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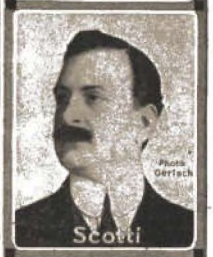

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AINSLEE'S

THE MAGAZINE THAT ENTERTAINS

Vol. XXX. No. 6

CONTENTS FOR JANUARY, 1913

YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION $1.80 SINGLE COPIES FIFTEEN CENTS

Monthly Publication issued by AINSLEE MAGAZINE CO., Seventh Avenue and Fifteenth Street, New York. ORMOND G. SMITH, President; GEORGE C. SMITH, Secretary and Treasurer, 79-89 Seventh Avenue, New York City.

Entered September 11, 1902, at New York as Second-class Matter, under Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

AINSLEE'S

VOL. XXX. JANUARY, 1913. No. 6.

THE GREAT DISCOVERY

BY I. A. R. WYLIE.

CHAPTER I.

"IF you please, sir, a gentleman to see you, sir."

The statement had been repeated twice, with equally little effect, and the third repetition was supplemented by a discreet, but determined, cough. Mr. Ashley looked up from the ponderous volume in which he was absorbed, and adjusted his pince-nez. Even then he did not give the impression of being fully conscious of his surroundings. There was a pleasant, half-plaintive vagueness about him, which, by the feminine visitors at Ashley Chase, was considered poetic, and by his family exasperating.

"Well, James, what is it?" he asked mildly. "Why don't you knock when you come in? You startle me so."

"If you please, sir, I did knock—three times," the butler replied, with patient imperturbability; and then added, in case his previous efforts had been fruitless: "There's a gentleman to see you, sir."

Mr. Ashley took hasty refuge in his book. An alarmed snail could not have offered a more determined appearance of inaccessibility.

"I'm busy; I can't see any one."

"If you please, sir, he said it was most important. He has come all the way from London to see you."

"Tell him I'm out."

"He said he would wait. I'm afraid he must have seen you through the window, sir."

Mr. Ashley started with annoyance, gave an aggrieved glance at the pleasant prospect through the open French windows, and closed his book.

"Very tiresome. One is never free from intruders. There, give me his card. I suppose I had better see who he is." The thin slip of pasteboard between his fingers, he remained for a moment in contemplative silence. "Samuels," he muttered discontentedly. "Samuels. I wonder what on earth he wants to worry me about now? Send him up, James."

"Yes, sir."

In the interval of waiting, Mr. Ashley prepared to receive his visitor. With the assistance of a Venetian glass over the mantelpiece, he patted his tie and arranged his scanty strands of gray

hair into a semblance of profusion. Then he went back to his study table, and fell into an attitude which suggested a gentle detachment from all things earthly.

"Mr. Samuels, sir."

Mr. Ashley gave a start, as though Mr. Samuels, of all people, was the last person in the world he expected. Having got over his surprise, however, he extended a white, hospitable hand in the direction of the newcomer.

"Ah, Samuels, very pleased. Take a seat, won't you?"

Samuels—a short, thick gentleman of obvious Hebraic descent, whose town clothes seemed as out of place as himself—accepted the offer of the chair, though with a gingerly diffidence which left him perched precariously on the edge.

"Thanks. Sorry to have to disturb you, Mr. Ashley."

"Don't mention it. I'm afraid you have had a long journey."

"Long, Mr. Ashley—but necessary."

Mr. Ashley evidently did not like the word. He pushed a cigar box across the table.

"Help yourself, won't you?"

"No, thanks, Mr. Ashley; I don't smoke when I'm out on business. And this is strict business, I'm afraid."

"Oh!"

Mr. Ashley stared out onto the shady park, and became once more gently absent-minded. His visitor drew out a pocketbook, extracted some unattractive-looking documents, and laid them on the table.

"All these are pressing for payment, Mr. Ashley," he said. "I have chosen out the most important, in order to give you some idea as to how matters stand. I should be glad if you would give me your close attention, sir. The outlook is not of the brightest."

Something in his tone aroused Mr. Ashley to a rather troubled attention. He turned round, his pale-blue eyes full of a childish alarm.

"What *do* you mean, Samuels?"

"Well, here is Marchand's bill for one thousand pounds. They have waited two years, and you can't expect them to go on waiting. I've kept them quiet with promises of a rather visionary character, and now they're getting troublesome. They're only one of a whole bunch, but they have got to be settled. That's what I've come down about."

Mr. Ashley's pince-nez dropped with his jaw

"My dear, good fellow, do you expect me to charm money out of the earth? Where do you expect me to get one thousand pounds from?"

"Mortgage, perhaps," suggested Mr. Samuels, with a comprehensive glance round the handsomely furnished room.

"Mortgage? Why, the place is up to its neck in mortgages already!"

Mr. Samuels' thick eyebrows went up a point.

"You didn't tell me that, Mr. Ashley."

"Good gracious! Why should I? It wasn't necessary."

"Considering I have to befoozle your creditors, it was very necessary, indeed," Samuels retorted. "It puts me in an ugly position, Mr. Ashley."

"Nonsense! The people shall be paid—in time. They must have a little patience. I give you my word they shall all get their money."

"I'd rather you gave me some idea how you propose doing it."

Mr. Ashley stopped in his restless pacing about the room, and confronted his guest with a weak air of triumph.

"You shall know, by all means. I suppose you have heard of the Trefelds Gold Exploration Company."

Samuels nodded.

"It's a good thing, eh?"

"For some people."

"Well, I've got twenty thousand pounds in it. Now, what do you think?"

What Mr. Samuels thought was not very clear. Beyond that his heavy features had grown suddenly red, he gave no sign.

"Might I ask how Trefelds stood when you bought them?" he asked placidly.

"At one hundred and thirty pounds. I was told they would be worth double in a few months. When the rise comes

I shall sell out, and then Marchands and the whole troublesome lot shall have their money. At the same time"—his manner became pompously reproving—"you can tell Marchands that they need not expect any more of my custom. I do not allow my tradespeople to dictate to me——"

"Excuse me, Mr. Ashley; have you looked at the papers this morning?"

"No. What the devil——"

"If you had looked," persisted Mr. Samuels doggedly, "you would have seen that Trefelds stood at sixty-seven."

"A passing depression. I was told to expect it."

Mr. Samuels rose.

"I don't know who your informant was, but he must be a mighty cunning fish," he said. "It's my unpleasant duty to inform you, Mr. Ashley, that to all intents and purposes your precious Trefelds aren't worth so much paper. You've been done in the eye, Mr. Ashley—badly done in the eye—and that's the truth."

The truth staggered Mr. Ashley as a gust of wind staggers a small and unsteady bark in a quiet sea.

"Good heavens, man—nonsense! You said yourself it was a good thing——"

"For somebody, Mr. Ashley. If they weren't good things for somebody these little enterprises wouldn't ever see the light. No doubt the wire puller has made a nice little pile out of Trefelds. But you're not the wire puller; you're the wired, Mr. Ashley, and that's the truth."

The elder man sank slowly into his chair.

"You mean," he jerked out, "you mean the twenty thousand pounds has gone?"

"It looks like it, sir."

"The scoundrel!" said Mr. Ashley, with great bitterness.

After that there was a silence in which the sleepy buzz of a stray bumblebee sounded loud and proportionately irritating. From somewhere outside, a woman's voice drifted in through the open window. Mr. Ashley passed his shaking hand over his forehead.

"My daughter!" he groaned. "My daughter! What shall I do?"

"Pull yourself together," was the practical answer. "There's no use in bursting it at her all at a go. Besides——"

Mr. Samuels broke off in his wise discourse. A slight, graceful young figure had sprung up between him and the peaceful landscape, and Mr. Samuels was connoisseur enough to catch his breath. Frankly he had not thought it possible that his weak, ineffectual client should have such a daughter. Perhaps in the laughing gray eyes there was a touch of the parental dreaminess, but the mouth and chin were firm, and even the small, straight nose suggested tenacious purpose. And the whole was undoubtedly beautiful. Mr. Samuels, who had dabbled in art as a financial pastime, considered her "classic"—a masterpiece—and for a moment he stared at her, open-mouthed, unaccountably ill at ease. She, too, looked at him, the laughter dying out of her eyes and giving place to an expression of troubled perplexity.

"I beg your pardon, dad," she said. "I didn't know you had visitors. I only wanted to say good-by."

Mr. Ashley cleared his throat. Like most weak men, he set a high value on his dignity, and his dignity was at stake. But the recent blow had stunned him and jolted his memory into confusion.

"Good-by, my dear? I didn't know you were going out—ah, yes, of course—the hunt." His eyes, traveling vacantly in her direction, suddenly brought him the realization that she wore a riding habit, and an unsteady smile trembled on his lips. "Stupid of me, eh? Who is taking you?"

"Peter de Warren," she answered. "He is driving me over in his motor, and Smith is to take the horses." Her brows betrayed a faint impatience. "I would rather have ridden," she added, "but Peter is so persistent. He worries till he gets what he wants."

She gave a short laugh, half amused, half annoyed, and Mr. Ashley rose, steadying himself with his hand on the table.

"Eh, yes, a tiresome young man, and his father—there, never mind. Take care of yourself; don't do anything headstrong."

"Father, aren't you well?"

Her startled question stung his pride into action.

"Perfectly well. Don't be foolish, Enid. I—I am a little tired. Mr. Samuels and I have been talking business. Now, be off with you, or you will be late."

His tone of parental protection was not without its absurdity. To Mr. Samuels' shrewd eyes, there was more of the child in the father than in the girl, whose face already betrayed the woman. Her eyes seemed to be endeavoring to penetrate the position, and Mr. Samuels, happening to meet them, flinched involuntarily.

"Very well," she said, with a sudden quiet. "I won't disturb you. Good-by."

She kissed her father gravely on the forehead, acknowledged Mr. Samuels' existence with a slight bow, and was gone the way she had come. The moment the sound of her quick, decided step had died away, Mr. Ashley collapsed into his chair.

"It is terrible," he said, "terrible! It is my deathblow. I shall never live to tell her."

Mr. Samuels shrugged his shoulders ponderously.

"That won't help *her* much," he remarked. "You have got her into the mess, and you had better try and pull her out. But it's a downright pity."

"What do you mean?"

"A lovely picture ought to have a lovely frame," was the picturesque answer. Mr. Samuels drew nearer, and rubbed a square finger along the beading of the table. "By the way, who's this Peter de Warren?" he asked abruptly.

"Peter——" Mr. Ashley shifted angrily in his chair. "A young man—a puppy, and the son of a—a—confound it! Why do you ask? Do you think I'm in the mood to discuss my neighbors' history?"

"Anything to do with old Mortimer de Warren?" the agent persisted tranquilly.

"His son. My dear Samuels——"

"Old Mortimer is worth a million or two," the other went on, as though there had been no interruption. "He has got his finger into every pie I know of, and he has nabbed most of the plums, as some of us know to our cost. He's a wire puller, Mr. Ashley. He might be useful."

Ashley looked up, the peevish anger still flickering.

"I really don't know what you mean," he said.

Samuels jerked his thumb in the direction of the garden, and then laid his hand significantly on the region of his heart.

"Anything thereabouts?" he asked.

Mr. Ashley rose. Some men are born theatrical, and he was of the class. In the instinctive, delighted recognition of an effective situation, he forgot his troubles, and even his own self-pity.

"Mr. Samuels," he said, "you are going beyond your prerogative. Ruined I may be, but I am neither a scoundrel nor the wicked father of romance. I shall never force my child into a distasteful marriage—even if I could," he added, betrayed into an anticlimax. "Your suggestion is absurd—insulting." He frowned, conscious of having missed fire, and Mr. Samuels spread out his hands in Oriental deprecation.

"I apologize," he said. "I am your agent, and it is my business to look after your affairs, which are in a deplorable condition. All you have said is very elevating, but it won't wash clothes or pay bills. When you find yourself and your daughter enjoying furnished apartments down Bayswater way, you may think better of what I have said." He picked up his top hat and smoothed its shiny surface with a loving hand. "In the meantime, I have done my duty," he went on. "There are the accounts; you can look them over at your leisure. I can't keep the people quiet any longer, and, knowing what I know, I shan't try. It wouldn't be straight, and it wouldn't be business. At the same time"—he hesitated,

his small eyes fixed steadily on the carpet—"if I could give them an idea that there was a rich match in sight, I might do something. I might do a great deal. They'd wait—and De Warren has a liberal hand, they say. Afterward you could settle down quietly——"

"Sir!"

The agent heaved up his shoulders.

"It's the only way out that I can see," he said, "and I think if you explain the situation to Miss Ashley she'd take it. Good afternoon."

"Good afternoon!"

Mr. Ashley retained his haughty attitude by the table until the door closed. Then he collapsed, with his face buried in his arms, and wept like a child.

CHAPTER II.

At the front entrance of Ashley Court, an automobile quivered and grumbled in impatient expectation of departure. A stoic-faced chauffeur stared patiently into space, and an equally impassive footman, laden with rugs and wraps, waited at a discreet distance. Evidently they were intended to form a color scheme. The motor had been enameled a delicate *bêche*, and the liveries were a scarcely perceptible shade darker, and elaborately braided. Chassis, chauffeur, and footman gave the impression of having been created in a grown-up toy shop, and the young man standing on the steps viewed them with a mild satisfaction of ownership. He himself was got up with a painful regard for sartorial correctness, and his small, clean-shaven face, adorned with an eyeglass, which seemed curiously inevitable, gave the last touch to the general appearance of overemphasized spruceness.

Enid Ashley, coming up quietly through the hall, viewed the scene with an expression wholly inscrutable; then she laughed, and the young man swung round.

"I thought you'd given me the slip," he blurted out as he took her carelessly extended hand. "It's awfully good of you. I know you would have preferred to have ridden."

"And yet you worried me for an hour to drive," she observed, smiling.

"That's because I'm a selfish brute." He motioned the footman to one side, and held open the door for her. "Won't you get in? We shall be late. I know you hate being late."

She hesitated, looking from him to the chauffeur with the same whimsical inscrutability.

"Can't I sit in front?"

"Well, I'm afraid not—unless you mean to give Thomas the benefit of your company."

"Drive yourself," she commanded. "Thomas can come on in the dogcart."

He looked up, smiled a little, his cheerful blue eye fixed on her with the frank persistency which is an eyeglass' attribute.

"I don't drive," he said quietly. "I can't. I tried once, but I lost my head, and ran into a wall. I shouldn't like to do that with you. I haven't got any nerve for that sort of thing."

"Oh!" She looked away from him as though from something she did not wish to see, and then, without further comment, took her place in the now exultantly rumbling car. Peter de Warren jumped in beside her, and drew the rugs over her knee.

"Are you comfortable? Very well. Fire away, Thomas."

They glided smoothly along the avenue, and swerved through the lodge gate into the highroad. Peter de Warren's small white hand clutched convulsively at the upholstered side of the car, and then relaxed. He gave a little high-pitched laugh.

"I hate the way these chauffeur fellows take corners," he said. "It jars me all down my spine. You don't mind, do you? I suppose you even like it?"

"Yes, I like it," she answered tranquilly; then added, in the same tone of polite indifference: "This is the new car, isn't it? I don't remember seeing it before."

"Yes, it's new. The liveries match. Did you notice?"

"Yes, I noticed."

Her delicate, clear-cut profile was

perfectly serious. He looked at her doubtfully.

"I don't believe you like it. Well, it wasn't my idea. The pater wanted it, and I don't mind much. Of course, if I set up my own establishment it would be different. I—I should have things as—as my wife liked them."

"Are you going to get married, then?"

She turned her head a little in order to have a better view of his face. This time he kept his eyes fixed ahead.

"I don't know; it depends."

"On 'her,' I suppose?"

"Yes. To tell you the truth, I'm afraid to ask."

"You seem to be afraid of a lot of things." She spoke lightly and carelessly, more interested now in the scenery which flashed past them than in the white, earnest face beside her. Peter de Warren stiffened. His small jockey's figure seemed to brace itself to a sudden nervous effort.

"You would be afraid if you had so little to offer," he said.

"Oh, I don't know. You have money—that counts for a lot nowadays; and De Warren is quite a nice-sounding name."

"But the 'de' is not genuine," he broke out. "I mean—the pater paid any amount to add it on. Before, we were just 'Warren'—'Rabbit' Warren I used to be called when they wanted to ring the change from Peter, the insignificant. Anybody could find that out."

"Still, there is no necessity to tell the already-mentioned and all-important 'her,'" Enid Ashley returned.

"I have told 'her'—now."

There was a moment's startled silence. They had come in sight of the "meet," and moving points of cheerful red were sprinkled over the brown fields. From the distance, a note from a horn drifted to them on the cold, biting air. It seemed to arouse Enid Ashley from her bewilderment. She turned to her companion with a haughty, impetuous movement, and then, as she saw his face, burst into a gay laugh.

"Oh, Peter!" she said. "How silly you are!"

He nodded, white-lipped.

"Yes, I know. I'm an awful fool."

The car pulled up smoothly behind a row of motors and dogcarts which lined the highroad, and in an instant a dozen eager riders had turned in the direction of the new arrivals. But they came too late. Even before Peter could move, a man standing by the hedge had reached the step and had helped Enid to the ground. Unlike the rest of the gathering, he wore ordinary clothes—a rough tweed suit, which had seen better days; and the cap which he had lifted in curt greeting was frayed and weather-stained. Yet he held his broad-shouldered, somewhat massive figure with a certain resolute self-confidence which silenced criticism and enforced respect.

"You see—I have come," he said quietly.

"I thought you would." Her eyes met his with a grave recognition. "I have learned to know that what you say you do. I am glad." She turned a little. "I ought to introduce you. Mr. de Warren—Mr. Otway."

The two men bowed unsmilingly, measuring each other.

"Your name is familiar to me," Peter de Warren observed. "Have we met before, I wonder?"

"My father was once in Mr. de Warren's office," was the cold answer. "You probably heard the name there."

Then he turned back to Enid. In that moment his whole voice and bearing changed. The bulldog defiance with which he had faced the well-dressed and well-mounted assembly gave place to a sudden victorious ease and happiness of manner. He smiled down into his companion's fair face, and Peter de Warren, seeing it, winced and turned away.

"Well?" Enid questioned.

Otway walked at her side toward the groom who stood in charge of the beautifully built hunter. No one who saw them could have guessed what suspense quivered in the woman's quietly put question. Even Otway glanced down at her with a surprised pleasure.

"It's Doctor Otway now," he said quietly.

"Then you have passed?"

"Yes; well—brilliantly."

He spoke without arrogance, but with the measured impartiality of a judge. Nevertheless, a dull red had crept into his cheeks, and the thin, determined mouth tightened. Regardless of all onlookers, she caught his arm and pressed it passionately.

"How glad, how proud, I am!" she said, in a low, broken voice. "When I saw you I hardly dared ask. It meant so much—so terribly much."

"If I had failed, I should not have come," he answered. "I should have gone away. I should never have seen you again. The disparity between us would have been too great. Now there is your wealth and station against my —my ability. We are equal. I am not afraid to ask you to be my wife."

She stood still. He had only outspoken that which had been long and silently acknowledged between them, and yet it came to her as something wonderfully, bewilderingly new. She looked up at him. The manner of his wooing was like himself—determined, reckless of circumstances, yet clear-headed and practical. His lean, hard-featured face was calm enough save for the eyes, which burned down to meet hers. She read desire and will power to which all desire was subservient.

"We are less than equal," she returned, with a gentle dignity. "My position is nothing; my wealth nothing. I am glad I am rich, but only because I shall save you from the rut. You will be able to give all your mind to your work—to your research."

He nodded.

"Yes. I have thought of that. I know I can be frank with you, for you are not like other women. My work comes first in my life. It must if I am worthy of it. I believe that I am on the track of something new, but to follow it up I must be free of all financial trouble. If you had been poor I could not have married you. It would have been a betrayal of those whom I am to serve."

She looked away from him. If there were tears in her eyes, her voice at least was quiet and steady.

"I understand. You have a mission in life, and no one must stand in your way. I remember when you told me about the serum you were experimenting with. I dubbed it the Great Discovery, and I knew then—what it meant to you. I want to tell you now—I am quite satisfied if—if I come second in your heart, Wilfred."

"I love you," he answered quietly. "My work and you—that is all I care for."

A horn signal warned them that the hounds were at work, and, without answering, Enid allowed herself to be lifted into the saddle. As the groom was busy tightening the girths, she bent down to Otway.

"Ride with me," she begged. "I want you, Wilfred. I am a silly, weak woman, but I feel I cannot do without you to-day, dear. Come!"

He made a little movement of comic despair.

"How can I? I don't belong to the hunt; I haven't a horse; my clothes are——"

"You won't ride the worse for a tweed suit. I know you better. Take the spare horse. The master won't mind. We are hunting over father's land; and, besides, father's subscription heads the list. I defy any one to object." She laughed with a smothered excitement. "To celebrate!" she whispered.

Still he hesitated. Then, looking up, he saw that Warren, mounted on a chestnut, had taken his place on Enid's off side. For the second time, the two men studied each other in silence. Warren's face was whiter than usual; there were lines about his small face which suggested that every muscle was drawn taut. His gaze dropped before Otway's—or, rather, shifted—wandering over the wide sweep of country with an expression which Otway did not understand. But it decided him.

"I'll come," he said curtly.

A cheery shout let loose the waiting group of red-coated riders, who spread

out in joyous gallop over the fields. Otway caught the groom's horse, and swung himself into the saddle. Enid and Warren had the start, but he overtook them at the first hedge. Even in that moment of glorious physical exhilaration, Otway's powers of observation were not in abeyance. Something in Warren's riding caught his attention. It was nervous, fidgety. At the jump the chestnut, who had been going well, swerved, and, falling short, struck Enid's mount against the haunch. The hunter stumbled, recovered, and broke away, Otway following with difficulty, his own animal failing to keep the mare's headlong progress.

"Steady!" he shouted. "Pull her in—keep to the right—the wall!"

Enid nodded. She had seen the danger toward which they were rushing the moment the first warning had passed Otway's lips—the high wall which stretched like a white ribbon along the field—and in her mind she already pictured the ditch beyond. She turned a little in her saddle. As in a confused dream, she saw the distended nostrils of Otway's horse close to her girths; she saw Otway's face, grim and set, his eyes fixed on her bridle in calculating intensity.

"Keep back!" she called to him. "She has bolted. Keep back, dear—you can't help!"

He made no answer. The space between them and what seemed to her the end had narrowed to a few yards. She felt, with the instinct of the born rider, how the animal beneath her gathered itself together for the reckless flight; and she, too, nerved herself. They rose like an arrow, and she closed her eyes. But there was no hideous crash of masonry, no sudden stumbling break in their passage. With an inch to spare, the mare had cleared the ditch, and now raced on, sobered, herself quivering with her own daring. Halfway across the field she yielded to the bridle, and, breaking from a canter to a walk, stood still.

Enid looked round. She had felt no fear, but as she saw Otway beside her she reeled a little in her saddle, overtaken by a sickening realization of what might have been. He stretched out his arm, and held her.

"Enid!" he said quietly, authoritatively.

Her eyes opened and met his.

"It's nothing. Only the thought of—what you risked. Wilfred, thank God you are safe! If I had known you were following me——"

"Did you think I should leave you?" he interrupted. "Do you think I cared so much for my own neck?"

She gave a low, shaken laugh.

"No; you are brave. I believed that before. Now I know. I am very proud of you." She drew herself gently from the support of his arm. "Where is Mr. de Warren?" she asked.

Otway turned his head.

"There—coming through the gate," he answered.

In those few words she heard a concentrated contempt which was reflected on his face. In silence they waited. De Warren came on at a slow canter, as though his very beast felt a share of the ignominy. His face was white, and as he drew nearer they saw a nervous, all-betraying twitch of the lips.

"My God! I hardly dared come round," he said hoarsely. "It was awful! No one has ever dared that wall before. And you——" He passed his shaking hand over his forehead. "I can't tell you what I felt when I saw you safe and sound," he added.

And this time he looked full at Enid.

"If Miss Ashley is safe, it's no thanks to you," Otway observed, in a tone of suppressed passion.

Warren glanced at him as though he saw him for the first time.

"You mean—it was my fault?"

"Your horse struck Miss Ashley's."

"She stumbled. I——"

"You pulled her in."

The two men stared at each other, eye to eye. Every drop of color had gone out of Warren's lips.

"You funked a four-foot hedge," Otway went on cuttingly. "You don't ride straight. You ought to have some one to open the gates for you."

Enid, who had seen Warren's face,

held out a protecting, appealing hand. The sporting spirit in her revolted at this chastisement of an already beaten man. Warren, not Otway, saw the movement. He pulled himself up. There was a touch of dignity in his bearing, and the quiver about his lips stiffened.

"Yes, it was my fault," he said simply. "I don't ride straight. I funk things; I can't help it. It's my confounded nerves."

Enid Ashley turned her horse's head. The excuse chilled the momentary warmth of pity.

"Nowadays 'nerves' explains everything," she said. "A few years ago it would have been given another name. Come, Wilfred, I am going home."

Otway obeyed, riding close to her side as though in protection. From the center of the field, Warren, a curiously lonely figure, watched them until they had disappeared.

CHAPTER III.

Mr. Mortimer de Warren was known in the city as the Dark Horse. Three days out of the week he spent at his country seat, Blenheim House; from Monday to Friday he was to be found in his office in a side street off the Strand. At his country seat he played the beneficent landowner. What he did at his office no one exactly knew. Beyond his name on the doorplate there was no indication as to what transactions were carried on behind the glass doors, and all that the most scandalously inclined had ever found out was that Mortimer de Warren had never had a hand in a losing game. Successful ventures always bore his name on the list of the committee; failures were left without even that adornment to console confiding shareholders. But how this appearing and disappearing feat was accomplished not even the best informed had been able to explain. For the rest, he appeared to have no weakness, no emotions; he went his way, and the wise ones took care not to cross it.

On a certain afternoon at the close of his weekly visit to the office, Mr. de Warren was disturbed from his perusal of the day's post by the entry of his secretary. His secretary, like himself, an unknown quality, a man who spoke little and went about his employer's business—whatever that might be—with a machinelike punctuality, handed Mr. de Warren a visiting card, making no comment, but with his small, short-sighted eyes on the door.

"Say I am out," De Warren said.

He tossed the card on one side as though dismissing the matter, but the secretary held his ground.

"I'm afraid it's no good, sir. He saw you come into the office, and he says he means to wait. He seems pretty desperate. I'm sorry, sir, but I couldn't keep him out."

Mr. de Warren drummed impatiently with his fingers on the handsome mahogany table.

"Very well. By the way, have you heard anything from Samuels?"

The secretary considered his nails.

"Mr. Samuels phoned that he had prepared the ground very nicely."

"Good! Now you can show old Otway in. I suppose we shall have to see him sooner or later."

The secretary bowed, and held open the glass door.

"Mr. Otway, please step this way," he said, and then quietly and discreetly evaporated.

Mr. de Warren threw himself back into his office chair. The movement seemed to bring the whole of the ponderous energy of his personality into play; or it might have been that the man who entered, by force of contrast, made him appear larger and more powerful than he was. The visitor, his soft hat crushed between his hands, his wan, deeply lined face expressing mingled fear and resolve, lingered on the threshold, seemingly all too conscious of the disparity between himself and these surroundings. Mr. de Warren motioned him to be seated, and the impatience on his bulldog face relaxed into a contemptuous good nature.

"Glad to see you, Otway. Take a

seat, won't you? You're looking ill. What can I do for you?"

The old man drew nearer with dragging footsteps, but he did not venture to take the proffered chair. He stood by the table, running a nervous, shaking finger over the polished surface.

"It's about those shares, Mr. Warren," he began unsteadily. "Heaven knows I don't want to worry you; but I heard rumors. I got frightened. I wanted to ask you—if it is all right. It would be a terrible thing for me if——"

He stopped. His pale eyes were wide open and fixed ahead with a kind of frantic, wordless fear. Mr. de Warren took up his pencil, and began to scribble figures on the sheet before him.

"Are you talking about the Trefelds Gold Exploration?" he asked.

The pale eyes swept round on him.

"Yes. You know, Mr. Warren, you advised me——"

"Good heavens, man, you haven't come here to tell me I am responsible for the failure of every upstart company, have you?"

"Then it's true?"

A violent, galvanizing shock seemed to pass through the bowed, broken figure, forcing it to a momentary uprightness, and bringing a cold, ugly glare into the pale-blue eyes. Mr. de Warren shrugged his shoulders.

"It's true that Trefelds are to be wound up," he said coolly.

"My God!" This brief flare of energy died out; old Otway stretched out a trembling, beseeching hand. "Warren, you don't know what it means. You're so rich—you don't realize. Or perhaps you do. I told you. I explained it to you, and you swore it was a safe thing. You gave me your word that——"

"I said it was a speculation," De Warren interrupted.

"Yes—a speculation that would make me a rich man."

"People who expect to get rich in a night must take risks."

"Did you take risks?"

Mr. de Warren met the challenge with unshaken calm.

"I never take risks," he said. "I don't expect to get rich like that. In fact, I don't expect miracles."

There was a moment's silence. Mr. Mortimer de Warren stared at the paper before him with the forced patience of a man who has no more to say and awaits his opponent's departure. But Jacob Otway did not move. He seemed to be recovering slowly from a blow which had bereft him of his reason, and a faint color crept into his yellow cheeks.

"Forgive me, Warren," he said at last. "I was hasty. The whole thing came as a shock. When you think, you will understand. Remember the years I worked for you. You couldn't have had a more faithful servant. You said so yourself."

"I say so now," Mortimer de Warren assented. "You were well paid."

"Yes, yes. You were liberal. There were, perhaps, transactions which required liberality. Out of what you gave me I saved—I saved rigorously—for my son. You remember? I told you I wanted to help him to his chosen career. I believed great things of him—and I was justified."

"Ah!" said Mortimer de Warren politely.

"He has obtained his doctor's degree. Those under whom he has worked prophesy he will go far—very far. They say he has genius. But he cannot go on unaided. He must have a beginning. It was for that I speculated—to buy him a good practice. Now I am ruined, and he with me."

"Very regrettable," Mortimer de Warren sympathized.

The cold, indifferent tones seemed to goad the old man to a sudden passion.

"Warren, don't talk like that—as though it were nothing to you. Remember your promise. If things went wrong with Trefelds, you would help me. That was the bargain—not a charity. Think of the Havelock business——"

De Warren brought his heavy fist down on the table.

"Are you trying blackmail now?" he asked fiercely.

"No, no, of course not. You know

I couldn't if I would. I have no proofs. It's one good turn against another—a case of gratitude. Besides, if you help me now you will be no loser—I swear it, Warren. You shall be paid back with interest."

"Out of a young genius' earnings?" Mortimer de Warren interrupted, with good-natured banter.

Old Otway saw the change, and caught at it. A smile of weak triumph crept over his face.

"Wilfred is going to marry," he said significantly. "A rich wife."

"Ah?"

"Enid Ashley—old Thomas Ashley's daughter."

This time Mortimer de Warren made no answer. He got up and went over to the window, as though something had attracted his attention, and when he turned again his face was expressionless.

"Mr. Ashley shared your weakness for Trefelds," he said almost gently. "Mr. Ashley is ruined." He waited for a moment, watching the effect of his words, and then added, in the same subdued, significant tone: "My son Peter wishes to marry Enid Ashley—and I have given my consent."

This time the silence seemed interminable. Old Otway had ceased to run his finger over the smooth surface of the table. He stood staring at Mortimer de Warren with the wide-open stare of a trapped animal.

"Then you won't keep your word?"

"I excuse myself from upsetting my own plans. Later on I shall be pleased to help you."

Jacob Otway picked up his soft hat, and crushed it between his hands.

"Ashley and me," he said thickly. "Ashley and me—you've let us both in—you've let us both in like you've done hundreds. God's curse on you!"

Mr. Mortimer de Warren held open the door.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Otway," he said.

Jacob Otway passed out of the office without answering the secretary's greeting. Without faltering or hesitation, he made his way along the crowded streets to the station, and there took his place in a third-class carriage, with the method of long custom. No one noticed him, or observed anything peculiar in his bearing. He sat quietly in the corner, staring out of the window with blank, apparently unseeing eyes; but as the train drew up at the quiet country station, he got out with the same mechanical precision. Half an hour later he entered the house lying on the outskirts of the sleepy country town. The door of the library stood ajar, and he pushed it open. Wilfred Otway, who sat at the well-worn table, bent over some book, turned his head a little with an absent-minded greeting. Then, as he saw his father's face, he sprang to his feet.

"Father! What is it?"

Jacob Otway held himself upright, but he was swaying slightly like a reed in the teeth of the wind.

"Ashley is ruined," he said slowly, distinctly. "I am ruined. I cannot help you any more. I want to tell you who ruined us. You are clever. I want you to revenge——"

He broke off. His jaw dropped. His eyes grew glassy, and he turned slowly on his heel, as though seeking something.

Wilfred caught him, and let him sink gently onto the sofa.

"Father!" he said imperatively. "Father!"

Jacob Otway's lips moved. He was struggling terribly—a convulsive conflict between the soul and body.

"Father, who was it? Tell me—try—who was it?"

There was a last effort, a feeble lifting of the head, then Jacob Otway lay still, stiff and rigid. Only the eyes remained alive with fierce, unquenchable fire of appeal and merciless desire.

CHAPTER IV.

"Mr. Peter de Warren asks if he could speak a few minutes with you, sir."

Mr. Ashley, who had been seated by his writing table in a hunched-up atti-

tude of physical collapse, looked up with an eagerness which implied relief.

"Ah, yes—of course. Show him into the library, Thomas."

"Yes, sir."

Mr. Ashley rose, pulled down his waistcoat, and arranged his disordered hair. Out of the corners of his eyes, he was watching the tall, girlish figure by the window with ill-concealed uneasiness.

"I am afraid you are very angry with your old father," he said feebly. "He is a poor financier, and he has ruined you and himself. My dear, if there were any earthly thing I could do, at whatever sacrifice——"

"Don't!" she interrupted, with a little gesture of quiet resignation. "I know that you would do anything; I would do anything myself. It's worse for you than for me. But I can't help you, either; I wish I could."

"Do you, my dear?" He stood by the door, stroking his neat gray mustache with nervous fingers. "Do you really? Ah, I wonder?"

She turned quickly, looking at him with puzzled, unhappy eyes.

"Surely you know I would. Why do you ask?"

"I don't know—an idea—a thought. An opportunity might present itself. One never can tell—I wondered. Heaven knows, I wouldn't do anything to force you. I may be foolish, but I am not like that. Well, well, we will see——"

He hurried out, leaving his jerky, disconnected sentences to do their work. Enid scarcely waited till the door had closed. What her father had said made little impression on her mind. All her thoughts and longings were centered on the man who waited for her, and she passed down the pathway leading to the highroad with a quiet, decided step. At the gate he met her. The half light of evening hid their faces in gray shadow, but the silent handclasp told more than any word or look could have done. She clung to his hand as though for support and comfort, yet she held herself bravely, a little defiantly.

"You have heard?" she asked scarcely above a whisper.

"Yes; I couldn't help hearing. Enid, what made him do it? Who advised him?"

"I don't know. He is mysterious. He won't tell me. Perhaps he has his reasons. I only know that the money has gone. In a few weeks we must leave here—where for I dare not think." She gave his hand a little, desperate squeeze. "Oh, Wilfred, Wilfred! It will break his heart!"

"Hush! It's no use lamenting. We must face things."

His voice rang hard, and his profile, clean cut against the evening sky, looked stonelike in its harsh decision.

"All my life is altered, too," he said bitterly. "My allowance, my hope of a good practice, is gone. No one can help me."

"Not even I!"

"No, not even you."

Something in his voice drowned her own pain in a flood of generous pity.

"Oh, Wilfred, that is the worst of all! I had meant to help you. I had meant to make your road to fame so smooth. And now it is all taken from you—everything. Wilfred, what will you do?"

"Go on," he said curtly. "Go on in the rut. The discovery must go. I have lost my best hope—I have lost you."

"Wilfred!"

"We must face that, too, dear. Unless you wait for me——"

"I will wait."

He was silent a moment, as though listening to the echo of that quiet, confident voice. When he spoke again, it was with a hesitating gentleness:

"Are you so sure?"

"I am quite sure."

"You will be tempted."

"Do you think so little of me?"

He caught her almost roughly by the shoulders.

"If you will wait it will make up," he said between his teeth. "And perhaps, after all, I shall win. There are two incentives behind me that have never failed—love and hate!"

"Hate?"

He nodded.

"My father lies there and looks at me," he said, with a sudden harsh change of tone. "He cannot move or speak, but he looks at me and wills me: 'Find out the man who has done this, and make him suffer as I suffer.' There are no papers to guide me, but I have sworn to him that I shall obey. I shall not fail. Vengeance is mine!"

"Hush!" she interrupted. "You frighten me. You will do nothing reckless?"

"No. A reckless vengeance is a bad one. It must be slow, lingering." He laughed suddenly, a short, harsh laugh of bitter self-mockery. "I talk like the stage hero—or villain—do I not? Powerful emotions are always theatrical, if one has the courage to express them. One must keep them out of sight. Forget what I have said."

She looked at him. Even in the growing darkness, he could see the depth of feeling in her wide-open eyes.

"I shall not forget," she said. "Vengeance is not womanly, and I am very much a woman. But I have been hurt too much not to understand. And I will make up to you, Wilfred; I will make good all this present trouble."

He kissed her with a passion that was almost brutal.

"I know. I trust you. You have lifted a weight——" He stopped, arrested by the sound of footsteps on the gravel pathway, and she disengaged herself gently from his arms.

"Go now," she whispered. "If it is my father, I don't want to burden him with my own trouble. I shall see you next week, Wilfred. Good-by, dear."

"Good-by."

He had vanished into the gathering twilight before she turned to meet the newcomer. Even as she did so, a sudden warning instinct told her that it was not her father who had come to find her, and she gave no start of surprise as she saw Peter de Warren standing before her. In some strange, painful way, she had expected him, and she held out her hand with a quiet courtesy which hid an unreasoned fear.

"Your father said I might come and look for you," Peter said simply. "I told him—I wanted to speak to you."

It was all so abrupt that she could only look at him in tongue-tied anxiety. He was holding his slight figure very erect, but his face was ashy, and there was the familiar nervous movement of the lips which she had grown to hate. She withdrew her hand, and began to walk slowly toward the house.

"Is it anything important?" she asked, in a voice which did not sound like her own.

"Yes, very. I want to ask you to be my wife." She stood still at that, horrified by this sudden crude realization of the worst, and he gave a little, uncomfortable laugh. "I'm not very eloquent, I know, but I'm not such a conceited fool as to believe that eloquence would help me. If I told you that—that I loved you as, perhaps, few men have ever loved, it would only disgust and anger you. You despise me—rightly—and what I feel is nothing to you. I knew all that days ago—when I funked at the hedge." He drew his breath quickly. "It's not my love that I offer you, though God knows that love is there if you would like it."

"I am afraid I don't understand," she said unsteadily.

"I will explain. I will try and put it clearly to you, and try and keep my own feelings out of it. The other day, when I realized I hadn't a chance, I meant to give up and go away and leave you in peace. If I was a coward, I wanted to prove that I wasn't a cad. Then the crash came. That changed things. The same day my father settled half his fortune on me—on condition that I married you."

"Stop!" she broke in, with a fierce gesture. "Do you think I want to hear all that?"

"No, no; yet I beg you to listen. If I have put it brutally, like the bounder I probably am, try and forgive me. And don't think harshly of my father. He and I—we both come of a common stock—and, strange as it may seem to you, he loves me. I'm his one weakness. And he knew I wanted you, and

he tried in his own way to give me my heart's desire. He didn't understand that I couldn't buy you."

"I am glad *you*, at least, realize that much," she said, with bitter sarcasm.

"I couldn't, and I wouldn't," he went on. "I care too much for that. If I offer you my name and wealth, it is not for my own sake, but because I want to shield you and those you love from trouble. If I could help you without thrusting myself upon you, I would. I ask nothing for myself—nothing—neither your affection nor friendship. If you would marry me, I would go away the very day you became my wife; you should never see me again."

"Don't!" she interrupted wildly. "It's monstrous—impossible!"

"Not impossible—not monstrous. I have told you I ask nothing, and so I have the right to plead with you. I can save you from misery and poverty; that, perhaps, is nothing to you; but there is your father."

She stood still. She had the feeling that an icy hand had laid hold upon her, choking, paralyzing her. She had felt so strong, and now something was nearing her against which she could do nothing.

"My father!" she echoed faintly.

"He is old. He loves you. It will break his heart to see you suffer through his fault. It will kill him to leave his house. His only hope is through you. He—wishes it."

She smothered a groan. The Unknown Something was there—a dark, pitiless figure which she could not yet realize. Was it temptation—the temptation of which Otway had spoken—or duty? The two promises she had made stood opposite each other; in one short hour they had become antagonistic. One had to be broken. Which? She thought of the broad-shouldered man striding alone through the darkness, and a passionate protest against the sacrifice of their love rose up within her. Anything—but not that! She lifted her head, the refusal on her lips. Peter's eyes met hers in steady, doglike pleading.

"Can't you trust me?" he said. "Everything—everything shall be yours."

He held out his hand. In that moment a new, blinding thought had flashed through her mind. Everything would be hers. Wealth—great wealth. And there was the Discovery—dearer to him than herself, than any other consideration. What if the two promises were reconcilable, synonymous? And in that moment of desperate agonizing indecision she heard her father's quavering voice coming from the house:

"Enid!" She turned. She saw him standing against the background of the lighted balcony window—a frail, broken figure—his hands outstretched in unsteady joy. "Enid, my dear child, is it really true?"

Then she understood. That which she would have thrust from her in loathing he had taken for granted—the certain fulfillment of her promise—her duty. She took Peter's outstretched hand in her own.

"It is true," she said, in a low, broken voice. "I am to marry—Peter—if he is content——"

He held her hand a moment, then dropped it.

"I am content," he said gently.

CHAPTER V.

The chairman of the committee for the Society of Helpers had risen and begged to give out a notice.

"Doctor Otway," he said, "has sent round a special appeal for a woman dying of consumption. She lives in a wretched neighborhood, and is afflicted with a brutal husband. Twenty pounds would be a godsend. He invites inquiry, and would be glad to answer all questions at his surgery, number ten Johns Street, E. C."

At that moment Mrs. Peter de Warren, at whom the chairman had cast a hopeful eye, had risen from her seat and gone out. The progress of the swiftly drawn victoria had seemed intolerably slow, and now, as she stood in the great, empty drawing-room, she felt as though there were fever in her

blood, giving her no rest. She went over to her desk, and took out her bank book. Her account was already overdrawn, and yet that twenty pounds —insignificant sum, in view of all the surrounding luxury—had to be found at once, for she could not wait.

And it was at that moment that her husband's absence came to her in the light of a grievance. Peter had kept his part of the contract. He avoided her; he left her to live her own life. And now for the first time she wanted him, and he was not there. She knew that he went every afternoon to his club, but even in that moment of impatient need the idea of seeking him there never crossed her mind. For that he was too much a stranger to her.

She looked about her frowningly. Twenty pounds! She knew that there were greater sums than that in the cash box in his library; and she knew, too, where the duplicate keys were hidden. There would be no harm in taking the money now. She could tell him afterward. He would not mind. For the stranger had a quality not usual in strangers—he was generous. Without hesitation, she slipped out of the drawing-room and down the passage leading to his room. The door was closed, but she was too sure of herself, too eager, to pause in a moment's doubt. She entered, and saw too late that her husband was seated at his writing desk. He rose instantly, and she stood on the threshold, her face flushed with embarrassment and anger.

"I beg your pardon," she stammered. "I thought you were at the club. I did not know you were here."

"Does that mean that you would not have come if you had known?" he asked, smiling.

"I would not have disturbed you."

"You are not disturbing me. Besides, I am here every afternoon."

"I thought——" She hesitated, torn between a sudden curiosity and the habitual reserve. "I had no idea," she finished lamely.

"Yet if you had asked one of the servants they would have told you. I told them if you wanted—anything ——" It was his turn to hesitate, and she looked at him with increasing trouble.

"Do you stay in——"

"In case you should happen to want me." The same timid, apologetic smile quivered at the corners of his mouth. "I'm afraid it was rather a useless precaution, but still I should have hated you to have come in vain."

He drew up a chair for her, but she refused the offer with a quick, impatient gesture. A new emotion was rising above her impatience, but she would not recognize it as shame.

"Thank you. I came to see—that is —I wanted some money, and I find my banking account has been overdrawn."

She lifted her head, and looked at him with a sudden defiance.

"I am sorry. It was that new hospital. I did not want to refuse. It shall not happen again."

"I hope there will never be any necessity," he replied quietly. "If you look, you will find that the account is in order. I paid in five hundred pounds for you this morning."

She caught her breath, and her defiance became an ugly, feeble thing.

"You are very good—Peter."

He shook his head.

"I have not been half good enough; I never shall be." She thought his voice shook, but the next instant he went on in a steady, matter-of-fact tone: "How much do you want?"

"Nothing; that is——" She tried to laugh. "Now that the banking account is in order, I don't need to trouble you."

"You may not want to be bothered with checks. I have gold enough here."

He went over to the safe by the window, and swung open the massive door. As he stood counting out the money, she watched him with a new interest. She acknowledged unwillingly that he had changed. He no longer wore the overexact clothes of the old days. He was still very spruce, but the indefinable something which makes for bad taste was gone. And yet—in spite of

it all—how puny he looked, how insignificant! The thought had no sooner flashed through her brain than he turned round.

"There!" he said cheerfully. "I have made it twenty-five. One never knows. Sometimes one wants more than one thinks."

"Thank you." She took the money, and the sense of shame became all too cruelly definite. "Thank you; you are very good."

She went to the door, and he held it open for her.

"You are going out again?" he asked with the old apologetic timidity.

"Yes. I am going down eastward. There is a poor woman I want to help—with your money."

His eyes seemed to hold her waiting against her will. They were full of an inexpressible trouble.

"Do you like that sort of thing?" he asked.

"I like to try and help make other people—less unhappy."

"Does it make you happy?"

An ironical answer trembled on her lips. She held it back.

"It helps," she said gently.

"Then I am glad. I should be glad of anything that helps."

He stood aside, and she went out. The carriage was still waiting for her, and she gave the order for Westminster. From thence she made use of a motor omnibus, going her way with the quiet certainty of long custom. She was unaware that at a carefully measured distance she was being followed. The man who followed her seemed, indeed, too accustomed to his task to be easily caught. In the crowded thoroughfares he kept close to her, his cap drawn over his eyes, his coat collar over his ears; and when she turned into a quiet by-street he dropped behind, walking with a light, noiseless step, and keeping to the shadow of the houses. At the end of the street she stopped and looked up at the house, which hung like a last shred of respectability on the edge of a noisome, dirty back alley. A brass plate bearing the name of Doctor Otway caught her attention. She went up the flight of uneven stone steps, and rang the bell. She turned as she did so, and looked back the way she had come; but she saw nothing but the figure of a loafer, his back toward her, his shoulders hunched in the familiar attitude of sullen discontent.

"Yes, miss?"

She turned again, startled by the sudden opening of the door, and found herself confronted by a dirty, slatternly little maid, who was staring at her with open-eyed wonderment.

"Is Doctor Otway at home?" Enid stammered.

"No, miss; he's just gone out."

Still Enid did not move, and the little maid of all work felt an increasing interest. Evidently the lady was in trouble, and the little servant had a good heart beating beneath the none too immaculate apron.

"Was you very anxious to see the doctor, miss?"

"Yes, yes—very anxious. I have come all the way—a long way to see him. Do you know when he will be back?"

"No; I know where he's gone, though, but I don't rightly know as I ought to tell you. It ain't a nice place for ladies. There's a lot of rough, nasty people."

"Where is it?" Enid asked eagerly.

The girl glanced doubtfully at the half crown which had been thrust into her grimy palm.

"It's three streets off, m'lady—Purple Alley, number ten, first floor. You're sure to find 'm there. 'E goes there every day to 'ave a look at a poor woman wots got a drunken 'usband and a rotten lung——"

"Thank you—thank you."

She left her informant standing open-mouthed on the doorstep, and hurried along the street indicated. She was not afraid, yet as she stood at last at the entrance of Purple Alley she hesitated. Dirt, squalor, misery she had seen, but nothing so utterly wretched as this narrow, sunless backwater. The tops of the dingy houses seemed almost to touch each other, and

the air was as fetid and stagnant as the untended gutters.

Enid went on. A few dirty children stared at her, and a woman seated on the steps of a gin shop called out a shrill, insulting epithet; but she reached No. 10 without further interference.

The door stood ajar, and she entered. From somewhere above the narrow, ill-lit stairs, she could hear men's voices and an occasional burst of rough, discordant laughter. She did not turn back. She was ashamed of the sudden fear which crept over her, and she began the ascent of the rickety stairs with beating heart and firmly compressed lips. The sound of the voices guided her, and at the closed door on the first landing she stopped and knocked. There was a moment's silence. Then a chair was pushed back. She could hear the sound of heavy, unsteady steps, and then, before her increasing fear could gain the mastery over her, the door was pulled wide open.

"Well, wot d'yer want?"

Against the pale, uncertain background of light, she saw a heavy, slouching figure, an ugly, bloated face which scowled down at her in suspicious question. The actuality of her danger gave her a momentary self-possession.

"I beg your pardon," she said quietly. "I came to see if I could find Doctor Otway. I understood that he was here."

The man stood aside.

"You come along in!" he said curtly.

There was no choice now but to obey. She entered. The low room was clouded by the fumes of vile tobacco, but the first glance showed her that the second man seated by the table was not the man she sought. She turned, mastered by a panic which was rising fast to the surface of her apparent calm.

"Doctor Otway is not here?" she said.

"No, 'e ain't 'ere; but 'e's 'ere often enough, curse 'im! Wot d'yer want with 'im?"

The man seated at the table rose and walked negligently toward the door. Enid saw the movement, and realized that she was cut off, but it was too late. Her only hope lay in her own courage.

"I came here because I understood Doctor Otway is attending a poor woman with consumption," she said steadily. "I meant to try and be of some assistance. As he is not here, I will come again."

"No, you don't! You can be of lots of assistance without your precious doctor. I'm the poor woman's husband. You 'and over wot you've brought. I'll take care of it."

She evaded his brutal, outstretched hand.

"Let me pass. I shall do nothing of the sort."

"All right, my fine lady. Bill, you go and keep the way clear. Now, then, 'and over—and if you squeal, by Gregory, I'll——"

A moment later the man in the overcoat who stood at the corner of Purple Alley heard a sound which aroused him instantly and completely from his apparent lethargy. Almost before the inhabitants realized his presence, he had reached the door of No. 10 and had dashed it open. There on the threshold he stopped short, as though the breath had suddenly been knocked out of him. The man guarding the foot of the stairs laughed.

"Now, then, jackanapes, wot are ye doing in other people's houses?"

"My wife is here," was the panting answer. "I have reason to believe that she is in danger. Out of my way!"

The laugh was repeated. Warren put up his hands in a wild attempt at self-defense, and the next instant he was flung headlong through the open door into the street, crashing onto the pavement with a violence which left him stunned and bleeding. The door was banged roughly to, and a little crowd of bystanders burst into a guffaw. Possibly Peter heard the sound; possibly his subconscious self, working through the darkness, roused him. He struggled to his knees, calling for help in a thin, cracked voice which produced a fresh outbreak of mockery from the

crowd. Then abruptly the little, jeering circle was burst asunder. A man from whom the roughest loafer seemed to shrink with sullen respect bent over Peter, and dragged him to his feet.

"What has happened? Who are you?"

Peter lifted his head, and for a second the two men stared at each other.

"Never mind who I am; for God's sake, help me! My wife is in that house."

Wilfred Otway made no answer. He let go his hold of the reeling man, and flung himself against the locked door. It yielded almost instantly, the worm-eaten wood rending and splitting to right and left; and before the sentinel on the other side could clear himself from the débris he had received a blow on the jaw which sent him full length along the narrow, ill-lit passage. Otway sprang up the stairs three steps at a time, and Warren followed slowly, clinging to the banisters.

At the top he found that that which he had tried to do was already accomplished. The assailant, whoever he was, was lying with his head in the fender, groaning feebly; and in the center of the room stood Otway, with one arm laid supportingly about Enid's shoulders. For a moment Peter de Warren stood silent on the threshold. There was a bruise on his cheek, which had already begun to discolor, and he looked curiously, pitifully inadequate. When he spoke, his voice shook.

"Is she safe? Is she hurt?" he asked.

"No, no; only frightened. Enid—Mrs. de Warren—your husband is here."

She looked up like a woman awakening from a dream, and in the same moment Otway drew back from her with a formal politeness.

"Peter?" she said. "You here?"

"Yes. I followed you." A dull flush mounted his white face. "I usually follow you. I felt it was not safe for you to go alone. But it seems my protection has been farcical—all along. This—this gentleman saved you."

Otway bowed slightly, his face hard and expressionless.

"Saved is rather a glorification of fact," he commented. "It's no hard task to settle a couple of these cowardly ruffians. Still, I am glad to have been of service. This region is not safe for ladies."

"I came here to find you—because I heard you needed help," Enid interrupted quickly.

"Ah? I am grateful. But I am afraid my work is beyond your help, Mrs. de Warren."

She uttered a little, gasping sound, as though he had struck her, and he turned quietly to her husband.

"I think you had better get away quickly, Mr. de Warren," he went on. "The people have a nasty temper, and when the two scoundrels are on their feet again there will be trouble. Your wife is quite well enough to move."

Peter looked at him with an increasing, troubled interest.

"Have we not met before?" he asked.

"Possibly. My name—Otway—may be familiar to you."

"Ah, yes, I remember," he winced. "It was at the hunt."

"Exactly—at the hunt."

Peter de Warren drew himself up, squaring his narrow shoulders.

"I am immensely grateful to you," he said. "You have been a true friend in need to my wife. I can't thank you properly now, but I hope you will give me an opportunity when you come to see us. My wife will be glad to see an old friend——"

Otway made a slight, deprecating gesture.

"I can scarcely lay claim to such a title. And, in any case, I never come westward."

"You will make an exception for us?"

"I am afraid it is not possible. And now may I suggest that you should make your departure? My friend there in the fender is coming round and will need my assistance."

"Is it safe for you to remain?"

A slow, ironical smile played round Otway's thin lips.

"It is scarcely ever safe in these parts. I am not afraid, if that is what you mean. Will you not go on ahead and clear the way?"

Warren held out his hand, but the other seemed to overlook the offer, and he went out onto the landing. Enid lingered for an instant. The color was coming back slowly to her cheeks, but her eyes were desperate.

"Come!" she begged. "There is our address—for my sake!"

He waved the card aside.

"I know your address. For your sake—I shall not come."

"Wilfred——"

"Mrs. de Warren, your husband is waiting."

She met his ironical self-possession with regained dignity.

"I have waited a year for the opportunity to speak to you," she said. "I must speak to you—I must! I have the right to ask as much of you."

He looked at her without the slightest change of expression.

"In that case, Mrs. de Warren, since you have the right, I will come."

He held the door open, and bowed her out onto the landing.

CHAPTER VI.

The conversation at Peter's dinner table had turned to criminology. A murderer had been pardoned on account of extenuating circumstances, and a banker on Mrs. de Warren's left had expressed himself gratified by the home secretary's decision.

"We are growing more humane," he said, sipping at his hock with critical satisfaction.

Wilfred Otway, on the other side of the table, looked up.

"You are quite satisfied that our humanity is really humane?" he asked quietly. It was almost the first time he had joined in a general conversation, and his vis-à-vis regarded him with a good-natured condescension.

"I scarcely understand you, doctor," he said. "A member of your profession must surely be always on the side of mercy."

"Mercy, yes—sentimentality, no. The deliberate conservation of a useless and even dangerous life does not appeal to me as humane."

The financier stared, aghast, and Peter leaned across from his end of the table.

"Then you approve—you would encourage capital punishment?" he asked.

"No; that is a waste of life."

There was a general, if scarcely perceptible, movement of impatience. Only Peter remained quietly, intensely absorbed.

"Doesn't that want explaining?"

"A doctor would understand me," was the curt answer. "To men of our profession, life, diseased and healthy, is of the utmost value. We have always been hampered by the belief that to experiment with it is to offend against its sacredness. I venture to say that were the great discoverers and investigators of our time allowed to test their experiments on half a dozen men who had proved themselves otherwise valueless to their fellow creatures, millions would be relieved of unthinkable suffering; the next generation would be relieved of a dozen scourges." He threw back his massive head, and a new light of enthusiasm flashed out of his deep-set eyes. "Let me suppose a case.

"In every hundred there is at least one man whom I will call an 'odd' life. Let me suppose further that a young doctor has made a discovery—say, in the matter of infectious diseases—which needs one dangerous, perhaps fatal, experiment before it can be perfected. Of what incalculable value would it be if the 'odd' life might be sacrificed in the cause of humanity!"

The banker emitted an angry exclamation:

"'Pon my word, what theories!"

"I don't think you would make a nice family doctor," commented his wife, with a playful shake of the finger.

A faint smile softened the rugged severity of Otway's face.

"You need have no fear. I am the last person to risk my neck by experimenting without permission. And with permission"—he laughed—"I do not

suppose there is a single man who realizes that he is either useless or an impediment, or who, having realized it, would sacrifice himself for the sake of others."

It was by the merest chance, perhaps, that his eyes fastened themselves on Peter's, and for an instant the two men remained motionless, as though paralyzed by the recognition of their antagonism. It was the angry financier who broke the silence.

"Pray, are *you* the great investigator?" he asked sarcastically. "Have *you* got a diphtheria serum up your sleeve?"

Otway did not look at him.

"I have," he said simply. "But an unproved discovery is worthless. I cannot experiment on myself, and I have not the wealth to buy myself a subject."

"Good heavens, sir! Do you mean that if you could buy a man to consent you would experiment with his existence?"

"Yes," was the deliberate answer. "For the sake of the other millions."

Enid Warren rose to her feet. She had grown deadly pale, and when she passed through the door which Otway held open for her she turned her head away from him as though to avoid his eyes. The banker gulped down a mouthful of wine.

"You doctors oughtn't to be allowed in society," he said. "Didn't you see how upset Mrs. de Warren was?"

"Perhaps my wife was moved—by a train of thought," said Peter de Warren, with his eyes on the tablecloth.

Half an hour later the three men entered the drawing-room. It seemed a mere chance that Mrs. de Warren was standing near the curtained doorway which led into her boudoir. It was with an apparently careless friendliness that she beckoned Otway to her side.

"I have some old memories to show you," she said, smiling, "old pictures. Would you care to see them?"

He bowed and followed her. In the daintily furnished room, with its pink-shaded lights, his tall figure in the threadbare evening dress looked out of place. His face, hard and defiant, was almost incongruous. She stood opposite him, the little table with the photos between, and looked at him with a tense eagerness, as though striving to satisfy some desperate hunger. He returned the gaze, but without a trace of softening in his set features.

"You ought to have spared me this," he said between his clenched teeth. "I came here because you claimed the right to see me. Your dinner was excellent, but I am not starving. Your friends are all that is delightful, but I am out of my element among them. As it is, I have disturbed the placid waters of their self-content. I suppose I have helped to feed your vanity. May I go?"

"Have you really the right to speak like that?" she said gravely.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I have the right to spare myself unnecessary suffering."

"I also." She held her head with a new courage. "I have suffered a year, and now I have the right to demand peace. I have the right to explain—to atone."

"What is there to explain?" he asked coldly. "Do you imagine that atonement is so easy?"

"Wait! Wilfred, we have only a few minutes together—perhaps for the last time; you must listen. A year ago you went away without a word. I wrote to you; you returned my letters unread."

He burst into a rough laugh.

"I'm sorry; I wasn't in the mood for feminine explanations, dainty prettinesses, varnished lies. It was for your father's sake, no doubt. I believe that is the correct excuse, is it not? Forgive me; I accept in advance everything you want to tell me, but I do not want to hear it. The matter is closed."

The tears rushed to her eyes, and for an instant she stretched out her hand with such silent pleading that he hesitated, looking at her with sullen, bitter eyes.

"Oh, Wilfred! Are men so forgetful? Is a year long enough to bring forgetfulness?"

"No, unluckily." The response broke from him against his will, and he clenched his fists in a movement of impotent resentment. "Why do you force all this from me? Is it a satisfaction to you to know that you put the finishing stroke to my misery—a misery that I can't shake off—that haunts me—paralyzes me? You have your husband, your wealth, your pleasure. You sold yourself for these things."

"Are you sure?"

"Or for your father's sake. What do I care? It was not for me."

"Are you sure?" He swung round, startled by the intensity of her question.

"I don't understand——"

"Hasn't it ever struck you I might have 'sold' myself for something greater—for the sake of something dearer to you than even I was?"

"Enid, before Heaven, I loved no one but you—I love no one but you!"

"Not even your work?"

He started back a step like a man who has been blinded by a sudden flash of light.

"My work? Yes, my work stands above every earthly consideration. Yes, that's true; it must do if I am to succeed."

"And do you imagine I did not think of that when the great choice was put before me?"

"Enid!"

"Don't you think that I realized all my refusal—my acceptance—meant to you?" she went on passionately. "If I refused, you might after many years have won a wife who would have hung like a millstone about your neck. If I accepted, I made it possible to make good, to help you to your end. There!" She took a sealed packet from the table, and laid it before him. "That is mine to give you; that is the price for which I 'sold' myself; that is what I have saved from the pleasures which you think I hold so dear. Take it—if, indeed, your work is above all earthly consideration."

"Enid, I can't! Do you think I have no—self-respect?"

"If you refuse, then you love your pride more than you loved me—or your duty."

He stood silent, the sealed package in his hand, his brows knitted with the violence of the conflict, and she went on with a regained calm:

"Not even your pride need feel offended. The world knows that I have dedicated myself to the cause of suffering. There are half a dozen research funds which are more to me than I need tell you. If I help you I help my fellow creatures through you. I shall tell my husband to-night of what I have done."

He drew a deep, shuddering sigh, as though relieved from some frightful inward suspense.

"You are right," he said slowly. "I must accept. Neither your feelings or mine must weigh in the balance. With —this—I should have opportunities—which I have waited for—of immeasurable value—at one bound, perhaps." He spoke like a man calculating to himself aloud. He was even smiling a little, a tight-lipped smile of a soldier who sees victory after long battle; and the woman beside him was forgotten. Suddenly, by the merest chance, his roving eyes encountered her face, and in an instant he was at her side, grasping her wrist with a reckless passion. "Enid, do you think I am satisfied? Do you think I am going my way—even to my work—without you? Do you think I don't see what you've paid? Make your gift complete! What is he to you—a poor, puny coward?"

She wrenched herself free. A wave of hot color brought the ebbing life back to her cheeks.

"He is my husband!" she said clearly. "And that is his money. Don't you understand? If I were disloyal I couldn't do it. It is only because it is all over between us that I have the right." Her voice broke, and she stretched out her hand with a little, unsteady smile. "Oh, Wilfred, don't take the consolation from me that I have helped you. Go away—forget me —fulfill your destiny. That will be happiness enough for us both."

He shook his head.

"Not for me. I'll go ahead, because I'm not the sort that lets themselves be stamped out; but I've been cheated of the one happiness that made my life worth while to myself, and, by God, if ever I find the man who has made us suffer——"

He stopped short, and as she saw his drawn, gray face, her own hardened.

"If it was, indeed, done purposely, then even I would not spare him," she said.

And it was at that moment that Peter pushed aside the curtains.

"Enid——" he began, and then stood still, looking from one to the other.

They, too, looked at him in that tense moment of suppressed emotion with a conscious antagonism touched with contempt. He seemed to feel it. The smile died from his small face.

"Won't you come and sing to us a little?" he asked mechanically.

She laughed, and the sound rang ugly in the heavy quiet.

"Of course I will sing—as much as ever you like," she said, and led the way. The two men followed her in silence.

CHAPTER VII.

Mr. Mortimer de Warren closed the door upon his last visitor with a click that sounded curiously final. It was as though he had set his heel on some noisome insect, and had ground it to death without passion, but with the deliberate intention of clearing an objectionable object from his path. When he went back to his desk and touched the electric bell, his manner expressed a cold, satisfied repose.

"Tell Mr. Peter I am disengaged," he said to the clerk who answered his summons. "I should be glad if he would see me here."

The clerk obeyed with the alacrity of fear. Fear was undoubtedly the strongest ingredient in the feelings which Mr. Mortimer de Warren's employees felt for him. They believed him to be without feeling of any sort, and certainly if he had a "weak spot" no one had succeeded in finding it. They stared after "Mr. Peter" as at a man entering upon a known and dangerous adventure.

"Well, my boy, what can I do for you?"

Peter de Warren took his father's outstretched hand and pressed it, then sank down in the leather chair on the opposite side of the table. For a moment he was silent, drawing off his gloves with the careful deliberation of a man who is trying to gain time; and the old financier watched him, his own expression undergoing a subtle, unnamable change. It could not be said to have softened, but undoubtedly something unusual was at work behind the high, deeply lined forehead. His small, deep-set eyes were ironically amused, and when he broke the silence again his voice sounded less rasping:

"You don't often pay me city visits, Peter. Although I feel deeply honored, I have an inkling that trouble of some sort is the cause. That so?"

The younger man looked up from his grave contemplation of the linoleum flooring.

"I want your assistance, sir, though it's not exactly trouble."

"Money?"

"Yes."

"How much?" Mortimer de Warren reached for his check book. Nothing in his manner betrayed the slightest annoyance or displeasure; on the contrary, the tight mouth had relaxed into a smile as he sat waiting, pen in hand. "How much?" he repeated.

"That depends on you, sir."

"Is it as bad as that, then?"

"I ought to explain; it's not for myself."

"For Enid?"

He brought out the name awkwardly, seeming to struggle with some discomfort, and Peter nodded.

"Yes—at least, partly. I wonder, sir, if you remember a man you had in your office some years back—a certain Jacob Otway?"

"Yes, I remember him. He was my chief accountant."

Mr. de Warren laid down his pen, and settled himself more comfortably

in his chair. His face had resumed the normal lines of blank imperturbability. "What about him? Is he a friend of yours?"

"No. I have never set eyes on him. But his son—is an old friend of my wife's."

"Of Enid's? Ah!"

Mr. Mortimer de Warren's tone was gently surprised. It suggested that his brain was only partially engaged in the topic of conversation, and Peter laid a thin, nervous hand on the table with a movement that demanded attention. So much determination was new in him, and the financier glanced at him with an uneasy flicker of the eyelids. "Who is this son?" he asked.

"A doctor—a young fellow—awfully clever. He believes himself on the verge of some discovery or other—'pon my word, I don't know what of—never could understand diseases—but he is handicapped. No money, you know, sir; and it seems poor doctors get pretty well shelved." His fair, scarcely discernible eyebrows contracted a moment. "Enid and I were both rather interested. We'd like to give him a leg up."

"Enid is a first-class philanthropist," Mortimer de Warren observed, with a less pleasant smile.

"Yes, isn't she? She is good—the kindest-hearted woman in the world." His voice rang with a young enthusiasm not altogether in accordance with his tired, troubled face. "Naturally she wants to help an old friend. Besides, I'm in his debt. He got her out of an ugly business with an East End tough the other day, and I'm immensely grateful. He did what I would have done if I wasn't such a puny sort, and it would do me good to pay back. And it would please Enid."

Warren got up roughly.

"You're a fool, Peter!"

"Why, sir?"

"Because—good heavens, don't you see——" He stopped short, thrusting his hands savagely into his pockets. "It seems to me you're both wasting your generosity," he went on, with a sudden change of tone. "Old Otway left the office with a good pat of money, as far as I know."

"He lost it, though. He wanted to invest, and got badly stung for his pains. Some blackguard or other let him in with a rotten mining company, and he went smash just as his son was starting on his career. Hard luck, wasn't it?"

Warren made no answer. He went over to the window, and stood drumming his square fingers against the pane.

"You're pretty free with your 'blackguards,'" he said, with a short laugh. "Who was this particular species?"

"No one knows, sir. Old Otway had a stroke, and hasn't been able to speak or move for a year. I wondered if you knew anything."

Warren swung round.

"I! Do you think I have anything to do with rotten mining companies?"

His tone was violent, and with something more than indignation—a sharp, poignant anxiety. Peter looked at him. He might have seen the strong man's weakness—the passionate hunger for his son's respect—but he got no further than the outward show of indignation, and his own face expressed a quiet admiration.

"No, sir, of course not. I know you've got the cleanest hands in the city. But Ashley went smash at the same ties over the same thing, and you—well, you've had an eye into my father-in-law's business."

Warren drew a stifled sigh of relief.

"Why don't you ask him yourself?"

"He won't say. He's as mum as the grave."

"He has his reasons." Warren came back to his table. "Peter, I don't feel like helping in this particular philanthropical work. If you want me to endow a cats' home, I'll do it; but leave Otway out. And if you take my advice, you'll keep him out—well, out of your home."

"Why, sir? He is Enid's friend."

"Yes. Enid's friend—exactly."

"Sir!" Peter bounded to his feet, his slight, elastic frame drawn taut with a

passion that seemed to magnify his height.

"Sir!"

"Enid and this fellow were engaged once," Warren interrupted incisively. "Didn't you know that?"

Peter said nothing for a minute. He stood rigid, his hand gripping the edge of the heavy table, his face white and haggard.

"Yes, I know," he said slowly, disjointedly. "Of course I know. Enid told me."

"Quite sure?"

He met the merciless scrutiny with a new resolution.

"And even if she hadn't—I trust my wife."

"By all means." Warren tossed his check book on one side. "But that's no reason why we should help her—former lover."

A wincing, painful silence.

"Yes, just because of that, I want to help him."

"You—are you mad, Peter?"

"No. If she cares—cared—I'm bound to help. It's the only thing I can do—the only decent thing. I've got to make good somehow."

"Peter!"

Warren saw something that he had seen often enough in that selfsame office—a man breaking down utterly beneath a crushing burden of long-stifled grief. The sight had never moved him. This was different. These bowed, shaking shoulders, these rough-drawn, smothered sobs—these were different. This was his son. And suddenly the man's weak spot revealed itself, the invulnerable armor failed before the weakness of another. He bent over the table; he took the frail hand between his two palms, and held it in a trembling clasp.

"Peter, dear fellow, for God's sake, don't! What's the matter? Haven't you got everything I can give you? Money, the woman you wanted?"

Peter lifted his head. There was a miserable laughter in the red-rimmed eyes.

"You've been awfully good, sir—awfully decent to me. But there are things you couldn't do; you couldn't make people care for me, and that's what matters."

"You mean that Enid—your wife doesn't——"

"Yes, that's it. It can't be helped."

Warren straightened his heavy shoulders.

"It must be helped! Women are queer. They grow into things without knowing it. She'll get to care in time. You'll knock that Otway out of the running. You must take her away, travel, give her anything she wants. There—if you want money——"

"Father, money won't help." It sounded as though he were speaking through clenched teeth, and his face was twisted. "She has seen me afraid."

Warren shook his head, utterly nonplused.

"Afraid? Of what?"

"Of a six-foot wall—for my own neck. You don't understand how that sort of thing counts with women like Enid. A crime they'd forgive; but cowardice never." He got up, instinctively trying to smooth out an imaginary crease on his coat. "We come of different stock, she and I," he explained simply. "Things come naturally to her which I funk. At first I hoped that it would turn out as you hope, but it isn't possible. I'm a mean, poor thing compared to—to the man she ought to have married, and if I could set her free I would. But I can't. All I can do is to make good."

He stopped, and looked steadily at his father. Mr. de Warren, who had been pacing about the room, his face red with trouble, broke out into a miserable laugh.

"It seems I've messed things pretty thoroughly for you, Peter," he said. "I've spent my life getting things that don't matter in order that my son should get the things that do. But I've made a failure of the job. Well, you shall have your way, Peter. I'll set this Otway up in Harley Street. I'll make good. Confound it! If I can't make you happy——" He broke off,

scowling bitterly, and Peter held out his hand.

"Don't worry about that, sir. You've been the finest father a fellow could have. It's not your fault that you haven't more—more of a man for a son."

"Hm! I don't know; I fancy I'd funk a six-foot wall myself. 'Sins of the father'—well, you have my promise."

"Thank you, sir."

"But take care."

"Of what?"

"Of that Otway—and—you know."

Peter drew himself up stiffly.

"I have perfect confidence in my wife," he said.

Mr. Mortimer did not laugh until the door closed on his son, and even then the laugh was not particularly mirthful.

CHAPTER VIII.

Enid came into her husband's study with a soft, mysterious rustle of silk and chiffon which roused him where the more noisy entrance of the butler had passed unheeded. He had been seated by the fire, apparently absorbed in the soundless movements of the reflections; but he got up instantly, and stood with his back to the light, looking at her. The faint glow was on her face, on her hair, and on the pale, indefinable beauty of her dress, whose folds had found their source of grace in the perfect lines of her figure. She, too, seemed to be caught in a sudden net of embarrassment, the white, almost frightened admiration depicted in his attitude taking her by surprise, for she did not move, and for a full minute did not speak. It was Peter who broke the silence.

"Are you going out?" he asked.

"Yes; it is the Edlingers' reception. I came to say good night."

"That was good of you." His hands were behind his back, clenched so that the knuckles stood out like polished ivory, and his face was woodenly expressionless. "Will you be late?"

"I don't know. There is something I want to say to you before I go. May I?"

"Of course. What is it? Won't you sit down?"

"No, no. What I have to say is quickly said. It's about that—that money for Doctor Otway."

"The two hundred pounds? Isn't it enough for the present?"

"It's not that." She was playing restlessly with her gloves, her eyes on the firelight, and her sentences came out in quick, broken breaths. "It's on my conscience, Peter. I haven't been fair to you. I have a feeling that I have deceived you. I ought to have explained something."

He held out his hand in protest.

"You don't owe me any explanation."

"Yes. You may not want it, but I must give it. I told you that I gave the money to Doctor Otway for his discovery. It's true—but he was my friend."

Peter nodded a grave assent.

"It's quite natural that one should want to help a friend."

"Peter, that's not it. He was once more than a friend. Once we were to have been married."

She looked at him with the old haughty defiance, and he looked back at her, the eyes under the fair lashes peculiarly steady.

"I know," he said.

"Since when?"

"Since yesterday."

She flushed, the color rising in a rich flood to the roots of her fair hair.

"I am sorry. I should have preferred to tell you myself."

"Why? It is of no consequence. I gave my informant to understand that I knew already. As a matter of fact, I was sure you would tell me when the matter occurred to you." He paused a moment, his gaze turned placidly to the firelight. "By the way," he went on, "it seems a shame to spoil the ship for the proverbial pennyworth; two hundred pounds won't help Doctor Otway far. He must have influence to get attention paid to him, and influence is expensive. I spoke to my father

about it yesterday. I think between us we shall get Otway going in fine style."

She caught her breath. A white, slender hand was outstretched as though to touch him, but he did not see it, and it was withdrawn.

"You are going to do all that?"

"Yes. Why not? It is a privilege to help genius."

"Hasn't it struck you—I mean—doesn't it occur to you that you are doing something dangerous? Are you so sure of me? After all that has once been——" She stopped, crimson with an anger which he did not understand.

"Yes, I know what you mean. One can't root things out of one's life so easily. It hurts me that you should suffer through my fault. But I am not in the least afraid."

It sounded very simple, very matter of fact, almost indifferent. She gave a little, light, unsteady laugh.

"How reasonable. I was afraid—another man might——"

"Have been jealous. Another man might have had the right. I have not. I am your friend. I hope you can consider me as such?"

"Easily." She laughed again. Her manner had become careless to the point of frivolity. "You are most generous, most kind, most sensible. I am glad we understand each other so well. Good night."

"Good night."

He held the door open for her, and then went back to the fireside, his face distorted with suppressed pain.

Twenty minutes later the De Warrens' carriage drew up outside the brightly lit house in a fashionable West End square. Enid slipped out and ran up the crowded steps. Halfway a man caught her by the arm. She stopped with a little scream, which, in the bustle of arrivals, passed unheard. The light pouring down from the open hall door fell on his face.

"Wilfred!" she exclaimed. "How can you be so mad—so—you must let me go——"

"Wait! I know I am mad, but I couldn't help it. I had to see you. I knew you would be here to-night, and if it was only for a minute——"

"Remember——"

"I can remember nothing except that I love you. I used to think I hated you, but since I know that you were loyal I know that it was love gone mad with pain. I can't rest. Even the hope for my work can't help me. I must hear that you still care—from your own lips."

"Hush! Please, for pity's sake——"

"For pity's sake—or for your husband's sake?"

She hesitated, and for an instant her troubled eyes wandered from his face. Then she smiled bitterly, contemptuously.

"Oh, no, I am not thinking of him. He is quite indifferent. I do not think he would care. No, no; it's for myself."

"Then you love yourself more than anybody, more than me?"

"No, no! It's for both our sakes. We can't be dishonest; we can't cheat people who have kept faith with us, who trust us——"

"Enid, you still care? I shall never give you up if——"

A new batch of arrivals swept them apart. Otway fell back into the shadow, waiting until she had disappeared. Then he strode away, keeping to the gloomy little by-streets as though instinctively shrinking from the gay movement of the bigger thoroughfares. It was a long way from the fashionable square to the gray misery of his own home, but he walked quickly, scarcely conscious of time or distance.

At the door he paused, taken by surprise. A carriage and pair waited at the curb, and carriages and pairs were about as rare in that region as paid doctor's bills. Otway ran up the dirty stone steps and let himself in. A light burned in his father's room, and he heard the sound of a man's voice which rolled on in unchecked volubility. Otway pushed the door open and entered.

The scene was familiar enough to him. The lamp on the table, the part darkness which mercifully hid all the drab poverty of the furniture, the couch

with its motionless, tragic burden—all this he knew as though it were part of himself. But the man standing at the empty fire grate was a stranger to him. As Otway hesitated on the threshold, his eyes, drawn by some invisible power, moved from the visitor's massive figure to his father's face. Nothing outwardly had changed. Old Otway lay there as he had lain there for a year, without sound or movement, dead save for the eyes with their persistent, terrible appeal.

And yet to-night Otway was conscious that a change had none the less taken place. It was in the atmosphere—a tension, a quivering strain, as though somewhere an invisible, soundless struggle was being fought out. Otway glanced involuntarily around him, seeking the intangible in the shadows, and once more encountered the stranger's gaze. The man advanced into the circle of light, and there was a flash of a diamond as he held out his hand.

"I'm afraid I must seem an intruder," he said smoothly. "But for his unfortunate condition, your father would be able to explain well enough. Perhaps you have heard my name—De Warren—Mortimer de Warren."

Otway touched the extended fingers.

"I know the name," he said, and it sounded as though each word was being jerked out by force. "My father was your partner at one time."

"Partner! Well, not that exactly, but a valuable assistant." De Warren bent down and patted the piteous heap of helplessness on the shoulder. "Eh, Otway? Well, sir, I've just been having a little talk with your father—rather a one-sided affair unfortunately, but I've been airing a few suggestions, and I'm glad you've come to represent your father's opinion. Can you spare me a few minutes?"

"By all means." Otway indicated a chair, but the visitor declined with a friendly movement.

"No—really—I am a business man, and my few minutes are the genuine article. To be brief, I have come to see if something can't be done for my old friend here—and for you, his son."

Otway started. The expression that flashed over his face was nameless—a swift indication of some upheaval—anger, or perhaps hope.

"You are very kind, but my father needs nothing, and I——"

"You are a young man awaiting his opportunity," De Warren interrupted cordially. "I have heard about you through my son Peter. You know him?"

"Yes." The monosyllable sounded like the rasp of steel against steel. De Warren nodded.

"It was he who informed me of your father's condition. I had no idea; otherwise I should have been at hand before now. An old friend—one doesn't desert an old friend like that." His voice sounded cordial, but in the brief silence that followed there was again that tension, that sense of some appalling human struggle, masked by darkness. "In a word, I want to come to the rescue," De Warren went on. "No, don't, please don't interrupt. It's not a favor I am offering. When you are a big gun, as I have no doubt you will be, you can pay me back. At present you must be generous enough to accept my offer." He took out an envelope from his pocket, and laid it on the table. "I am not a medical man, and you must know your own requirements best. At the same time, I suggest a change of quarters. You will find my check large enough to cover all present needs—even to a West End house. Later on we will talk together again. You know my address." He took up his hat. "Do me the kindness to make no protests. I am wealthy enough to afford myself the pleasure of giving ability a helping hand."

Otway had drawn the check from the cover. He looked up now. His usually tightly closed lips were parted as though he were breathing heavily; his forehead was damp with the same nameless conflict of desire and protest. The protest died.

"You do this for—my father's sake?"

"Certainly. For whom else? There is gratitude even in business, eh, old

friend?" Again the affable, familiar tap on the powerless hand. "Good night. Next time we see each other let it be in Harley Street."

He was gone, and Otway did not accompany him. For a brief flash he had seen his father's face, and for a moment as brief it held him in a grip of intangible fear. It was as though he had seen its full horror for the first time. The cavernous features were those of death; expressionless, they yet expressed something—something that Otway could not fathom; they framed the blazing eyes in a ghastly whiteness that was yet terribly, quiveringly alive.

He shut it out, turning away to the mantelpiece, the check held out before him like a vision of a desired future. There was a faded amateur photograph of a woman on the shelf; he pushed it aside with his elbow, and stared from the slip of significant paper to the line of torn and tattered books—the remnants of his student's days, the first steps which he had cut for himself in the great climb upward. He no longer needed them. He crossed the room and unlocked a cupboard, took out a phial, and held the colorless body to the light.

"Who knows, father?" he said. "For money many things can be bought. One test, one experiment, one proof, and then——"

He did not finish the sentence. He put the phial back in its place, laughing quietly, and, as though the laugh snapped a paralyzing spell, releasing the contending invisible forces, there was a sudden movement in the silent room, the sound of a body being dragged upward, of a pillow violently flung aside.

Otway started round. The change was now real, absolute. The stricken, awful figure sat upright. Like some ghastly, galvanized image of death, it pointed at him, its shaking, bloodless lips forming words which had as yet no sound. Otway sprang across the intervening space. The outstretched hand gripped and held him. The fleshless fingers drove themselves into his flesh with the strength of despair.

"Father, what is it?"

The opposing forces closed for the last time. There was a last silent bout between soul and body. Then Jacob Otway spoke, his foam-flecked lips molding the words with desperate clearness:

"He has bought you, Wilfred—bought you! He ruined me and you—in cold blood—to please himself—to get you out of his son's way—yes, he told me—Peter was to marry her. I have been trying to tell you for a year; I tried to-night when he was telling his smooth tale, and I prayed God that I might be given the strength—to save you—but he has bought you—and now he laughs—he has won—and you promised——"

He fell back. His voice had risen scarcely above a whisper, but each word had been poignantly clear—clear enough. Wilfred Otway rose from his knees. He stood staring down at his father. The resemblance between them at that moment was almost grotesque.

"I promised," he said. "It didn't need a promise. You don't need to be afraid. I'm not to be bought. I've lost one thing that can't be paid for. But I'm going to win—in my own way." He bent down. "Just take that to your comfort. An hour ago I couldn't have won. Never mind. I can now. And I'll make him suffer as you suffered—as I suffer."

He took up the check, which had fallen to the floor, smoothed it out, and placed it back in the envelope. Then, without another glance at the prostrate figure, he went out, closing the door sharply after him.

CHAPTER IX.

The reception was over. With closed, aching eyes, Enid lay back in the corner of her carriage, and gave herself up to the mingled pain and relief of solitude. For the first time since that short, momentous meeting on the steps, she was alone. And yet not altogether alone. "I shall never give you up." The words made a torturing accompaniment to her thoughts, driving them back to the memory of a white face full of reckless resolution. They

wove themselves about her, closing her in, stifling her with a sense of her weakness and their strength.

How strong he was! Her imagination played dangerously with a hundred little incidents of the past when that strength was her pride and her glory. Strength, courage, genius—he had all three—things that she loved, virtues which had drawn her to him at their first meeting, and which now—— She dared not think. She let down the carriage window, and the cold night air blew against her feverish forehead. Temptation, delirious, conscienceless, raised its lovely serpent's head out of the tumult and took voice:

"Why ruin his life and yours? He wants you; no one else wants you; no one else wants you. Life is so short." She tried to argue. "One can't cheat those who trust one. Peter trusts me."

And again and again came the relentless answer: "What is Peter to you? Peter doesn't care."

The carriage came to a standstill, and with a sigh of relief she passed into the warmth and light of her home. Before the door closed she glanced back over her shoulder. To her excited imagination, there was some one waiting for her out there in the shadow, calling insistently. Instead, it was the emotionless, level voice of the butler that recalled her to herself:

"If you please, ma'am, the master asked if you would come into the library a moment. Mr. Ashley and Mr. de Warren are there."

She nodded. Her father's irregular visits were frequent enough to cause her no surprise, but her father-in-law came seldom, and in some strange way she dreaded him. As she entered the warmly lit room, all three men rose to their feet. Mr. Ashley came with slow, unsteady step toward her, and kissed her. His cheerful, vacant smile stung her with its content, its placid acceptance of a state which was goading her to madness. She scarcely heeded his paternal Old World compliment, but when Peter's father took her hand she started back to full consciousness of the present.

"Surprised to see me so late, eh?" The big, heavy face seemed threateningly near. "I'll warrant you have no idea what I have been doing this evening?"

Enid shook her head. Involuntarily she glanced at Peter. Of the three, he was the only one who had not greeted her, and now he stood with his back half turned, and stared into the fire. His attitude filled her with a new, reasonless irritation against him.

"I have no idea," she said carelessly. "Looking after Peter, I expect."

Her husband shifted his position uneasily, and Mr. de Warren laughed.

"Not this time. Can you fancy me as General Benefactor to the Needy and Deserving? I have been distributing my worldly goods, and a friend of yours has come in for a portion. I thought you would be pleased, and came round for my meed of thanks." He still held her hand, and his eyes never released her. She felt that his words covered a deeper meaning. "I hope you are pleased?" he added slowly.

"Up to the present, I do not even know to what friend you refer," she retorted.

"What! Have you so many 'deserving' on your list?" He laughed again. "Well, it's the doctor this time. Peter told me about him, and I've just been and set him up in Harley Street. A very fine fellow. I have no doubt he will prove himself worthy of your—interest and my money."

Mr. Ashley rubbed his delicate, aristocratic hands together.

"You're generosity itself, De Warren," he said. "Generosity itself."

Something in the words rang apologetic, almost servile.

Enid released her hand with a movement of pain, and as she looked from one man to the other she understood. She understood that she was bound hand and foot, and by something more than duty. They had loaded her with services and gifts—cunningly, perhaps; at any rate, effectually; and nothing could ever set her free.

"I am very grateful," she said quiet-

ly. "I am sure your generosity will always find its reward."

She looked him in the face as she spoke, and De Warren nodded as though in acknowledgment of some secret treaty.

"Glad to hear you say so, Enid. It's a pleasure to be able to help any old friend of yours. By the way, I've been talking to Peter about your future plans. Wouldn't you like to be out of England for a bit? I'll be bound you like traveling. What do you say to a few months abroad—Egypt, or farther still? You're both too young to settle down. What do you say?"

She laughed a little. She knew now that this man had been Peter's informant, and that he was bargaining with her—unnecessarily and clumsily, but with a sure business instinct for a good exchange.

"There is nothing I should like better."

"There, Peter, didn't I tell you?"

His son looked up, white and quiet.

"It's not for my sake, Enid?"

"Oh, no! I wish it."

She turned away. Now that the pursuing temptation had been bravely outdistanced, she knew how great it had been. She had seen Wilfred for the last time. He would go his way, and she hers—with Peter—Peter, the insignificant. From a long way, she heard De Warren talking. His voice sounded loud and domineering:

"You should get out more, my dear Ashley. You must permit me to lend you my car for a month or two."

Somewhere downstairs a bell rang. It was no unusual sound, but De Warren, for some reason, left his sentence unfinished, and there was a sudden silence.

"If you please, sir, a gentleman to see Mr. de Warren."

Mortimer de Warren threw back his head.

"At this time of night?"

"If you please, sir, he said it was urgent."

"Tell him——"

The servant was pushed quietly to one side. Enid, turning, knew whom she would see standing on the threshold. Her instinct had rushed to meet him, and now she waited, wordless, motionless, for what was to come. Neither De Warren nor Peter moved. Otway, closing the door on the astonished servant, came to the table in the center of the room.

"I've brought back your check, Mr. de Warren," he said.

There was again silence. Enid drew a step nearer, but Otway did not look at her. He was looking at Mortimer de Warren with a merciless directness.

"You seem surprised," he went on. "It isn't usual to return properly indorsed checks for one thousand pounds. It may interest you to know that my father recovered his speech five minutes after you left the house."

Mortimer de Warren made an uneasy gesture.

"A matter of congratulation surely," he began.

"You think so? For a year I have been tracing the circumstances of my father's ruin. Now I know them. You ruined my father—intentionally and deliberately. I stood in your way—in your son's way. I know something of your business methods, and it is easy to understand that you were not to be thwarted by ordinary codes of decency. You ruined Mr. Ashley, too, no doubt, and no doubt bribed him to silence. You ruined my father, and left him stranded when the crash came. You had got what you wanted. I was cleared out of the way; your son had only to go in and offer his price, and take what he wanted." For the first time he looked at Enid, and from that moment his eyes did not leave her white, stricken face. "There is your check, Mr. de Warren. Take it. You have got what you want. It isn't necessary to bribe your conscience, and my gratitude is not so easily bought. Good night."

He had spoken so swiftly, so violently that there had been no interruption. From the door he looked at Enid again.

"We can't cheat people who keep

faith with us," he said significantly. "You know now who has kept faith."

And with that he left them. Enid was the first to break the silence. She came into the middle of the room, standing where Otway had stood.

"Is it true?" she asked.

De Warren heaved up his shoulders.

"It's a ridiculous lie——" But his face was colorless, and his eyes wandered to his son with the look of a man seeking quarter. "A lie!" he repeated doggedly.

"Father, at least you will tell me the truth."

But Mr. Ashley buried his face in his shaking hands, and made no answer.

Enid turned and went slowly to the door. She walked mechanically, scarcely knowing what she did, and it was only when he called her by name that she knew Peter had followed her. She lifted her eyes to his face. Even in that moment she wondered at the violence of her own hatred.

"Peter, the insignificant—Peter, the coward—Peter, the cheat!" she said. And passed out.

CHAPTER X.

Doctor Otway closed the door on his last patient. The little maid of all work, who lingered in the passage, looked at him with wide-open eyes. He did not usually accompany his patients on their departure, and his manner was strangely elated. And, being a maid of all work, she wondered.

"Remember what I told you," he said abruptly as he opened the door to his father's sitting room. "I am not at home to any one except the lady I have described to you. Show her direct into my consulting room."

"Yes, doctor."

The door closed sharply. Old Jacob Otway, who lay inert and apparently indifferent on his couch by the fireside, turned his head in his son's direction.

"Well?" he said.

It was almost the first word he had spoken since that sudden violent outbreak on the night before. Doctor Otway came and stood by his side, looking down into the wizened face with a somber, critical interest.

"She has not come yet," he said, "but she will come. I am sure of that. I know her. There will be a struggle, but she will come."

"And then?"

The dim eyes flared up with a momentary cruel anticipation. Doctor Otway smiled.

"Then we shall both have what we want," he said significantly.

"You say so. I do not understand."

"Think a little. Mortimer de Warren has a son whom he loves, and that son loves a woman who is coming here to-night. Doesn't that suggest anything to you?"

"Yes, yes! But why should she come? Peter is rich, and you——"

Otway laughed.

"You don't understand women, father. Women have their own moral code, which is higher in their eyes than money and all the laws in the world. Yesterday she would not have come; to-day she will." The doorbell jangled faintly. Otway went to the door of his consulting room. "You see!" he said. "I am right. Are you satisfied?"

"Yes, quite satisfied." The grin that distorted the once meek and kindly face was terrible in its ruthless triumph. "Quite satisfied. Wilfred, what will you do?"

There was no answer. The door between them closed, and in the silence of the drab consulting room Enid and Otway faced each other. He had drawn back as though in painful surprise, and she came toward him, her hands outstretched in wild pleading, her lovely face pale with grief and despair.

"I had to come," she breathed. "All to-day I have been fighting it out, but in the end you won. You had to win after last night. Until then I could not have done it. I couldn't have betrayed any one who was honest and just and true as—as I thought he was. But now——"

"Now?" he echoed as she broke off.

He had taken her hands, and was

drawing her nearer. His eyes shone with the knowledge of victory.

"Now it is all over. Last night, when I understood that you and I had been cheated wilfully, cruelly; that those three men—Peter, his father, my father—had just bought and sold your happiness—and mine—then I could not bear it any longer. I can't live with the man I despise like that."

"You despised him before," he interrupted sharply.

"Yes, but not like that." She passed her hand over her forehead with a movement of utter horror. "Wilfred, I have run away. Whatever happens, I can't go on with that old life, knowing what I know."

He was very close to her now; her fair, disordered hair brushed against his shoulder; she could feel his breath on her face.

"You shan't. You don't need to. You are a brave woman. You stand high above the ordinary worldly scruples. Despise them. Come with me! We will go abroad together and start life afresh. I have money enough for the start. Will you trust me?"

She drew back a little, staring at him with dazed, uncomprehending eyes.

"Trust you? I have no one else. But your work—your discovery?"

He laughed harshly.

"Never mind that. That's all over, anyhow. Come! You, too, are all I have left."

Yet even as he caught her, half resisting, half fainting, in his arms, there was the sound of an eager knocking at the door, and she drew away from him, an exclamation of fear on her lips.

"What is it?"

"Nothing—the servant. Wait a moment."

He crossed the room, placing himself between her and the door, which he half opened.

"What do you want?" he demanded angrily.

"Please, doctor, a gentleman is out there. He says it's urgent. He must see you."

"Did he give his name?"

"Yes, doctor. Mr. Peter de Warren, he said."

There was a moment's blank silence. Otway looked back over his shoulder at the woman behind him. She was swaying uncertainly, and the deadly whiteness of her face warned him. He came back quickly to her side.

"Go into the next room. My father is there, but he won't bother you. Don't be afraid. It is better we should get it over now. He need not know you are here."

She obeyed him without resistance, almost without consciousness. Only when the door had been softly closed did panic break over her. The old man, lying in an uneasy sleep by the fire, looked spectral in the half darkness; his low, irregular breathing sounded unnatural, terrifying; and now and again he chuckled to himself, as though over some secret satisfaction.

Enid, crouching against the door, listened in helpless fascination until another sound aroused her. It was Peter's voice. She heard it distinctly, although it was in no way raised; and the quiet, steady accents filled her with a new fear. Of what? For whom? For Peter? She knew that Wilfred was passionate, reckless, and strong. He hated Peter with a justifiable hatred. And Peter was insignificant, weak.

She remembered vividly the great, bulky ruffian lying unconscious in the garret where Otway had rescued her. And the fear became definite. Whether it was for Peter or Otway she did not know.

Very softly she turned the handle of the door. There was a curtain on the other side, which hid her, while to her every detail in the scene was visible. The lamp had been lighted. Otway stood in the shadow, his elbows propped on the mantelshelf, his massive head thrown back, in an attitude of insolent attention. In the circle of light she saw her husband.

No greater, more dramatic contrast could have been imagined than between these two men—the one rugged, powerful, truculent; the other slight, delicate, almost foppish. Enid was conscious of

a mad, hysterical desire to laugh as she saw the white carnation in the buttonhole of the inimitably cut frock coat. It was so like Peter—ineffectually dainty to the last. But as she saw his face the desire to laugh died. He had been speaking, and now appeared to await an answer. It came in an easy, contemptuous drawl.

"You say you have an explanation to offer for this unexpected visit," Otway said. "I should be glad to hear it as quickly as possible. My time is precious."

"I am in your debt," said Peter simply.

"Are you referring to last night? Have you come to offer me another check?"

"No."

There was something in the monosyllable, in the whole attitude of the visitor, which seemed to catch Otway's closer attention. He drew nearer, folding his arms.

"Well?"

"I have come to pay my debt."

"I am afraid I do not understand."

Peter bent his head; he began playing with the fringe of the tablecloth with the nervous restlessness which Enid knew so well.

"I think I can explain. I am in your debt. I owe you more than money. You were checked in the beginning of your career, and you lost the woman whom you loved and who loved you. I do not know or care whether you believe me when I say that I was innocent of the misguided plan for my—happiness. The point is immaterial. I hold myself responsible. I propose to make good."

"That is impossible."

"I think not, and I think I understand you, Doctor Otway. You are ambitious, and you love strongly. You have been thwarted in both directions. I can give you back one or two of the things that you have lost."

Otway laughed roughly.

"Indeed?"

"Please listen to me. I will be brief and frank. You said once that among a hundred men there was always one whom you called an 'odd life.' You meant by that a useless life, a life that stood in the way of others, in itself valueless, but which for you would be intensely valuable."

"Mr. de Warren, if you have come on professional matters——"

"Yes, I come on professional matters. I am that 'odd' life!"

Otway came slowly forward. He was measuring the quiet, upright little figure with penetrating eagerness.

"Will you be more explicit?"

"Is it necessary? I recognize myself as one of the world's drones. Except to my father, I am nothing to any one; and my father must bear his share of the atonement. I am in your way, and in—Enid's way." For the first time the stoic composure of his features broke, but only for an instant. "You see, I understand. She is so awfully honest and good, and—and I don't want to drive her into anything—that would make her anything else—in her own eyes. I might—well, clear out my own way, but she might reproach herself; it might make her unhappy. And we must try and avoid that. You see, I have been thinking it all over."

"For pity's sake, get to the point!"

"It is just this: You have made a discovery—you have discovered a new serum against diphtheria. I understand that the quantities necessary have yet to be discovered, and that the first experiment, essential to final success, must almost certainly be fatal."

"Yes. What are you getting at?"

"I offer myself—as the first experiment."

It was very quiet in the little room. But in the tense, painful stillness there was something living and vibrant, and out of the dingy shadows there arose something which blinded the woman hidden behind the curtains. It was as though she saw for the first time. Out of weakness there had come forth strength, and out of insignificance a simple, unshaken heroism.

"I don't want to be held for your murder," said Otway from between white lips.

"That is easily avoided. You will

give me the serum, with instructions how to use it. When I am taken ill, I shall send for you as for an ordinary doctor. You will attend me and draw your conclusions as to the worth of your discovery. No one will blame you if I succumb to—diphtheria."

Again silence. Otway had turned his back to his visitor, and Enid saw his face distorted with the violence of his temptation. She shrank back as from an abyss which had been revealed to her in a flare of lightning.

"In the cause of science," said Peter, smiling faintly.

Otway went to his medical cupboard and unlocked it. He took out the colorless phial, and held it up to the light.

"Half a dozen drops, and the first symptoms of diphtheria should make their appearance in twenty-four hours," he said scarcely above his breath. "If six drops were the correct quantity the symptoms would pass, leaving you entirely immune."

"But the chance is slight."

"Very slight. I have only experimented with a luckless rabbit or two. The human constitution is of a different kind."

"And the rabbits died," said Peter, with the same smile.

"They died."

The two men looked at each other over the table. Peter held out his hand. It looked more than usually fragile.

"Won't you give me that stuff?"

"Wait a moment. You can hold your tongue?"

"Yes. I can promise you that much."

"To the end?"

"To the end."

"Are you sure of yourself—you, a coward?"

Peter laughed unsteadily.

"Oh, that's all right. I've given myself time. When I give myself time I'm all right. My confounded nerves can't play me tricks."

"Do you realize what you are tempting me to do?"

"I am asking you to have the courage of your opinion."

Otway made no answer. He went to the cupboard, and brought back a delicate syringe, which he held for an instant, testing the steel point against the palm of his hand.

"Will you roll back your sleeve?"

Peter obeyed with the care of a confirmed dandy.

"You had better make the injection yourself. You must fill the syringe from the phial. So!" Otway fumbled clumsily with the tiny glass bottle. His hands shook. "It's my nerves now," he said between his teeth.

"Nerves are beastly things," said Peter sympathetically. He took the phial and the syringe, and looked at them with a thoughtful interest. Otway bent toward him. The perspiration stood out in great beads on his forehead.

"You know what you are doing?" he said. "It is—it may be death."

"Yes, I know."

"Why are you doing it?"

"In the cause of science."

"That's a lie!"

It seemed to Enid that the slight, boyish figure grew and towered for a moment over the man before him.

"And because I love my wife."

Enid pushed aside the curtains. Before either of the two men could move or speak, she had crossed the room and wrenched the phial from Peter's hands. The next instant it lay in the fender, shattered into a hundred fragments.

"I am glad you love your wife, Peter," she said brokenly, "because it seems, after all, that she loves you." Then suddenly she laid her hands on his shoulders, half laughing, half crying. "Peter, I'm a runaway. I ran away from you because I didn't understand you or myself. I do now. Will you take me back?"

"Enid—my wife!" He seized her hands and kissed them. "I love you!" he said. "I wanted to set you free. I thought——"

He broke off, and she felt that he was trembling for the first time in that strange interview. Over his bowed head she met the somber question in Otway's eyes.

"I am sorry," she said. "I have mis-

led you because I misled myself. I tempted you—to commit a crime. It was a crime. However wronged you were, you had no right to accept the atonement of Peter's life. It happens to be of value, after all, to me. It is worth more to me than your discovery —yes, and the cause you serve. It is mine, and I cannot give it up for the whole world. Peter, if you can forgive me, take me home."

Otway held open the door. The evil had gone out of his face, leaving it haggard, but curiously at peace.

"Perhaps you have judged rightly," he said. "Perhaps there is something greater than my discovery, and one day I may be glad that you have found it."

He waited until the outer door banged to. Then he went back to the fender, and ground the broken fragments of the phial to powder.

A SONG OF LOST LOVE

TAKE your weeping willow,
And your hemlock pillow—
Take your garnered rose leaves,
And dreams of past delight;
Take your faded glory,
And treasured old love story;
There's no mournful sweetness
I envy you to-night!

My love is a glad love,
Never yet a sad love,
Even as I kiss its eyes
And bid a long good-by;
Though our love be ended,
I will have it splendid;
I will make our broken love
A sword upraised on high.

Tempered by life's fires,
And Passion's old desires,
Is it not a gallant blade,
Fit for any strife?
Sound the trumpet loudly,
For I will bear it proudly,
This my lost love's sword I carry,
In the Lists of Life!

A. A. C

THE COMMON CHILDREN

BY

MARION HILL

IT was really beautiful—the smoothness with which Agnes Silsbee managed everything, even Christmas.

Since the term "managing," used in connection with a woman, implies usually much that is not satisfactory, let it at once be stated that Agnes was as satisfactory a young woman as was to be found in all America. Ask her husband, Norman.

But she held definite views of a reformatory nature, was unafraid in stating them, and was energetically capable of making them good. With her, speech meant action.

For instance, at the time of her marriage, she had informed Norman's mother, among other things, that she intended to make Norman's comfort the aim of her life—which the older woman thought sensible and prudent; that she did not intend to "nag" him with affairs of the household—another bit of sense; and that, as both she and Norman had gathered from observation a knowledge of the fact that children rendered hitherto calm places unpleasantly chaotic, they had concluded to keep their married life free from them. And this is where the elder Mrs. Silsbee had been heard to murmur words to the effect that the Lord would have something to say about *that*.

So far, however, the Lord had not interfered with Agnes' arrangements in any particular; for she and Norman *were* comfortable, neither nagged the other, and nothing chaotic had put in an appearance.

As for Christmas, Agnes had systematized the upsetting occurrences of that season of the year, until the twenty-fifth of December rolled along as evenly as any other twenty-fifth. And she had no patience with the unsystematized antics of eleventh-hour shoppers, who chased dementedly through the stores for they knew not what, and bought, at beleaguered counters, gifts of total moral unfitness, whose sole appropriateness was vested in the fact that they had happened to lie within the zone of clutch.

"It is worse than un-Christmaslike, Norman; it is positively un-Christian," she now announced, gazing at the murderous seethe of people in the street before her. "Isn't it?"

"You bet," agreed Norman, but his hilarious cheerfulness robbed his remark of the perfection of acquiescence. Theoretically he knew she was right, but practically he was well entertained by the hubbub of this disgraceful twenty-fourth.

He and Agnes were riding side by side in the latest addition to their family, a warm limousine car, sufficiently removed from the turmoil of holiday traffic to feel free of responsibility for the unholy flurry of their unknown brothers and sisters on the pavement. Or, at least, so Norman thought.

"Why, Norman, look at them," pensively insisted Agnes, combating the

negative in his mind rather than the assent on his tongue. Six years married, she was still delicately, inflexibly bridelike in opinions, as she was still prettily bridelike in dress. That came of owning no offspring to upset her theories and costumes. "Look at their well-nigh *vicious* faces as they push and jostle by. They scowl. They positively suffer. And over holy Christmas! Norman, won't you please say it is really an indecent sight?"

Norman pulled reconsideringly at the place where he would have enjoyed a mustache, had Agnes consented, and growled with dutiful dejection:

"That's so."

Once a lover of Christmas, he now remembered that he quite hated the day. But it was because he had to receive presents, not because he had to give them. Of an impulsively generous nature, he would have delighted in dumping gifts upon his friends as a letter carrier dumps mail, unseen and unrewarded; but, to be thanked, fawned over, and dumped upon in return, necessitating fawnings and thankings of his own, aroused in him sensations of skulking bitterness. A nice enough young man all the rest of the year, Norman Silsbee at Yuletide became capable of much unpleasantness.

For his erratic sake no less than for her orderly own, Agnes immensely mitigated the rigors of the season by her practice of beginning to buy her presents in January, and by having every last one of them beribboned, tinsel-tied, inscribed, wrapped, and addressed by Fourth of July at very latest; early in December, after gumming on the final flaming placard, "Please do not open until Christmas Day," she expressed them forth upon their various ways, thus ridding her house and mind of much encumbrance, and enabling her to face the day before Christmas with real sanity and composure. Very few manage to do it.

To be sure, between Independence Day and the twenty-fifth of December, a remembered friend occasionally died, which gave a dismal innuendo effect to the please-do-not-open, et cetera, intended for that person, but otherwise did not shake Agnes' belief in the moral value of her forethoughtedness. But, being as sensitive as sensible—a gentle combination in a woman—she never could bring herself to switch these mortuary presents carelessly to survivors, and what to do with such was always more or less of a soul problem.

As for now, she shuddered tenderly at every recollection of a colossal rocking-horse and mammoth-sized French doll, which her storeroom painfully harbored—things bought for two dear little twin cousins who had lately gone out of this happy world as they had come into it, unexpectedly and together.

"Why, hullo, Ag! Where are we supposed to be going?" broke in Norman, noticing that his car had turned away from the street of tortured shoppers, and was pelting conclusively down a mean side thoroughfare.

"To take a turkey to Mrs. McGinn, dear."

"Mrs.——"

"McGinn."

"Who the dev——"

"She did mother's washing, Norman, and does ours."

"Washing? Our washing? Don't Becky—or Nora——" He feelingly mentioned his large-salaried cook and housemaid.

"Wash?" supplemented Agnes, reading his amazement aright. "Mercy, no."

"What *do* they do?"

"You and me," cheerfully admitted Agnes.

"Only the two of us—a servant apiece—and the washing has to be given out," marveled Norman, unresentful, but pardonably surprised. "By Jove, Agnes, what happens to the people who have a houseful of little ones? How many servants do they have to keep?"

"As many as they can pay for, and more," said Agnes, using a slightly virtuous tone in spite of herself, as if there were economic praises due to her for being childless.

The slowing down of the car heralded its approach to Mrs. McGinn's dwelling, a house visibly swarming with obscure but social life; that is, if bottles

and cans on the successive window ledges were truthful indications of family upon family, in layers.

The full garbage cans dotting the curb for the entire length of the street, each capped with a peak of new snow, bore festive imitation of frothing beer steins, of size fitting the capacity of the neighborhood. And why is it that the full garbage can always ornaments a street that claims to suffer from the empty dinner pail?

Despite the saltlike snow that still indefatigably fell, to the accompaniment of a freezing wind, too, Mrs. McGinn, clad in nothing warmer than her calico wrapper, stood at her area gate holding open-air conclave of plainly dismal nature with multitudinous female neighbors. These leaked politely into retirement when the auto came to a stop.

"Is something the matter, Mrs. McGinn?" questioned Agnes, opening the car door when the woman stepped near, and putting the turkey into her bebewildered arms.

"I'm sure I'm thankful to ye quite," said Mrs. McGinn, mechanically grateful, but evidently not realizing completely what she held, for she dandled the turkey soothingly up and down, as if quieting a fretful baby. The turkey seemed to take to her kindly, dropping its headless neck coyly to one side, and waving its flippers amiably. "It's scarce knowing I am, Miss Agnes, whether I'm ann me head or me feet, some news has come that suddint."

"Not bad news, I hope."

"Yer hope's a liar, Miss Agnes," responded Mrs. McGinn promptly. "For me poor brother's widder, she whose two children I'm motherin' till she gets better, has tuck a turn for the worse instead, and sends for me immejit—down State she is—to be by her while her gets cut open by her doctors, and something tuck out from her or putt in—I dunno —annyhow, I have to be takin' the train in an hour's time or so, maybe less."

"And you need money?" asked Agnes, reaching for her purse.

"Money's the laste of me troubles," said Mrs. McGinn, humanely giving the turkey a change of position, and thoughtfully putting a portion of her apron around its bare shoulders. "It's little Alfie and Mattie, the childern, Miss Agnes, and what to do with them overnight I've no more idee than the man up in the moon. They're in wrong with himself." "Himself" was Mr. McGinn, and to manufacture a condition of "in wrong" for those beneath his roof was "himself's" pet industry. "I can't l'ave them with me sister, as wunst, for, God rest her sowl, she's dead, as ye well know, Miss Agnes. And me cousin, her that lives the block beyont, is rin away wid another man—a likely enough chap, this wan, be the trut' told —but that's more there than here. To kape well to the point, himself's celebrating howly Christmas that full already, Miss Agnes, as to be a bit unsafe for those not big enough to stand up under his jokes like." She unconsciously illustrated her whole meaning by fingering a bruise under one of her eyes, measuring its state of recovery. "Except for knowing, no wan better, how you don't like young uns at all at all, Miss Agnes, nor ever have, I'd be begging *you* to kape an eye and a hand on them over Christmas. That big your house is, sure they could lose themselves in it twice again, and you not hear nor be worried by them." Her expression grew more and more anxious, and she smacked the turkey's chest rhythmically wtih the broad of her palm. "But you wouldn't stand for anny sich shindig *as that.*"

There is nothing that stirs one to more honest opposition than to be accused of a fault that one knows one owns.

Not like "young ones," indeed! Agnes stiffened quite haughtily.

"Mrs. McGinn, you might have known I would be glad to help in an emergency like this," she uttered severely. "If the two children are ready, I'll take them home now in the car, and see that they are well cared for till you come back."

"Mrs. Silsbee," gasped the relieved woman, honoring her young benefactress with the rare tribute of her married name. "It's the rale jool ye

can be when ye want." Then, increasing her powerful voice to fog-signal caliber, "Alfie!—in there—Mattie!—in there—putt on y'r coats and hats till I git to ye's!"

As if she judged the soothed turkey to be asleep by now, she maternally lowered it from its sitting-up position till it reposed on its back in her arms, and tiptoed into the house with it.

"Two names I positively loathe," murmured Agnes. "Alfie and Mattie! I already see freckles and carroty hair. Norman, do you object, dear?"

"Freckles, yes; carroty hair—well——"

"I mean, do you object to my taking the children?"

"Suppose I do, what then?" queried Norman composedly. Agnes' impulsiveness manufactured continuous vaudeville for him.

"Yes, it's too late now," she acknowledged, patting his hand in apology.

It certainly was; for Mrs. McGinn, minus the handsome fowl and plus two plain children, who were bundled bulkily in wools and flannels, appeared again from the basement. On her way to the car, she was wrapping up two obvious nightgowns in a piece of newspaper several sizes too small. To economize with materials that cost them nothing is how most of the poor exercise their thrift.

"Sit you there, Alfie; and you there, Mattie," Mrs. McGinn ordered, stowing her unresisting charges like parcels into the seats Agnes pulled down. They showed no active interest in the proceedings, belonging to a class where infants do as they are told, or run the risk of getting knocked under a table or down some stairs. "Go wid the lady and mind ye's manners, or 'twill be the sorry day for ye when I see ye next. Reminber that. These is they nighties, Miss Agnes, dear, and may the blissid saints in h——"

Norman humanely had the car start.

"Of all the——" Agnes disjointedly ejaculated. She was looking at the garments that leaked profusedly from the newspaper. They were home-grown affairs, fashioned sternly for use, not adornment; and they loudly proclaimed themselves to be made of flour bags—well washed and ironed, to be sure, but still dimly offering the legend, "Purity guaranteed."

Though an admirer of purity, and a respecter of guarantees, Agnes, nevertheless, stopped at the first store and purchased some more up-to-date pajamas and gowns.

Alfie and Mattie took life equably, refusing to show either excitement or dejection. Their beady eyes traveled from one elegancy of the car to another without luster of admiration. Mrs. McGinn might have been in the habit of taking them with her in just such another to collect the wash, for all the glow that came from them. The only sign of activity they gave was that Alfie sniffed.

This sniff got on Agnes' nerves, and she in time silently offered Alfie a handkerchief, and insisted upon his acceptance of it. Alfie obediently pocketed it and continued to sniff. The sniff was not physical, it was psychic, and handkerchiefs were useless. By calm sniffing Alfie showed himself to be still master of his soul, despite the Walpurgis whirl that his affairs were taking, and the dangerous grandeur encompassing him. Mattie's sole contribution to the sociability of the occasion was to roll her mittens into a wad, and with them to wipe a hole in the frost of the windowpane that she might look out.

Agnes eyed them disappointedly. She would very much have liked to take a womanly interest in them, and she felt annoyed with them that they gave her so poor an opportunity. Their faces were small and compact, expressionless as the faces on the ends of coconuts; and their hair was of the depressing pink shade that one notices in a stale-cooked shrimp. As for age, they both seemed to be about six.

"Are you twins?" she asked Alfie.

"Ma'am?" Sniff.

"Are you twins?" she asked of Mattie.

"Ma'am?" inquired Mattie. Squirm.

"Are you twins?" she inquired, going back to Alfie.

"Ma'am?" Sniff.

Agnes gave it up.

"The boy's the older," volunteered Norman, viewing the waifs scientifically, as if they were behind bars in a menagerie.

"How do you know?" asked Agnes.

"Don't know," admitted Norman. "But he is." Man has his intuitions, too.

Arrived at her own house, Agnes showed her generalship. No wonder Norman admired her and relied upon her. Most cooks, at having two young charges thrust upon them, would have given immediate notice; but Becky was handled with disarming skill.

Nora had been granted, and had taken, her Christmas vacation; a vacation that was in turn to be passed on to Becky at New Year.

Becky was, therefore, sole presider over the basement and attic—the realms of her profession.

After explaining the case, Agnes left Mattie and Alfie with her, saying:

"It is going to give you extra trouble, Becky, and I am sorry. So here is an extra five dollars to help you forget it. Take good care of this little boy and girl, feed them well, make them as happy as you can. Turn the heat on in the attic, and let them play all they want. Consult me if necessary; but don't let the children annoy either Mr. Silsbee or myself. I can trust you to be kind to them, can't I, Becky?"

"Like dey vas mine own liddle brudders and sisters," promised Becky, quite sincerely.

Not for the sake of the five dollars alone was she glad to have the babies; for Christmas in the Silsbee mansion was too staid and noiseless to suit the Hebraic expansiveness of Becky's affectionate disposition.

Agnes went serenely back to Norman in the drawing-room and reported success.

"How about presents for the little beggars?" he asked, before wiping them out of his existence.

But Agnes had arranged even that.

"I have changed the tags on the rocking-horse and doll," she said briefly.

"That's all they need?" asked Norman, wishing wholly to ease his own mind, not in the least to increase the gifts of his guests.

"And more than enough," stated Agnes positively. Truly, the doll and horse had cost extremely high. "Remember, Norman, that these are very common little children. They would be pleased with much less than we are doing for them, what with the pretty bedrooms, the good meals, and kind Becky, and all. We can conscientiously put them out of our minds."

Which suited Norman exactly.

After a quiet dinner, the Silsbees settled themselves in their cheery parlor to enjoy an evening of calm, a calm that they were excusable in thinking was well deserved, for every last relative and friend had been remembered, every servitor had been liberally tipped, the house had been chastely decorated, and every soul in it, down to the chance waifs that day arrived, substantially taken care of. What more was there to do?

From the streets outside, occasional reminders of the Yuletide turmoil stole in to them, in the rattle and crash of frantic delivery wagons, in the weary thudding of messenger feet, in the wrangle of harassed voices; the very electric lights seemed to wince and splutter over the pavements in disturbed sympathy for the insanely scurrying shoppers beneath them.

Within, Agnes, quite adorable in demi-toilette, rocked sedately over the leisurely cutting of a new magazine; and Norman smoked a gift cigar of less than usual vindictiveness, while he pleasantly struggled with the superfluities of the evening paper.

After a bit, however, the interest of these soothing home industries remarkably lagged, and Agnes found herself gazing wistfully into the fire, while Norman as thoughtfully examined the ceiling.

"Agnes," he said at length. "I'm happy all right, and I'm holy all right, and not in the least pessimistic, but isn't

it funny the way the bottom seems to have fallen completely out of Christmas, now that we have grown up?"

"I was thinking of the same thing," she confessed, stirring restlessly. "But it can't be helped, Norman, dear; it's the penalty we pay for being big instead of little. Our illusions are gone."

"Do you call Christmas an 'illusion'?" he asked, not sarcastically. He anxiously wanted to know.

"Not Christmas itself; but our happy childish fancies about it. Its magic thrill will never come back."

"I suppose not," he concurred, but very unresignedly. "It used to be the great old day, though; and I'd part with a lung or two to have another taste of some of the gone-by fun."

"Norman, we can't be children and grown-ups, too," reminded Agnes.

She got up and knelt beside his chair, and he put his arms around her as she knew he would, each thus showing the other that the grown-up years brought much, even if they as truly took away.

Here the portières were poked aside to admit the entrance of Alfie and Mattie, bathed, combed, nightgowned, and escaped.

"Is this the parlor?" Alfie asked of Agnes.

"What in the world are you doing here, and at this time of night?" she demanded, rising and resuming her former chair.

This being no answer to a plainly important question, Alfie tried the superior being in the room.

"This the parlor?" he asked of Norman.

"Yes; and—and a very nice one, indeed," assured the master.

"Then come on," ordered Mattie, attending strictly to business.

The children pattered over to the mantelpiece, each dragging a black, limp stocking, apparently endless in length, which each affixed securely to a convenient bump of the many that ornamented the carved woodwork.

This accomplished, they stepped back an inch or two, clasped their hands behind them, and surveyed the snaky cascades of hose with a satisfaction too great to need speech.

The new nightgowns were vastly more becoming than the exaggeratedly serviceable woolens of their day wear; and the combed curls flirted around their heads like living gold. And Becky's bath had been soapily and redolently a perfect one.

The children were no bad ornament to a parlor; but the stockings——

"That's not the place for those things," tutored Agnes.

"Yes, it is," taught Mattie in return. "It's the *very* place."

"Didn't you know that?" asked Alfie, surprised. "Why, when we come down in the morning those stockings will be runnin' over wid the wonderf'lest things you ever! Candy, a ball, a top, marbles——"

"A curly hair weeny baby doll, a booful tea set, a card wiv a watch and chain all sewed on tight for me to bite off——"

"A toy pistol," hurried on Alfie. "A ledder purse wid pennies tru' and tru' it, some kind of a animile wid a squeak in his innards——"

"A beany bag," proceeded Mattie breathlessly, taking up Christmas as *she* knew it. "A *dear* litt' ring in a box——"

"A knife wid a blade on all four corners," continued Alfie, exploiting Christmas as *he* knew it. "A gold trumpet wid a red cord and tossle——"

"Doll boots what truly button," snatched Mattie, squirming her tiny bare toes in ecstasy. "A sandy heart to punch needles into——"

The unguessed maternal woke suddenly in Agnes, taking its oftenest guise —that of stern admonition.

"You'll catch your death of colds!" she scolded, her nervous eye traveling from bare feet to bare feet.

Tractably conscious of where the fault was, and how to remedy it, but too excited with visions to fall into silence while she obeyed her conception of the command just given, Mattie, still gabbling, climbed into the astonished silk lap of her hostess and tucked its

flounces around her extremities, to the tune of:

"Some walnuts or two, and a peppermint cane."

Not to be outdone in obedience—and at this critical time of the year, too—Alfie climbed into the no less startled lap of his host, whence he experimentally fitted his toes into the various dents of upholstery in Norman's morris chair, while mentioning:

"I like to find oranges and apples in the heel of mine."

"And now you can tell us the story of the Baby in the manger," suggested Mattie, thudding her gold head softly against Agnes' shoulder, to batten down any ornaments inconveniently in the way of perfect rest.

"Why—why didn't you ask Becky?" stammered Agnes.

"Phat can *she* know about it?—a Yiddisher kike like her?" demanded Alfie philosophically. "G'won. You."

The sudden silence in the room whose homy warmth and dancing firelight made it exactly the place for bedtime tales, informed Agnes that she had better begin without further ado.

At first The Story came awkwardly—it had been so long since she had told it with the simple, vivid faith due to childish ears—but its neglected beauties soon came back into her memory, for it is a story that can never perish even from disuse, and she gradually sensed that her husband was listening as intently as the happily huddled children.

His humble abeyance of mind aroused an answering humility in her, and made her glad of her grace of womanhood which gave her the enviable place of story-teller on the home hearth. She felt that the four of them were children together, learning, on Christmas Eve, anew of that faith which alone could make all the rest of the year unbarren and glorified.

The deeper silence at its finish was broken by a peculiar sound, as of seven pair of loose slippers slapping down the hall stairs. It was Becky, nervous and loud of breath.

After her burst into the parlor, the sight revealed—two satisfied listeners warmly cuddled in friendly arms—permitted her to clasp her hands in relief over her palpitating abdomen.

"F'r God's sake!" she ejaculated piously. "You vash found."

"This time stay with them till they fall asleep, Becky," commanded Agnes leniently, herding the drowsy pair into the "Yiddisher kike's" care. "Hurry them out of the drafts; quick as you can."

But a symbol of new riches in a center table which he passed caused Alfie to halt the cavalcade; he dug his tender toes into the carpet with an anchoring result equal to heel spikes in clay.

"Look, Mattie," he reveled, pointing to the table. "Here's where the Christmas tree will hold up to-morrow morn ing!"

"And so it is, and so it is!" she whispered, thrilling with awe. "I can smill the smill av it even now already. It will have candles and diamond strings."

"And a angel at the top, and Mr. and Mrs. Noah wid their lady friends, and the rest of the animiles in the green sawdust at the bottom," prophesied Alfie, starry-eyed with joy.

"Ah, yah," sighed Becky commiseratingly. "Come to sleeps, you poor dings, before yet you wakes oop. *Tree?* Ah, yah!"

And she protectingly withdrew them to their slumbers. Truly a tree, that shedder of spines and dripper of stickiness, was the last dream ever likely to be realized in fact on the Silsbee center table.

"Don't arms feel empty and unwarm when a kid goes out of them?" queried Norman amazedly.

But Agnes was too full of affairs to hear, much less answer.

"Do you know what we have to do?" she asked, jumping up, her frightened gaze on the clock.

"Yes," said Norman. And he did. He had probably known it before she had, being a man, and consequently more of a poet. "We have to zipp like Hades and buy every last thing those imps will rise at dawn to look for. Isn't it awful?"

He, too, questioned the clock.

"We can't get Beeman, can we?" she mourned, knowing in advance that they could not, for Beeman, the gentlemanly chauffeur, belonged to a union which donated to him for his own all those hours when his services would be most appreciated by his employers.

Scorning to make the sure reply, Norman hurried her and himself into outdoor wraps, and together they flew out into the frosty, nipping night on a wild rush for the nearest shopping district.

If it was late, nobody on earth seemed to be aware of it, for the streets were blazing with light and packed with humanity, and were noisier than the stock market at its fiercest.

The curb venders, mercifully overlooked by the police in the hours of their last chance, hopped their toy animals almost into the pockets of possible buyers, poked out their mistletoe and holly, wiggled their "novelties" into every passing face, and kept up a continual hoarse shrieking of reasons why it was criminal for a person to go by without purchasing.

Norman's seeking expression marked him quickly for a victim.

"This is it, friend! Go no farther!" yelped a seller of tissue-paper pigs.

The "animile" caused Norman to waver.

"Take it home and love it," ordered the grimy merchant, slapping one in a bag and forcing it almost into Norman's hand. "A quarter."

"Does it squeak?" urged Norman. "It's perfectly useless unless it squeaks!" His urgency was too tragic to cheat.

"Squeak?" derided the seller, grabbing back his squeakless commodity. "Live mice for yours. Move on!"

Deafened by the din, weakened by exigency, the Silsbees bought everything and anything with a helter-skelter abandon that marked them as being more witless than any other partaker in the general orgy. From her first move—which was to buy a latticework string bag, a shoddy article she had always loathed and derided, for the carrying of her silly little parcels—to her last move—which was actually to snatch a pair of doll boots out of the examining hands of a neighbor—Agnes that night deliberately smashed every law of shopping decorum—she, a member of the Consumers' League, and pledged thereby to do no buying after nightfall! —and she consequently learned in big doses a necessary lesson of comprehension, finding out by stiff experience that people who do inconsiderate things mostly do them because they have to.

Pianos and houses would have been easier to buy than the sought-for trifles —or, at least so it seemed. Peppermint canes had apparently melted from the earth, along with watches and chains sewed on cards, though Agnes would have been willing to take her oath that these things had been in every window right up to the moment of her desire. The commonplace is as clever at hiding when it is wanted, as it is persistent in getting underfoot when its absence would be preferable.

Lulled by false hopes of being through, twenty times Agnes and Norman started home, only to remember something else vitally necessary, and to pelt back into the hurly-burly for it.

"Gosh, Agnes, I feel like the old gent himself," was Norman's final Santa-Clausian utterance, as he jovially climbed his own steps ladened with bundles and clasping a tree all hoar with snow. "This has been some sprint, believe me! But the worst is yet to come! The worst is yet to come!"

Breathless from the weight of her own packages, Agnes' only reply—as she preceded him into their parlor, their next arena—was consentingly to giggle. Agnes had not giggled since childhood, if even then; but the headlong scramble of the past hour, the intoxication of being an active factor in the Christmas revelry, had brought about a restoration of her girlhood.

The sound was a healthy one, and spurred Norman to fresh idiocies of speech. In fact, while superintending the "worst," which was the erection and trimming of the tree, and the stuffing of the stockings, they were boy and girl again. Their eyes brightly dancing,

their cheeks pink with excitement, they wrapped, and tied, and hung, and stuffed like mad, stopping now and then to sit on the floor and hop queer beasts toward each other, or to spin singing tops, only to jump up and dash again at their work, laughingly desperate over the chances of finishing it by midnight. The parlor was one magnificent scrap heap of strings, excelsior, papers, cardboard boxes, and price tags. It looked like home for the first time.

When at last all was cleared away, when the tree stood bravely bearing the treasures of Aladdin, and the plethoric stockings bulged with mystery, while delicious smells of popcorn and evergreen hovered in the air, the clock stood at five minutes to the first hour of the new day.

"I've had the time of my life," panted Norman, fanning himself industriously with his handkerchief. "The bottom out of Christmas? Why, it has a solider bottom than ever! And what do you suppose has done it? The fact that we'll get never a word of thanks!"

"No, that's not it," said Agnes, her usually direct glance slanting half shyly away from his. "It's something entirely different. It's what's in the little beds upstairs, Norman."

"You mean——"

"The children."

She ran to him, put her arms around his neck, and hid her face upon his shoulder—crying there.

"Oh, my goodness! Oh, stop!" he besought at first, in a panic.

Then, slowly realizing that the tears were a prayer, a sacrament, not a sorrow, he folded his arms understandingly around her, and reverently kissed her.

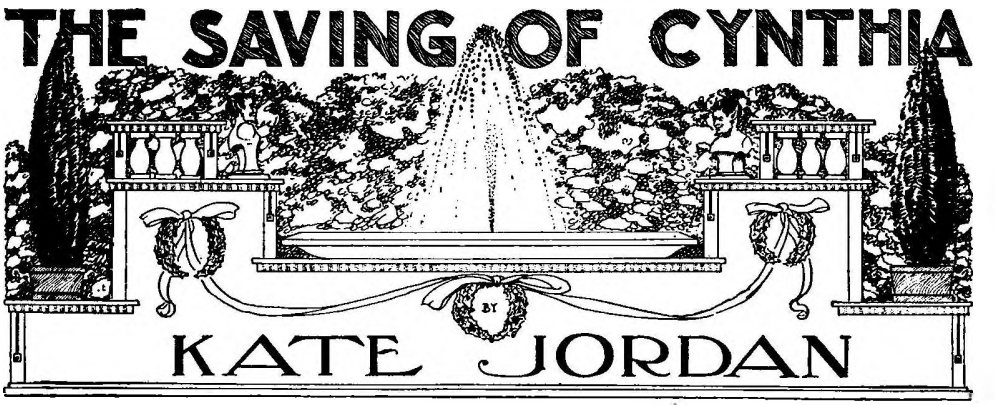
Next, from every high bell tower far and near, rang the happy clang of midnight chimes; and outside, and inside, Christmas Day had come.

CHRISTMAS PRAYER

ETERNAL God, on this resplendent morn,
When unto Thee the infant Christ was born;
On this glad day, when every son of earth
In some wise tells His majesty of birth,
And all Thy lesser creatures bow and kneel,
It has been said, as if in mute appeal:
I come to Thee, the humblest of my clan,
An ordinary, human sort of man,
To give Thee thanks for what, Lord, Thou has done
Throughout this year, whose course is nearly run!
And as I pray Thy gentle guidance still,
In calm and storm, in good, and, likewise, ill,
Let me impress Thee that I seek not gold
To cheer my heart until my life is told;
That I should garner from the field of Fame
Not one lone sheaf to glorify my name.
If Thou wouldst bless me of a truth indeed,
And grant what most of all below I need,
Take not away this restful love, which now
Falls like a benediction on my brow;
But may it seem, until Time shall have passed,
With each new Christmas sweeter than the last!

RALPH M. THOMSON.

THE SAVING OF CYNTHIA



BY

KATE JORDAN

EVEN London was still. It was between two and three in the morning—"the hour of innocence." A taxicab progressed equably along lower Piccadilly. Inside of it there was a very blond, very discontented young man, who, with tall hat tipped over his nose so that his head might rest backward in perfect ease, was drowsily interviewing himself:

"Don't you know, Tommy Perkins, that the life you're leading would make a pugilist anæmic? After a feverish fortnight at Monte Carlo, you come to London—supposed to be pious and gentle in its winter season—and in one week you run into four dinners, three theater parties, five actressy suppers, four roulette games in country houses within reach of town, and here you are, driving home on the edge of a raw December morning, a blithering wreck. Aren't these the acts of a silly ass? I *ask* you! If you didn't have an income—if you *had* to make real money for actual food and shelter—your young life would be the better for it, and *I* say——"

The cab came to a standstill before a Georgian house with bright-green door, brass knocker, and ivied window boxes, in an old street off Waterloo Place—a house that bore the unmistakable marks of being a high-priced bachelor habitat. Tommy alighted, yawning, and went deeply into his pocket for loose silver, while beginning a dribbling conversation with the man at the wheel. He always did this; he liked cheering up people, and people always came to him to be cheered up. Already the taximan's weary face was smiling.

"Ever drink?" Tommy asked, with eyes as sad as a dying deer's.

"A little, sir—now and then."

"Don't!" said Tommy. "Ever gamble?"

"Oh, a bit of bridge, sir, or nap—very light."

"Cut it out!" said Tommy, with weighty wisdom. "My dear friend, study the horrible examples you deposit at chaste doorsteps at the time the milkman is due, and take warning." He squinted his eyes at him. "You have a noble brow," he murmured, "suggestion of Gladstone. Live up to it!"

He gave the man an extra half crown, and, with hat far back now, moved in a bent-over, enfeebled way to the flat, white steps, when another taxicab slid down the silent street, and, as his own edged away, took the place before his door.

"Tommy?" said a woman's voice.

Tommy's jaws snapped like a trap springing, and he swore inwardly. He came back unwillingly to what, through the open cab window, was a mist of pale furs, flowers, and glowing eyes. Though this might prove to be one of the frailest moths of the London night, Tommy could not be anything but kind. But when he came closer, his unwilling-

ness vanished, and he looked simply and overpoweringly blank.

"*You?*" he asked, and frowned in at the eyes and furs. "What are *you* doing here, like this?"

"Get in," said the soft, tired voice.

"Can't. I have an engagement with my bed. What's wrong?"

"Get in and I'll tell you."

There was a break in the voice, and the bared hand that pleadingly touched his face was hot and trembling. He obeyed.

"Well, for five minutes. I'm only fit for calomel and a nursing home." Before he closed the door he said: "Where to?"

"Anywhere," came faintly, and the eyes, shaded now by the hot fingers, sent tears upon the flowers and furs.

"Drive around Westminster way—Bird Cage Walk—Embankment," Tommy directed.

He waited until the fingers fell and the woman faced him. She was very young, and while she looked only her twenty-three years, worldliness, bitterness, and recklessness were written large upon her. Her pallid face, with lifted, crimson mouth, and dreaming, gray eyes, was of a charming delicacy, yet showed such damage as a hurricane would leave upon a flower.

"Had a row with Humphrey?"

She looked mockery, her pursed mouth quivering in nervous pain.

"You can't row with a granite figure. Humphrey doesn't remember me seven-eighths of the time. Let him have his laboratory, his retorts, and his nasty messes in the cause of science, and his wife, in trying to find happiness somewhere, can come pretty close to going over the precipice. *He* wouldn't know it—and I'm tied to him, Tommy—*tied* to him!"

Tommy had awakened. He began to smoke. He knew enough about Mrs. Harbison's life to knit this hysterical fury to the truth. What he had been afraid of for a long time seemed on the edge of happening. And yet—*it must not happen!* Cynthia was at heart, too, really good; Humphrey loved her, though he seemed not to have the genius of making this plain and holding; the third person in the mélange—for there is always that third, whether visible or not—was also far from a villain, though he was both selfish and sensual; and they were all his good friends.

"Poor, little Cynthia!" he said; "you *think* you wish you were dead, don't you?"

"I would wish it—I would—only for——" she stammered.

"Only you wouldn't like to go and leave Arthur Mason so confoundedly healthy behind you! Down deep you're perfectly sure that, after a short interval, he'd scratch your memory, and some other lady, *also* not quite satisfactorily married—blond, also, probably, as he seems partial to the pale, pastel tones—would corner the attention of his dark, gazellelike eyes."

Cynthia's sudden push almost knocked off his hat. It was a movement of primitive frenzy, and she trembled violently.

"Say, you ought to be a suffragette!" Tommy objected, as he straightened.

"It's like a trifler—*a shallow dish*—to ridicule something *big* that it doesn't understand!"

"All right—then why don't you let the shallow dish go home to bed? It doesn't want to be here," he said plaintively.

Her next words came in a different tone. Tommy felt the truth in it—the solemn, cold truth, just as if sunless, ocean depths, moved by some powerful convulsion, had come to the surface for a moment.

"Arthur Mason loves me. I love him. Whatever you may think of everything else in this miserable business, you must admit *that*. *Say* you do!"

Tommy took her hand very gently.

"My dear girl, I do. But I warn you that I'm awfully fond of Humphrey. I think he's the better man of the two. In fact, I think that if you wanted your freedom to marry Arthur, Humphrey would manage to give it to you. But what would be the use, since there is a very large blonde, with a gold band on the third finger of her left

hand, who, eleven years ago, was 'signed, sealed, and delivered' as Mrs. Arthur Mason? Have you forgotten the lady?"

"Rather *not!*" Her mouth gave a bitter twist. "It's about Peggy Mason that I want to talk to you to-night. Will you really listen and help me?"

"Anything that a shallow dish can do is yours to command," said Tommy, who began to like the adventure.

"Humphrey is at some scientific séance in Edinburgh, and will be away for six or seven days. To-night I was at the Harlows at an after-theater supper. When I left I just drove past your house on chance. I wanted to tell you this: Arthur is with his wife in Rome, as you know. Well, to-day I got a letter from her, asking me to come now for a few weeks, and stay over Christmas with them—quite the sweetest that Peggy Mason ever wrote me." She slid her fingers around his arm. "Shall I go?"

"Here's where I feel like Sherlock Holmes," said Tommy.

He gazed out at the towers of Parliament, rising from the black base of the river, and delicately filigreed against the wan sky. He smoked; he thought deeply—more deeply than Cynthia dreamed, for he was reviewing many things he alone knew about Peggy Mason in the past, and that might be applied to the unraveling of the present complication.

"Did she ask Humphrey?" he asked, at last.

"Of course. But she knows he won't go, just as she knows that he'll be satisfied to have me go, if I wish. He can't bear Peggy—I don't know why—and she never seems quite comfortable when he's around."

Tommy chuckled.

"Humphrey's eyes seem nearsighted, but they see a lot sometimes. He has frequently astonished me. Now, he sees through Peggy Mason, and she divines it. Cynthia," he said, pursing his mouth reflectively; "that woman is a *cat.* While she's all fur, and pur, and languor, she's really watching the mouse's hole with watery chops, and when she gets what she's watching for she'll suddenly change to all *claws* and *clutch.*"

"You frighten me!" Cynthia murmured.

"Do I?" Tommy asked mildly. "That was my intention to a nicety."

"You think she'd hurt me?"

"If she could—that is, providing she believes you're after her saucer of cream."

"Do you think——" Cynthia whispered, and, despite her fashionably pulled-up cloud of hair and the long, jade pendant earrings that produced an effect of worldly sophistication, she looked very much the wondering-eyed, little girl of twelve that Tommy had first seen. "Do you think she would try to injure—to ruin—*my reputation?*"

"I certainly do," Tommy assented, and added: "You think a lot of your reputation—don't you?"

"Yes," she said, with a strained look past him into the empty street. "I couldn't live after disgrace. I suppose I'm a coward. But even to be with Arthur I could not be *déclassée.* My reputation!" she said, in a slow, burning way. "I'll confess this to you, Tommy—because I'd lose *that* is the only reason I didn't bolt with Arthur a year ago."

"Think of it!" said Tommy, with a crooked sort of smile; "and how easily you could bolt, too—he's such a good airman! Think of the *Daily Mail's* posters hawked along the Strand: 'The First Elopement in a Monoplane! Love in the Clouds!' Yet you didn't go because you thought of your reputation." His tone became vigorous and clear cut. "Then take my advice! Keep your eye on your reputation very closely just now. Don't let it get a freckle. Keep away from Rome—trouble is waiting for you in the land of the scudi and the lira. Keep away from Peggy Mason!"

There was silence in the cab a moment. "But I've accepted," said Cynthia timorously.

Tommy gave a tired convulsion that meant a roar of laughter, though no sound came from his open mouth. "Oh, *is* that so?" he jeered. "And you came

to ask me, if you *should*—after you *had*. You're a fake! I mark you down and chuck you on the bargain counter. Now, I'll go to my bed. I'm far from well."

He put his head out of the window to tell the driver to turn, but Cynthia pulled at the tail of his coat, and brought him around, glaring.

"Please—oh, please!"

"My God, you're an awful person!" said Tommy. "*Now* what?"

Her face was little and pinched.

"I don't know why, but, somehow, I've been afraid of just what you're afraid of," she whispered. "I can't think why she asked me. Arthur and I had said good-by—we were going to try to keep away from each other forever. It seems as if she *knew* this, and wanted to torture us. And I know I oughtn't to go—yet I *must*. I long to see Arthur again, and yet my heart grows cold! Tommy——" she faltered.

"Well?" he asked, his eye watchful. "There's a 'touch' of some sort coming—I know the tone."

"I thought, perhaps, *you'd* go to Rome, too."

"Me?" he asked in a little squeak, and tried to look furious.

"So that, if I needed you, you'd be there."

He regarded her with a twisted mouth and a smiling, yet icy, stare.

"I refuse."

"You have no definite Christmas plans—you told me the other day. I've heard that Christmas is lovely in Rome. They say——"

"Know all about it! Don't bother to be a guidebook, dearie."

"And I'm such an old, old friend!" she ended feebly.

Tommy looked very strong.

"I won't be used as a human mustard plaster to be applied after you've deliberately done the damage I am now solemnly warning you against. I refuse!"

He gave the order that turned the taxicab, and it went at a smart speed along the Embankment toward his chambers. After sitting back with dignity, he let a stealthy eye rest upon Cynthia, and saw her little, white face, her vacant stare, and the whole, utter helplessness of her.

"But I'll tell you what I *will* do," he compromised, and, although maintaining a rigid pose, felt himself a wabbly, weak fool. He heard her breath flutter. Like a bedraggled bird trying to creep to shelter from a storm, she edged nearer him. "I'll not leave London. I'll hang around. If you need me, telegraph—or telephone—or come back and use my door knocker. Until the Roman visit is over, *father is yours!*" He took her hand, now icy. "All right?"

"Tommy," she said, with real quivering feeling, "you *are* good! No one gives you credit——"

"How true!" he said, in a cello tone.

"You're an angel, and a——"

"Don't waste your strength on descriptive details. 'Angel' will do. Let it go at that," said Tommy, and patted her hand.

The Masons had rented the top apartment in what had been a sixteenth-century palace. The rooms were like banquet halls—cold, frescoed, echoing, and mournfully beautiful. From the windows there was a view of eternal Rome to bring the heart crowdingly into the throat. Cynthia, whose hard, London life—made up of dancing and feeding in packed rooms, of contraband heartburnings, and the fag ends of sleepless nights—was filled with a religious rapture by the beauty everywhere. The suspicion and timidity that had troubled her vanished. Rome wove its spell around her.

At times during the first few days, when she recalled fragments of her talk with Tommy as they had taxied around sleeping London, she would gird herself with watchfulness, but this, even against her will, faded until his warnings became as pointless as the incidents of a disturbing dream. Peggy Mason likened to an outwardly smooth, inwardly savage, feline thing with sheathed claws ready to accomplish a friend's destruction? *Ridiculous!* Never had she been so childishly wide-eyed, never so kind. In fact, one day, when Cynthia came in with a sore

throat after a drive on the Pincian Hill, Peggy had put her to bed, and, instead of leaving her to the services of her maid, had remained with her as nurse and entertainer.

For the first few days Arthur was absent, off in his monoplane.

"I don't know his cloud address, my dear," Peggy had said, laughing, as she and Cynthia were having tea in the winter garden of the Hotel Quirinal, "or I'd tell him to hurry. He'll be surprised when he finds you here."

A numbness had stolen over Cynthia.

"Surprised! But doesn't he know you asked me for Christmas?"

Peggy dug her fork into a juicy *baba,* and the rum squirted upward. There was a suggestion in the small action of something being stabbed to death and bleeding. But the fancy died without leaving any impression on Cynthia when her hostess chuckled and fixed her eyes—as brightly blue as old Italian enamel—upon her face.

"I love surprising people. Always a trick of mine," she said, with the slight lisp that made her words sound infantile. "I know that you and Arthur get on like a house on fire—and, as Rab McGregor and I hit it off so well, I thought we'd all play together a bit. Rome is glorious, but I do like 'mine own people' about me. I thought Humphrey might come, too. But, between you and me, I'm just as glad he didn't." She gave a sudden gurgle and paused with her chocolate cup raised, flecks of cream in the dimpled corners of her mouth. "Oh, there's McGregor now! Solemn and Scotch!"

Yes, there he was—Sir Robert McGregor, big, lean, and gray-haired—strolling between the tea tables and gazing about in his nearsighted way. It flashed through Cynthia's mind that wherever they had gone the Scotchman had appeared casually, as now, always as if by chance. She recalled, too, that he always kept with them when he found them, and seemed to enjoy merely sitting in a vacant-eyed dream listening to Peggy's rippling talk—foolish, merry, audacious, but always good-natured. But these impressions glanced off without leaving a warning, for Cynthia was so filled with her own dreams that she went about with these two, often oblivious of their presence.

Arthur did not know she was there! How would it be when he came? Would he be happy? Angry? Miserable? Reproachful? Would the guilty joy help or hurt? Would she return to London stronger or more wretched? What would they say to each other—meeting amazingly after their *eternal* parting?

He came unexpectedly one day as they three sat at lunch. Before he saw her, hidden, as she was, by some blossoming almond boughs sent up from the south, she noted—while her heart gave a wild yet sad leap—his listless step, the dumb weariness on his air-browned face. To his wife's gay greeting of "Here's the cloud conqueror," he crossed the big palace room, and then he and Cynthia looked at each other.

He paled under the air stain, and the glowing eyes, that Tommy's comedian mockery had called "gazellelike," brightened with a savage joy which, instantly suppressed, left a question and a deep look of fear. As he took her hand all he said was:

"Hello, Cynthia. How jolly!"

"If you'd known *this* was waiting for you," Peggy laughed, "you wouldn't have ridden so many air currents and made such a long stay with the rest of the solar system! Now shake hands with Rab, and try this *frittonusta*—delicious!"

Cynthia was in her room and ready for the late afternoon drive a few hours later. As she stood before the mirror she heard a small and stealthy sound. The place was so large and high-ceiled everything made an echo. Her gaze went inquiringly, first to the door leading to the hall, and then to a smaller one set cornerwise not far from the huge, early-Italian bed. She had never given any thought to this door, so narrow and so decorated it melted into the other panels. But now, as she watched, the handle was turned, giving out a plaintive sound. The door

opened a little way, but no one appeared.

"Who's there?" she asked sharply, and stepped nearer.

"Hush!" she heard Arthur say in a whisper. He remained hidden. "Come a little nearer." She did so, her heart beginning a furious beating. "Are you dressed?" he asked.

"Yes."

His face showed in the opening. It was stern, pale, the mouth rigid.

"Did you know you were put next to me?" he asked so faintly that she had to come close and watch his lips.

"No, I didn't." Cynthia faltered. "I supposed your room was near Peggy's. There are so many rooms, and they are so big—I never thought about it. Why—why?" she questioned in fear.

"It's queer she should put you here! And do you know there isn't a key to one of these old doors—not one!"

He stood, frowning.

"What shall I do?" Cynthia asked, and Tommy's words in the taxicab seemed to take her by the throat.

"Nothing—yet. Don't mention that you've found this out. We'll talk later. It's dangerous—here." He stood up straight, miserable-eyed, and his gaze went swiftly over her daintiness and wistfulness, her youth and unhappiness. *"Darling!"* he said bitterly, in a tone of farewell, and closed the door.

Before they left for the drive Arthur went straight to his wife.

"Why did you put Cynthia next to me?" he asked angrily.

"How did you know?" she said, with a surprised little laugh.

"I—saw her go in."

"Well? Why not?" asked Peggy, with eyes that were turquoise wells of amaze. "The view is splendid from that room. Hasn't she the dome of St. Peter's? You know I'd have taken it for myself, only that's the cold side of the house. Cynthia doesn't mind the chill, but I'm wretched unless I'm fairly warm."

"But there are no keys, as you know."

"What a fuss you make, Arthur! I believe you're only really human when you're flying!" she said, with good-tempered criticism. "On solid ground you are the most conventional!"

"But it *doesn't* look well," he insisted, "and might cause talk!"

"Who'd talk? The Tuscan cook who comes in the morning? Yaco, who, in his detached, Japanese way, despises us as he waits on us, while thinking of his country and his ancestors? My maid? Poor, old, stupid Germaine!" She shrugged her chubby shoulders. "Cynthia is my friend, and you, besides being my husband, have the regulation Saxon conscience. So cut out these heroics."

They looked each other fully in the eyes. Husband and wife, yet no more than tactful, lukewarm friends, edging on enmity! They both knew this, but since appearances were being kept up it was neither well bred nor politic to put it into speech. But she wondered if he had divined just how she would have enjoyed bearing the title of Lady McGregor as wife of big, quiet Rab, who would always adore her in the slavelike way that her really exacting nature, masked in an appearance of downiness, demanded. And he wondered if she had come to see that, instead of a passing fancy, Cynthia was deep in his heart, kept there warm, and sweet, and pure—filling him with the best feeling he had ever known—a tender and hopeless love. And they both wondered what the end would be.

"At any rate," he said, in conclusion, "I don't like it. Visitors might find it out. Besides, you should have told Cynthia."

"How do you know I happened *not* to tell her?" she asked, with big, childish eyes, wide open. "Since you saw her go *in*—she hasn't come *out!*"

He was enraged at himself for the slip and ignored the question.

"There's another room. I'll take that. Yaco can move me this afternoon."

"Yaco will do nothing of the sort," she said, in a tone that was both exact and languid. "I've had that as a storeroom and a sewing room for a fortnight past." She swept into the hall, shrug-

ging up her furs. "Go back to the clouds if you're afraid of a door without a key. We were quite placidly happy till you came." She laughed out loud in her big, unctuous way, as she went down the stairs. "Or stay, if you like—and I'll tell Cynthia to have the bureau pushed over so that it's a rampart."

The jesting words only made his helplessness increase, for he knew that, because of the corner-wise position of the narrow door, and the cumbersome dimensions of every piece of ancient furniture in the room, even this could not be done as a sop to conventionality.

After this he and Cynthia felt that they were walking on thin ice without danger signs displayed. At the first opportunity for a confidential talk, Arthur set out plans for their future conduct: As she had arranged with Humphrey to remain, it would look better to stay on, but they would be alone as little as possible. Cynthia might go to the hangars and see his monoplane, but not once—although Peggy kept lightly suggesting it—would he take her off in it to a tête-a-tête far above the many steeples; they would keep close to McGregor and Peggy; they would be strong, watchful, and sensible in every smallest particular, giving calumny no grain of food on which it might live. And, after this self-persecution, this added pain that need not have been, good-by would be spoken again, with London and safety for Cynthia following, and the whole sad world of land and air for him.

But they reckoned without Peggy. She was like a frolicsome, disobedient puppy, and would unexpectedly skirmish off with McGregor on day-long motor trips; would at other times leave them as if for a few moments, in a shop or church, and not put in an appearance at lunch or dinner. Thrown, willy-nilly, upon each other for companionship, they began to feel that the situation would not be made worse by getting such innocent enjoyment from these bittersweet hours as they could. And so, while love was carefully blotted from every act, it cried out in eyes, in handclasps that, while seeming casual, were really burning and agonizing, in broken words that rushed out at times against their might to hold them back.

After a few days of this they no longer watched Peggy. Love is the world's egoist. Besides, they were like people eating the last morsels of delectable food while facing famine.

"I think getting you here was just a ruse of Peggy's so she might run about with McGregor," Arthur said. "She's not the sort to fall in love, but she believes in small, circumspect marital separations. Food means such a lot to her, too, you see—and McGregor, who admires the affluent, Titian type of woman that Peg's developed into, enjoys watching her steady, unrelenting progress from *hors d'œuvres* to desserts."

So, while Peggy continued to lunch and dine sumptuously in the high places, with vintage wines as accompaniment, and drove in state on the Pincian Hill, and motored to Frascati for a special hothouse asparagus and cream puffs, they were forced to go their own way, which led far from hers. They frequented queer, little restaurants in the Strangers' Quarter; romantic, Tuscan inns, where they drank a sweet, pure wine out of little blue-and-white pitchers; old shops in twisting streets, where they reveled among antiquities—cameos, gems, engravings, illuminated volumes made by medieval monks, pearls, and old, tender-tinted silks. But, best of all was one day at Tivoli, when they lunched at the Sibilla, and then spent a long, yellowing afternoon among temples, cascades, and the cypresses in the gardens of the Villa d'Este.

It might be interesting some time for a sentimental statistician to try to compute how often love began, grew glorious, and ended, in a garden. We have data that the first of earth's romances ran a complete course there, until the Fates shut out two sinners. Something of this sort happened with Cynthia and Arthur on this mild, meditative day, which seemed to deny that the next sun-

rise would usher in Christmas. They found themselves in solitude, and walking slowly along an avenue of cypresses. The blackish-green shadow, the cascades' drowsy murmuring, and their own hearts' beating all went into the phrase that, after a long silence, left Arthur's lips.

"I can't endure this any longer, Cynthia." He had begun to speak while looking down at her with a somber, miserable craving, but at the guilty happiness riding over the reproach in her eyes, he glanced aside and said slowly: "I'm going away—an early start in the morning. By this time to-morrow I'll be a speck on the sky."

Those birds of Rome whose tender, minor songs are never still, even in winter, trilled hauntingly in the cypress aisles as Cynthia answered him faintly.

"That is best," she said, and they continued on, the silence between them thickening and throbbing with the meaning of the moment.

But it could not be sustained. Arthur stopped suddenly. His face had grown gray in a look of grief. He drew her sharply to a seat under the trees, and, with bitter defiance, faced her.

"Things are all wrong upon this earth! Your marriage and Humphrey's—a tragedy! Mine and Peggy's—a joke. Yet there's no way out for us. No way but one that would hurt and soil you—and which will never be!"

Cynthia's brave smile was only a nervous twitching of the lips. "Life ties us, Arthur, but *we* helped to make the knots, you know."

"Oh, yes, I know!" he said, in angry pain. "Eleven years ago, when I was twenty-one—a fool who knew nothing of myself or of life—I married Peggy's yellow hair, and dimples, and laugh. She married me because I was the most satisfactory choice at hand, and because it was a conventional conclusion to her fourth season—for six years we have almost hated each other. The situation between you and Humphrey is different in detail, but the same in effect. You were not meant for him!" His agony came in a torrent. "You were meant for *me*—and I for *you*—and we are to go separately all our days!" His hot hand sought hers and crushed it. His gaze burned upon her eyes until she lifted them to him.

"But we will—remember," she faltered hopelessly.

He lifted his other hand, and his fingers touched her cheek, then trailed around her neck. He had never before dared so much. He felt her quiver, and yield, and quickly she lay shuddering against him in desolation and joy. Heretofore reluctant and careful words had expressed the love that forced them apart. To-day they poured out their hearts, but through all that was said of their craving for each other, their rebellion against the network of conditions that divided them, there ran one intent and one word—"good-by"—as solemn as the old, old garden, with its broken gods and ancient secrets of other loves and partings.

"Good-by, my darling," Arthur whispered, after a last solemn kiss from his soul.

"Dearest, good-by."

"I will never forget, Cynthia—never."

The tears sparkled like crystals on her wax-white face.

"Nor I. Nor I."

They left Tivoli in silence—the silence of overwhelming meaning that abides with those returning from a grave. All had been said. Speech about the unimportant would have been like the lisp of water from a bucket after standing in wind-torn torrents. So they went back in silence; past the Campagna, mysterious always, but ghostly now in the twilight, and piercing in its melancholy—back to Rome and to the few hours left them.

There was to be a Christmas Eve dinner of eight at the apartment that night, with the opera following. When they entered, the servants were moving about, preparing for it, but Peggy was not visible. Too apathetic to ask, they assumed that she had not returned from her drive. Without looking at Arthur, Cynthia hurried into her room, goaded by that need of solitude for which grief

at floodtide shrieks. She fell upon the bed, crushed her face into the pillows, and a fury of tears came with strangled "Oh's!" It was not half spent when she heard the moan that old hinges give out. This jolted her to her elbow, presentiment thrilling coldly through her. While her breath halted she saw the narrow, panellike door sweep back very slowly.

Arthur's voice came to her: "Cynthia!"

She crouched, rigid, speechless.

"It kills me to hear you, Cynthia."

He came to the bed, seized the trembling, wet hand she had raised protestingly, and kissed it with a longing that filled her with a forlorn ecstasy.

"Oh, don't!" she said, in dreary wonder.

"I've hurt you enough now. But when I think of afterward!"

She sprang wildly to her knees. "Go back. If you were seen!"

"I'm going, dear," he said, retreated a step, and then paused to drink in the picture she made in her turbulent beauty and distress. "I couldn't hear you cry that way and not come—as if," he said, in a tender, dragging whisper, "you were weeping over the dead!"

His back was to the larger door that gave upon the hall. She faced it. As her look shot past him he heard a soft jar behind.

"Hurry!" Cynthia breathed, her face tense, her eyes a snare.

But it was too late. Kneeling in the center of the huge bed she seemed to freeze. The sight filled him with a sudden sickness, as he turned sluggishly and saw Peggy in undress, her lounging robe gathered into a pale-blue, chiffony bunch against her white breast, her hair tumbled. She was peeping in like an inquisitive child, and smiling drowsily.

"You people had better hurry. I fell asleep on the lounge in the sewing room. Do hurry, Arthur!" she said, pouting petulantly, and was gone.

With the click of the door they looked at each other, stupefied. That the thing could have happened at all was like the incredible rocking of a solid house on its foundation. Peggy's sleepy voice and amiable smile had helped to straighten the house, and relieved them, but they were left breathless and without any sense of security. As Arthur gained the door of his room, Cynthia scrambled in dismay to the floor.

"Do you think that she *thinks*——"

Before he could reply, and while his eyes darkened in a snarl of doubts, there was a faint brushing knock, and Germaine, carrying a pair of Cynthia's satin slippers, stepped in from the hall.

"Pardon!" she said, her face obviously made blank on seeing Arthur as, with accentuated discretion, she stepped out again.

"Call that woman back!" he said, between his teeth.

He disappeared into his room, to find Yaco, with masklike face and changeless, beady eyes, waiting for him.

"Well?" he snapped, in smothered fury, facing the Japanese. "What are you after?"

"It is to bring my master the hot water for shaving," Yaco piped, deposited the brass ewer, bowed stiffly, and retreated.

There were two ghosts at the dinner—the unseen Arthur and Cynthia. They waited in coldness and fright for Peggy's covert accusation; or for her scorn flashed at them in the rather coarse raillery to which she was sometimes given. But nothing of the sort happened. Peggy had seen her husband in Cynthia's room, but the fact had apparently made no impression on her. She was her usual self in every iota, neither more nor less good-natured than usual, dividing most of her attention between McGregor and a *risotto* with truffles that she eulogized in moist-mouthed rapture.

"She doesn't seem angry," Cynthia whispered to Arthur, after dinner, as they made ready for the theater. She lifted her tired, little face, relief upon it. "She isn't going to say anything—is she?"

"Seems not," he shrugged. "She's losing her sense of values. The feeding hour is all she thinks about. Still—keep your eyes open."

They went in four taxicabs to the

opera, and Arthur managed that he and Cynthia were separated during the drive. But afterward they found themselves in the same loge with two others of the party. Peggy, with Sir Robert, was on the other side of the horseshoe curve. Just before the light went down she waved gayly to them.

They had arrived in time for the second half of the program. It was "I Pagliacci." Its theme of love, and love, and *love* rose like a star flung up from earth on the waves of human madness and mistakes, to break at last into flaming splinters in the clown's song of passion and despair. Not music to help the fight against willful, earthly craving, to make enduring the cold, sweet vows of purity and strength. Cynthia and Arthur did not look once at each other through the dimness. They dared not.

When the curtain fell after the sinister phrase, *"The comedy is finished,"* and the lights leaped up, they saw that Peggy's box was empty. No one had noticed her going.

"She's probably outside. She gets giddy in theaters after dinner." Arthur said to Mrs. Pembroke, the other woman in the party, at whose villa outside Rome they were due for supper.

"But I saw her rising just after the curtain went *up,* and that's an hour ago," Mrs. Pembroke cried, as she twisted into her wrap. "Ten to one she's gone on with Rab, and is having a smoke in my garden."

But Peggy was not at the villa. They waited supper a half hour, and she did not appear. When it was almost over, a telephone message came from her. She was not well—had gone home.

"It's a man's voice," Mrs. Pembroke commented, as she hung up the receiver.

"Rab's, naturally," Arthur said easily.

"No, not Rab's, and not a servant's, I'm sure." Mrs. Pembroke looked puzzled. "I *seem* to have heard it before."

Over the three miles between the Pembrokes' villa and the Masons' apartment, Cynthia and Arthur sat almost silent and tense with suspense.

"It will be a mighty good thing for us when this night is over," Arthur said savagely, as they came in sight of the house. "By dawn I'll have vanished into the air, Peg and her damnable mysteries and contradictions left miles and miles behind!"

"She may be ill," Cynthia suggested, in the dogged voice of one trying to believe her own words.

"She may," Arthur said curtly, as the cab stopped.

After its whir had quite died in the solemn street, a sense of being separated from the rest of the world seemed to put accusing hands upon them. The feeling went with them up the echoing palace stairs to the top, and grew heavier as they entered the dark apartment. There was not even a flicker of light from distant rooms. It was intensely still. In the gloom they were like wraiths, nothing heard but their troubled breaths.

"Yaco always waits up," Arthur muttered with heat. "Why not to-night? He's a yellow snake—I feel it. I'll drag him out of bed."

He moved forward furiously and stumbled over a chair. Cynthia, groping after him, fell against him and throbbed there a moment, a bundle of jasmine-scented chiffon.

"Give me your hand," he said, and so led her into the dining room, to the huge mantel, where he knew matches and a candelabra stood.

The stillness was so thick that the splutter and leap of light following was as startling as the report of a pistol. The candles, placed on the table, blazed like a torch creating moving shadows in the corners. When the two wraiths looked into each others' faces, they found themselves pale mortals with human, distressed eyes.

"Wait here," said Arthur. "If Peg's asleep I'll wake her."

Cynthia dropped into a seat by the table. Her feet and hands were sickeningly cold; the blood kept rushing into her brain, and then falling back upon her heart. The lonely room was the abode of a *Menace*—the flames leaping in the glistening wood and the banked shadows stirring in the corners

belonging to it. As she listened to faint, echoing sounds—the opening and closing of heavy doors, dead silences between, and then Arthur's distinct, approaching footsteps, significantly solitary through the resounding rooms—she felt on the edge of hysteria. The sight of him was like the slight, final touch that made her lose all footing, and sent her plunging into panic, for he had the look of the hunted.

"Trapped," he said, in a queer, thick voice.

"Arthur—*what?*" Cynthia implored.

"Peggy's not here. She's *gone!*"

"Then—call Germaine!" she urged, dry-lipped. "Call Yaco!"

He came close to her, and she saw a paper rattling in his hand.

"I found this in my room," he said, and spread it out on the table, his fingers jolting as machinery does when it dies down automatically.

They bent over the paper together. The black, dashing, determined script romped like an infernal, pygmy procession before Cynthia's sight.

ARTHUR: After what I saw just before dinner, and which confirmed the suspicions I have had for some time, I cannot remain any longer under the same roof with you. I have gone and taken the servants who were witnesses of this insult to me. I retire in favor of Cynthia Harbison. She has my place. Let her keep it. Her presence in my house under the outrageous circumstances to which I refer will secure me an English divorce. I shall apply for it at once. PEGGY.

"Cleared out for *good!*" The cry came from Arthur, choked, but venomous, and followed by a curse that made Cynthia shudder. "Taken the servants! Left us here at dead of night—alone—like this! Damned and lost!" he said, clutching his head as he walked to and fro in the dark room. "That was her plan—damned and lost!"

Cynthia stood upright, her fingers closed round the top of a high chair. A long time seemed to pass, and she looked beyond the room, beyond Rome, to London—to London's strength and somberness; she seemed to smell the soot; saw the sullen Thames; the empty, solemn streets; and from a cab's dim corner heard Tommy Perkins' drawl: "She'll change to all claws and clutch." Well, she had! The claws were at work now, tearing, drawing blood. Standing there, she seemed to die.

"It's too horrible," she said, when words could come faintly over her whitened lips. "A woman *couldn't* do this."

Arthur was smiling with cold contempt, but he gave her such a look of pain it cut. "A woman couldn't—not one with real, red blood. *She* could—and will," he said, each word distinct and deepening in hopelessness.

"But it's a lie! Lies *don't* live. They can't! They can't!"

The silent room seemed to seize the pleading cry. It was beaten down in the high space, doubled on itself, and died away in a dribbling echo that made their solitude sinister. "A lie! And it will ruin me!"

"She *is* a liar—and your ruin is what she's pitilessly plotted for from the start."

As Cynthia tottered, he seized her tenderly in his arms. She shook him off with a piercing shriek, terror in her eyes, and stood away from him.

"No!" she said breathlessly, and then fiercely: *"No!"*

He looked at her with clearer vision, and intense sadness went over him as his arm fell heavily.

"You're right, Cynthia. Danger lies all about us. It's possible we might one day have fallen into a pit of ourselves, but no one—not even this abominable sneak and traitor—shall be able to fling us into one deliberately dug for us!" He held out his hand, and she came nearer. "Don't be afraid any more."

He placed her in a chair. She sank with the relaxed thud of a dead thing, flung her arms on the table, and laid her staring face upon them. In this threatening horror she was making a new acquaintance with herself. She thought of the garden with the dark cypresses, and the good-by spoken there. It was remote, unreal, like a happening to another person, and of which she had only

heard. And yet she had been sincere in her grief, had believed herself stripped of happiness. She knew better now. One bit of self-illumination after another flared in cold brightness before her. She saw that life, though holding a hopeless love, could be very bearable if she spent it as a well-established woman feeling the respect of the world warm upon her. She saw that losing Arthur would not mean losing everything; that good repute was terrifyingly precious; and that, in a material way, a sound ocean-going steamer, with Humphrey on the bridge, had solid advantages over the light, dancing craft she and Arthur would have to set sail in upon a tormented sea. She was ashamed of these truths, but she was honest.

"I'm not a bit like a heroine!" she burst out miserably, turning on her cheek and wringing her nose with the damp handkerchief she had twisted into a little rope. "You might as well know it, Arthur. I'm a coward. I can't face the world strong in the consciousness of innocence and all that, and take whatever comes. I'm just as frightened as I can be." She began to cry in a quiet, exhausted way. "I was willing to pay some price, for we *have* been to blame. But not *this* price. Oh, not this one! We don't deserve it." Her voice sank to a sickly shudder. "It's too terrible."

Arthur had pulled out a huge silver cigarette case. He longed to stroke Cynthia's stricken face, so he began to smoke with the nervousness of a man who must keep his hands busy.

"Tommy Perkins said he'd help me if anything went wrong," Cynthia rambled on miserably, voicing each plunging thought. "But, although he has a way of getting out of things that's simply uncanny—there's nothing that even *he* could do here!" She sat up, rigid. Under strained, reddened lids her eyes were wild. "We're finished, Arthur; I more than you, for the woman is—*gibbeted!*"

He bent toward her then.

"Cynthia, I mean to save you."

It was such a simple statement, and spoken so quietly, she answered it in a question voiced as simply:

"How, Arthur?"

"Air voyaging," he said, as a long gaze clung between them, "is still a very dangerous experiment. Lives are lost at it every day. Each time I set sail as a living man there's every chance that I come down a dead man."

She tried to stand up, trembling violently, and looking at him so piteously he passed his arm in protection around her shoulder. She did not repulse him then.

"That would be even crueller than this. You didn't mean it—you wouldn't! No, I won't be saved that way, Arthur. I could never forget it. I couldn't live after it!"

"But, Cynthia, you may as well face the truth. Peggy is going to get a quick divorce and marry McGregor. We might plead to her on our knees, try to touch her by every possible means—and she wouldn't budge. My *finish* is the one thing that would absolutely cut her claws and silence her. Nothing else. Don't you see, dear? Without doubt she's on her way to England now——"

The phrase broke sharply. It was like insanity to believe it, yet they seemed to have heard a groan and a yawn. Cynthia's fingers clutched Arthur's sleeve. When he made a convulsive movement forward she held him, frightened. The yawn came again, followed by a chuckling, drowsy voice through the stillness:

"Wrong! Quite, *quite* wrong, old top!"

Before them, on the threshold of the dark salon, Tommy Perkins swayed and blinked. He was in creased dress clothes, his hair roughened. He smiled at them and hugged himself in a chilly way.

"Got a cigarette?" he asked plaintively. They did not move. They seemed stone. He blinked again. "Good Lord—you'd make fine illustrations for the yearly report of the board of health—two prematurely discharged hospital patients!"

Cynthia gave a fluttering, wild cry

then, and took a few steps toward him. She paused again, and waited for his next words with an anxiety that was like some evil thing sucking her breath away. But Arthur had turned ghastly; rage filled him. The night had been horribly cruel, but at any rate it had had the dignity of tragedy. Tommy's grotesque appearance on the scene was the smear of sacrilege.

"How did you get in here?" he demanded, in a small but threatening voice. "What are you doing here? Are you drunk?"

"No, just stiff," Tommy answered mildly, rubbing his legs. "You notice that I don't move with my natural, antelopelike grace. Give me a cigarette, for God's sake! I've smoked all mine." He saw Arthur's case open on the table, pounced on it, and, in a few seconds, had the delectable, cylindrical fragment burning between his lips. "Ah, that's good!"

"What are you here for, Perkins?" Arthur insisted, though Cynthia had crept to him and was pulling nervously and warningly at his sleeve.

"Wait—wait!" she faltered. "Maybe——"

"What are you *here* for?" Arthur said again.

"Watch me for the next hour!" said Tommy. He pulled out a chair, sank into it with a huge sigh, and waved a big, white hand in a large generosity toward another. *"Asseyaz-vous,* Arthur, and stop scowling. You're going to be so grateful to me in a few minutes that you'll want to *kiss* me—or you would if you were as Italian as you look! But stand back!" he said, and drew a circle around himself with the cigarette between his fingers, as he stretched at insolent full length under the table. "Get me food, first. Dinnerless to-night I played a triple rôle—Sherlock Holmes, Romeo, and a sort of mild, twentieth-century Cæsar Borgia. And all for you two—so *feed* me! What I won't do to a plate of sandwiches! Also, you might stay this sinking feeling with about three Scotches and sodas." As they remained motionless, he gave a frantic lurch, and laid his open hand flatly above the point of the triangle made by his low-cut dress waistcoat. "Get busy! Like Pepys, I cannot talk 'when empty.'"

Arthur and Cynthia drifted away separately to obey him. They scarcely spoke to each other. Between kitchen and dining room they passed and repassed, bearing food, siphon, and decanter—all to satisfy the racking hunger of Tommy Perkins. But, though they were silent, their thoughts were in a burning riot. Did his appearance mean anything vital? Had he done something to help them? Had he something happy to tell? There was electricity in the air—that they could feel—but was there *hope,* too?

Tommy attacked the food and drink as if attending to serious business. A nautical mood had for the moment seized him, and, except for brief thanks like "Good, my hearties!" and "What cheer—what cheer!" as he made the soda whiz, he said nothing. Not until he sprawled in saturated satisfaction, just dampening his blond mustache with the twinkling amber fluid, did facts begin to trickle from him. Cynthia sat very near him. In the carved, cavernous chair she looked frail and jaded, but with wonder and hope in her plaintive eyes. Arthur leaned against one of the dividing pillars, furiously smoking and heavily silent, his eyes upon the woman he was ready to die to save.

Tommy began his story with a few flat sentences. He had been afraid of Peggy. He had known for some time that she was keen on McGregor. He had had the instinct that her invitation to Cynthia meant "business."

"You see," he said placidly, turning to Cynthia, "you've been such a mad, tearing little flirt with Arthur this past season it occurred to me that she might see you as an easy mark to fit in with her plans—a ripping burnt offering! When Humphrey reached London I had a long talk with him, and then I felt *sure* of it! I at once set the machinery of my mighty brain going, and—ergo! —I followed you here. It was dandy

I always liked detective fiction, and here I was on the job."

He waited and took a neat, crescent-shaped bite from a cold-partridge sandwich.

"Humphrey?" said both his listeners. *"Humphrey?"*

"How could Humphrey——" Cynthia began.

"That's *just* what I expected you to ask!" Tommy confided cozily. "If one of you hadn't, you'd have cramped my style." His light-blue eyes took on something of a monkeyish pleasure. "Here goes! I hate giving a lady away, but when she cheats at the game she's got to be handled without gloves. Arthur," he said crisply, "four years ago, before Humphrey married Cynthia, your wife wrote him letters—well, letters that no married lady should ever write! She wanted to start a sort of affinity partnership, limited, with him. Humphrey, it appears, met the suggestion with the vivacity of a frozen flounder on a fishmonger's marble slab. Compared to him St. Anthony was probably a freshman in the art of turning down ladies. Has Peg had it in for him ever since?" He smiled at them. "I ask you. You are both at present in a situation brought about by that sweet woman's humanity and tender heart—so I *ask* you again—*did* she hate Humphrey? Oh, no, *not* at *all!*"

Arthur's gaze became rooted on Tommy, and gleamed with a purpose.

"But has Humphrey those letters still?"

"Fortunately, yes. You see, they fluttered after him from port to port when he was traveling in America. During a change of valets they were mislaid. When Peg wanted them afterward he got out of it by saying they were destroyed. Only lately, and after he had come to see quite through the lady, and to be a little afraid of her, he came across them, and he kept them." He looked with abrupt seriousness into Cynthia's widened, spellbound eyes. "Has your left ear burned lately? It should have, because Humphrey and I talked of you steadily one night for five hours over supper at the Savoy, until the lights were put out and the waiters frowned us into the Strand."

As Cynthia made a tentative movement toward him, a question on her lips, he held up a limp hand.

"Of him—anon! Now let us get back to little Willy. On arriving here," he said, and a contagious triumph from him communicated itself to his listeners, "I cast myself for the Sherlock part of which I spoke—dressed as a nearsighted student in baggy velveteen, with long, ebon, Leonardo da Vinci locks, and clouded eyeglasses. In this I played the Romeo part, and my Juliet was—*Peggy's maid!*"

"Germaine? Impossible!"

"I can't believe——"

"Of course you can't believe it," Tommy said, becoming feeble with controlled laughter and wiping his eyes with the corner of a huge handkerchief. "Yes, even Germaine—forty-four, rooted in spinsterhood, sour, and suspicious—went down before that fatal charm of mine that you may—or may not—have noticed. A few dinners at a cheap table d'hôte, which she frequented, where they gave you much navy-blue wine, and spaghetti in five-pound courses—and I had Germaine pumped dry. Afterward I bought Yaco for a price down. Peggy's little plot was laid, as a map, before me." He stood up, leaned heavily on the back of a chair, and beamed in a state of fatuous self-laudation. "I hear you saying—*clever!* But wait, dearies; we come to to-night! Oh, Peg had everything ready. From the moment Arthur was such a silly ass as to step into your room, Cynthia, her daintily devilish scheme progressed like a forest fire in a drought. McGregor sent his trunks to the station early in the evening, and took a train for London as soon as they left the theater. Peggy, sure you were on your way to Molly Pembroke's villa, came back here and got hers ready with the help of—*my paid spies.*"

He stood up and stretched himself gloriously.

"So, there you are!" he cried, and

lighted another cigarette. "Neat—wasn't it?"

The stillness held in the room. Cynthia sat, thinking. Arthur roused himself and held out his hand.

"You've been splendid, old man. Sorry I was nasty. Thank you for all you've done. You can prove the whole beastly plot to trap us. But——" And he paused, frowning miserably.

"If——" Cynthia said faintly.

"But? If?" queried Tommy. "Both parts of English grammar. But, if—*what?*"

"If she *tells* her story," said Cynthia, with sick eyes, "it will be ruin just the same. Even if we fight and win—*speech,* you know, is like pitch, and it will stick to us. She'll talk as soon as she gets to London!"

The agony in the last phrase made Tommy straighten. While holding his cigarette between two fingers, he placed one of the candles in Cynthia's hands and helped her stand up.

"Tiptoe into the farther salon and have a look," he said, grinning.

Red rushed over her face, her eyes grew radiant.

"The farther salon?" she murmured breathlessly, and went toward the half-open door.

Arthur started to follow her, but Tommy held him back.

"Not you, my son!"

"Why not?"

"Well, it wouldn't be fair. You see, Peg's asleep in there on the divan—so *fast* asleep that her mouth's wide open. After all, she's a woman—*and she never looked plainer!*"

There was the fluff-fluff of chiffon, and Cynthia, with soft-flying steps, returned. Her face was transfigured, she almost flung the candle to Arthur, and threw her arms so violently around Tommy he sank backward into a chair.

"She's—*there!*" she murmured, like a wildly joyous child, and kissed him. "Tommy," she said, crying while she laughed, "you've kept your word. Oh, you *are* splendid! Every door seemed shut on us, and you've opened them all. Oh, my dear Tommy! My dear, dear friend."

Tommy looked across Cynthia's infolding arms at Arthur.

"What did I tell you? Am I *it?*"

In the talk that followed, they learned how thoroughly, under his mask of frivolity, he had worked to prevent their social damnation: The "Cæsar Borgia" part of his program consisted in having Yaco put a strong Japanese sleeping powder into some champagne that Peggy drank after her return from the theater, with the result that she fell fast asleep over the trunks. The letter she had left ready to mail to Mrs. Pembroke, no doubt containing her account of the situation, and through which the scandal would have leaked out over Rome the following day, was not sent. Instead, Tommy had telephoned the message of her illness. Before allowing the servants to go he had insisted on their signed statements of the real facts; and both of them, on departing, had told the *portière* that their mistress had sent them away, was in her apartment, and would follow them to London the next day.

"Safe! Absolutely safe!" Cynthia and Arthur cried this out to each other in a look while stammering their thanks to Tommy.

Over and over in happiness, gratitude, humility, they insisted that he had saved them. He said "Rats," and declared that he had had "the time of his life."

"You've been a bully general, old man!" said Arthur. "We'll consult you. What's the next move?"

Tommy sat back, hugged his knees, and looked him straight in the eye.

"What was it you had meant to do, if Peg hadn't got you into this mess?"

"I was going off in the monoplane at daybreak."

"Then *keep* to that idea." Tommy counseled, with a long, minatory finger raised. "It's brilliant! Fly, birdie, fly!"

"Except that Cynthia will be here alone with you."

Tommy cut short the objection by standing up with decision.

"She won't. Humphrey is on his way. We've exchanged five long telegrams to-day. I expect him here any moment now—so get busy with the good-by."

He went to the salon door, paused in the shadow, and looked back at the two standing mutely in the candlelight.

"I never take advice myself, and I hate giving it. But I'd make this a *real* good-by, if I were you. Change yourselves into friends. It will pay in the long run. You and Peg, Arthur, can get away from each other legally somehow later on, without wrecking any woman, and you can get a lot out of life afterward." He looked more serious than they had ever seen him as he added: "But I'd tell Cynthia something different, if she'd let me."

"Tommy!" she cried, and went to him, her hands held out in a gesture of childish obedience. "Tell me *anything!* Ask me to do something for you, Tommy."

He looked down at her hands as if counting the ten, small fingers.

"Give Humphrey another chance. You really mean a lot to him. I know he's going to ask you to travel with him for a year. Do!" he said wistfully. "It's worth a try." He patted her hands paternally, and turned to enter the dark room. But he fell back again in a convulsion of silent laughter. "I say!" he whispered to them both. "Won't it be a *scream* to see Peg wake up and find Humphrey, Cynthia, and me there sitting beside her, all wishing her a merry, *merry* Christmas?" He wagged his head helplessly and bent over. "My word!" he said, and disappeared.

The two left looked at each other, shadow and silence around them. They had come close to drowning, had fairly felt the suction of the fatal ninth wave, and, like those returning to life after tasting death, their eyes were faint, their pulses feeble. They were only the ghosts of the lovers who had rebelled and sorrowed.

"Arthur, I mean to try—again," Cynthia said, and let him take her cold hands gently.

"Good-by."

"No," she said sharply, "we said good-by to-day! Let this be good morning! Look—*oh, look!*"

She made a rush past him to one of the windows, and knelt there, her face raised. Before he went out of the room, and out of her life, he stood for a moment gazing past her head at Rome. The first light of Christmas morning was making a glory of the dome of St. Peter's. From far, far away came the high-pealing ecstasy of choir boys' singing.

MISTLETOE

After Balder, who had been slain by a dart of the mistletoe, was restored, the gods caused all in their company to pass under a branch of mistletoe, bestowing a kiss, to attest that the plant should nevermore do injury.

HE that was slain by the mistletoe dart—
His breath comes again, revives his great heart;
And the plant of all ill no more shall do harm,
But on earth, as in heaven, it works a sweet charm.

For under that bough, with its ivory fruit,
Immortals and mortals now safely salute;
It was Death's before—that mystical bough—
'Tis Love's, by a kiss made consecrate now!

EDITH M. THOMAS.

DELICATESSEN DAYS

By

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

ON his uptown way home from business one May afternoon, Lindsey Mordell found his swift, impatient automobile brought to a standstill in a snarl of traffic in the neighborhood of Astor Place. Some accident had tied up all vehicles for many blocks.

"Can't we snake our way across to Washington Square, and go up Fifth Avenue?" he asked his chauffeur. But even this proved impracticable, and presently, as if obeying some sudden thought which had brought a curious look of boyishness into his rather cynical, man-of-the-world face—"Never mind," he added. "I will walk. Remember to be on hand at seven."

Then, stepping out of his car, he had edged his way through the congested wheels till, having gained the sidewalk, he turned the corner into Eighth Street, and disappeared from the wondering eyes of his chauffeur, not a little mystified at his master's choosing to go on foot in such a neighborhood. However, like a sensible servant, he wisely concluded that it was no business of his. Rich men did as they pleased the world over, particularly in New York.

Meanwhile, Mordell was leisurely walking westward through a quarter whose shop fronts and window displays witnessed the cosmopolitanism of its inhabitants. Stuffed bears of a very moldering antiquity advertised Russian furriers; mysterious signs in Yiddish invited the hungry Israelite—not too invitingly; Hungarian brass commodities gave here and there a touch of brightness to the drab street, which seemed mainly given up to restaurants and bakeries in every language, mysteriously lurking in basements and cellars. Italian volubility was particularly in the air, and as he neared University Place a faint wafture of absinth and the rattle of dominoes through the open windows of a café reminded him that he had suddenly stepped into France. Only a few yards from Broadway—yet what a different world! A world, it might seem, of memories to Mordell, from the wistful, almost expectant look that had come into his face as he continued to walk on with a certain at-homeness in his manner, as of one anciently familiar with the region.

Yes, as a matter of fact, Mordell knew the quarter very well, though he had not looked on its quaint shabbiness for years—had once, in fact, known every stick and stone of it; and as he walked he was evidently on the watch for unforgotten landmarks. There was the little shop, with its sign "Artists' Materials," where he and some of his fellow art students had bought their drawing paper, their pencils and brushes, and so forth; there the little Frenchman's where they used to buy their cheap wine; and, ah! there was the little milliner's shop, hardly bigger than a bandbox, where he had often stood with a beautiful young girl at his side, looking in at some newly created masterpiece of Madame "Ma-

rie's" deft fingers. Long, long ago was all that, blown far away on the wind, buried deep in the drift of the years. For Mordell had long since ceased to be an art student, and had belonged to Wall Street these many years, was president of great companies, and sat solemnly on important boards—the dreams of Art sternly banished from his life. Yet there were hours, particularly in the springtime, when those dreams would steal timidly back and stand with great, sad eyes at the door of his heart.

This was such an hour, and he gave himself up unresistingly to their gentle spell. He had never quite forgiven himself for his renunciation of them in obedience to his father's stronger will. Sometimes he fancied that, having won from the world of reality all he needed of it, he would be able to return to the lost dreamland. But in his heart he sadly realized that Art survives no such compromises. You must take her for all in all, or not at all. She would miss in him, also, a certain old companion—his youth; for when Art had gone away, weeping, youth had seemed to vanish, too.

Still, this May afternoon, with the reminiscent fragrance of spring flowers, all seemed possible. Yes, perhaps even he would come upon her, as he had first met her, doing her modest marketing—if, indeed, the same little shop was still in existence. His heart beat high as his steps brought him nearer and nearer to the place, and he could hardly keep back a cry as at last he came upon it, veritably the same little shop, in the same place, after all these years, with the same tempting display of humble delicacies in the window as of old—succulent hams, cheeses in silver paper, cylinders of sausage cut across to display their tesselated insides of black-and-white marble, those black-green, fresh olives on which the proprietor prided himself, and of which she was so fond, smoked fish from strange, far-away seas, oddly shaped bottles and jars containing mysterious luxuries from the ends of the earth—a German delicatessen shop, neither more nor less. Smile if you will, refined and supercilious reader, but here of all places was for Lindsey Mordell the shrine of everlasting romance. He was due to dine at Delmonico's that evening, but what would he not have given to be back fifteen years, just entering that vulgar little shop to buy the dinner he would presently eat in his garret studio a block or two away!

For it had been just such a May morning, fifteen years ago, that he had come upon the Loveliest Face in the World—so it had seemed then, so it still seemed—standing waiting her turn to be served, an apparition of contrast among Italian workmen buying sandwiches, weary-faced women with shawls over their heads, anxiously economical, and barefooted children prematurely wise, while the great, good-natured German and his buxom wife bustled about behind the counter, slicing this and weighing that; both so fat that one wondered how they managed to move around, squeezed as they were between the counter laden with dishes and the shelves at their back crowded with every conceivable can and package dizzily balanced one over the other. When the Loveliest Face and he had come to know each other, and sometimes did their shopping together, they used to compare the kind, fat, perspiring creatures to two hippopotami at close quarters in their tank at the zoo.

That first meeting in that incongruous setting had set up an immediate silent camaraderie between them. They were both beings from another world, both out on the same simple errand. Right away this had seemed to set up a sort of intimacy between them, and, though they did not speak to each other on that first occasion, Mordell carried home to his garret as a sort of sacred secret that that ethereal being nurtured all that rainbow beauty—on sliced bologna sausage, Gruyère cheese, and fresh olives. So much already he knew about her, and somehow it seemed to be wonderful knowledge.

Next they had seen each other at the life class, and a glance of half recognition had flickered toward him like a moonbeam across the dusty classroom.

She was an art student, too. What more natural, then, than that, when next they met in the little delicatessen shop, a tentative, whimsical smile should make them acquainted?

He had begged leave to walk with her to her door. She, too, worshiped the Goddess of Art in a little garret studio, shared with another girl votaress of the goddess. The distance to her door was absurdly short. They filled it chiefly with the small talk of the art school. Yet when he had at last to say good-by, it was wonderful how long they had seemed to know each other. He had even courage slyly to add, as he held her hand at parting:

"I, too, am devoted to bologna sausage."

And she had gayly laughed back at him:

"Then, of course, we must have been born for each other!"

Adorable answer! How clearly he could hear her saying it again after all those years! Just the light jest of a merry girl; yet who can foresee the eternal issues involved in the frank confession of a natural fondness for bologna sausage?

You see, humor had entered into their love from the beginning, and there is nothing like a shared sense of humor to bring about a serious attachment. It is the lost laughter once enjoyed together that makes the deepest ache of the years as it is blown back to us on the wind of memory, all the fun and frolic of loving, the light-hearted nonsense and childishness of it. The great, solemn moments repose in marble urns, watched over by the stars. The pomp of death is about them. But the moments when we were plainly foolish, moments of "silly sooth" together, those never die, but haunt the lonely heart forever. How they suddenly catch one by the throat some summer day, and fill one with sudden tears and hopeless longing!

So it was with Mordell this May afternoon as he peered, half afraid to look, into the little store, and at length found courage to enter and take his place as of old among the waiting customers. Ah, yes, there was the same enormous, good-natured couple wedged in behind the counter, busily slicing and weighing and ejaculating "How?" and "So!" as fifteen years ago. Save that they were a little fatter, though that had hardly seemed possible then, and were growing a little gray, they seemed hardly to have changed at all. Time was chiefly evident in the presence of a jovial lump of a daughter, proudly emulating her mother in rosy bulk. One would have said that the shop would have had to be enlarged to hold her, too. But no, she laughingly managed to fit in, and the three leviathans worked away good-temperedly, evidently enjoying the joke of it all.

Mordell reflected, as he stood and watched them, on the strangeness of the fact that all those fifteen years, so full of varied, many-colored activities for him, these good Germans had been hard at it doing the same simple thing —slicing ham, and the sacred bologna, and weighing out potato salad day in and day out, from morning to bedtime. And little did they think, as he stood there, that it was not a customer for delicatessen, this fine gentleman in a polite attitude of waiting, but a pilgrim to a shrine—that to his eyes the ham wore a halo, and the bologna sausage was circled by rainbows. The waiting customers seemed to him to have a meaning "too deep for tears." They were surely the very same customers. All seemed the same, and surely if he waited on there would presently be another among them, a being made of flowers and fragrance and starry eyes. Surely all else could not be the same, and she for whom alone it all existed be missing! He had only to wait a little longer, and would he not hear a voice like the morning stars asking for —bologna sausage, Gruyère cheese, and fresh olives?

He had had a first thought to recall himself to them, to awaken the echoes of the past even thus preposterously by their homely, fat-witted aid. But as he looked at them, untouched by sentiment as one of their own hams, he realized the tearful absurdity of the idea.

As well attempt a Chopin nocturne on a jew's-harp. How could these healthy, bacon-minded animals realize that they had once been the unwitting assistants at a fairy tale? No, he would escape before his turn came, for she was evidently doing her marketing in some other store this afternoon.

But it was already too late.

"How?" asked the big man, brandishing his knife, waiting to serve him.

Disconcerted, he looked around helplessly, wondering what in the world to ask for. Presently he made a wild grab at a can on a near-by shelf.

"Give me this," he said foolishly; and a moment later found himself in the street, alone, with a can of Regal Baking Powder! His exit had not passed without comment from the triumvirate of fat. Certainly it seemed an odd purchase for so fine a gentleman to make. A can of baking powder!

After that he sauntered off, with an amused, sad smile, toward Washington Square, and sat himself down on one of the seats in the little park, with the can of baking powder at his side. What on earth was he to do with it?

So absurd was his mood that he could not bring himself to throw it away. It had already acquired a certain sacredness. Was it not humbly related now to bologna sausage? And then his thoughts went wandering off again. How unconsciously true her adorable answer had been! Once again he heard himself saying:

"I, too, am devoted to bologna sausage."

And once again he heard her laugh back:

"Then, of course, we must have been born for each other!"

Ah, yes, indeed! Had they not been born for each other? He was sure of it then. He was even surer of it today. How soon that common interest in bologna sausage had developed into other common interests no less wonderful—books and music and painting and theaters—the whole fascinating world—was there anything in it that they couldn't share with an intimacy of understanding no others could know?

But most wonderful of all was their common interest in each other. In that was the inexhaustible marvel of life. Just to be together. In that was summed up all the enchantments and achievements of existence. Together over a simple meal in some dingy Italian restaurant. Was there ever wine so superb as the red vinegar thrown in so generously with the forty-cent table d'hôte? Together at some vaudeville show, laughing like children at clowns, or magnificently silly music-hall ditties. Or together high up near the ceiling at the grand opera, swept away together on the strong tides of "Tristan and Isolde."

Or, perhaps best of all, sitting together, as he was sitting alone now, watching the strange flotsam and jetsam of humanity, delighting in those whimsicalities of "character" of which they could never tire. Yes, it was all that laughter shared together that had been the deep, eternal bond. It was that which came back with such an ache in the heart this May afternoon.

He arose with a sigh. He would go and look again at the outside of the old house where she had lived—high up in what she and her pretty friend had called their "distinguished garret." What a charming bower they had made of it, with their bits of old furniture and strays of old silver, picked up in exciting expeditions among the curiosity shops of Fourth Avenue, and even the weirder nooks and corners of the East Side. How often he and she had gone together on such adventures. Everything they did together was an adventure. His home in Fifty-fourth Street was filled with the priceless romantic wreckage of Europe. But what were they to him compared with an old silver spoon, or a brass candlestick, or a cut-glass pitcher breathlessly brought to earth in some Bowery junk shop?

At length he found himself in her street. The old house was still there, shabbier, indeed, than of old, but still wearing an air of dingy distinction on its old colonial front. Up there was her quaint dormer window. How often it

had framed for him her lovely face as she had waved him good-by. Now, alas! the slatternly figure of an ancient Italian woman obscenely filled its sacred frame, and on the doorstep an indescribably dirty little Italian boy, with bright eyes that defied all possible dirt, sucked ecstatically on a lollipop of celestial stickiness. He had planned to have the courage, with circumstances propitious, to ask leave to look again at the little, haunted room. But before that old Italian crone and her sticky offspring his courage quailed. His memories were not proof against such disconcerting realities.

So, removing to a safer distance, he stood and eyed the place of vanished dreams. How often she had flowered for him in that doorway! How often passed up and down those steps, spreading fragrance from her petallike skirts! And the last time her feet had touched them—how vividly he remembered that! Still he could see the cab waiting for her at the door, with the trunks already piled upon it. For she was off to Europe to study her art in one of the famous schools of Paris. He was to see her off at the steamer. How fresh the heartbreak of it all was! How vivid still the sad journey together, all wet with tears as they had sat clinging together, with protestations of eternal faithfulness, lost to all the clangor of the streets as the cab rumbled remorselessly on to those estranging docks. Ah, why had she gone? Why had he let her go? And now the street remembered nothing of it all. In its place sat an Italian ragamuffin sucking at a lollipop.

With her going, all his ambition, too, seemed to have gone. His art seemed no longer of any account. It had grown to be but a part of her. Without her, he seemed to have no vocation. One career was as another. And as the loneliness of her absence grew upon him his courage to keep up the old fight with his father failed him. What did it matter now? So he had given up his garret, and Wall Street had won, and the prose of life had begun to swallow up the dream. All the dreams but one—the deathless dream of her. He had her letters still to keep his soul alive. Adorable letters! Quaint, whimsical, tender, fairy-tale things! In each one of them she seemed to mail herself and step out of the envelope, shaking her fragrant skirts, as much as to say, with her big child's eyes: "Am I so very much crumpled with my voyage?"

"Dear delicatessen days!" he sighed to himself as he turned his steps uptown to keep his dinner engagement at Delmonico's.

On reaching home, he let himself in quietly with his latchkey, and, making his way up the broad, silent staircase, tapped at his wife's door.

"May I come in?" he called.

A sweet voice from within bade him enter.

His wife was seated before her dressing table, and her maid was putting on the finishing touches to her evening toilet.

"Can you spare me a minute?" he asked, bending down and lightly kissing her glorious hair.

"A minute, that's all, you bad boy." And he nodded to her maid to leave them alone. "We shall be late, you know. Wherever have you been?"

And a being still made of flowers and fragrance and starry eyes turned up her face to be kissed.

"I have been on a sentimental journey," he answered. "Took a fifteen years' spin in my 'time machine.' And, see, I have brought you back a souvenir!"

And he placed the can of Regal Baking Powder in her lap.

"You'll have to explain the joke," she said, handling the odd package with a puzzled expression. "I give it up."

"Yes," he rejoined, with mock sadness. "I thought you had forgotten. I waited ever so long in the little shop, but you never came."

"The little shop! What can you mean?"

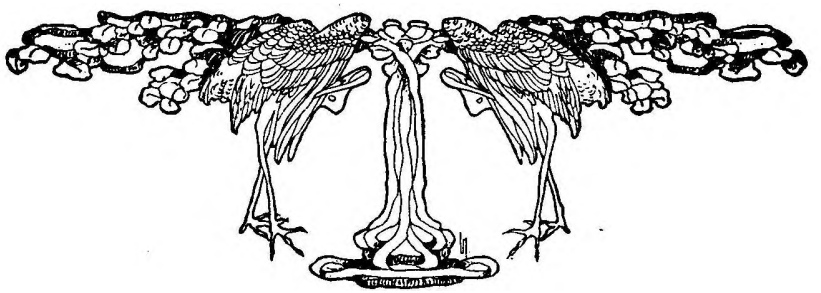
"I suppose we are too fine nowadays," he answered, "to remember—'Bologna sausage, Gruyère cheese, and fresh olives'!" And he imitated her

voice as she had said those sacred words fifteen years ago.

"You don't mean our little store! You don't mean to say you have been there, you dear, sentimental darling!"

"Do you really think that we were born for each other, after all?" he asked as he took her beautiful face in his arms and looked into her deep blue eyes, misted over with tears.

Yes, for Lindsey Mordell it was still the Loveliest Face in the World.



WITH CHRISTMAS CHEER

UNDECKED must fare my tiny attic room
By rubied holly boughs this Christmastide,
Nor snowy taper light the winter gloom
Where Poverty and I peer side by side.
And yet within its murky gable drear,
By dingy city hovels prisoned fast,
There gleams, alight with love and Christmas cheer,
Each unforgotten Christmas of the Past.

Their Yule logs flicker bright upon the wall,
Their well-known footsteps climb my narrow stair,
Their voices through the heartsick stillness call,
Their fir-sweet fragrance greets me everywhere.
No happy child with eager face aglow,
Close-clinging to its busy mother's hand,
Whose joy I have not felt, and still may know,
Whose breathless whisper fail to understand.

Oh, God, for this Thy gift of memories dear,
That Time can neither dim nor take away,
For Love, and Home, and warm-lit Christmas cheer
I bring Thee grateful thanks this Christmas Day.
Undecked must fare my tiny attic room
Where Poverty and I sit side by side,
But holly-wreathed, together through the gloom,
The Past and I keep joyful Christmastide.

MARTHA HASKELL CLARK.

OSWONG

BY

Nalbro Bartley

"I MADE them with kimono sleeves," said Helen thoughtfully. "Linao has a charming neck and shoulder for that kind of pattern."

Caldwell chuckled. "I suppose you've concocted all kinds of filmy tea gowns and matinée frocks out of abacá cloth," he teased.

She nodded. "There isn't any use in a Moro princess keeping the traditions of five hundred years ago—not when she's to be married and the United States government has seen fit to present her with a beautiful sewing machine, just to show they appreciate her father's friendliness."

"I suppose not," Caldwell smiled broadly. "Only, it seems funny to think of you in a Moro palace, stitching away on a princess' wedding clothes. Nine months ago, your husband and I lay in the cogon grass all night waiting to rush the sultan's fort and kill him if we could."

"The sewing machine is a much better way of making friends," murmured Lieutenant Craig, Helen's husband. "Besides, it amuses Helen. If she didn't have that to play with, she might try to start a suffrage club or something like that. Then we'd sure have to ship her back to Manila."

"Was the ardent radjamunda present at any of the tryings-on?" asked Blake, the army surgeon.

"He was permitted to look for three minutes at Linao in her wedding dress. I don't care what the custom is regarding the treatment of future brides. When I was married, I was the one who gave permission to be stared at by an impertinent young man who tried to kiss me."

Craig looked blandly innocent. "You aren't going to try growing orange blossoms, are you?" he asked. "There's a few of the New York items that you'll have to let slide."

"I'll omit the wedding march and 'Oh, Promise Me,' played with a violin obligato while Linao stumbles over her vows. But I'm going to insist on a wedding veil and a wreath of some sort. And Linao has almost promised not to black her teeth."

Caldwell sat upright. "Mrs. Helen," he said solemnly, "if you do that, I'll put it in the Manila reports."

"Sometimes," she answered soberly, "I really think the radjamunda likes Linao. He looks at her—reverently. Don't laugh. If you are flattering yourselves you are out here civilizing people, why don't you flatter yourselves into believing that you are giving them big things as well as fear of your rifles?"

"We are," her husband assured her, "a sewing machine and a capable operator who boldly rips up lengths of choice hemp and makes a natty walking suit with frilly collar and cuffs."

Young Moore, the shavetail, came up the steps and sank wearily in a chair. "I've just come from Lung Lee's. He's the sorest Chino the island ever harbored. Talk about rows! He's been

trying to convince me for two hours that he was not smuggling opium, never intended smuggling opium, and was not going to pay his hard-earned money for a fine. But I got it."

"Lee's dream of happiness," Caldwell explained to Mrs. Craig, "is like that of all the rest of his kind—to get enough money, never mind how, and to go back to China to bask in the worship of his ancestors."

"And he has smuggled opium?"

"Bushels of it—and would. We've wiped him pretty dry of money now." Young Moore pointed to a regular who was lugging money bags toward the rear of the house. "That'll mean a raise in pay for some one, or a new schoolhouse."

Caldwell chuckled. "One of you boys'll develop some sudden fatal sickness and have to be sent to the hills on a hunting trip. Good work, little Moore."

"I met the Radjamunda Pindino," added the shavetail. "He gave me a Fifth Avenue bow and told me the lady at the post was making Linao a gorgeous trousseau. The sewing machine was a happy thought, wasn't it?"

"It was," admitted Caldwell modestly. "After shooting off all the sultan's dangerous men and the radjamunda's desperate followers, we reduced both factions to blissful peace. It wouldn't have been the decent thing, when the engagement was announced, not to have sent something roofy. I hesitated a long time between a washing machine and a sewing machine. But it seemed to me the sewing machine presented ever so many more new possibilities."

"I've made four waists, three dresses, *the* dress, an evening wrap—don't laugh, you may be giving cotillions yet—any number of lingerie things, and an automobile bonnet." Mrs. Helen's gray eyes looked grieved surprise as the men ignored her presence and howled.

Craig looked at his watch. "I'm going in to dress," he told them. "See you all later."

Helen watched his tall figure disappear in the doorway. Then she dropped her frivolity and leaned appealingly toward Caldwell. "Caldy," she demanded boldly, "just what is the matter with my husband?"

The army chaplain gave a mild start of surprise, Blake looked at her in perplexity, and young Moore sat up in his chair to get a better view of the situation.

"He's too well behaved," Caldwell told her frankly. "I'm so glad you've started an open-air conference—let's all talk it over."

"Too well behaved," she repeated slowly. "Is that it? There's something that isn't just as it should be."

The post, knowing the New York girl's absolute adoration of her lieutenant husband, and her devotion in waiting north for him until the short, infrequent vacation days came, was touched by her childish confidence. Not a man in the comandancia but would have stood by Mrs. Helen through the sharpest crisis.

"He has too much reserve, too much self-control," Caldwell explained. "Let me tell you a little about it. Throughout the valley your husband is feared and respected. He is a white man, who has never turned back even in the fiercest battle. He has never run to shelter. He has never spared himself. And, through it all, he preserves that wonderful, almost unbelievable self-control and stoicism which is not good for white men. I admire him, I wonder at him—let me whisper this last—I'm going to promote him. But it isn't good for Craig. He has strained himself never to show feeling. He has steeled himself to where he can turn away from an open grave and take a major's wife in to mess. He can leave a cholera epidemic and play cards with outward enjoyment. Self-control can be overplayed. There is a certain draining of one's vitality, which is eventually ruinous. Understand? Craig is always the same nonchalant, slow-moving Craig. Yet he conquered the pulahanes in Leyte, he fought through the bloody Samar days, he was in Negros during the massacres, and he came down here and made the Sultan

Amai-Sankarut, descendent of the last Moro king and your Linao's father, kneel and take his oath of allegiance to our flag."

"Then, why," blurted young Moore impatiently, "why isn't he a hero?"

"He is—heroes can have clay toes occasionally. Craig's are of his own making. He's overdoing it. Before all else, he is a human being with the God-given right to hate, grieve, love, rejoice. Instead, he has molded himself into an unfeeling person strong enough to weather the hardest blow and show no injury."

Helen nodded. There was a womanliness about her that commanded respect, even though the post knew that there were only twenty-one candles on her last birthday cake. "That is it," she said softly. "Thanks, Caldy, I knew you'd locate it."

"You really think so?" asked young Moore anxiously.

"Yes, I do. Lewis Craig is not made of steel, which bends but never breaks. He is iron—which can be crushed if sufficient pressure is applied." Helen looked at Caldwell for approval.

"Very neat paraphrase," said the army surgeon, "and I don't know but what you're right. In the sanitariums, they used to tell the neurasthenics, 'Laugh all you want to—cry all night. You'll be better in the morning if you do whichever you choose.' Taken in a bigger measure, it holds good. Craig ought to feel—he should suffer. When you begin repression, you start something awful hard to get at."

There was a perplexed frown across Helen's forehead, and she twisted and untwisted the tiny widow's curl that grew stubbornly over one small ear. "I've sometimes thought," she added, more to herself, "that Lewis would restrain himself if it were connected with —me. If I were very ill or dead. I think he would believe he must keep an outward poise."

"It's time to dress," Caldwell interrupted wisely, "and I think you are developing a positively snobbish tendency in regard to Linao."

The worry lines fled away as the gray eyes crinkled with amusement.

"Why?"

"You haven't given a single shower for her, let alone a garden party, where we put on our inquisition white-duck suits and sit around drinking pink tea, and speculating what she will do with her hands when she stands up before the pandita."

Caldwell felt a prickly cactus leaf pressed down his collar band. Then the door closed with a bang.

"Funny little girl!" mused the army surgeon, knocking his pipe against the railing. "Now who would think of putting it that way? The average woman would label herself misunderstood and slip around the post corralling us single-handed and murmuring that her husband had developed one life lease of a grouch."

"Craig worships Helen," said the chaplain.

"And Craig's usefulness in the valley is a thing of the past," said Caldwell quickly. "I'm going to promote him—and send him north."

"Caldwell!" Young Moore burned with indignation. Young Moore looked at Craig as he had looked at the heroes in the "Self-Made" series some years previous.

"As far as this particular valley is concerned," repeated Caldwell cheerfully, "Craig has finished his very excellent work. But there's no end of rough stuff left for him in other spots. That is, if he doesn't break. I was thinking about it the other day when I came back from the palace. You ought to have seen the princess watching Mrs. Helen baste, and stitch, and design. You know that meant a good deal more than our taking the sultan's stronghold and killing off his advance guard."

"Did it?" asked the army surgeon skeptically. "Caldy, you were meant to be a platform demonstrator."

"No such luck," murmured Caldwell. "Anyway, this is what came to me. We've come to a deadlock in civilizing these Moros. Fear and oppression, torture and scientific warfare have done their best—or worst. It is time for the birth of new things, things that Krag carbines and cannon, long night

marches and military trials with resulting executions, are incapable of conceiving. Look at it in the rough, boys, what has the Moro to make him civilized? By civilized, I mean the ethics of civilization."

"Spill away," the army surgeon advised kindly.

"Their character comprises bitter hatred, a mild degree of gratitude to their own people, loyalty to their race, and, above all and everything else, superstition. Superstition covers the other traits like a steel armor which it is impossible to penetrate. Pretty barren elements to develop a white man's outlook on life? It is not enough to create a civilized race or to build up a progressive civilization. All the schoolhouses in Mindanao can teach no lasting virtues with only these elements to work with. And to develop the Moro character is the hardest, most subtle task the Powers can impose. Do you understand?"

"I'm sure you want to say something else." The chaplain's eyes were twinkling.

"I do. There comes a time in the civilizing of a savage race when firearms and brute force lose their power. We are at that stage with this particular valley of people. To see the daughter of a previous bitter enemy sit watching a white woman operate a sewing machine means a bigger stride toward real progress than all the rapid fire our best regulars are capable of. We must give these people *new emotions*—not new guns. It is like telling a man to build a brick house when he only has the rough brush and twigs of the forest for material; and then punishing him because he constructs a dugout. The Moro knows no other things, therefore he can do no bigger things. And to give birth to a new emotion, a white emotion, is not easy."

"Do you really believe this mysticism?" asked the army chaplain.

"Thanks for letting me down easy. I do. That is why our friend Craig is of no more use in the valley. Craig believes in repression and physical superiority. I did—up to a short time ago. I'm in favor of giving the sultans such things as photograph albums and cameras, washing machines and sewing machines. That gets them ready for new emotions. Oh, yawn away, Blake. You're only good for rubbing horse liniment on an open wound or doing the cooking when Wing has neuralgia. Young Moore is sleepy and will think he dreamed it, Craig is inside making himself all pretty, and our chaplain took vows to be charitable toward all mankind. Therefore, I'm secure."

"Why do cameras and washing machines make a savage ready for a white man's emotions?" The chaplain crossed his hands over his knee as if to restrain himself.

"It unconsciously gives them the message of civilization, the value of brainwork—the amount of brainwork that such inventions necessitate. Of course, they don't analyze it, but the thought reaches them eventually."

"And you think," drawled the army surgeon, still smarting from the fling about horse liniment, "you think you could give these chaps all this?"

"If you have the knowledge," Caldwell told him easily, "you usually have the power to prove your knowledge to the world. There is always a hard part—the conquering natural inertia in order to harness and apply power. That is why so many of us slump who know better. And the more we know, the bigger the slump."

"Well, success to you!" The army surgeon lifted his glass of gin on high and waved it mockingly. "Drink hearty."

Wing's yellow face gleamed from the doorway to announce dinner. Helen and her husband came outside and watched the toast.

"What's it for?" asked Craig, in his slow, even voice. "Who's so reckless as to have a birthday or get married?"

"It's for Caldy," the army surgeon answered mischievously, watching the senior inspector flush. "It's to baptize his last theory of how to make the sultan chew mashed potatoes eighty times!"

One glance at the Radjamunda Pindino's face told Caldwell bad news. He had seen the same look in the brown features when the radjamunda had surrendered to the government unwillingly.

"She is gone," the radjamunda said simply. "Thou hast not heard?"

"The princess?" asked Caldwell.

A quick expression of scorn passed over the other's face. "Who else?" he demanded.

"Where has she gone?" Caldwell had an unpleasant sensation lest the princess had disappeared. He wondered if Helen had caused her to break traditional seclusion and roam in the safe part of the valley.

"She is gone since morning," repeated the radjamunda. "We must find her."

Caldwell raised his hand in formal salute. "I am ready," he promised.

The Sultan Amai-Sankarut but repeated the radjamunda's request for aid, although Caldwell saw his lips tremble as he spoke his only daughter's name. Many things might have happened to the slim brown princess of fifteen, who had been sewing on her wedding clothes only yesterday; sewing on an American machine, with a white woman coaxing her to change the costumes of her people and dress in tightly buttoned things which had strange curves and lines.

She had disappeared at daybreak. They had heard her singing a rising prayer in her room, but when a slave came to tell her that they were ready for the morning river bath, they had found the draped couch empty.

All day the troops scoured the bosque, searched the huts of the tao, bullied the high priests, and interviewed the judges. All day the old sultan sat in his watch-tower, a grim, strange look on his lean, brown face. All day Helen waited with anxious eyes to catch a sight of the returning party. The radjamunda followed Caldwell as a hunting dog does its master. Not once did he let the white man stray from his gaze. Always, the same half-hidden suspicion of the white man peeped from his angry black eyes. Caldwall knew and understood that suspicion; it was waiting for the slightest provocation to fasten the disappearance on the American government, since fear was the only restraining link that chained the Moros to the white men. The first offense, suspected or real, meant their loophole of escape, their password for treason, rebellion.

Craig had taken a second party through the mountain passes. A third, composed of a pandita and the common people, marched along the river bank. Slowly, yet surely, throughout the valley, rose the tide of hatred against white men—and the white woman who showed no modesty, who left her face uncovered in the presence of the sultan, who refused the radjamunda admittance to speak with his betrothed.

Night brought only the report of failure. Wild beasts claimed the bosque for theirs—wild beasts, and quick, treacherous storms that swept the woods and valley alike. Every thought of horror concerning the girl's possible fate redoubled with ominous meaning as the darkness fell.

Among the natives came the faint whisper, "Oswong!" Like many Oriental words, it is hard to give a proper translation of the native "oswong." It intimates the magic and superstitions of the people, the belief in bad spirits, the wealth of ghosts who inhabit the bosque, the general atmosphere of haunted places, and corresponding English phenomena. It is used as an expression of great strength when the wish is to state what has befallen another native. It is as much-dreaded and seldom-spoken a word as the Italian evil eye, or the Polish form of cursing is among the peasants of those countries.

Caldwell understood the meaning of oswong. He had seen the red flag of the pulahanes and the yellow one of the cholera epidemic, yet he shrank from the murmur of oswong more than before either of the other omens. Oswong meant that the people—the seething, turbulent mass of people—had decided that witchcraft was among them, that the white man had caused their princess to be spirited

away, that the white man was an evil influence, and that they had shirked their religious duty in allowing him to live. It spelled the revolt of the Moros, and every explosive Berlin bullet of which Manila boasted could not shatter the distrust that was forming in their hearts.

All the next day was a steady hunt for the princess. Craig took the bosque and Caldwell the mountain trail. Groups of hysterical natives searched in ridiculous spots. The sultan ordered the sewing machine to be thrown into the bay, and countermanded his order for several hundred Spanish needles, which Lung Lee had undertaken to import.

That night Caldwell heard—in the wonderfully indistinct way in which the Oriental can convey secrets—that the common people believed that the lumalao, or ghost of their princess, would walk on the high bosque ridge at midnight, and verify their suspicions. If she had died unjustly or by violence, she would come back and show the wounds.

Craig heard the rumor, too—and the army surgeon and young Moore. Helen heard it from Wing, and came to Caldwell with a trembling, pale face.

"Caldy, they'll make you go to the bosque at midnight—they'll murder you there, and it won't be a fair fight. They'll——"

Craig put his arm around her. In the same even voice that he had used throughout the excitement, he tried to soothe her. But Caldwell interfered.

"Let her cry, Lewis," he advised. "Let her get it out of her system. Listen, little girl, the bosque at midnight is a black, lonesome, swampy place. But it might be worse. We can't let the radjamunda think we murdered his bride or spirited her away. The radjamunda has formally demanded that we accompany him at midnight to the high ridge just where the quicksand bed is—to see the lumalao."

"And he'll murder you," she protested. "He'll have his men ready to spring at you—I tell you it isn't fair. It isn't fair!"

"There is no danger," said Craig evenly; "not the slightest."

"Oswong!" repeated the army surgeon. "What a row ignorance can kick up!"

"Where do you really think she is?" asked the chaplain childishly.

"Oswong," Caldwell answered honestly.

"We are all to go?" asked Craig.

"All except the chaplain," Caldwell explained. "He stays with Helen. It won't be bad. I've taken the Maxim-silencer gun—you better, too; they may have some nasty thing on hand, but I think not. I honestly believe they are sincere. They believe if she walks, she will point to us as her mur——"

"And if she does?" The words slipped from Craig before he could stop them.

Caldwell laughed. "That's the only spontaneous thing I've heard you say," he told Craig cheerfully. "There's hopes! 'If she does'—you really don't expect to see a perfectly good ghostess slipping around the ridge, do you?"

"If she does," repeated Craig stubbornly, as if to prove that his words were not spontaneous, "there'll be war to the hilt!"

Caldwell had hoped for a moon, but the night was black. Sullen clouds covered the valley relentlessly, as if to emphasize the dark. The radjamunda had taken his high priest, who was to have married him, a cadi, a maid of the princess, three warriors who had served before his time, and six followers of the sultan. Caldwell, Craig, the army surgeon, young Moore, and eight regulars, comprised the American faction.

Curious mobs of people followed them to the edge of the bosque, then drew back in terror as they heard the clump-clump of marching feet die away. Many were convinced that they would never be seen again; others were positive that the Americans would weaken and confess, perhaps disappear or change into animals. The mourning chant for the princess wailed itself into many discordant sobs of hysterical women. The slaves beat their hands and feet together rhythmically, as they

sang their sorrow song. The old sultan crouched in his watchtower, planning the first attack on the American comandancia.

Craig led the way into the bosque. Once he turned to ask Caldwell a direction, and Caldwell deferentially referred to the radjamunda, who had kept a sullen silence. Tramp—tramp—clump-clump—once the brown slave of the princess sobbed aloud and was roughly silenced.

The pandita was saying a prayer. The party had halted. Caldwell surmised that this must be the place for the lumalao to appear. There had been many wild ghost stories told about the distressed spirits of murdered ones who came back to the ridge and told their stories.

Caldwell did not know how long it was until twelve o'clock. It might be an hour. If there was fear in the white men's hearts, not even the watching radjamunda could have sensed it. Erect, their hands in calm passiveness, the Americans were facing the test of oswong.

"Good God——" breathed the army surgeon softly.

"Allah's will!—Allah's will!" wailed the radjamunda, the grief in his vibrant voice sounding through the trees until it waked some animal into angry answer.

On the far ridge there swung a rude yellow light. Walking swiftly, almost gliding, came the figure of a young girl dressed in a wedding gown. Her bridal wreath was over her face, and her hands were convulsed and grasping at the air. One slim, brown hand, with jingling silver bracelets on its arm, raised the veil. The Princess Linao was looking at the radjamunda. Her eyes were bulging and wild. She wore a heavy gag in her mouth and around the brown neck was a cord, symbolic of her strangulation. The veil dropped. The light vanished.

A chill breeze had risen. Caldwell felt it chasing up and down his spine. He let his teeth chatter for the mere relief of the motion. He was ignoring the Moros' anguish. He was oblivious to Craig's calm voice, as he ordered the return march, or to the army surgeon's low oath when he had to carry young Moore on his arm. All that Caldwell was conscious of was the apparition of the murdered woman. Beyond that, he did not care to think. He only knew that he had experienced "oswong," that every nerve in his body was strained to the uttermost to keep from snapping. He dimly remembered boyhood pranks—walking through a graveyard at midnight, and spending a night in a medical dissecting room. He remembered the foolhardy bravado with which he had laughed it off, and then had spent long, sleepless hours filled with haunting memories. That same horror swept over him now, and he reached out to touch Craig's firm arm as they stumbled over the bosque.

At the edge of the jungle, the radjamunda paused. He took out the creese he wore at his side, with the finely wrought elephant's head in silver, symbolic of his people. He spat on it twice, and threw it at Caldwell's feet.

"Lie thou like the blade," he told him scornfully. "Thy people are evil, thy teachings are of bad spirits. They have taken Linao from me; they have tried to give my people a new god, a new belief. Allah is angry that we have yielded. But Allah shall be pleased. We have seen together the lumalao of my bride. We have seen her throat tied with the death cord. Thy people did this. And for every drop of blood in her body, one of thy white men shall die. As long as there be a Moro in the valley, white men shall not rule!" He left the dishonored blade in the soft earth as he turned away.

Caldwell's voice followed him. "I accept thy challenge," he answered in Arabic. "I deny thy words. White men are virtuous, and Allah has a place for them in the seventh heaven. Thy people are wrong. They turn blindly from the light. If I restore thy princess within two days, shall we not stay brothers?"

"Restore the princess?" The radjamunda's voice quivered. The trip in

the bosque had left him less of a warrior. "If thou canst restore her within two days, unharmed, and telling me with her own lips that thy people are innocent, we stay thy brothers."

"I will find her," said Caldwell simply. Then he gave the forward order.

On the way to the comandancia, Craig began telling Caldwell how many men they would need, and how long it would take to get a dispatch through —he believed Caldwell should have asked for a longer reprieve from the radjamunda, whose grief had not enabled him to see through the tactics of war. Craig had his doubts as to whether the troops could get there within two days. Caldwell said yes and no at intervals, with a queer jerkiness that made Craig wonder why this man had been so honored by the Powers.

"You're turning schoolgirl, Caldy," he told him.

"I keep seeing her walk along the ridge and then vanish." Caldwell dug his heel into the earth as if to prove his own solidity.

"What do you think it was?" persisted the army surgeon. They were on the veranda now, pounding loudly until Wing should shuffle out with the square-face. Below came many strange sounds from the natives. The news of the apparition had spread broadcast.

"I don't think," said Caldwell sharply, draining his glass.

Young Moore staggered to the doorway. They had taken him in and put him to bed. "Lieutenant Craig," he blurted, "did you know where—she—Mrs. Craig is?"

"No," answered Craig quickly. The others were strangely silent.

"She's not in the post," young Moore told him. "The chaplain was sent for in the valley—it must have been a fake sick call—and the door to your rooms are wide open. There was some kind of a tussle——"

Craig had pushed by him. Caldwell, following on his heels, peered into the apartment to see the turned-over chairs, the rumpled rug, the heavy, silver-backed mirror, which lay face downward on the floor.

"Search in the cuartel," said Craig, taking the authority upon himself. "Send down for the chaplain and see if he can give a clew—get him back as fast as possible—he's probably wandering aimlessly around trying to locate the call—— Send word to the valley—— Let the radjamunda know the post is in mourning because the white woman has been stolen. If it shouldn't be spite work, it may turn the tide."

"For God's sake," whispered Caldwell, "cry a little or swear, knock me down, or tear your hair! Are you human, Craig? Your wife, a helpless girl, has been stolen. You know what that can mean. You saw the rope around the other's neck."

Craig made an impatient gesture. "Is this the time for lack of control?" he demanded. "Is this the place for sentiment? Do you think it's easy to keep up nerve? If it's a ruse of the radjamunda, we'll get her back; if it's——" His voice faltered.

No trace of the white woman was found. Wing had been in the valley buying supplies; the army chaplain had gone down to one of the tao huts, only to find it dark and unoccupied. The white men on the hill looked down at the brown men in the valley accusingly. The brown men looked up at the white men with the stubborn courage that superstition gives, and said that Allah was punishing the white men as well. Some whispered that Helen was no woman, but an evil spirit in a human body; that she had bewitched every garment she had made for Linao; that every time she smiled or spoke to a little child it was marked for the evil one's occupations. Others debated she had fallen under the spell of the Americanos, that she was a helpless bit of woman-soul paste, the instrument of the fierce white devils.

Not once did Caldwell catch a phrase of sorrow or condolence. Not once did he see a look of sympathy on their faces as he rode through the barrio, searching frantically for her; only the relentless determination to revolt, the fear

that oswong had visited their valley, the conviction that they must kill out every track of the white invaders.

The radjamunda sent a scroll up to Craig, demanding that he come to the bosque at midnight to prove if his white wife had met her death. Caldwell would have interfered, but Craig, with the uncanny control that frightened those who understood it, said that he was quite willing.

Through the slushy, swampy bosque they marched, with glowworms daubed on their backs for light, and the slipping sound of snakes near by. The radjamunda was close beside them, eager to see the white man when the lumalao should appear.

They waited a long time before midnight. Caldwell found himself saying a fragment of a prayer. The Mohammedans chanted monotonously. Craig stood stolidly in the foreground, his head erect as if waiting for marching orders. The old cadi gave the word that it was twelve o'clock.

A yellow light flickered on the ridge. A slender figure in a long tan coat and panama hat stumbled over the path. It was Helen, her neck tied with heavy rope, and her mouth gagged. Her hands thrust themselves appealingly toward her husband. The light vanished. Only the black of the bosque remained. Caldwell and the army surgeon had impulsively rushed toward the ridge. The army surgeon felt one leg being drawn into the quicksand bed that intervened. So he limped back submissively. It was impossible to reach the ridge.

"We had better go back," said Craig in Arabic.

The radjamunda looked at him with a thrill of admiration. Even a bad spirit can show weakness. Yet Craig had faced the ghost of his one wife without flinching.

"There is one day left," the radjamunda said to Caldwell, as they parted.

"One day left," repeated Caldwell, saluting.

Again the sword was flung on the ground and trampled upon. Caldwell acknowledged the second challenge with grave formality.

All night long, Craig sat in a stiff-backed chair, silent and calm, with inward angry, hideous thoughts lashing themselves against the framework of his wonderful steellike mind. Caldwell and the others sat like frightened children, wondering as to the mystery, debating it in whispers, checking each other's timid hints that oswong might be an actuality.

In the morning, Caldwell went to call Craig. There was but one day in which to get the men ready. One day more of undisputed American rule. The dawn of the next morning would see crouching enemies waiting in the grass. And what the sunset held for either brown man or white man, no one knew.

"Craig," said Caldwell gently, "maybe this thing can work out yet. There was the time Blake was lost—five weeks—and he came back as brown as a berry, with all kind of wild stories. Of course, Blake is a man, but you know Helen isn't easily frightened, and she's game—she's as game as a pebble——"

Craig did not answer.

"Wake up, Craig," repeated Caldwell, coming nearer. "Poor old buck! Remember this is an oswong country, where everything is possible——"

"Swamp water, swamp water, cure these warts," sang Craig softly, as he struck his hand against imaginary afflictions. The old boyish doggerel sounded like a wail. The senior inspector bent over him gravely. Caldwell saw the childish look in the stern face. There was a drooping of the lower lip that Caldwell had seen before—on a man who went home in a strait-jacket. The lines across his forehead had vanished. It was the face of a foolish boy.

"Come back, Craig," called Caldwell, "come back—come back——"

"If you don't tell on me, why should I ever tell on you?" argued Craig, with his old-time logic. "I wouldn't tell—honest. You never told on——"

Caldwell covered his ears. It did not seem as if he could stand the babbling, the insanity resultant of proper out-

burst. The army surgeon found him in the doorway, his ears still covered.

"It's come," said Caldwell briefly; "the pendulum has swung. Craig is a schoolboy having the time of his life. He has forgotten the last eighteen years. Thank Heaven, he has forgotten Helen. He is saying his Latin prose and slipping in an occasional joke. It's like a cancer that started suddenly to grow internally instead of staying external—it is just what we told—her, when she asked us what Craig lacked."

"What in hell are you going to do?" asked Blake softly. "There's only till to-morrow, and with Craig—and Helen—and——"

The chaplain had come up behind them, and was listening. Wing and young Moore appeared in the outer doorway. The sound of a child's voice floated out to them. It was Craig telling about his "kinger-chestnut," Craig, whose record made the war department look at each other reproachfully because they were unable to find "needed suggestions."

"What in hell are you going to do?" repeated the army surgeon.

"*It is time for the birth of pity,*" Caldwell told them solemnly. "Before God, I can't let the whole valley slide back into savagery. I can't see them lose what we've sweated blood to give. It would be the blackest sort of failure. It's the big side we must look at. We must make them feel pity for us—they're ready for it—they only need the showing."

"But can you?" asked the army chaplain gently. "Caldy, the Man who taught people pity came nearly two thousand years ago."

"I can try, sir," Caldwell said slowly. "If I have the knowledge, I must have the power. But it comes—a—bit—hard."

"And if you fail?" The chaplain placed his hand on the senior inspector's arm as if he would detain him.

"Then it means the burning of houses and forts alike, hanging innocent men along with guilty ones, just to show that we can. It means cutting regulars into ribbons, and seeing old veterans fall like jack rabbits during the game season. It means the water cure, the old, ugly tortures, the weather-beaten round of savage superiority, the slogan that brute force is the winning element. This is what it will mean—and more: it means the strengthening of superstition in every Moro heart. Oswong will have new terrors for them. For generations, they'll tell and sing this story of the brown princess and the white woman who were murdered, and who came back on the high ridge on a cloudy night. It's all because of Americanos—and a sewing machine! Oh, my God, you don't know these people as I do! They're simple, complex, all in one. It's like a stone wall, this barrier against us, a stone wall that can be let down or shattered piece by piece. It is the dashing of good white men against that stone wall until it finally breaks, unless we can kill superstition and offer them a new emotion in its place. Don't you understand?—a sort of psychological operation. The cutting away of superstition and the grafting of pity. Pity!"

"If you fail——" The chaplain was talking more to himself.

"But, sir," asked Caldwell clearly, "would the Man of two thousand years ago have hesitated?"

"No, Caldwell," the chaplain answered quietly. "No—you are right."

The radjamunda, the Sultan Amai-Sankarut, his warriors, and the prominent judges and high priests came in answer to Caldwell's summons. At the post, there was serious talk of imprisoning both Caldwell and Craig, and trusting to luck that the troops would reach the comandancia before the first attack. But something about Caldwell's manner forbade any such liberties. His absolute ignoring of the army surgeon's feeble arguments, his sharp commands to the shavetail, who obeyed him in spite of himself, and his gentle deference toward the chaplain, made the post realize that Caldwell's theory was to be given a fair trial.

The muchacho told Caldwell that the delegation had come. Caldwell rose leisurely. He asked the others to come

into the courtyard; to be prepared for anything he might say, and to stand by him. "No matter what," he added, as the army surgeon's eyebrows were lifted incredulously.

"It isn't exactly according to the best tactics," he began. "There isn't any doubt but what more men will come soon, Caldy, and the Powers——"

"Anything I may say, you know," repeated Caldwell patronizingly. "It'll only be for a little while—then you can flay me alive."

In the burning sunlight, with the troops standing awkwardly by, Caldwell faced the enemy. He thanked them for coming so promptly, he expressed sorrow that their princess had not been found, and called attention to the loss of the white woman which was yet unsolved. He told them gently, almost timidly, that the white man did not believe in silly oswong, that the day of magic was past, that the superstitions of their people were like musty cobwebs that concealed bad fever germs. He explained that he had asked them to witness something of which he was positive they would approve. He felt that he was speaking to men of equal intelligence, his brothers until the morrow, and that they were entitled to be present at any event that might concern them.

Then Caldwell gave a regular an order. A moment later, and the startled post saw Craig led into the courtyard. A happy, smiling Craig, who laughed at the sight of brown faces. They were strange faces to Craig—he had slipped back some years to when a brown man was found only in the traveling wild West shows, or between the covers of a book.

"Jolly queer," began Craig, laughing at the radjamunda and pointing to his sword.

The radjamunda stirred resentfully. He realized that this was not intoxication, yet he was unable to define it.

"This is Craig, first lieutenant," said Caldwell distinctly, as Craig squatted on the ground to play mumblety-peg with imaginary comrades. "Once he was a brave, strong man. Now his time of usefulness is past. There is no reason why we should waste a strong man's time in watching that he does himself no harm. There is no reason why he should eat good food and drink good gin, and be allowed to sleep in a soft cot bed. Because his white wife has been taken from him, we know not how, his reason has left him. He is more useless than the leper, more imbecile than the baby in its first year. Strong men must not lose their power because of women. What right has he to forfeit his manhood? What else has a man to live for but to prove his strength?" Caldwell pointed shamefully at the big child who sat in the sun.

He stepped back. His hand slipped to his hip pocket. A blue, shining butt made a quiver of horror run through the post. Caldwell leveled the gun at the big child's head. He turned to the Moros.

"In some of your tribes, you kill when a man is useless. In our country, we, too, should kill. Brothers, do you not commend this?"

A faint look of protest came over the sultan's wrinkled face. The radjamunda, softened by his loss, spoke faintly. The pandita murmured that it was not fair, and the cadi cried out in shrill dispute. The warriors turned to each other in perplexity. Softly stirring in their hearts was the first eerie cry of new-born pity for one afflicted. Something gripped their sensibilities as they watched the white man point the gun toward Craig—Craig's blissful singing of a jingle, his utter ignorance of the meaning of that blue, shining muzzle, the memory of the white woman as they had seen her walking with him, riding, rowing on the blue, churning bay, smiling at him as they smiled at their gods. And because the white woman was gone, the big soldier had lost his soul. That was it! The soul of the big white man had gone ahead to Allah, to plead mercy for the others! And to shoot him as they killed their enemy, to harm him because his soul dared to leave his body, and go bravely to Allah—it was not right. They *pitied* Craig.

The radjamunda darted forward and

struck the gun from Caldwell's arm. "Thou shalt not kill!" he said, unconscious that he had spoken the fundamental law of the white man.

"Why?" Caldwell tried to keep the look of victory from his tired face, to ignore the threatening, stupid glances from the post.

The radjamunda was silent. He could not have voiced his reasons, yet he was only the spokesman for the others. He knew that something had been born into his heart, something that soothed and softened, that killed anger and revenge, that gave the fortitude to wait and learn, to watch and understand. Such was the birth of pity!

Caldwell walked over to Craig and laid one protecting hand on the yellow head. "Then why will thy people rebel?" he said simply, as one speaks to a frightened child. "Our sorrow-ridden, crippled post is the same as this big child on the ground—we cannot fight, we have no extra men who are not weakened through grief. We, too, are broken from the loss of the white woman. Thy men can kill us, can burn our buildings. And, by and by, there will be another long siege such as happened when the white man first fought for his rule. Thy people remember that—too."

Caldwell hesitated. He let them listen to Craig singing some patriotic song. It blurred in Caldy's ears.

"As thou hast interfered in the killing of this man, wilt thou not interfere in the killing of the post? A bigger sacrifice, brothers, a finer deed! What thou felt for this white man is called by our people—pity. Pity! Allah pities when he spares lives during cholera times. He pities when he permits weak women and girl children to live. Thy people love Allah, they follow his teachings. Teach them to imitate his pity, teach them to pity white men who have suffered a greater loss than thine."

Caldwell was holding the radjamunda's hands according to custom, symbolic of a treaty. The warriors stood silently by, angry that this new strangling emotion had crowded out their fierce love of battle, yet awed by the knowledge that they did not care to burn the comandancia or tear the flag in shreds. As they had murmured against the shooting of the big white man, so they turned away from the chance of warfare. The sultan bowed his acceptance of the treaty, and the pandita gave a blessing.

Meantime the chaplain picked up the gun which lay just as the radjamunda had struck it from Caldwell's grasp. He handed it to the army surgeon, who gave it a brief examination. A new thrill of admiration for the senior inspector passed over him. It was loaded with blanks!

Craig was restless during the night. Caldwell stayed close beside his cot, and bound the strong arms that he might rest. Once he thought Craig recognized him. And once he whispered "Helen" indistinctly.

Toward dawn, Caldwell stole to the door to watch the parting clouds make way for the rosy burst of light. He leaned his head against his hand. The strain was telling. Confused memories whirled through his brain—his theories about giving savages new emotions, the ghost of the little brown princess, as she slipped along the ridge, Helen's ghost, in her tan coat and big panama, Craig's wonderful control, young Moore's fainting, the murmur of oswong which had struck terror to their hearts, then Craig's insanity, the chaplain's gentle skepticism, the assembling of the radjamunda and his men, the test—the daring, unheard-of test. The wonder of the triumph escaped Caldwell. He only knew that he, too, had tampered a bit with some sort of oswong, and had won.

A native climbed the bank. As he drew nearer, Caldwell saw that he trembled, and that his eyes rolled back and forth convulsively.

"The lumalaos are waiting for you," he began, kissing the senior inspector's feet, and holding fast to his ankles. Then he kissed a charm that hung around his neck. "They are waiting at the cavern, near Lung Lee's, they have frightened Lung Lee away. Early this

morning he sailed out to take a steamer. He could not stay, honorable inspector, the lumalaos had followed him. He left solemn messages that the white men would be brought to proper repentance if the rocks leading to the cavern were pushed away when the clock turned to five. I was brave, honorable inspector, I opened the cavern's mouth—— And the lumalaos were there—the brown princess and the white woman." His voice had risen to a high scream.

Caldwell caught him by the arm and dragged him to his feet. "Where did Lung Lee go?" he asked.

"To his ancestors—much money he took and bags. The lumalaos had come to his realm, he had lost his power against them——" The native beat his hands in anguish.

"What did the lumalaos say?" persisted Caldwell.

"They sent me to you—they demanded you come." The native gave Caldwell a cunning glance. In his heart, he had no doubts but what Caldwell would be spirited away should he dare face the lumalaos.

Caldwell ordered out a pony and started below. He dragged the native in front of his saddle.

"Show me where," he said sternly, knowing that Lung Lee's long reign in the island had taught him secrets of inner passages of which even the natives were ignorant.

They paused before a barricade of rocks. Fresh scratches in the earth proved that the native had spoken the truth. A heap of dried brush was in front of the small opening—that the lumalaos might stumble if they tried to float outside.

"Caldy, it's Caldy," said a woman's voice, weak but distinct.

"Allah be thanked!" answered Linao.

Somehow Caldwell tore away at the opening and dragged them outside. The native had taken to his heels. He only saw the senior inspector embrace the ghosts of the white woman and the brown princess. He felt that he had no further call to stay.

Helen told of the capture by Lung Lee—first of Linao, cunningly planned, and then of herself, when the chaplain had been got out of the way; how they had been concealed in the cavern and treated kindly, even deferentially. Lee had had no desire to harm. But to have been beggared by paying a fine had been beyond his disposition. Money he must have—enough to go home and spend his days in blissful delirium, enough money to pay for prayers to his gods that the white men might be forgiven their avarice!

In the almost silent way the Orientals employ, word had been spread throughout the valley that the ghosts of the women would walk. Through force, Lee had led them through the cavern and made them reach the ridge by means of the underground passage, he following below them, swinging the strange yellow light which he focused on their figures. Then charms had been sold at fabulous price to protect the individual natives from the evil spirits. Lee's shop had been crowded from early morning. In less than a day, he had made twice the amount of the fine. In two days he had stowed away as much money as would buy him a place in heaven close to the emperor, and to provide equally well for his father and brothers. Lung Lee was not greedy. He did not wish to harm. But to suppose that he would sit meekly back and let the white man win his money was child's logic. No matter by what methods—women were but women—Lee must reclaim his fortune. He had charged one peso for a charm when he could get it, five if he dared, and ten to the most gullible. He had forbidden their mentioning the price to the others—it would break the spell, he told them. Lee approved of oswong—it was most convenient in times of financial panic.

Having reached his wildest aim, he had decided to slip away, lest greediness become a part of his soul—or the senior inspector happen upon him at an uncomfortable moment. He had left word with a native to release the "lumalaos," and trusted that they had not been inconvenienced. Such is the yellow man's conception of fair play, his inborn idea of honorable retaliation.

At first the radjamunda could not believe the truth. But when Linao lay in his arms, exhausted, whispering her woman's version of the story, murmuring her gladness at being safe in his embrace, the radjamunda looked at her with a new expression—perhaps it was the birth of a bigger emotion than Caldwell had implanted.

"Thou shalt eat with me," he told her, sweeping aside the custom of his ancestors. In the joy of repossession, she seemed thrice precious.

Mrs. Helen said afterward that it was the psychological effect of the empire-cut wedding gown with silver-cord finishings and kimono sleeves. Lee had been clever enough to take that when he had captured Linao. Even three days in a cavern, with a night-walking scene through the bosque, had not robbed the gown of its charm. But Linao did not care for reasons.

Caldwell hailed a passing native. He had sent Helen in to her husband, after telling her all that had happened. He felt it would be kinder so. The native would have shuffled away, but Caldwell held him fast.

"Show me the Chinese charm," he demanded.

Reluctantly, a dirty string was tugged at around the brown neck, and a small, long bit of cloth, securely sewed, was handed over. Caldwell opened it with curious fingers. Then he chuckled. Lee was not to lose the money he had expended in importing Spanish needles for the sultan, even though the order had been countermanded. The sacred charm against the lumalaos consisted of a single needle wrapped in blue cloth!

Craig opened his eyes to find his wife bending over him. "Rest," she whispered, praying that he might sleep instead of babbling foolishly. She could not have borne to hear the unbalanced words.

"I've had a beast of a dream," he said slowly, "about oswong sweeping over the valley, and you and Linao turning ghosts—oh, I say, was it a dream?—I must have been hurt, I've been sleeping so long—I can't remember."

Knowing that joy stands all news, she told him. "And after pity," she whispered softly, "after pity, Lewis, they will learn love!"

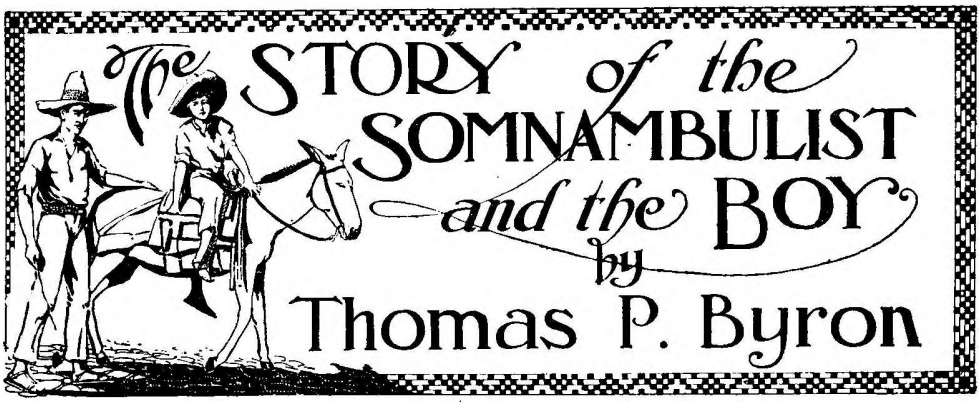
A CHRISTMAS SONG

SEE, how gleams the holly berry!
Masters mine, let us be merry!
Crimson hangs the berry on the bough!
Lo, how shines the holly leaf!
Masters mine, away with grief!
Melancholy? Who'd be melancholy now?

Years ago within a manger
Once there lay a little stranger.
Crimson hangs the berry on the bough!
And the tender mother smiled
O'er the slumber of the child.
Melancholy? Who'd be melancholy now?

Glory! Glory! Down the ages
Drifts the song of saints and sages.
Crimson hangs the berry on the bough!
And we catch its echo still
From that far-off Bethlehem hill.
Melancholy? Who'd be melancholy now?

CLINTON SCOLLARD.



THE name had been given to him by the first legion of modern Goths—which was a horde of unhanged freshmen in a bucolic mid-Western university—that he had led through the mists of the past back to the beleaguered walls of Troy and adown the parasangs of the Ten Thousand.

They had called him the Somnambulist, and really that was the way he went through life—like a somnambulist, for he broke all rules of traffic, and passed on through the crowd, grazed by tragedy, comedy, and all the rest of it, paying just enough attention to men and things to avoid collision with them. When the Somnambulist had been born, Fate had fastened on his baby feet leaden boots of poverty and duty—that he might never run away, that he might struggle always through the drab soil and drab atmosphere of the little mid-Western town in which he was born, with never a chance to gain the great rainbow-hued world beyond, where there was beauty, and light, and wonderful men and women, and wonderful things.

For the Somnambulist had fought his way through school and through college, taking care in the meantime of his widowed mother, and when he had graduated they offered him a chance to teach—for he was one who had absorbed languages as a desert absorbs water—and he had taken it gratefully, and had never rebelled against the manifest destiny that had set him to the planting of ancient roots in the mental soil of refractory modern freshmen.

And he led them against the ancient walls and down the ancient roads, like a somnambulist—for he was always dreaming of the wonderful world that crept away from him with the years until it was more distant than the fallen walls of Troy—and the wonderful things that wonderful people were doing in it rang in his ears as faint and far as the echo of the trampling of the Ten Thousand.

But he always dreamed of it, and it was for that that the unlynched freshmen called him the Somnambulist.

And then, after seven years of teaching, his mother died, and the Somnambulist felt his feet free from the leaden boots that he had worn so willingly, and, as he marveled, dazed and sorrowful, the Fate who had clasped them on his baby feet, shod him anew with seven-league boots with which he might speed like the wind—out into the rainbow world—over it, through it, to gaze on its beauties, and drink its joys.

An uncle whom he had almost forgotten had died a month after his mother, and left him—the Somnambulist—three million dollars.

When he realized it, the Somnambulist smiled at Fate, and Fate smiled back at him—for the dreamy, abstracted, fine-spun boy had worn the leaden boots as gladly as he would wear those of the seven leagues, and when the Somnambulist spun the little globe that shone in bright colors with the

countries of the world, then shut his eyes and reached forth a finger to touch the place where he would go first, Fate smiled still, and planted the finger upon a city——

And the Somnambulist stepped forth in his new seven-league boots.

It was a city of white houses—almost every one with a lookout tower which was called a *mirador*—and it was a city of gardens, and parks, and splendid *paseos,* and it was a city whose name was written red on the pages of history. Three times had it been destroyed by earthquake, and it had been sacked, and looted, and burned, and had built itself anew each time, for in its turbulent heart for more than one hundred years had burned the flame of liberty.

And it lay in the green curve of the great, deep, silent bay, a tremulous, mysterious jewel of white, and over it hung the twin volcanoes that had destroyed it—one once with a deluge of water—one twice with a deluge of fire. Two perfect cones, they rose into the clear azure sky—sisters—one white and dazzling with snow—one black and menacing with a sullen, shifting, red gleam on its cone in the morning when the Somnambulist came to the city in a German steamer, that had churned through four thousand miles of glassy seas.

The bright, diaphanous veil, spun of sunlight and rainbow hues, that lay over the ocean, had suddenly melted away, and there, in the corner of the palm coast, it lay, tremulous, shining, mysterious—like a city of dreams and mirage.

The Somnambulist's steamer stopped at the behest of a launch that fired a gun, and he listened in the captain's cabin to a strange story. The army held the city, said the officer of the port, and the president's cabinet were beleaguered in the American consulate, where one might see the American flag flying, and the officer of the port pointed out through the porthole.

There had been desperate fighting for three days, and the Eastern Quarter of the city had been burned. One might see the smoke hanging motionless in the air like a pall. And for the last two days the navy—which was the three gaunt armored cruisers that lay there, with ready guns—would have battered the city to powder, but they had been hindered by the British and American warships, which lay yonder. *They*—the navy—were loyal to the besieged president. And the port was closed by the admiral's orders. It was a state of war. No foreign vessels could hold communication with the shore."

"I can land my cargo at Puerto Alegre," said the captain, "fifty miles down the coast. And this gentleman—he wishes very much to go ashore. Can you not allow him to land?" He pointed to the Somnambulist.

"Orders are very strict," said the port officer pleasantly. "However, there is no objection to a stranger—an American—going to the city. The fighting is practically over. They can't hurt us—and *we* are not allowed to hurt *them.* Why don't you stop your engines as you go around Punta Mala yonder, and land the gentleman at that little port? It is only seventeen miles to the city, and he can get a horse and ride in."

"Will that be satisfactory?" asked the captain.

The Somnambulist replied that it would, and thus it was that, at high noon, he was rowed ashore and made his entry into the republic like a despot, on the shoulders of a coffee-colored son of the same, who carried him through the surf. Punta Mala was a place of palm trees and huts of white stucco, and the total population was on the beach to greet him.

A barefooted little man with a sword—who was the general—led him across the beach to the plaza, half the town carrying the Somnambulist's baggage, and the other half running ahead. And presently, when they had seated their guest comfortably at a table with a white cloth and a bottle of wine, under the great cotton tree before the president's house, all the world proceeded to the work which his advent had inter-

rupted, which was the hanging of a stuffed effigy to a palm.

When he demanded of them if it were Judas—for, indeed, it was Christmas Day—they told him "yes," and they told him again that Judas' modern name was Iriarte, and that, up until two days ago, he had sat upon their necks like an old man of the sea, just as he—the Somnambulist—had sat upon the neck of the one who had brought him ashore.

And all applauded, and they drank confusion to Iriarte, who was the president trembling for his life, somewhere where he was hidden, and success and long life to the great General Ruiz, leader of the army, who had given them—the free citizens of the republic—back their rights and liberty.

And when he had eaten their feast of iguana, which he thought to be chicken, and drunk their wine, he demanded a horse, and a guide to lead him to the city.

They brought him a burro, for there was never a horse, they told him, through all the countryside. The army had taken them all. And it was an excellent burro, well bred, of unimpeachable ancestry, strong as an elephant, swift as a race horse, a gray, calm, subdued, and gentle burro, full of wisdom and virtue—and the price was fifty pesos of the much-depreciated coin of their recently liberated realm.

Now, when the Somnambulist contemplated the burro dreamily, they asked him hesitatingly "if the price was too high, or was *he* too grand a señor to ride upon so lowly a beast?" And the Somnambulist shook his head, smiling, and pointed to the traitor hung in effigy, and asked was it not the birthday of One who once rode into the most sacred of cities upon an ass—One whose day they—the pueblo—fittingly celebrated by hanging His betrayer, and, far from being a lowly animal, an ass should be the most exalted, and this one, which was the pearl of its species, he bought in joy at the paltry price which they were so good as to name to him. So he counted over the fifty pesos and offered fifty more for a saddle, and christened the burro before them all by pouring a glass of wine over his poll, and named him Seven-league Boots.

But they told him that never—never were burros ridden with saddles, and, besides, there was no saddle, and the *muy caballero* would ride very well without, and they all wished fervently that God might be with him on his journey, and the general swore to send his baggage on the following day by bullock cart, and the Somnambulist would have mounted and rode away.

And then up came a Boy, and *he* demanded a horse.

At first glance, as they all stared at him, he seemed a very ordinary sort of Boy. His clothes were cheap and poor, consisting of a coat and trousers of linen, the first buttoned up tight around his throat, and the second soiled with dust, leading down to shamefully muddy boots. And he wore an enormous sombrero that would easily have kept the rain off *two* boys and a girl to boot, and out from under its tremendous rim his eyes gleamed, and a bit of his chin, and that was all that could be seen of him, so was he muffled in hat and clothes.

And in those eyes there was a look of despair, and the Somnambulist knew at once that just as once one Crookback Dick of Gloster—according to W. Shakespeare—would have given a kingdom which he did not possess for a horse, so would this Boy—who was no crookback, but the straightest and handsomest Boy in the world, give *all* the kingdoms of the world, and his chance for the one beyond, for his own burro yclept Seven-league Boots.

For when they told the Boy that there was no horse, nothing but a burro, which had just been sold to the Señor Americano for fifty pesos, he cast upon Seven-league Boots a glance of passionate avarice, and then he looked about and eyed the crowd, and, having found where the Señor Americano was going, he marched away wearily, and the Somnambulist, having ascertained that the road to the city was the great *"camino real"* on which he had no need of a guide, since it was

impossible to mistake, shook hands with each and every citizen of the municipality of Punta Mala, and rode away. And again they wished that God be with him on his journey.

Around the first corner the Boy was waiting for him, just as he had expected, so the Somnambulist smiled and dismounted, and the Boy spoke to him.

"Señor," he said, "I did not speak before the people, because I was afraid they would not understand, or would understand too well. But I am in desperate straits. I *must* be in the city before ten o'clock of the evening. And there is no horse —no conveyance at all. And I cannot walk. Already I have walked all the morning, and I am legsore and weary. Señor, you paid fifty pesos for the burro. I will give you one hundred if you will yield him to me. It will inconvenience you, no doubt, but to me it is a matter of life and death—and I ask it in the name of Him who once rode upon an ass, Him whose birthday they celebrate to-day even in this unhappy country, which is torn by injustice and revolution."

And the Boy started to weep at his own words, and he seemed suddenly very frail and pitiful, and the Somnambulist thrust the rope reins of the burro quickly into his hand.

"Don't weep, Boy," he begged. "If you *must* get to the city the burro is yours—and as a gift. His name is Seven-league Boots. You ride him, and I will walk. I have been cooped up on a steamer for a long time, and will rejoice in the chance to stretch my legs. And we will travel together to the city."

The Boy's face flushed with sudden joy.

"Oh!" he said. "Then I will get there, after all. I was in despair. I had come so far, and I thought I had failed at the last."

He clasped the hand of the Somnambulist in both his own, and stared at him in admiration and gratitude through the narrow gap betwixt his high-buttoned coat and the low-hanging sombrero.

"Señor Giver-of-burros," he said, "I will never forget you—never—never."

He raised the Somnambulist's hand to his lips and kissed it.

"Señor Boy-very-desirous-for-burros," said the Somnambulist, in confusion, "mount! Mount quickly, and we will be on our way."

So the Boy rode on like a caballero, while the Somnambulist trudged at his side. And each time that he looked at the Boy he marveled, for all the lad's gloom and despair were gone, and he smiled from under his mountainous hat with a quick, flaming smile of conquest. It was marvelous to see one become so radiant at the gift of a fifty-peso burro.

And he had had half a notion to spend the rest of his life and his three million dollars in buying burros and giving them away to burro-desirous Boys, and then the Somnambulist smiled at the thought, for he knew that there was only one Boy in the world who was a *magic* Boy, and only one burro in the world who was a *magic* burro, and these twain were *his* Boy, whom he had found in distress, and *his* burro, which he had bought for fifty pesos.

Now, the burro's magic quality was plain to be seen, for he was simply the magic seven-league boots given in terms of ass, but the Boy, where was *his* glamorous essence? And the Somnambulist stared at him, and at last he *saw*—he saw it shining from under the mystery, and the dusty clothes, and the overwhelming hat of him. And each time the Boy smiled at him the Somnambulist looked shyly away.

Now the sky was like a vast, blue turquoise, and the sun was of a sheen that flashed through the windows of the eyes deep into the heart, and the road was an Arcadian pathway under cocoa palms, and orange trees, and aguacates; and now it led with a thousand twists of delight through fields of sugar cane, and now through tiny villages, where the white houses nestled half hidden behind the rustling palms of their banana patches.

And each wayfarer that they met stared at them, and smiled, and wished

that God might be with them on their journey. It was His Son's birthday, and His name was on every lip.

Once they passed through a somber forest, where all was hushed and still save for great, red parrots—guacamayos the Boy called them—that fluttered across the road like splashes of blood, and shattered the silence with a raucous scream. And then there were tiny, green ones flitting about—no bigger than a man's thumb.

And when they emerged from the dark wood, there was the bright, shining world again, with the twin volcanoes from their exalted place in the sky, nodding and beckoning to them mistily, as if *all* the sunshine, and palm trees, and the marvelous road, and the mysterious city at its end, were merely for the Somnambulist who had marched so long in the drab mud, with leaden boots, and now was flying over the rainbow world with his *Boy,* whom he had found—and his burro, who made four miles an hour, and was named Seven-league Boots.

The Boy seemed to have locked his despair and grief under a time lock, as it were, so that not even *he* could get to them to harass himself with them until it was their time and place, which was ten o'clock that night, and somewhere in the city, and he asked the Somnambulist, whom he called Burro-Man, ten thousand questions. There was no denying that the Boy was very impudent, and the marvel of it was that the Somnambulist, who had given him his Seven-league-boots burro, was so complacent over it. But *he* really seemed to like it, because he had seen for a moment the Boy's magic quality.

For the Boy asked him whence he had come, and why he had come, and why he spoke Spanish so vilely, and if he were married, or had a sweetheart, and what sort of girls he admired, and how old he was, and what he did in life, and the Boy almost fell off the burro with laughter when the Somnambulist told him that *he* had besieged Troy seven years just as the Greeks had—only *he* was at the head of barbarian freshmen.

And the Boy told him that he was a fool to pay fifty pesos for Seven-league Boots, and he changed the beast's name to Aguinaldo, and, when the Somnambulist rebelled at the name of an insurgent against his flag, the Boy almost died of laughter again, and addressed the burro thus each time he urged him on, and presently the Somnambulist remembered.

Aguinaldo was only the Spanish word for Christmas gift, and the name and fame of him of the Philippines was totally unknown to the Boy.

And that pleased him, for he knew that the Boy appreciated the gift. And presently, when the Boy plied whip and spur, to keep Aguinaldo at his top speed of four miles per hour, sometimes he struck the burro, and sometimes he struck the Burro-Man—at first gently and playfully, and then harder, until at last the Somnambulist winced and jumped, and, far from taking the Boy by the scruff of the neck and throwing him into the top of a palm tree, he only laughed and begged for mercy.

"Why do you not beat me back?" demanded the Boy. "You are too meek and humble, Burro-Man. No wonder you have neither wife nor sweetheart. What girl would have such a spiritless one?"

And then the Boy was suddenly smitten with shame, for the Burro-Man always evaded his triumphant glance, and he leaped from the back of Aguinaldo and insisted that the Somnambulist ride for a way. But the Somnambulist refused, and then the heartless Boy suggested that they *both* ride the beast. Again he protested, shuddering at the diminutive size of the beast, but the Boy insisted, and finally they tried it, the Somnambulist in front, the Boy behind, and Aguinaldo protesting vocally, and with much kicking and humping.

It was a perilous ride of ten yards, and the Boy clung to the Somnambulist's neck, almost choking him, and he could feel the lad's heart thumping against his back, and then the burro settled the question by lying down in the middle of the road, and trying to roll over them.

"We have broken his back," said the Somnambulist, and he looked reproachfully at the Boy.

So did the burro, as he rose to his feet, but the Boy only laughed and made his peace with the one by kissing him between the eyes, and with the other by striking him with the gad. It was the burro that he kissed and the Burro-Man that he struck.

Then he mounted Aguinaldo again, and they passed on as before. Presently the road passed through another forest, and they came out upon the sea, which foamed on a dazzling white sand beach, and heaved blue and silently beyond. Around a wide curve the road followed the beach straight to the city that trembled white in the dancing heat of the afternoon, and over it nodded and smiled as ever the red sister and the white. All about were groves white with blossoms—orange groves and almonds—and at the side of the road was a tiny posada, where, under a thatch, a handsome woman stood behind a row of glass jars filled with rich-colored fluids, in which floated great lumps of ice and slices of fruits.

The wayfarers were thirsty, and the Somnambulist selected a jar in which floated slices of pineapple. It was labeled "piña," which means pineapple, and when the woman, smiling, handed him a tiny glass, he rejected it scornfully, and demanded one of the capacity of a quart. She filled it, still smiling, and the Somnambulist took one great gulp, and then begged for water with streaming eyes and choking throat, for it was stronger than the strongest brandy he had ever tasted.

When the woman gave it to him, roaring with laughter, the Boy spilled it, and the next one also, and it was only the third that allayed his tortured throat. Again he looked at the Boy reproachfully. His great hat was on the back of his head, exposing a pale, delicate-featured face, his long, dark hair clung to his head, and both the woman and the Somnambulist stared at him in admiration.

The woman reached forward and pulled a lock of his hair playfully.

"*Por Dios,* little rogue, but you are handsome," she said.

The Boy stopped laughing, pulled his sombrero down again to the eyes. He shot a quick glance at the Somnambulist, then leaned forward over the counter to the woman.

"Do you think so?" he said mockingly. "Perhaps you would like to kiss me—in that case."

The woman looked at him for a moment, smiling steadily, and she shook her head. The Boy's glance fell, and he shrank back. She surveyed him for a moment, and then looked searchingly at the Somnambulist.

"It is a strange Boy that you have with you," she said slowly.

"Aye," said the Somnambulist. "Come on, Boy. Let us go!"

But the Boy was already on the burro and going.

When they got beyond sight of the posada he seemed to have lost all his gayety, and sat dolefully on Aguinaldo, stealing questioning glances at the Somnambulist. But the latter was serene, and said never a word about the woman, and soon the Boy's spirits were back again, which he showed by belaboring anew both burro and Burro-Man.

And thus they marched on through the golden afternoon to the city, and, though the road was long, and hot, and dusty, and they were obliged now and then to yield right of way to a company or so of soldiers, who marched about in the intricate business of war, they never felt fatigue, for the magic of the Seven-league Boots was upon the Three of Them—Somnambulist, Boy, and Burro.

At the Eastern Gate the Somnambulist, again upon the burro, showed his passport, and they were free of the city. It was a city of night by then—a city of dreadful night, had it not been for the sky ablaze with stars, and the sisters overhead, who nodded and smiled among them—and the streets were deserted of all save soldiers. None of these molested them. The burned Eastern Quarter, through which they passed first, still smoked, and when they

were free of it the Boy turned down toward the bay through a quarter of narrow, crooked, twisted streets, and when they were through and came out upon a broad avenue he pointed the way to the Somnambulist.

"The place I have to go is back here," he said, pointing to the quarter they had just traversed. "And down there, at the end of the Avenida, is the Plaza de la Paz—the principal square of the city. You will find hotels there—everything that you wish. Go to the Hotel d'España, and—if all goes well with me to-night, I will see you or write to you. Oh, Burro-Man, I can never thank you enough. We have traveled a long journey together. Good-by."

But the Burro-Man had him by the arm.

"We have traveled *too* far together, Boy," he said slowly, "and we will go together to the end. Whatever you have to do in there I will go with you, and we will do it together. Do you understand?"

"*Nombre de Dios,* do I?" cried the Boy. "Come! We will do it. It will take but half an hour. Come!"

So the Boy led the way back, and soon they came to a tiny plaza, where there were an ancient fountain in the center, and straight, tall, frowning, old-fashioned houses on every side. To one of these the Boy stepped up, and agitated the old-fashioned knocker. The door was opened instantly, and a man faced them.

"Whom do you expect?" whispered the Boy.

"Don Dinero," answered the man.

"Come along, Burro-Man," breathed the Boy, and the two of them followed the doorkeeper down a long, dark corridor, and threw back a door that admitted them to a room dimly lighted with candles.

There were half a dozen men there in uniform, and, among them, two common soldiers, who stood at attention before a curtained bed in the corner of the room.

The Boy, with a frightened gasp, started back, but he who had admitted them barred the way, and, as the Boy and the Somnambulist looked about, dazed, the men came up and stood around them in a semicircle, surveying them silently.

"*Por Dios,* but this is droll," said the youngest of them all—a tall, iron-faced man, whose uniform was covered with medals. "Whom have we here?"

He reached forth a hand to pluck the Boy's sombrero from his head.

"Don't, please don't! Don Carlos, I beg of you!" cried the Boy.

The soldier started back with an exclamation, and they all stared, wide-eyed.

"*You!*" said the leader. "*Alma de Dios,* can I believe my eyes? What brings *you* here?"

"I came," gasped the Boy, "with a message to a person who is not here."

"Ah," said the soldier, "I begin to understand. Alas! The person for whom you have a message *is* here. This way, if you please."

He led the way across the room, and motioned to one of the sentries, who reverently drew aside the curtains of the bed.

There lay an old man, dead, and in a splendid uniform, covered with orders. Over his breast lay the gaudy flag of the republic.

The Boy, staring at him, began to weep softly.

"He was fusilladed?" he asked, trembling.

"Nay," said the soldier gently. "He died by his own hand."

"What are you going to do with me? And my father; where is he?"

"Your father is safe. But you—you had something to deliver to *him?*"

"Yes."

"Then you should deliver it," said the soldier.

Heaving with great sobs, the Boy took a large, thick packet from inside his coat, and laid it beside the corpse.

"The republic is the heir of the one who lies dead here," said the soldier. "Do you not agree with me, caballeros?"

"The finance portfolio should have charge of this, then. Will you, Señor

Rivas, examine that package and tell us what it contains?"

Señor Rivas, an old man, examined it, and gave an exclamation.

"It contains drafts of Paris for twenty-five million francs," he announced.

"Twenty-five million francs! And in three years!" said one of the others, marveling.

The soldier turned to the Boy.

"You must tell us about this," he said.

"Willingly," the Boy faltered. "It was just a few days ago that father sent me away. I was to go to New York and wait for him there. I sailed on the *Atahualpa,* and, on our first stop at San Miguel, the news came that revolution had broken out, that the president's cabinet were besieged in the American legation, and that he himself was hidden some place in the city, and could neither be found, nor could he escape. And, just before that, Señor Bresno had given me this packet. He told me the revolutionaries were after him, and that he would never reach shore alive. And that morning some one stabbed him on the upper deck. He told me the packet must be given only to *him"*—the Boy pointed with a nervous little gesture to the bed—"and that I would do *him,* and likewise my father and the republic, a great service. So, when I heard that Bresno was dead, and that my father was in danger, I left the steamer and came here to deliver the packet—and help father if I could. Bresno had told me that this was the house—that I was to ask whom was expected, and that the answer would be Don Dinero."

"I am convinced that that is the truth," said the soldier.

The others agreed with him, and they all looked at the Boy compassionately.

"How did you get here so soon?" queried one.

"I came by a launch from San Miguel with two sailors. She ran out of gasoline near a creek fifteen miles above Punta Mala. I walked from there to Punta Mala this morning, and this afternoon I came from Punta Mala on the burro of this caballero."

"Two hundred miles in a launch, fifteen on foot, and seventeen on a burro!"

The Boy turned and looked fearfully at the Somnambulist, then he turned to the others, and burst into sobs.

"What are you going to do to me?" said he. "Where is my father? Can I not go to him? Or is he—he is not——"

"Have I not told you that he is safe? You would need seven-league boots to go to him. For he is on the steamer that sailed for the north at daybreak this morning. But all his property has been confiscated. And as for you—you have done nothing—you have done nobly. You are perfectly free and at liberty to do whatsoever you choose."

"Oh!" said the Boy. "Then I can go—I and my friend?"

The soldier looked at the Somnambulist.

"It is a serious predicament," he said, turning again to the Boy. "Your father is on his way to New York, and does not dream that you have come back to the republic. And he will be in exile for some time. But you—your uncle and aunt are here. You must let me put you under their protection. Perhaps they will persuade you to stay here—in the republic. And every one will admire what you have done, and they will forget that your father is a political exile. You, better than any, can pave the way for his return. There are many here who will love you and care for you. I, myself, as you know, have always been and always will be your friend. So let us thank this caballero Americano, and Señor Rivas and I will take you to get the rest and care you need after such an experience."

The Boy looked at them all—he realized that it was a home that they offered him in the country where his father was outcast, and then he looked at the Somnambulist, whose face was drawn, and he thought of the journey they had made together.

"You promised to come with me, Boy," said the Somnambulist hoarsely.

The Boy smiled at him radiantly.

"Then," he said, turning to the others, "if I am free and can do as I please, I think I'll go—with my burro—and my Burro-Man."

So they walked down the corridor again, and out the door into the old-fashioned plaza, where Aguinaldo waited.

The Somnambulist lifted the Boy to the burro, and the Boy clung to the Somnambulist.

"Burro-Man," he whispered, as he turned his face to the moon, and his great sombrero tumbled off, and his long hair tumbled about his face. "They all knew—every one of them. And that woman that sold you the piña—she knew. Tell me, did *you* know—from the very first—that I was a *girl*—all the time?"

"All the time," said the Burro-Man, and he kissed the Boy, who kissed him back.

"And have you seven-league boots?" whispered the Boy again.

"Three million dollars' worth," said the Somnambulist, and he kissed the Boy again.

Aguinaldo stepped bravely through the night to the Plaza de la Paz, and the Somnambulist marched at his side, his arm around the Boy's waist.

"I say," he demanded, after a while, "who was the one who was dead—the one you had the twenty-five million for?"

"His name was Iriarte," answered the Boy.

"The president?"

"Yes."

"And who was the one who wanted you to stay?"

"His name is General Ruiz."

"The provisional president?"

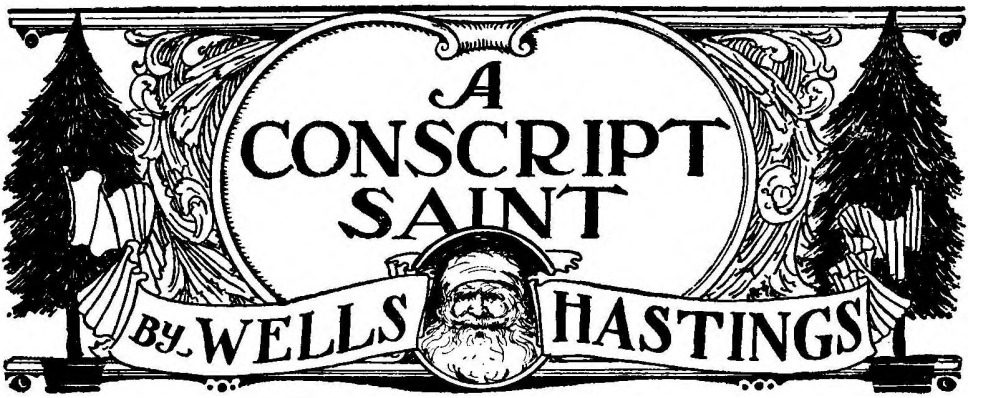
"Yes—and my name is Luz—Luz de Rojas, and my father was once minister of war."

"Your name will shortly be changed," whispered the Somnambulist, and at that decision we will leave them as they passed on through the night and the city that Fate had touched with his finger, under the stars, and the sisters red and white, and on the magic burro, whose name was Seven-league Boots Aguinaldo.

THE TRUSTEE

SO full of sunshine were his days,
So golden and so rare the ways
On which he trod, so sweetly fair,
He feared he'd more than his full share.
Hence his resolve that he would be
In Hope his fellow man's Trustee,
To have and hold these gifts of life
Not for himself, but those in strife;
Relieving care with acts of grace,
And helping others in the race
So grim, so stern, so void of chance
For them chained down by circumstance—
And as he spreads his gifts of peace
The more his surplus joys increase!

JOHN KENDRICK BANGS.



MR. ANDREW BRICE, walking westward toward Fifth Avenue, looked and felt about as much like Little Orphan Annie as it was possible for him to look and feel. He was somewhat handicapped, of course; he was sixteen years older than Annie—whom we have always conceived to be about twelve; he was a trifle over six feet; his shoes were his own, and intact; and his clothes were not in tatters. His fur-lined overcoat alone was foreign to the part, and what matches he carried were safe in a waistcoat pocket. Nor could it be said that he was without a friend in the world. But, aside from these minor differences, his likeness to Annie was complete. He felt friendless, utterly disconsolate, and as he turned into Fifth Avenue the gay throng passed him heartlessly by. Likewise, it was the day before Christmas. He loathed, disliked, abhorred, detested, and abominated Christmas; and in spite of this he had been trapped into doing Christmas shopping.

It would have been better, he thought sulkily, if he really had been friendless; but there were people he must remember; and, worst of all, he had to provide something decent for Jim Nelson's brats. He snorted with fury as he thought of it. Jim had imposed upon him; so, for that matter, had Mrs. Jim. That they were old friends was no excuse; he knew perfectly well that they were trying to cheer him up; perhaps they imagined that they were treating him with tact; but he knew. As if making an idiot of himself could possibly cheer him. He wondered with smoldering resentment how they had managed to persuade him. A pretty figure he would make in a red flannel overcoat and a wagging white beard and a fur-trimmed red nightcap, with his nose done to match, and a pillow or so under his belt—all to satisfy a possible passion for realism which Jim had assured him his sons and daughter possessed. Probably the kids wouldn't wake up anyhow.

He had a poor opinion of people in general, and of Jim in particular. He discovered, to his surprise, that Jim, whom he had always thought generous, was in reality a piker, a niggardly, cheeseparing soul. He had opened the pack with which Jim had provided him, and from which he had insanely promised to fill the brats' stockings that very morning, and he knew whereof he spoke. Fifteen little trumpery presents—five for Alice, five for Jimmie, junior, and five for Andrew, his namesake. Huh! He had never suspected that Jim could be such a tightwad. Even his valet, who had helped him to sort the pack over, had looked pained, which was just like his impertinence. He determined, as he shouldered his way angrily through the crowd, to tell Jim his opinion of him when opportunity presented. It was a fine business, being forced to tramp the streets with the thermometer around zero, to make up a penurious friend's gross inadequacies.

In his rising indignation, he lost all resemblance to Little Orphan Annie.

He found at last the great toy shop he was looking for, a disgustingly crowded place, full of brainless, grinning people; and here he spent what was left of the morning morosely buying dolls and tin soldiers and miniature electric railways. The railways were really something like—quite up to date, with a charged third rail and automatic switches and signals, and tunnels whose gloomy interiors lighted up with incandescent lamps at the approach of the train, and whose outsides were covered with bowlders and vegetation of a brilliant sylvan green. They were quite intricate; it took him the better part of an hour to get the hang of the things so that he could make a flying switch successfully. That was no reason, however, why the salesman should have moved the "Please Do Not Handle" sign around in front of him; the fellow evidently thought that he was like all the rest of those ignorant shoppers. He bought an extra suburban station just to put him in his place.

When he came to leave, he found that he had to order a taxi; and when he was helping the porter pile his purchases into it, an officious old lady spoke to him.

"You look as if you had been having a beautiful time," she said. "There is nothing like Christmas!"

Nothing like Christmas! If she had been a man, or if, after all, she had not been such a sweet-looking old lady, there is no telling what he might not have said or done. As it was, he managed to keep on smiling as he touched his hat. "No, nothing like it," he said; and, stepping gingerly into the taxi, he banged the door after him, and turned once more to the contemplation of his injury and his gloom.

After luncheon he tested the electric railway, to make sure they had not left out anything; and even condescended to explain to his valet the workings of a spring cannon. His valet, he found, was a bad shot, easily beaten at knocking down soldiers. It was no excuse that he was not used to lying on his stomach; neither was he himself used to it. His triumph gave him something of a glow as he started out after his more serious purchases.

The glare of the sun, which had blinded him in the morning, had lost its heartless brilliance, and now only pleasantly sparkled on the mountains of snow in the gutters; the biting air had become almost exhilarating; he was jostled less in the streets. There seemed to be a great deal of laughter and chatter about him, a rush and bustle that was strangely good-natured. Once in his own hurry he ran violently into an atrociously fat man, who roared with laughter, and poked him with a pudgy forefinger; and he had laughed, too, and allowed himself to be dragged into a German barroom for a glass of hot, spiced punch. And the fat man had shown him a very superior cow, which mooed and shut its eyes whenever you pushed down its head. He had never seen anything like it, and the fat man generously told him where he could get one. He turned out to be very well informed, and knew even where red flannel overcoats and white whiskers and cotton snow were to be bought. It was a fortunate encounter.

Even the department stores were decent enough places. He had heard that it was impossible to be waited on, but he found no difficulty. Many of the girls behind the counters were, he found, surprisingly pretty. No one knew better than he the heartlessness of womankind, but in his growing abandon he smiled back at them. It seemed a courtesy expected of him, and he determined that, whatever his own feelings were, he was not going to mar Christmas for others. In this he met with tremendous success.

Before early darkness had fallen he had not only completed the little list he had in mind, but he had added to the congestion of the distracted post office numerous special-delivery packages, addressed to people whom he had had originally no thought of remembering. As he left the last department store he passed in mental review his friends and acquaintances. The list, after all,

was not complete; he had nothing for Mrs. Jim, and in spite of the fact that she was largely responsible for enmeshing him in the tangled labors of the day, she must be suitably remembered. Lights were already gleaming on Fifth Avenue as he started uptown, cheerful, luring lights from shop windows, meteoric flashes from motor cars; and along the avenue itself orderly chains of incandescent brilliance stretched in undulating perspective into the narrowing distance. The crowds seemed undiminished. Brice felt himself borne along by a sort of collective exhilaration. He turned in at last at the ornate bronze doors of a great jeweler's, a vast, templelike place. But even here the spacious aisles were crowded.

He finally, however, managed to engage the attention of a distinguished-looking gentleman who presided over a caseful of brooches, and with his skillful help soon made a selection. There was a little delay while he waited for his package to be wrapped and sealed, and in this delay another distinguished gentleman spoke to him:

"Pardon me, sir, but you are Mr. Brice—Mr. Andrew Brice—are you not?"

Andrew admitted it.

"I am very glad you came in, sir. We have been wondering all the year about you. We have written you twice, but we have heard nothing from you."

Now Andrew remembered, and looked nervously around for his package. "I have been in Europe," he said. "I have been only back a week or so."

"We have been uncertain," said the distinguished gentleman, "what to do with the ring you ordered. You chose the stone, you remember, but you desired a special setting. You were to call for it." He gazed at Andrew in gentle reproof. "We have been very much perplexed—it is a stone of great value. I am glad to have the opportunity of giving it to you."

He was gone, and presently a page came back with the brooch he had bought for Mrs. Jim. Andrew took it, and, with a glance over his shoulder that automatically drew the attention of two of the store's detectives, started guiltily toward the door. But there he had to wait while the liveried porter fumbled with the door latch—perhaps at some signal from the detectives, who had followed his stealthy progress. The little delay was enough; Andrew, glancing again over his shoulder, saw the distinguished gentleman hurrying toward him. Flight was now out of the question. He feigned an interest in a near-by show case.

"Here you are, sir." A small, square package was pressed into his hand; the detectives strolled thoughtfully away. "I was afraid you were leaving without it." Andrew heard both injury and reproach in the deferential voice.

"No," he said mendaciously; "no, hardly that." And as quickly as he could he made his escape.

He loathed, abhorred, detested, and abominated Christmas! The vulgar, brainless crowd jostled him as he thrust along through them, eager to be home and out of it all.

What an ass he had been—what an unthinkable fool! He had spent a year with the thought, but it had lost none of its bitterness. The ring, the crowning fruit of his folly, seemed to swell in his breast pocket, chafing him as he went along. He thought grimly of its purchase a year and a day ago. The sentiment had seemed to him a pretty one then—to ask her on Christmas Day, to bring her his ring and himself on that day of gifts. He had been so sure, as certain as ever a man could be. Even when, on Christmas Day, he had found her gone, he had tried to wait patiently for some explanation. And then, at the club, some one had casually told him that Caro Gouveneur had gone abroad Christmas Eve. Even then he had expected a letter, and later he had gone restlessly over Europe looking for her.

He had been sure she loved him, and she had not even taken the trouble to bid him good-by.

When he got back to his apartment, he found himself utterly worn out. He waved aside the suggestion of dinner, but dinner was brought to him, and he

ate it absently. A little after ten his valet came into the room and solemnly laid out the white wig and beard, the red flannel overcoat, artistically flecked with cotton snow, wrinkled patent-leather hip boots, a fur-trimmed cap, and a stick of red grease paint. Beside these he laid the bulging pack. Brice groaned aloud.

"Yes, sir," his man said sympathetically. "Would you care to have my assistance in sticking on your eyebrows, sir?"

"Get out!" said Brice. "I'm not going."

"But I thought, sir——"

"I'll trouble you to keep your thoughts to yourself." Brice got up and surveyed his valet malignantly. "I suppose somebody has got to go," he said. "I have decided to have you take my place, Stewart."

"Me, sir? Oh, no, sir, I couldn't do it."

Andrew brightened a little. "Of course you could; it is very simple. No one will know you."

"Really I couldn't, sir. Gentlemen can do things, even stuff theirselves with sofa pillows; but a man in my position—you understand, sir. I should hate to give up the place after all this time, but my dignity is something I could not sacrifice."

"Very well," said Brice; "if you won't, you won't. I must be fair to you, I suppose. None of your friends happen to be burglars, do they? This is just the job for a porch climber who has any decent sense of humanity."

"I did know a gentleman who might have done it for you, sir, but he was unfortunate."

"Well, get me those eyebrows, then," said Andrew peevishly; "there seems to be no way of getting out of it."

Perhaps this was as good a way of escape from his thoughts as any. Padding and bundling himself up pleased him, and he took a really artistic delight in painting his nose and cheeks the proper saintly rubicund glow.

Stewart assured him that he had never seen a better one in his life.

The startled and frank amusement of the elevator boy gave him some foretaste of what awaited him in the street. His own cross street he had always thought of as a most quiet and respectable one; people of position and dignity lived along it in ugly, dignified houses. There were two other bachelor-apartment buildings in the block. Its staid quiet he had come to accept as a matter of course, but now as he lifted his pack to his shoulder he realized that he had showed a lack of foresight. There was not a taxicab in sight; instead, he came upon two shrill and excited small boys, who shrieked aloud joyously at sight of him—shrieks that seemed to work a miracle, for before he had gone many yards hordes of little boys had sprung up from nowhere, whirling dervishes of clamorous enthusiasm, dancing, wondering, roistering imps, an infernal bodyguard that escorted him willy-nilly to the corner. There happily an inspiration came to him, for on the corner was a member of the church militant, a shivering figure, clad much as he was himself, if with far less perfection of detail, a loose-bearded Santa Claus, who leaned against a box shaped and painted like a chimney, and stolidly rang a bell, inviting down his chimney the coin of the passer-by, that the city's poor might have some share of the seasonable cheer. Andrew approached him, and laid his pack beside the chimney, and after some fumbling managed to get out a small bill from a buried pocket.

"Merry Christmas, brother!" he said. "I would share your vigil."

"My what?" said the other Santa Claus.

Andrew passed him the bill. "Your vigil is what I said. What I meant was that I want to stand here for a minute until these kids get discouraged."

"I getcha!" said the shivering one. "Take a ring at the bell if you want to."

The boys were already turning away, disappointed. Brice took the proffered bell, and rang it with fervor, looking up and down the street for a vacant taxicab. The proprietor of the chimney seized the opportunity to beat some

warmth into his mittened fingers. Andrew was commencing to enjoy himself.

The corner was in the heart of the club district. Several people whom he knew passed. One—a young millionaire—in kindly preoccupation, tossed a quarter into the chimney as he passed.

"Cheap sport!" said Andrew distinctly, drowning the thanks of the other Santa Claus. The giver stared at him and laughed, and dropped a dollar into the chimney before he went, still laughing, on his way.

Andrew had caught sight of a taxicab, and, with some regret, he handed the bell back to its owner. "I'm not so bad, am I?" he asked.

"You certainly have yer noive," admitted the other.

The taxi driver drew up suspiciously. "What's the game?" he asked.

Brice opened the door and thrust in his pack, giving the address of the Nelson apartment. The driver did not even smile. He had almost made an unfortunate mistake, and he was used to the vagaries of his patrons. The snow was still deep, but they plowed steadily uptown. Andrew at last was feeling quite in the mood for his duties.

When he had at last arrived, and paid off the driver, however, he lost something of his confidence. The street was fortunately deserted, but he moved with caution. He had a sudden unhappy memory of a time when he had mixed the dates of two invitations, and, sprucely attired as Little Jack Horner, had come, sucking his thumb, into a room where all the other men were in full dress; so that now he stole up the steps on tiptoe, and, opening the door a crack, reconnoitered with one eye the pretentious entrance hall. It seemed to him positively crowded with people. He stole down the steps. He would wait until the coast was clear.

But after he had taken two more discreet peeps, and found the hall still occupied, his anxiety deepened. The luck of the empty street could not hold forever, and he found that whiskers and red flannel, even reënforced by pillows, were poor substitutes for a fur-lined overcoat. A desperate and whimsical thought came to him. The apartment house was on the corner, and when he turned it he came upon what he was looking for. Here, in a court-like depression of the building, was the fire escape. To be sure, he was separated from it by a high fence of upright iron bars, terminating artistically in very practical spear heads; but what was a fence to a man who had made up his mind to be a realistic Santa Claus? He struggled up it far enough to drop his pack gently on the other side, and then, with his ears straining apprehensively for a policeman's whistle, he gained the top, and with the timely assistance of the pillows leaned scathless across the spear points, and presently was over in safety. He climbed the fire escape in a fine exhilaration. If a chance policeman chose to whistle now, let him whistle. He had only to scramble into Jim's apartment, and he was absolutely safe.

Nevertheless, it was hard work; the iron ladders were narrow and incredibly cold to the touch; the steel-lathed platforms were ribbed with snow and a thin layer of ice; his pack was not tremendously heavy, but it was bulky, and swayed in the winds, and he had to push it ahead of him through the little openings in the platforms. He heaved a sigh of relief when the fourth floor was reached at last.

"Lucky Jim believes in fresh air," he said, as he paused before a half-open window. His voice startled him, and recalled the peril of his position. He glanced down at the street; beneath the light on the corner he saw the helmet of a policeman. "A pretty narrow squeak," he thought; and, cautiously raising the window, he thrust in his pack, and stepped as lightly as possible over the sill.

Fortunately he was perfectly familiar with the apartment; he was, he knew, in a little library; he had only to cross the room, walk the length of a narrow hall, and he would come to the little sitting room which opened off the children's bedrooms. Here he knew the stockings were hung; here, in all proba-

bility, anxious parents were already awaiting him. He chuckled as he thought of their surprise. That he knocked over a chair on his way to the door did not disturb him; they were going to see him in a minute.

But when he had come safely down the hall, and in silent mirth opened the door, he found the sitting room empty. It seemed impossible that they could have gone to bed, and yet a low night light burned on the table, and he could see no one. He came in and softly closed the door behind him. Not a stocking hung from the mantelpiece; what in the world was the matter with them?

"Jim!" he called softly. "Jim!" He thought he heard some one stir, but there was no answer. With an appalling apprehension, he glanced about him.

He was in the wrong apartment. The Nelsons were either above or below him, comfortably waiting for him, but separated from him by all the perils of the unknown. Even with the realization, the door that should have been Alice's, that *looked* so exactly like Alice's, opened, and in the room before him he dimly saw a figure, and before the figure a wavering circle of light.

"Who's there?" a small, but very controlled, voice asked him. The wavering circle, he now discovered, was the nickeled muzzle of a revolver.

He had done it; he was done for; but, at all events, he would make the best of it. "Santa Claus," he answered as cheerfully as he could.

"Santa Claus!" He heard the name repeated in a voice of frightened wonder. "Are you sure you are not a burglar?" Then: "Perhaps you can see I have a revolver."

Oh, impossible night of wonders! He had ventured only a little way into unreality, and now he found himself at the very heart of wonderland. Sanities had vanished; even *this* might be true. "Won't you please come out?" he said. "I—I won't hurt you. Perhaps I have a present for you. Please come, Caro," he said.

The little nickeled revolver fell to the floor with a small thud. Andrew heard a sigh that was half laughter, half a sob. "Is it you, Andrew?"

"Certainly it is," said Andrew. "Won't you please come out?"

There was a moment's pause, and then she stepped uncertainly into the doorway. The hair, which Andrew had always seen crowning her head like an intimate halo, fell now in two long braids over her shoulders, glistening against the dark-blue Chinese silk of her kimono. She might have been the sleeping—or, at least, the just awakened—princess of a pantomime, or the spirit of winter coming to greet winter's patron saint. Andrew fought hard against the feeling of unreality. For a moment he did not try to speak, but was content to watch her in silence; he thought—he was almost sure—that she was glad, for some reason or other. Then, as she looked back at him, her expression changed, grew troubled, and, with some unspoken thought, a little angry flush swept over her face and slowly faded away again, leaving her very pale.

"Why are you here?" she asked. Tears came into her eyes. "How could you, Andrew?"

Andrew flushed, too, under the white beard and the grease paint. "You do not think I meant to come, do you? You didn't—you couldn't think that!"

"Then why——"

"I came up the fire escape to play Santa Claus to Jim Nelson's kids, and I got into the wrong window. Not—not," he added honestly, "that I wouldn't have come in if I had had any idea that you were miraculously here. I have been looking all over Europe for you, to find out what the trouble was."

"Trouble! Andrew Brice, what do you mean?"

"Why did you go off without so much as a word? Why have you never written all this time?"

"I sent you a note by messenger, and you didn't pay the least attention to it. How could you expect me to write to you, when you didn't come down to

see me off, or even take the trouble to answer?"

"I never got a note, Caro."

A year ago he had planned the whole thing. He had thought she loved him; he had been almost sure. He had known just what he was going to say, in what fine, proud, humble phrases he was going to tell her that he loved her. Now, without a word of telling, he found her quite naturally in his arms. She was crying, but he knew that she was happy. Then tardily, after some unreckoned interval, he whispered that he loved her.

"If you could have seen me watching for you," she whispered back, "expecting to see you every moment in the crowd, expecting even when that awful steamer moved away—I felt as if my heart was broken, Andrew—dear Andrew!" Then later, parenthetically: "Father was sick in Berlin. He cabled me, and, of course, I had to go to him."

Later still she pushed him gently away from her, and, with her hands on his shoulders, looked at him, laughing. "If you could see yourself, Andrew you——"

Andrew glanced down at his red, unwieldy figure. "That reminds me," he said; "I have a present for you, if I can ever get at it. Yes, here it is." He tore open the little square box. "I meant to give it to you last Christmas." He snapped on the electric lights that he might see her better, but in their brilliance Caro caught sight of herself in the glass, and, clutching her kimono about her, fled suddenly to her room. He heard her gasping laughter as she shut the door. "Wait!" she called to him presently. "I am hurrying as fast as I can. You ought to go down and give those kiddies their presents."

"We shall both go," said Andrew.

The Nelson children did wake up, after all. They could scarcely have been expected to sleep through the excitement and the merriment in the next room. They came, rubbing their eyes, from their beds, only to be incontinently shooed back again, where in spite of their wonder they fell asleep in the confused clamor of Christmas chimes. But they were all positive they had been awake, even though their accounts differed, and they had all seen Santa Claus. Jimmie, junior, said that he had seen his father embracing the saint, or at least clapping him familiarly on the back—a highly improbable statement. Andy claimed a vision of a fairy with golden hair, whom he surmised was Mrs. Santa. He added circumstantially that she had a large spot of red on one cheek. Alice, who took an interest in her neighbors, thought she was not a fairy, but that sweet young lady who came two days ago to visit the old lady in the apartment above them—at any rate, she looked like her. This Andy held as absurd. Why should this strange young lady have come down the chimney with Santa Claus?

He laid the matter before Caro herself at Christmas dinner, when she turned out not to be strange at all, but the lady who was going to marry his godfather. He never got a really satisfactory answer.

APASIONADA

BY

HORACE FISH

SHARPER than two sides of the letter A, the peak of a mountain was printed up in purple against the paper-colored sky; and next to it another; and on its other side a third; and beyond them to the south were four and five; and beyond them to the north were six and seven.

A loon's cry is the loneliest in the world.

A great road, wide, narrow, yellow, rolling, snakish, twisted from them, and to them, and between them; downward, perhaps to hell; upward, perhaps to heaven; around, as if to the sea; back again into the network.

Spain is the stoniest, dustiest place in the world.

Above them, glistering the gray and brown wings of the loon, as it sailed from isolate water to isolate water, the white sky shimmered with the sandlike gilt of evening, and whittled the tall peaks to a sharper purple, while back of them the sun, as dull red as the heavy roses of America, climbed slowly backward.

There is no place in the world so chill, so cold, as Spain.

Duller and more dull, redder and less red, the slow sun cut the valleys into halves of ebony and of brass, and the crying loon sank away toward hidden water.

Than Spain, there is no place in the world more desolate.

As though to write the desolation down, God had set a creature of flesh, and a little blood, on a slope above the roadway. If he had laid back his head, his thoughts might have been in France, for no one has ever drawn a cord, from side to side, across the Pyrenees; but he was sitting forward, with his thin hands clasped before his bent-up knees, like a Virgin's upon her breasts.

Than a loon's cry, a man's clasped hands are the only thing lonelier in the world.

Blue peaks rose in a far circle around him. Below where he sat eating the last dry crumbs of bread and cheese from his pocket, the road stretched on still wide and yellow; but he had not passed a town since half a week, and there might be none till Spain.

A dull sound seemed to rise from the earth of the rough road. It grew louder, and echoed in a low rumbling among the hills. Slowly it grew and grew, and he crouched down in terror behind a rock. People and wagons went by—gray figures, indistinct in clouds of yellow dust, with a babble of chattering and creaking noise. Far ahead, one voice called back, and a great jolt stilled the groaning of the road.

The last wagon of the caravan became slowly clear below his rock. It was deserted, and he crept down to it. The sound of footsteps and voices drew farther and farther away toward the head of the procession, and he climbed under the shelter of the wagon's canvas. From the sacks and boxes surrounding him there was a heavy smell of fruit, but he touched nothing. He

was afraid to steal. He crept among them and fell back, pressing his hand slowly and tightly against his heart, as though between them were something that he could hold close for its warmth.

When he woke, everything was black. He did not know that it was another night. He was stiff, and gnawingly hungry. Creeping out in the stillness, he saw dim trees all about, and the embers of a fire near the wagon. There were bits of meat scattered by it, and he ate voraciously. Through the thick wood lights rose and fell, and he crept among the trees to the top of a ridge and looked down. In a wide hollow there were many people—hundreds, he thought—walking around, and lying down, between flaming bonfires. Their shadows flared up and down in the yellow light like the torch-lit shadows of a festa, and a moaning song rose from them. It was very beautiful, rising and falling like the fires, but it had a lonely sound that frightened him, and he went away among the trees. He remembered that he must speak to them, and ask his way, but he was afraid now, and he knew he would be afraid to look into the shining eyes of human beings watching his approach between the trees. But he remembered again that he must speak to them, and ask his way, and abruptly, as though carrying his courage in a bundle that slipped, yet clung under his trembling arm, he went down into the camp, and toward a tall figure that stood wavering alone by a flickering fire in the outskirt.

"*Saluté*," he said, and stood waiting for a reply.

"*Salud*," said the gypsy, looking at him coolly. "Are you drunk, that you mispronounce *Salud?*"

"No," said the man quickly. "I am not drunk, but I am not Spanish, either. Can you speak Italian?"

"No," said the gypsy slowly. "But I cannot speak Spanish, either. I simply speak. So we are quits, and we seem to understand each other a little. Are you lost?"

"I hope not," said the man, "but I fear so. *Amigo*, I am very hungry for food, but not so much as I am to know my way. Do you know the road on this paper?" And from his pocket he showed a torn map, made by hand, and eaten apart by handling.

The gypsy studied it, holding it down so near to the uncertain flames that the man trembled.

"Have I left France?" he asked, with his breath catching.

"I do not know what you have left," answered the gypsy, with a short laugh, "but I know that you are in Spain. As for this map, it is a poor one, but you are in the neighborhood of this cross."

"*Mio Dio! Grazie! Grazie, mio amigo!*" cried the man, seizing back the paper and laughing.

"Come, sit down and eat," said the gypsy, "and do not laugh when there is nothing to laugh at. Sleep with us to-night, and start out again to-morrow. For what do you look?"

"For Terassa," said the trembling man. "Have you ever heard of a small village called Terassa?"

"I have seen it from a tall mountain behind what is called the Chasm," said the gypsy, "but I hope I never will go to it. If you are anything like a gypsy, or as bad as one, or if you are running away from some crime, or if you are of any spirit at all, do not go there, for this town is so good that its priest should be kidnaped like a rich baby, and held for ransom from the pope. We have no more use for Terassa than it has for us, for gypsies do not like priest-ridden towns, and this village has long ears, which the old man pulls as he digs his knees into its ribs."

"I had thought," said the man, "that it was a very large town, with a school in it, like a city."

"You think of Terra Sa, for which it was named," said the gypsy. "That is south of Barcelona, while this lambkin village is north of it, perched up like a bird's nest in the foothills."

"I thank you, I thank you!" whispered the man. "And if you know all this, do you know if, above it, here somewhere in the mountains, there is a house where an outlaw lives? I swear I will weep like a woman if you do not

know, for a lie is worse than a hand-strike, and I was told that there was such a house, with such a man in it, and, Maria help me, that he traded sometimes with the gypsies, who knew him!"

"Save your tears," said the gypsy harshly, "and save your reason by pausing for an answer. It is good and bad. There was such a man, and we know him. His name is Miguel. But he has deserted his house, and it has rotted without him for a year. Now will you weep, or will you laugh again, like a loon? Sit down and eat!"

"Mio Dio, grazie!" cried the man, grasping his hand with ten quivering fingers. "If he be burning in hell or freezing in heaven, I am glad that he is absent, for it is his house that I must find, not him! Will the road above, leading downward, bring me near it?"

"If you live long enough, yes," the gypsy answered. "But life is hard when one is alone and foolish, in the mountains, and alone you would have to go, for we journey north. Sleep with me, and if you are not reasonable in the morning, we will start you on your way, and find your bones for a souvenir next summer."

"I will go now," cried the man, "and pray for you if you will not be a bad priest and let me buy the prayer now with some money. I have a little."

"Put it back in your pocket," said the gypsy. "We may steal now and then, but not from the insane. I will not hold you here to-night for the pleasure of it, but I will hold you if I have to with this left hand, while with this right I crowd two bread crumbs down your throat."

And he forced him, by the shoulder, to a sitting posture on a shawl by the fire. They ate in silence, and then the man, lifting upward the gypsy's tawny hand, and pressing his forehead against it, rose, and, with a low *"Grazie, grazie, amigo!"* stumbled farther and farther away from the flaring lights.

Once more the world rolled over in its dizzy sleep, while the man climbed, and walked, and ran, and sank down, and ate berries, and lay on the ground, and walked, and climbed, and ran.

At the next hour of evening, while he stood gazing hopelessly down through a steep-slanting grove of thin, huge trees, a film of deep cloud drew itself slowly around the sky, darkening the dark forest, and a sound, as rumbling and ominous as the caravan's, approached and approached, and, from above him, with a hissing roar, silver sheets torrented down and swept between the lines of shaking trees. From under a leaning rock, where he cowered with bent shoulders, he saw the monstrous locust-acacias, in their feathery clothing, bending away from and toward each other like gigantic women in a dance; and suddenly one beautiful creature, at one loud word from God, and one bright look from His eye, fell forward among her sisters with one long, bitter shriek of her branches, and lay dripping, with staring yellow rents in her great gray body, like a bridge overswept by the cascade. As in the gypsy wagon, he pressed his hand against his thumping heart, as if between the heart and the hand, symbol of need and symbol of possession, were something that, pressed close enough, could give the shivering body a little warmth.

Before him, intermingling white pieces of mist sifted between the trees, forth and back, and up and down, and more and more forward and up, as the hissing ceased, and more and more thick as the growing silence echoed with the small, quick sounds of diminutive dripping globes of water, which, as the white blanket was drawn slowly beyond the trees into heaven, gleamed more and more like jewels in the renewing light.

The brilliance dazzled him, and, turning himself slowly and weakly under the rock, with a little shudder running back between his shoulders, he closed his eyes and let his head fall upon his arms, not knowing, because of the wetness of his sleeves, that unseen jewels glittered forth from the eyes themselves. When he opened them, the army of standing trees, and the prone pathway of the fallen one, were boldly

black below a bright-indigo sky in which sharp gold specks were sitting, and over the slippery bridge he crept to the edge of the ravine, and, clinging to the branches, looked into it.

From across it, through its darkness, came a sound that sent a moment's clamor to his heart, and another terrified shutting to his eyes, which now were the only part of him that was dry; but, after listening, he knew that it was only an earthly waterfall, and he sprang dangerously erect on the tree trunk, with all the remainder of his exhausted blood seeming to rush to his feet as the cataract rushed to the stream bed, and, lifting his head up, cried aloud, *"Mio Dio! Grazie!"* and, swinging onto a rock, clambered down through the rough underbrush, and, skirting the swollen brook, climbed up and up beside the waterfall.

As he went higher and higher, something else was climbing, unknown to him, higher and higher, too. It was not a man, but it was a thing made by the same mind that had made him, and when he reached the top, and, with his heart near stopping, saw the small house written black on the rich night sky, the bright beginning of the moon, as curved and as gently balanced as a boat, was resting in the tree that drooped over the roof. It was soft and luminous, yet as sharp and perfect as two joined tiger's claws in a woman's hair.

From the slow quietness with which he stepped nearer, he might have been thought to wear the unclawed paws themselves, for the gnawing fear of disappointment tugged him back with the strength of a weighted rope; but at last he stood near the door, and at last his voice came, calling: "Are you there?"

No voice answered him, but his tense ear heard the sound of cautious footfalls in the little house, and, with a great cry of joy, he leaped forward and struck open the door, and stood on the sill, with the moonlight streaming through ahead of him. Once more his left hand went up to his heart. The shadows of three heads shot into the block of light, three voices oathed, six hands reached toward him, and laid upon him; and the cry with which he sprang back and turned, louder than a hurt animal, was full of a rage greater than his joy had been, and a pain that rang out again and again as he darted away, crashing desperately through the bushes, and instinctively hiding his own noise in the shelter of the waterfall's roar as he leaped, step after jolting step, down into the blackness of the ravine.

Surrounded by the dull-silver twilight that crept through his house in November, and surrounded, also, by ten of his little boys, brooding over their natural-history lesson, Padre Pedro lay back in his deep chair, sunk in a reverie deeper still. The little boys were the ten who were most troublesome in the subject of the moment, eight who had no imagination to spare for it, and two who had altogether too much; and the ensuant elements of confusion had caused the weary father to command silence for one hour, which should be devoted to memorizing two passages, about the ostrich and the kangaroo, which he thought interesting enough to arouse the most backward, while practical enough to restrain the enthusiastic. On his own lap he held, instead of a book, his silver little dog, Nanette.

She had been lately given to him by an American lady who, though rich and handsome, was yet in trouble, and whom he had helped and comforted with gentle kindliness and wise advice. As the lady was a Protestant, he would not accept the votive jewel that she proffered; and, therefore, Nanette, her long, white hair dampened by a few tears that had traveled all the way from California, had become his reward, despite his own protestations, and now lay sleeping peacefully beneath his hand, which grew slower and slower in its strokings as the silence of the little boys increased and his thoughts wandered farther back across Terassa's history.

There had been no wine festival this year, for the first one, in the yellow September fourteen months ago, had brought him so much sorrow that, in spite of its benefit in fame to Terassa, he had been too fearful to repeat it, and

thought to hold his judgment open for another twelvemonth; and his feelings now hung pendulous between regret and satisfaction. Truly the great sale of wines had brought shining pesetas into Terassa from many countries, even the stubborn America, and Terassa's little name into even that huge country.

But as truly, too, the festival itself had seared his heart in as many directions. On the first day of it, the visiting necromancer had nearly shattered, with his evil love spells, the union of his beloved Toninio and Violeta, the happiest and prettiest husband and wife in northern Spain. But he had cause for gratitude in God's help, by which he had learned in good time of the old man's villainy, and driven him from the town. Still, would his heart ever heal from the old man's revenge? He had suborned and carried off his lovely Margarita.

Was she bad in God's eyes? Was she dead? Would she come back? Over the quiet books of the little boys a sigh floated through the twilight, stealing hopelessly from his nostrils, and, in quick self-reproof, he bit his lips. Was there not much to be thankful for? Tito, his smallest orphan, had run away, too, next day, because he had thieved a toy from the magician's booth; but had he not returned, and had not his pitiable exposure in the Pyrenees brought back, as his protector, the long-lost outlaw, Miguel, and made, from a frightened murderer, a worthy man and a good husband?

But Margarita had not returned, and again he caught himself catching back a sigh as he visioned the festival, helplessly picturing it as a gayly decked and smiling martyr, doomed, in its brilliant ribbons, among evil forces. Yet, again, one fortune had been brought up the highway by means of the festival, and by means, also, of the magician's flight itself, and flourished now, as beautiful as a flower, in Margarita's house. This was the parrot woman, who, coming unknown into Terassa with all her little, green birds, had, in one night, wrapped her rosy cloak about the padre's heart, and left it hanging there as secure as the thirty choir robes of his little boys.

Almost a smile quivered on his lips, and, at the next sad festival thought it did not, strive as it would, quite go away. This thought was of the minor festival, which he had held next spring, in the poppy fields, for the unveiling of a new statue of Santo Miguel. Here was discovered wickedness, indeed, for the expensive figure had been defiled, and painted into a likeness of the devil. Moreover, the sacrilege had been done by a Terassan. Yet, reflected the padre, good, in its own strange way, had come even of that, for the terrible event, and the discovery of the guilty, had turned ancient Inés, the best lace maker north of Valencia, into a Catholic again, after she had turned atheist in the most defiant spirit.

Old Rosa had helped to accomplish the reform, by taking very stringent measures with Inés, whom she hated, and who hated her; and here came in another good, for, ever since then, over a period of more than six months, Inés, penitent and virtuous, had not only gone to every single service at church, but had followed Rosa about as a tail follows a horse.

After all, the beautiful autumn wine festival, and its religious sequel in May, had done no final harm—unless, perhaps, Margarita, or the creamy gloss of her round, fair name, were truly gone forever from Terassa. A third sigh struggled for release from him, while to him, as though from far off through the dusky light, a different sound seemed to come, seeping into his thoughts through his ears. Could it be that the little boys were whispering?

José and Tito, the one quite bad, and the other quite good, were the pair with too much imagination; and, though they loved each other very much, they had sometimes to be separated for considerable periods, to the end of mutual benefit. But José had been virtuous, and Tito untempted, all through November, and the padre forgot the smile which he was striving to regain as he realized that, in truth, against his urgent instructions, they were conversing in low tones now.

"Nanette is asleep," said José, "and

the padre's hand has slipped off her back. Now listen. I think Nanette is a rich animal, for she came all the way from America, where nobody is poor. You will notice her fur is long and gray; just like that of the lady who gave her to the padre. Now, the padre seems to be asleep, too, and if you will tiptoe over and bring Nanette here, we will see if there is not money under her fur."

"I will not, José," said Tito.

"Why not?" whispered José. "Are you afraid?"

"I confess it," said Tito, "for I do not like that dog. There is something the matter with it. I have looked under the fur myself, and it has buttons down the front, like the padre."

The padre started so that Nanette, with hurt feelings, jumped off his lap.

"Tito, did I tell you not to talk?"

"Yes, padre."

"Have I told you, also, not to express your opinions?"

"Yes, but if you will look, padre——"

But his words, and the padre's, were further spared by a sight and a sound—the sight of a figure rushing by the window, and the sound of it thudding on the sill and against the door.

As the startled padre rose to his feet, a trembling man sprang into the room and stood with gripped hands outstretched, while the frightened little boys clustered behind him, and Nanette, with a terrified yelp, jumped under the chair.

"Give me harbor," cried the man, "or I will take it! Do you see these hands? Do you know what they could do?"

"I do not fear them," said the padre, "and perhaps you do not know what God's power can do. One thing that it does is to surround me closer than my robe. When you speak to a priest, speak quietly. What do you desire of this one?"

"Harbor!" said the man, steadying himself against the wall. "You are the Church, and you can give it to me. In the name of your God—and I hate Him—I demand it! If I do not have it, I will be murdered. There are three men in Terassa now who are hunting me! I demand the protection of your cloth. I can be seen where I stand now—let me get between you and the cupboard!"

"Sit down in this chair at the window," said the padre sternly. "I do not believe that there are men in Terassa to murder you, and, if there are, remember that murderers fear the Church, and in my house you are safe," and he pushed the man into his chair. "Now, tell me this in one word. You know your condition better than I do. Can you take wine now, or must you eat beforehand? Remember, one word!"

"Wine," said the man, and lay back in the chair with a shudder.

"Drink this," said the padre, holding a glass to his lips with one hand, while with the other, from which the man shrank away as he saw the movement of it, he thrust a pillow behind his head. Then he turned to the little boys.

"Go to the church, all of you, and stay there till you hear from me. Do not talk of this matter, either among yourselves or to any one who may question you afterward. Remember. Talk as much as you choose of the kangaroo and the ostrich, and even of Nanette, if you wish—here, take her with you—but not two words of this. Go! I will call you presently."

They went out, scared and quiet, Nanette crushed under one of José's arms, and Tito under the other; and the padre stepped across the room, and back again to the man, with a plate in his hand.

"Eat," he said, and, drawing a chair opposite to him, sat down, and, as his guest ate—slowly, painfully—studied him; his long, thin body, his noble head, with its sunken, aquiline face; the mass of thick, dull-black hair; the pallid, white skin; the wavering lips; the quick, startled eyes, that seemed first black, then dark bronze-brown, then the deep color of lapis; the hands, slender and fine, yet coarsened by weather and field labor.

"Speak now," he said at last. "Tell whatever you have to tell, and let it be the truth. When you address me, call me 'padre.' It is respectful, and I like it. There is wine on the floor, below

your elbow—but drink slowly. Now speak."

"I will speak, padre," said the man. "I am to be murdered, but first I will commit murder myself. I swear it."

"I said to speak the truth," said the padre, "and you tell two lies to begin with. You shall not be murdered, and you are not going to commit murder, first, or second, or last. Perhaps I should question you, and get at it that way. Are you guilty of some crime?"

"Yes, one—against myself."

"What was it?" asked the padre.

"I loved a woman."

"That is not a crime," said the padre.

"I trusted her—that was the crime," said the man.

"To trust a woman may be foolish, but it is not a crime," said the padre.

"It was one to trust that woman!" cried the man bitterly. "She betrayed me!"

"Did you betray her first?" asked the padre quietly.

"*Mio Dio,* I did not! I loved her. I would have died for her. And she has sold my life."

"Then is it the woman that is to murder you?"

"Not with her own hands, but she has set three men upon me."

"Who is this woman?"

"I do not know."

"But you know her. Answer sensibly."

"I do not know her. I saw her in a theater. I looked at her, and I loved her, and she loved me. I could have sworn it."

"Your words are stormy, and convey no intelligence," protested the padre. "Your speech is Italian. Is this theater in Italy—in Spain?"

"I am a Sicilian, padre, and the theater is in southern France, where I worked in a vineyard. In this theater I saw the woman dancing, and heard her singing, and I knew that she must be mine, or I would die."

"Did you pay your way into the theater?" asked the padre.

"I did. I earned three francs a day in the vineyard, and I paid two to go into the theater."

"And you having paid two-thirds of your wages for the privilege of looking at her in public, she desires to murder you. She is an unreasonable woman," said the padre.

"I will tell you, I will tell you!" exclaimed the man. "This was a small town, but it had a theater after the like of a larger one, and sometimes performers came to it. I was but a laborer, padre, but I had a little savings, and one night I went to the play. It was a fine play, though it meant nothing. It was music, with two musicians below the platform, and dancing, and a trick show. When I saw the woman who danced, I loved her right away. You may not understand this, for you are a priest, but even a priest might understand it for some one else. Across the candles on the platform, she looked at me, and, as I looked back, I felt sick, and I went away."

"And came all the way to Spain, crazed?" inquired the padre.

"No, no, padre! I will tell you. I went again to the theater the next night, to look at her again, and again she looked at me. And I looked at her all the time, and once, as she danced, she smiled at me. Then I was sick again; but I did not go away, but waited till she gave place to the trick show, and then I leaned over to the boy who played the fiddle, and asked him if she had any husband. And he said 'yes.' And I paid him a franc afterward to help me from the theater and bring me some of the way home."

"I begin to understand somewhat," commented the padre. "As she had a husband, having been insulted by you, she naturally complained to him, and you ran in fear of him from southern France to northern Spain. So would I."

"Insult her?" cried his visitor. "I would cast to the wind the man who did! And as for running in fear, I did so from the little house on the fourth mountain back of you, where I was sprung upon by her ruffians, but I tell you it was not from fear that I tore apart the Pyrenees and climbed through them to find that house! I lived then

for but one thing; and, having lost it through perfidy, I live now, thanks to quick eyes and quick muscles, for one thing else!"

"I think you have been at Miguel's house," said the padre. "Why were you hunting for that?"

"Your questions thicken my brain," cried the man in feeble protest, and he sank back again in the chair.

"Forgive me," said the padre. "When one converses with a man who both fears murder and intends to commit it, one will be inquisitive. Speak on as you choose, and I will be as silent as I can."

"For a third time," said the man, "I went to the theater. And this night I paid in three francs at the door, so that I might sit alone in a raised seat next the platform. And, as I waited for the play, I determined that I would not be sick, which would be foolish, for it was only joy that had made me so. But I was, padre, for, as she danced to the music that I sung afterward to myself all the way through the mountains, she threw a flower to me, and it touched my face, and fell into my hand. The people laughed, and I laughed, to deceive them, and so did she, but all the time I was holding the flower down at my side, crushing it tight and rolling it in my fingers, as I would have crushed her in my arms, and she saw, and, as I watched her eyes, I knew that she, too, was sick, like me, and she fell backward a little, and stopped dancing. I was going to jump across to catch her, but the man who had the trick show ran from the side onto the platform, and caught her. I think she did not like his catching her, for she jumped away from him, and began dancing again, and laughed, and made the people think she had put it in the play."

"Go on," said the padre.

"When he went away, she deceived the people again by closing one eye at them and tilting her head boldly at me, and then wrote something, with a pencil, on a piece of paper, and threw the paper to me. And she, and I, and the people laughed, but I was dizzy again, for there I held her message in my hand, and I had to make a motion to her that I could not read."

"You talk like a man who could read," said the padre.

"I am glad, padre, that she thought I looked so. She understood, and before her dance was over she had stepped, clashing her tambourine, quite close to me, and motioned her head toward the fiddle boy, and said: 'To-morrow night.' And the next night, as I sat early in that seat again, this boy came over to me, and gave me a long message—far longer than she could have written on that paper. It was that, if I loved her as she hoped, she must run away from her husband, for she was married by the Church, and he watched her jealously—so much, that if he found her coquetting he cursed her and threatened the law. But for my sake she would risk husband, and Church, and law, and meet me, to be mine for good, if I loved her enough.

"This I could prove if I would journey a long distance, to the house of an outlaw, who would befriend her, and me, too, for her sake, and to this house she would go, by a devious route, after her husband had brought her back to Barcelona, whence she could escape him as she could not from a little town. I made the boy say this over and over, and he gave me, also, a large paper from her. This, the boy said, was a map, and a map, padre, I can read. It had a big cross on it for the town where we were, and another for Terassa, and a red one for the outlaw's house. And the end of her message was that, if I would do all this—and she would put on me the curse of the three generations if I lied—I must show some love, already proven, by displaying the flower she had tossed to me the night before. If I did not have it about me, she would forget me; and if I did, and would obey her message, I should hold it in my hand in the light of the candles.

"When I knew all this message, padre, I was very sick again—more than ever before. But the boy laughed and talked quickly, so that the people coming in suspected nothing, and I gave him some of my money, and when he

had gone below, and the candles were lighted, I had got the flower out of my shirt, and was holding it in my hand where she could see it, near the candles."

"Your story is an evil one," said the padre, "but good may come of evil. Go on."

"I do not remember that night," said the man, "except that she saw the flower, and that we looked and looked at each other, and that once the fiddle boy made a sign to me that her husband was watching; and, in truth, I saw that the old man of the trick show was staring at me from across."

"The *old* man?" asked the padre sharply. "What was his show?"

"Sleight of hand, and two marionetti."

"*Mio Dio!* Go on!" cried the padre, growing white.

"There is no more, padre. As cold as though I was naked, but more weak from joy than from fatigue, I found that house, and, as if it covered a tunnel from hell, three men sprang upon me. She betrayed me."

"Forget your betrayal for a moment," exclaimed the padre, "and tell me this: Do you know her name?"

"I do not," said the man, "but the boy told me that for the play she called herself 'The Pearl of the Pyrenees.'"

"*Dio,* I will soon be convinced!" cried the padre, gripping the sides of his chair. "What was the flower that she threw to you? Would it be a yellow rose?"

"I do not know the name of it," answered the man, "but it was not a rose. To keep the people laughing when she threw it to me, she told them it was 'the crazy carrot of Queen Anne.' That, of course, means nothing, but what is left of it you can see for yourself." And he threw open his jacket, and then his tattered shirt, and drew a shriveled green-and-white thing from where it lay against the black hair on his chest.

"The lace flower—I am sure of it!" breathed the padre. "When she threw it to you, was it fresh and beautiful, like a round piece of new lace?"

"I think so," said the man, "but I did not examine it. I was crushing it in my hand."

"If I could look at the paper that she threw to you, I could be sure," said the padre eagerly, "for I would know the writing. Have you it?"

"No," said the man, "I ate it."

"*Ate* it?" exclaimed the padre. "Why?"

"Because the words on it were hers, and, as she put them down, her little finger touched the paper."

"Such love, if it is love, is madness!" cried Padre Pedro, rising and pacing swiftly about the room. "My son, you do not know whom you love, but I do, and I could tell you her name."

"Let her stay nameless," replied the man, "for a corpse is nobody, and I am going to kill her."

The padre halted in front of him.

"What you say about that, my son, is of no importance just now, for you are not only in my house, but in my power, too, unless you are strong enough to kill me, which I doubt. Now, consider that, and answer one more question. Did you say that she was truly married to the old man—married in church?"

"I did, and she was. Such was the message she sent me. Else she would not have been afraid to meet me right there, and run away with me. So the boy said. She was afraid of the law, because she was married in church."

"For so much, I thank God!" ejaculated the padre.

"And for so much, I hate Him!" cried the man angrily.

"Do you hate me?" demanded the padre, turning toward him commandingly.

The man stared at him wonderingly.

"Answer me."

"No, padre. You are kind and good. So kind and good that I did not fear to speak."

"Then be yourself so kind and good that you fear to kill, and fear to hate God. Fear one more thing: fear me. Fear and love are close together, and I tell you now to fear me or love me, one or the other, enough to obey me for the

present. Did you say she was going back to Barcelona?"

"Yes, padre."

"To-night, then, you shall sleep not here, but in Toninio's house. Toninio is one of my finest citizens, and he and his wife will care for you as well as I could. To-morrow you will be in a better mind, and we will discuss the whole matter, leaving out the question of murder. To-night I must be busy. Will you obey me?"

"Padre, padre!" cried the man desperately, seizing his gown in both hands. "I am afraid to leave your house! I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid to die without knowing certainly whether she betrayed me! I would obey you, but have I not told you that the three men are in Terassa?"

"You have told me so," answered the padre, "but I do not believe you. Be still a moment." He stepped to the door and, putting his hands about his mouth, called José from the church. "Tell the rest to go home," he said, "and go yourself to Toninio's quickly, and send him to me. Good night, my dear. Kiss me, and run."

As he turned back into the room, he found the haggard man's eyes gazing at him helplessly, over lips that quivered between striving to speak and striving to hold speech back; and he laid a pitying hand on his matted, black hair.

"What troubles you now, my son?"

"The men! I spoke the truth, padre! I know that they are here, for I saw them!"

The padre looked keenly into his fearful eyes.

"You are sure of this? Where did you see them?"

"At your inn. When I crept into the town, I went there, hoping I would have courage enough to show my face and ask for food, and I saw them. I swear it! They were sitting in the vestibule, drinking."

The padre's face grew grave, but his voice was cheerful, as he answered:

"If this is so, I will have more work to do. But you will not, my son; and, as for the question of your future work, there will be some for you in Terassa, so that you need feel no sense of charity in accepting our harbor while you have to. That was a pretty word that you used—'harbor.' While you stay in it, I must speak to you by name. What do you call yourself?"

"Francisco," said the man.

"Francisco, a Spanish name? Are you not Italian?"

"It was Francesco. But she is Spanish, and I changed it."

A footfall sounded to them from the Chasm Road, and Francisco bounded from the chair and crouched behind it.

"Your fright is needless," said the padre. "I know the step. It is Toninio's. Sit down again, Francisco."

As he finished speaking, the yellow-haired Toninio pushed open the door, and stood looking in wonder from the padre to the stranger.

"Toninio," said the padre, "please clasp the two hands of this man, and listen to me. He loves Margarita, and is in trouble because of it. And you, Francisco, listen to this: Toninio is a man whom Margarita loved, or thought she loved, before she ran away, and she tried to do much harm to him, and to his wife. Yet you see he is a strong and handsome man, and a happy one. You, too, may be a strong and happy man, by doing right. Toninio, take him home with you and be his friend. Give him clothes, and a bed, and tell him of Terassa, and the poppy fields, and the little boys, and entertain him till I come to your house. If he is molested on the way, use your hands, and your lungs, and stones if necessary. Take this candlestick. It fell off this shelf onto my head once, and I remember nothing except how effective it was. To-night I shall start for Barcelona, and I shall stop at your house on the way."

And the two strange companions, glancing curiously at each other, went out, the padre accompanying them as far as the highway, where they turned down toward Toninio's house, and where he turned upward, plodding to the square, and across the village green to the inn.

Despite the dreary season and the dullness of the twilit hour, there were seven people seated at the little tables that stood always, save in rain or a cold winter, both in the vestibule and on the gravelway below it.

Four were women, sitting on the lower chairs; and, in the swift glance that he cast about as he approached, the padre saw that the remaining trio were grouped together at a table in the portico; and, in selecting his chair, he took one near to them. Of the four women, three, like the men, were seated together, drinking and talking with animation, but such was his anxiety for his errand that, though he recognized them, he gave them no heed, and, in straining his ears toward the vociferous men, paused only for a sad look at the fourth woman, whose brown, unfortunate-looking dress matched the desolate expression of her face. He pitied the staring vacancy of her eyes, as they gazed across her untouched glass; but a man's life, not a woman's poverty, was his necessity now, and he leaned back, striving to understand the mixed converse of the men behind him.

But he gathered nothing from it, owing to the lowness of their Neapolitan dialect, and the height of the voices pitched over the table beyond him. The three ladies who sat about it were elderly—so elderly that, added together, they would have been at least three times as old as any one else in Terassa. They were old Rosa, and ancient Inés, and Amarillis, who was so small that it was hard to see her face, for which reason she had escaped a byword for her name, the only big thing about her. They were bending their three heads over the table, enjoying three glassfuls of wine, and discussing three things, namely, the Trinity. Rosa was loudest, though Inés was loud, and Amarillis was as silent as she was allowed to be, speaking only when she had to agree with one or the other, and saying "yes" or "no" to the demand of either, hoping always that she would soon be scolded by both at once, which might distract their attention to each other.

The three men ordered more wine, and, as they poured it, the padre ventured to look at them. They were not drunk, he thought; and ill-clothed as they were, they touched glasses together like men of a better class, or else of a needy purpose, and he hoped to hear their toast; but Rosa's voice, suddenly higher than ever, drowned it:

"Take care, Inés! Remember how I used to hate you, and I will hate you again in a moment if you are saucy to me on that point, which I tell you I got from the padre! We will have each one more glass, and before we finish the contents I will either convince you or punish you, one or the other!" And she turned to summon the proprietor.

"Have done!" called the padre, with quick impatience. "If you must discuss religion, which you are not clever enough to do justice to, do so in your houses, where I cannot hear you, for you do not impress me favorably at all! If you are too selfish to entertain each other with your own wine, consider that you spend more in this public drinking! Go home!"

"Pay no attention to him, Inés, darling," said Rosa loudly. "We will show whether we are selfish with either our wines or our money! We will throw aloft these coins, and the one who loses must pay for all three. José showed me how to do it. Now, if my coin falls with this side up, I need not pay; and if your coin falls with the same side up, *you* need not pay; and if they fall with different sides up, Amarillis will have to pay."

"Cease this wickedness and go home," cried the padre indignantly, "or José and you, too, will pay, with a certain side up!"

And the three ladies, Inés and Amarillis very much embarrassed, and Rosa with head upheld and tightened lips, proceeded away.

Shedding his frown and donning a friendly smile, the padre switched his chair toward the three rough men.

"I note that you are strangers," he said. "Do you like our little town?"

They gaped at him a moment, and then one of them answered:

"Si, signore. It is a very fine town, and sells a good wine."

"I trust that it will be good for you," replied the padre. "With aliens, it is sometimes too familiar. Let me be intimate enough myself to comment upon your speech, which shows discernment. I spoke to you in the best Italian I could muster, and in reply you used the high Italian, putting an 'e' upon the word *'signor.'* Such politeness might well lead me to hope that you have come to Terassa with some good and worthy purpose. Then have you?"

"Si, si, signore!" replied the questioned man, and his two companions murmured after him *"Si, signor,"* and stumbled along to add "e!" "e!" in haste.

"I am sorry," said the padre, "that having called me *'Signore,'* you should follow such politeness with a lie. This time speak the truth: Do you love God?"

"Si, si, signore, si!" cried the men hastily, looking at each other.

"As men who love Him, you do not seem to know Him very well," said the padre. "Let me educate you a little, by telling you that not only does He know your purpose in coming here, but that He has given me a knowledge of it, too. Am I right? You came here to murder, if you could, a man named Francesco, whom you attacked in a little house far up in the mountains. Let me tell you two things else—one is, that you are going to leave Terassa now, while I sit here and watch you go, and the other is that, if Francesco meets his death at either your hands or your instigation, four souls will leave this flesh instead of one, and three of them will go to a place wickeder than your kind can make this world. Now leave for anywhere you choose; and if you pause on the road, let it be to reflect that you must answer yourselves if hell is your destination!"

With a skin as white with wrath as their own with slant-eyed terror, he sat flecking his boot with the tassel of his gown, as they slunk past him and across the green.

As their ragged backs vanished into the highway he rose, clenching his hands, and, with a quick, indrawn breath, took a step forward, but a voice arrested him, and, turning sharply, he met the gaze of the forgotten drablike woman, who faced him from behind her lonely table.

"I thank you for that," she said. "I never would have supposed that I would have to thank a priest for anything, even marriage, but I thank you for that!"

Padre Pedro stared at her, marveling at her swift, impulsive words. Then, at his astonished face, she laughed, and before the sound had ceased to vibrate through his heart he had sprung across and caught her to his breast.

"I thank God!" he cried, straining her to him. "I thank God! I have been answered! I have said a thousand times, 'She will come back,' and even to-day, as I sat among my little boys, I lost faith! Forgive me, my Father!"

And with tears running into his neck he bent over her, passing his great hand over her brown, unkempt hair, and striving to see, through the blur before his eyes, into the great sunken dark ones that he had not recognized.

But she struggled away from him.

"Let me go!" she cried. "I have not come back! I am some one else. Did the girl who ran away from you have dirty clothes? Did she have sunken eyes? Was she ugly? If I had been she, would you have stared into my face and not known her? Let me go, for I have not come back to Terassa; but, tell me this, or I will hate you: How did you know of him? Where is he? How did you know those men were murderers? Answer me, or I will strike you!"

"Will you break my heart over again?" cried the padre bitterly. "Did you not hear me tell them God had put the knowledge in my hands?"

"How did He put it there?" she demanded wildly. "Have you seen him? Did you hear of him? Has the old man been here? You learned it in some real way! Shall you expect me to believe in magic, when I have lived a year with a magician?"

"My dear, my dear, come with me to

my house," pleaded the padre, "and there we will talk with quietness!"

"Tell me here, and let me go!" she cried. "It is all I ask of you! Is he in the mountains? Have you talked with him? Be merciful, and tell me so much, and let me go! I will get down on my knees if you ask it, and own that I was wicked to you long ago! But I will not go to your house, for I am afraid of you! You would strive to change me, and I will not be changed! You prevented me when I tried to love Toninio, and you would strive to prevent me in this. In the other I was wrong, but now I am some one else, and the three men, and the old man, and you, and the King of Spain shall not interfere with me! See how I plead with you! Tell me what you know of him!"

"I will talk with you about him if you will come with me to my house," said the padre quietly.

"Tell me now! Tell me, and see me vanish, and forget me! Your house is a long way off, and I am weak."

"It is quite near, and I am strong," answered the padre, and abruptly lifted her in his arms, and carried her across the green, down the highway, into the Chasm Road, into his house.

She lay passive, her desperate eyes closed, in the great chair; but she sat tensely up as she heard him stirring about the room.

"Bring me no wine and no food, padre! I will not drink or eat till you have told me what you know—not if you sit and watch me starve and thirst to death!"

The padre sank heavily on the opposite chair, and faced her as he had faced Francisco.

"I said I would talk to you about him, and I will, against my judgment. This much you shall know, and no more, for the present. I have seen him; he is safe; the men do not know where he is; he is not in Miguel's house. He has told me his story; you have made him suffer bitterly; and I intend to make a good man of him, as I intend to make a good woman of you."

"*Mio Dio!* Then he is in Terassa!" she cried, and leaped from the chair and seized his arm and shook it. "Tell me where? In what house is he?"

"I will not tell you. Sit down. I have said."

From long ago she knew the finality of his tone, and sank back, with a little moan, into the chair, and lay there silent, staring past his eyes as she had stared, at the inn, over her empty glass.

"My dear one," said the padre, leaning forward and tenderly taking her thin, cold hand in his large, warm fingers, "tell me, if you will, about this matter. Be truthful with me, for I have had the truth from Francisco."

She turned her great eyes strangely upon his.

"I did not even know his name," she said. "When I heard you say it at the inn, did I not grow dizzy down to my feet? Then will you say this is not love? I love him!"

"You thought you loved Toninio," said the padre.

She laughed. "I have told you I tried to do wrong there. I own it again, to show you that I know what love is now."

"*Why* do you love him?"

"I looked at him."

"That is no reason," said the padre.

"It is the only one there is, and that one is enough for me. You said to me: 'I have seen him.' That should be enough to satisfy you. I looked at him. *I* have said."

"Such love, if it is love, is wrong," said the padre.

She flashed her eyes at him, and her words poured forth like loosened grain.

"Shall you tell me what is right or wrong? I do not blame you, for I confess, as I have confessed, that I wronged you once in a love matter! But not having seen me since I ran away, shall you sit there and tell me that I do not know the moon from a candle? The mere sight of my clothes should tell you that I have been dragged at least part way through the world, and though you were able to hurl all the churches in the world at my emotion, you would not be able to tell me whether or not it was there!" and she struck her bony hand against her breast.

"I did not tell you that it was not there," said the padre. "I told you that it was wrong."

"Again do you say that? Why? In my turn I ask it! Why?"

"There are ten commandments," said the padre. "Can you remember seven of them?"

"Oh! Oh! Oh! I should not have come home with you!" she moaned. "I knew that you would try to interfere! Did I ask your blessing? Have you anything to do with it, except to tell me where he is?"

"Yes," said the padre gently, "I have one thing, if no more, to do with it. I have to make you calm and quiet before you go to sleep to-night in your house."

"Calm? Quiet? Sleep? Sleep in my own house?" She slipped to the floor and knelt before him, clutching his gown with ironlike fingers. "I defy you as to all that! In my turn I shall ask questions, and have them answered, and say what shall be and what shall not! It is but just! If I were a man, or an educated woman, I would walk through the streets of the world and talk against a church that forbids me to love. When God, if there is one, bade me to love as I do, shall His own Church bid me not to? Listen to this: When I go to bed—or to a barn—to sleep, I do not sleep, but have dreams instead. Since I saw this man, I have had visions. Have you ever seen a blue sky? Answer me, or I will scream at you!"

"I have," gasped the padre.

"So you have seen a blue sky! How truthful you are! Well, have you ever seen nasturtium flowers? Do you remember their colors, from when I grew them once in my little greenhouse?"

"I do, my dear, I do!"

"Hear this, then: In my visions, I see his whole white body lying among nasturtiums—millions and millions of them stretching to the sea—the great Mediterranean Sea—under a blue sky. His limbs look like four long, rolling mountains rising from them, and his breathing bosom like a quiet earth that might be presently a volcano, and his black hair, falling back among the light-green stems, like the darkness that lives on the bottom side of the world, brought up to crown him in the daytime! And, in this vision, I myself seem to be that sky, bending over him, and down through the black side of the world and up again, in a complete circle, so that he cannot be stolen from me anywhere! He is mine, I tell you! And you, tell me this: Do you doubt now that I love him? Did I have such thoughts before, when I lived as one of your townspeople, and in my foolishness complained at the littleness of this town? Will you tell me that I have not changed? Did I think such thoughts, and feel such things, when I tried, as I have confessed, and confess again I did, to wrong your Toninio and his simple Violeta?"

"I have listened to you," said the padre, with an effort. "Will you listen again to me? I beseech you! I wish that you would go home to your little house. Will you not do that for me? Since you ran away, I have prayed, and, God pardon me, I have also said, sometimes angrily, that you would come back. For to-night, will you not stay in your house? For fourteen months, there has been no day that I have not thought of you, and for fourteen months there has been no night that God has not heard me say: 'Send her, if You will, back!' And it is evident that He, and, perhaps, Maria, heard each time, for back you have come. Will you not go to your own house? It is waiting for you, my beloved!"

"Where is he?" she asked, and laughed.

"I asked you a question," said the padre, "and you were not kind enough to answer it. My dear, I am so weary that when I say five words to you I am saying ten—five of them to God: 'Keep me strong, and wise.' I have faith that I am strong and wise now in saying to you that, whether you were bad or good, I would have joy in seeing you once more within your four white walls. They have held some one else almost ever since you have been gone, but she knows that the house is yours, and

would welcome you there, and go somewhere else to-morrow."

"She need not go, for before to-morrow I will have found him," she answered.

"How can you," cried the padre, "when I will not tell you where he is, and will not leave you till you have gone to sleep? My plan was that he should stay here in Terassa till his mind was fed, while I went to hunt for you in Barcelona. Afterward I could have thought what was best for his good, and what was best for yours. But you shall not meet him here, even if, to prevent it, I should have to go to Barcelona to-night, after all, and ship him home to Sicily!"

"*Mio Dio,* how dare you?" she cried, springing up. "The boy betrayed us to the old man, and now you betray us! I should not have thanked you at the inn! I knew as I spoke that I was a fool—it would have been better if I had gone on to the little house of Miguel in the mountains, and killed myself, not finding him there! What wrong have I done you? I will not confess again about Toninio, for the number of my confessions should be enough for even a priest. Is there anything else that is making you cruel to me? Can it be the money that the matter cost you?"

He motioned a trembling hand at her, but she did not see it, for she was tugging at the fastenings of her dress.

"Despite my despicable gown, I have money between it and myself. I think I know the sum you paid to the old man to go away. I can hear your voice now, as you justly villified him on the green: 'Two hundred pesetas and two!' 'Four hundred pesetas and four!' Is my memory good?" And she drew a knotted handkerchief, weighted with coins, from her gown.

"Put back your purse!" stammered the padre.

"Where is he?" she cried, holding up a handful of coins. "Do not shrink from them, for I earned them. I stole them from him the night I ran away from him. But it was not stealing. I wish it were, that I might think I had done some wrong to him. I had earned it—by dancing, and singing, and by blows. There were, I confess, but two blows—one from one hand and one from the other before I could catch it. But those two were worth two pesetas! Take back what my husband cost you, and be honest with me then!"

She hurled the uplifted handful of coins at him, and they stung his gown and slid down onto the floor.

"Where is he?" and she flung another handful.

"My heart, my heart!" wept the padre, bowing his head into his hands and rocking helplessly in the metal shower.

Suddenly feeling the handkerchief empty in her hands, and seeing his tears upon his gown and his great fingers, she laughed, and tossed the bit of cloth at him.

"You need it!" she said, and sank down into the chair, weakly closing her eyes.

"My child," he said presently, "I wish only that you would be sanctified. I do not despise your love. But for its sake you demand a terrible thing of me—one that I would never grant. You ask me to countenance something that is a crime in God's eyes."

"I do not ask you to countenance it, or to so much as glance at it at all!" she answered. "I ask you only to tell me where he is, and, having told me, allow me to go and vanish with him. Again I say, have you anything to do with it?"

"You do not understand," exclaimed the padre. "First of all, you were my orphan, and I loved you. Second, you were beautiful, and rather naughty. Third, you ran away. Then have I no interest or right in you? May I not, before God, demand you back? Can you, looking at these reasons, chide me if I keep asking you to go home to your pretty little house?"

She looked at him with a strange expression gathering gradually in her eyes, and increasing a smile that played more and more upon her lips.

"You said that you would wish to see me 'sanctified'?"

"I did, my dear."

Her smile, and her eyes, grew wider.

"I believe," she said slowly, "that you would wish to make a virgin of me."

"My dear, I am not God," said Padre Pedro.

"You would not have to be," she answered.

Through a long moment they gazed into each other's eyes in silence.

"But, my beloved, you were married to the old man, were you not? Then——"

"I would have cut his throat," said Margarita.

When the padre spoke again, it was with his hands clasped and his eyes uplifted.

"How sad is this world, my Father? Did she not teach me sadness long ago? Have I not learned more from her tonight? Is there more of it that I shall learn from her?"

"'Sad?' 'Sadness?' Are those your words?" she cried angrily. "At the news I have given you—if you were dull enough to find it news—should you not be glad? Does it not leave me free, even in your blind eyes? Will you now not let me—allowing that it were your province to let me or not——"

"I will not," he said.

"Shall you even stop my words with one stubborn word? Shall I not speak myself out? While you try to cut off all the rest of my body, which you think your own God made, are you not satisfied to let my tongue remain? You say, knowing that I am as I was when I left Terassa, that you will not, if you can prevent it, let me go to this man. Why? Answer me! Why? Why? Why?"

"My dear one," he said, twisting his hands tensely together, "you would not listen to me if I answered that. But perhaps you will listen if I ask you this: If you were free to marry, if you were even free to love, *would* you marry, *could* you love, a man whose feeling for you permitted him to wish to murder you? My daughter, I would not lie to you to save either your body or your soul, and, in my desperate need of words, I tell you now that when he found you absent from the little house, and was set upon by the three men, he came madly on to Terassa in the hope of killing you!"

"I do not blame him," she answered, with a short laugh. "If he thought that I had done it, what else would you have him desire to do? Have you no intelligence at all? If I had done that, I would deserve murder—not with a knife, as I suppose he would do it, but with a club. And I tell you, moreover, padre, that if he saw me he would not murder me, or even start to. As I ran toward him he would know that my bare heart was open before me for his knife, or his club, or his foot, whichever he chose; and do you know what would strike it? His own heart. I have said."

Again the padre clasped his hands and lifted up his eyes; and when his lips stopped moving, and he looked at her again, he saw that she was staring, as at the inn she had stared over her glass, past him, her own lips motionless, but parted.

Her eyes seemed fastened upon the darkness that had been creeping slowly across the oblong of the window; and when, after a long moment, they had not moved, with a throb of fear he turned and looked out as she was looking.

From the thick, black night, Francisco's face was gazing in, its eyes fastened, staring, as hers were fastened, its lips parted, motionless, like hers. Then the face vanished, and reappeared in the doorway.

He was holding the beautiful, heavy candlestick in one hand, upraised, and the other reached out toward her, clutching.

The padre sprang at him, and threw his arms about him, pinioning him.

"I did not do it!" screamed Margarita at him.

"Go home!" cried the padre to her. "Go to your own house—jump out of the window, and run! I can hold him no longer!"

And as she leaped over the sill and vanished into the darkness, with a sudden gasping effort he wrenched the candlestick from Francisco's hand and beat him with it down into the chair, and, as

the sobbing man fell back exhausted, turned and flung it, shuddering, out through the window.

As he himself sank down, he again, bowing his head in his hands, wept.

"To what have you brought me?" he sobbed. "That ever a priest should strike a man, and with a weapon! It stood for seven nights, with a pretty light in it, in my church, when a sacred candlestick had been stolen! Francisco, Francisco, what have you done to me?"

"I do not know," wept Francisco. "To you, I did not mean to do anything!"

"Did you not promise me you would stay in Toninio's house?"

"I do not know whether I promised that or not," said Francisco wearily. "I confess I felt as if I had promised that, but I could not stay shut up in any house! I crept out while they were making supper. I wanted to come here to you, because you had spoken kindly to me, and no one had ever spoken kindly to me before. I swear it. And I swear that I brought the candlestick only because I was afraid of the three men."

"And you tried to kill my child with it!" said the padre. "Did you hear what she screamed to you as you tried—that she had not done it? It was the boy that betrayed you, and I do not know that I so very much blame him. Perhaps he was striving to do right, as I am!"

"I thank God! I thank God!" cried Francisco, reaching his arms upward and half rising from the great chair. "And I thank you, padre, for saying so, for I was too mad to believe or understand her! All I understood was your telling her to run to her own house. Where is it? Which house is it? I will fall on my knees there and eat the candlestick! Respectful or not, padre, I demand of you—I demand, I demand—that you should tell me!"

"My dear," said the padre, laying a trembling hand upon his, "I will not. Francisco, I speak kindly to you now. Are not what you have learned, and your remorse at having tried to kill her, enough to sleep with for at least tonight? Will you not return to Toninio's house? If you will not to obey me, will you not to please me?"

"I will, yes, I will," moaned Francisco desperately; and presently leaving the house, they went, leaning heavily against each other, up the Chasm Road.

Diagonally across from Toninio's prosperous house, there is a smaller one—much smaller, but very attractive, with its four neatly whitewashed walls, and its little filigree balcony just under the low roof—and situated, moreover, between two delightful objects; its small greenhouse on one side, and, on the other, a delicate locust tree, weedlike and youthful, but struggling earnestly, with more and more success each year, to become a gaunt and towering acacia, such as the mountains have.

Within, the parrot woman was sitting, humming softly as she guiltily disobeyed the padre's instructions not to do needlework by candlelight, her quick eyes watching her quick fingers speed deftly to the end of a lace nightgown. Presently she rose, smoothing her firm, rapid hand down the sleeves, and the dazzling white network of the neck, and laid it by on the bed with her breath flickering, like the candles, into a sigh half satisfaction, half regret. Then her eyes caught the dead blackness of the window, and, with a start, and a sudden little cry of remorse, she ran toward it and leaned out.

"Come in, my dears, come in!" she called. "While we have a roof, shall we not live under it?"

And from the branches of the locust her battalion of little green birds lifted among the remaining leaves and fled in by her, clustering on their great cage in the corner.

She stood gazing down at them as their shivering feathers quieted and grew still.

"*Mes pauvres*, it was my fault! Did I tell you to play in the tree till I called you, and leave you there in the cold, dark November? The padre would tell us that one wrong thing brings on another. I worked when I should not, and so forgot to call you when I should!

But see, my dears, what a pretty work I did. Go over and look at it! Come! Walk about on it if you like, and see. But be careful of the little claws, for it is the finest I have done. Yes? I thank you, *mes chéries!* You shall have no lesson to-night. Come sit with me now. You shall have supper when I have rested. And meantime you shall walk over me as you choose. Anywhere—my hair—anywhere. So! Have we not been happy here in this lovely house? How glad we should be, when it is so chilly!"

As if to boldly answer her—as if November had in person swept down to the little house, the door whirled open, and a woman stood before her, wind-like, erect, startled in the dim but too sudden light, and, as a real gust clattered the harsh door close again, the parrot woman rose in slow wonder from her chair, instinctively raising her bird-dotted arms before her, and the two stood gazing at each other speechlessly.

After a long moment of the heavy silence, her arms fell against her sides in an action so limp that two of the love birds fell off of them, thudding on the floor, and presently limped desolately away toward the empty cage.

At last, haltingly, in a voice very low, the parrot woman said:

"You have come back. You are Margarita."

The heavily breathing woman, swaying a little in her trailing, dirty, brown dress, did not answer; and, abruptly straightening her drooped shoulders, the parrot woman shook off the rest of the little green birds and stepped quickly forward to her.

"Forgive me, dear! Will you think that I have not expected you? Do not speak. Do not speak at all, until I have undressed you. How tired you are! How far you must have come, to look so tired!" Holding one of her hands, and with an arm about her waist, she drew her over to the bed. "Say nothing yet. We will sit on the edge here for a moment. Close your eyes if you like, or else sit and look about at your own house. Yes, I would have known you anywhere. Something would have told me. Yet you are different from the sweet young girl I thought of. I have thought of you so much, and talked about you so often and often with the padre. I had always thought you would be pretty, and you are not. You are beautiful, instead. How odd I must look beside you! Where did you gather the great lines under your eyes? How they frame those great, black fires you have! And at your years—for I know your age, dear, and when your birthday is. You are eighteen. You were, two months ago. I am sure the padre does not think so, for you were seventeen when you went away, and I know that you could not exist for him save in the gown you wore, and with the number of weeks in your life that he had counted. Are you hungry? Will you sit here, or lie down, while I bring you some food?"

Margarita laughed.

"You are right about the padre. He did not know me. Yes, I was pretty when I left. Do you make sport of the lines under my eyes?"

"Sport?" said the parrot woman gently. "I would as quickly make sport of the Madonna. You are lovely—as lovely as Violeta, only you are more like the deep, warm summer night. But you must not speak yet. See, I can reach this glass of wine without leaving you. Do you care—that I have tasted it? We will call it that I was toasting you, though we did not know it. And I have often done so purposely. I did so on your birthday, and so did the padre—he and I together. Old Rosa scolded us unmercifully, but I saw her afterward stealing a sip that was left in our glass, and she broke it in her anger when she saw me smiling. How glad she will be! Do you like the way I have kept your house? Nothing is changed, except the walls, which I rewhited myself. And your greenhouse—ah, how I bungled at first!—but it is in fine order now. I broke a glass the very first week by dropping a turnip through it, but my first good piece of lace replaced it. As for your own lace, all that you left is there in the cupboard, with new

lavender in. How I studied it! But I was very careful. And, see, how much I have learned from it—do you like this? It is very strange: I made this for you, to have waiting, and when I finished it and laid it here on your bed, you came! Now I know why I was tempted to work too long to-night—good has come of it!"

"The padre would not say so," said Margarita.

"Ah, yes, he would, my dear. How faithful he has been to you—as faithful as he has been good to me. Do you know my name? I came here nameless, and because of something that the padre and I understood together, he has called me, ever since, 'Simpatica.' Will you call me so?"

Again, with a leap of bitter fire in her eyes, Margarita laughed.

"Why not 'God,' or 'Goldfish,' or something else ridiculous? 'Simpatica?' There is no such thing!"

"How sad you are!" exclaimed the parrot woman. "Come, you have finished your wine—let me take off your dress. How far you must have walked in it!"

"I have walked very little in it, but I have run enough," said Margarita. "It was a thousand years, if not a whole thousand miles. Leave it on! I shall not take it off until I find him!"

"Very well, dear," said the parrot woman, dropping her hands from the fastenings of the gown, and putting her arm about her waist again. "I had thought it might help to rest you. I will never forget how far I had walked when I came here, and the feeling of old Rosa's lace nightdress when she had taken off my dusty clothes from me. It was because I remembered so well that I made this one for you. Will you look at what else I have made? Would it amuse you? Will you look at a white mantilla that I struggled over?"

"Yes! Yes! Show me that!" cried Margarita excitedly, and suddenly laughing again; and the parrot woman rose and fetched from the cupboard a long, waving piece of frosty workmanship.

As it floated through the room on her outstretched arms, a new light came, through the balcony opening, into the little house, and flooded through it, shimmering on the whiteness like radiance on a snow bank. With a cry Margarita seized it and flung it over her, and ran madly up the steps to the balcony and stood there, staring up at the newly risen full moon.

"Where is he?" she demanded, stamping her foot at it. "Tell me, you! Are you, too, swayed by the padre as I am swayed? Shall he control *you?* Has he told you not to tell me? Where do you see Francisco? He is somewhere near! Your light is exactly the color of green nasturtium stems! Where are you shining on him? How big were you when he found the little house? Did you see the three men spring on him? Did you help him? Or did you shine on him and try to betray him as he ran away? So you will not tell me? So you are afraid of the padre?" With a fierce movement of her fingers she dragged the delicate lace into a hard knot under her chin, and stood holding it tensely with one hand, while she pointed the other upward at the great silver disk. "If you must not tell me where he is, tell me this! Answer me! Am I to die in this white mantilla, or a black one? Which? Tell me that! Will you? Will you?"

Simpatica, who had softly mounted the steps behind her, circled her gently with her arms, and drew her down into the room, the torn mantilla dragging back over the poor, brown dress.

"Talk to me, dear," she pleaded. "Talk to me. It might help you. I am not so powerful as the moon, my dear, but at least I will answer you when you wish me to. Will you not talk to me? Will you not now call me by my name?"

"I would call you Maria in Excelsis if you would answer me this: Where is he?"

"I do not know, my dear. Will you not tell me of him?"

"You would ask me questions! You would interrupt me, like the padre!"

"I will not interrupt you, dear. Will you not speak?"

"Yes, yes, I will!" cried Margarita. "But will you listen?" And, lifting her clenched fist, she struck her, with each question, on the shoulder: "Will you listen? Will you listen?"

Turning from the Chasm Road into the highway, the padre led Francisco down toward Toninio's. He glanced with apprehension at the dim light filtering from the parrot woman's house, fearing that Margarita's voice might rise and stream out with it; but they heard nothing, save quick footsteps in Violeta's garden, as they entered it, and then Toninio's voice in the darkness.

"You have him? Oh, padre, I am glad! Forgive me! I was coming to you. I feared to face you. We do not know how he got away! Violeta reproached me, and made me start to tell you!"

"Take his other arm," said the padre, and together they brought him in, and sat him down, while Violeta, her great, purple eyes deepening with pity, brought a hot meal, and set it before him.

"I will not eat," said Francisco, "until I have seen her. You shall not make me, nor shall the padre. What right have you, padre, to keep me from her? What right?"

Hot tears sprang into the padre's eyes. "Hear me finally!" he exclaimed. "My right is that I have no right not to keep you from her. She was married by the Church, and I am a priest. Even if your love were what it should be, you would have no right to her, and you never will have while the old man lives. And I say this—I, who can tell you in all friendliness, Francisco, that, rightly or wrongly, I have often wished that he was dead."

"I would gladly attend to that," said Francisco, "if I could find him."

"Hear me out," said the padre, "for you must understand me. This afternoon I intended that you should stay in Terassa and have work to do, and learn to be a good man—but that you should learn that somewhere else if I found her, and could persuade her back here. Now that she has come, I do not know what to do, for she shall stay here, and therefore you may not. I do not wish to lose you; but in a choice between my daughter and you, my son, my choice is simple. And when you have slept, and I have, we can talk of your future. I cannot stop your loving her, but, with God's help, I can keep you from her while her husband lives. Think, Francisco; he is an old man. When God, in His wisdom, had taken him away, if you still loved her, and she then wished you to, I would have no right to stand between you, even if I could. But until that time I shall keep you apart, if my Father keeps me strong enough!"

"You are a bad priest!" shouted Francisco. Then he sank back in his chair.

"Amigo," said Violeta gently, seating herself beside him and quietly taking his fallen hand in both of hers, "let me speak to you of something. He is not a bad priest. He is the best priest in Spain. He is the best priest in the whole world, except the pope. Let me tell you what he did similar to this, to prevent a married person doing wrong, and another from being wronged. She whom you love so—and she was my foster sister—tried once to wrong me through my husband there, thinking she loved him, and she used a wicked love spell to her purpose. This has been never uttered between my husband and me before"—she spoke on quietly, her eyes lowered upon Francisco, away from Toninio's crimsoned face—"and I speak now but to show you what the padre is, and what he strives to do for you and her. He stopped her, not to save me from madness, but to do right, and so he saved me. But let me tell you this: On that very day, when I had stormed wickedly at the padre, and cried that I would throw stones at her, the Virgin came to me and told me something, and, when I believed her, I forgot my wrong, I forgot everything in the world except my husband and her message," and Violeta pointed across the room to the cradle of her sleeping child. "Francisco, that is what the padre means, even if he could not say it to

you as a woman can. It is wrong, usually, to wish for any one's death, but wait, Francisco, for the old man's death. Can you understand? You cannot doubt that I love my husband; but I would rather sit holding my child beside my husband's grave, than love my husband, having had no child."

"There is a love," said Francisco, beginning a laugh and trailing it into a solemn tone that matched the growing look of distance in his eyes, "that is beyond the love that makes children."

"My son, how do you say these things?" exclaimed the padre. "I do not approve of what you say, for, in your case, it is wicked, but I say to you that you, who cannot read, speak as a man of too much learning. How do you think and speak these things?"

"I do not know," said Francisco.

"If you did," said the padre, "you would too much respect yourself, and the love you feel, to name your emotion basely."

"My emotion is not base!" cried Francisco. "I defy you there, I defy you! Read forever, and think deeply forever, and I will still defy you!"

"Hush!" said the padre softly. "Perhaps I cannot understand your love, and perhaps I can, but I know that you do not understand mine for you, or you would not be angry and desperate with me."

"I am not angry with you," said Francisco, falling back in his chair again, "and I thank you, and I thank God, for your blessed words, which were never said to me before. But I wish that they had come from her instead." And he laughed.

"But at least," said Violeta, "they have come from him, and there is a way to be grateful. Please him by drinking this wine. I can understand how you cannot bear to swallow food, but a little wine is easy. Indeed, I saw you drink some from my own hand when Toninio brought you here. Will you not?"

He took the glass from her and half raised it.

"She is right, my son," said the padre. "It will help you to sleep."

Francisco lowered the glass and glanced at him sharply.

"Is there a potion in it?" he demanded.

"No!" exclaimed the padre. There was almost impatience in his unhappy tone. "We have no potions in Terassa! I do not allow them! There was a kind of potions in my village once, and they proved enough!"

"Forgive me, padre," whispered Francisco, "for I had said I would not sleep until I saw her," and he drank.

He said no more, and they sat in silence, Violeta rocking the cradle, Toninio and the padre gazing through the window, Francisco staring before him with fixed eyes. When, after a long stillness, the padre glanced at him again, his hands were quiet, his lids shut and untwitching. Violeta, too, was looking at him, and, as she met the padre's eyes, she rose and came softly across.

"Have I done wrong?" she asked, in a low voice. "You were mistaken, padre. There was a potion in it. Do you not remember—when the child was near to death, and I was frantic? You fetched a drug from Barcelona, and it made me sleep while the doctor cut the child. There was some left. Have I done wrong?"

"You do always right, my Violeta," sighed the padre.

"Wrong or right," said Francisco, opening his eyes, "you have played a trick upon me! That was wicked! It closed my lids down, and put stones on my arms, but I can hear you. You are wicked!"

With a huge effort that wrought a cry from him he struggled up, and, with a strange laugh, began to sway from foot to foot, snapping his fingers crisply at his sides.

"I will show you whether I will sleep before I find her!"

And he broke into a slow whistle that grew faster and faster, as it cadenced from his lips and led his snapping fingers into the mad rhythm of castanets, and his feet into the light, thudding tread of a woman's dance.

Suddenly his voice replaced the lilting melody.

"It was at that note that she nearly fell, when she looked at me and was sick!"

And he stumbled backward. Toninio caught him, and, staggering forward with the dragging weight, dropped him, face downward, on the bed.

The padre ran over, and, having turned the head and wiped the shining beads from the sleeping face, lifted up his own with a great, deep breath.

"I thank thee, God! *Mio Dio, grazias!* Now I can go to her," he added, and, kissing Violeta, stepped into the moonlighted garden, and went across the highway to the parrot woman's house.

As he entered and closed the door behind him, Margarita rose from the bed and rushed at him, the floating mantilla brushing a swirl of parrots from Simpatica's gown.

"Where is he? Did you prevent his killing me so that you could enjoy doing it yourself? The candlestick would have been quicker, at least! Rosa has been here, and crosser than I ever knew her, but let me tell you that that hag is kinder than you are! She says you are a fool!"

The padre turned and pressed the hand that Simpatica had slid under his arm.

"Has she eaten?"

"Not yet, but she will," said the parrot woman. "She has promised me she will. Have you not, dear? Padre, will you not leave her to me? She is safe here. Trust me, and rest, I beg of you. Go, or she will say things that she would not mean, but that would hurt you!"

"Yes," cried Margarita, "go! I detest you, and I despise you! And I do mean what I say! I hate you! Go!" And the padre went silently, and walked heavily downward toward the poppy fields, and sank upon the doorstep of old Rosa's house. She had heard his tread, and was waiting in the dim-lit doorway; and she seated herself beside him as quietly as if he had come on his daily visit at noontide.

"The road is not yellow," she said presently, "but I suppose I may talk as crossly as if the sun were out. Do you know that you are foolish to act feeble, when you are twenty years younger than I am? But if you must think yourself a child, put your head on my shoulder, instead of against the doorframe. They are equally sharp, perhaps, but this way is more friendly. Do not speak. Violeta and the parrot woman have told me of their two maniacs, and I think I could tell them something about mine. Is that cross? I could not tell them that there are more tears in me on account of your weariness than on account of Margarita and her bandit put together. And why *not* put them together, for that matter? I could tell you, if I chose, that they are less at fault than you. And I say this, who condemned her so! You can tell me a hundred reasons why I am wrong. I know that. But the sight of her was so pitiable! Even I, whom you forever call hard and disagreeable, had at least a stone tear rolling down my heart."

"They must not see each other," said the padre.

"Let me confess to you," said Rosa, "that I did you a wrong when I saw her. I told her that I thought you were a fool. That was a sin—not saying so, but saying so to her. Is it a sin to say it to you? If it is, then I shall sin, and be glad of it."

"Rosa, my heart's friend," answered the padre, "I may be a foolish priest, but I am a priest. I know that many times you have proved wiser than I. But this is not a matter for your wisdom. The Church is the Church, and I am its servant. A poor servant I may be, and of little help to it, but obeyed it I always have, and obey it I always will. I came to you for comfort. Well, I have had a little. You are learning gentleness. You are gentle toward Margarita."

"Why do you rise?" pleaded Rosa. "Will you not rest? I have something to tell you. Once I quarreled with you about her, and you said that when she came back I would kiss her, if you had to force me to. Padre, I have kissed her."

"I am glad of that," said the padre. "Alas, I should have sent her to your house—yet I knew she would not go to you, and if I brought her now, she would suspect why. They are too near together. I must leave you now. I must watch."

"Stay, oh, I beg of you, stay!" cried Rosa. "I would never call you a fool again if you would stay a little, and lie down!"

"I must judge, Rosa," said the padre, and walked up the highway.

As he stepped cautiously into Toninio's house he saw, beyond the chair in which Toninio lay, the gentle, shadowed swaying of the cradle beside Violeta, who sat, rocking it with her foot, in the dim light of one small candle.

"He is still asleep?" whispered the padre.

"You may rest, padre. He is still asleep."

"I am not asleep," said Francisco's voice, in the darkness. "I am helpless, but I am not asleep. Her voice called from somewhere, and, if I had slept, which God forgive me I cannot be sure of, then it waked me. I heard her voice. I swear it. And it called me by name—Francisco. I could not answer, for I do not know her name. You could tell me now, but you are wicked and cruel, and I will not ask you, for I must save my voice to whistle with if she calls again. You have tricked me, and I cannot move; but I am awake, and if I knew where she was, I swear to you I would be able to get up and run to her."

The padre drew Violeta to the door.

"I will go out. If I stayed here, he would try to talk to me. At least he cannot move. Thank God for that. I will walk up and down outside."

"Stop talking," said Francisco's voice. "I might not hear her if she called. Go away!"

"God be with you, Francisco!" whispered the padre, and, dropping Violeta's hand, he went softly out into the highway.

There was not even a dim light streaming now from the window of the parrot woman's house, and, as he walked up and down, up and down, the great, round, green, rose window of the world, the moon, went surely nearer and nearer the mountains, toward Miguel's house. At last he could not see, through the blackness, the least dim shine of Violeta's candle, and, as he walked up and down, and up and down, he once struck his hip against the highway wall that guarded him from the valley, and once the gate of Violeta's garden caught his sleeve.

Once he heard Margarita's voice above and behind him, saying, he thought, "Francisco!" and, turning, he thought he saw, even in the thick blackness, something white that might have been the ghost of a mantilla in her balcony.

Once he heard Francisco's whistle, rhythmic, faint, cadencing, yet with a little breath of trouble in its lovely music, like a gasp, or an oath, or a shudder.

Once something came up the highway toward him, and laid a faltering hand upon his shoulder.

"Go home, padre, go home! Must I, at seventy years, spend a night of weeping and fright, when you, so much younger, could save me from it by merely going home? I beseech you! Padre, padre! Let me walk up and down, if walking up and down does any good!"

"Go home, go home," he said, and, with a little sob, she went away, and he walked up and down.

When the sun came, flooding the valley with tremendous light, and yellowing the highway so that it might have been a gaudy ribbon trailing back from the purple mountain, he saw some little figures walking, like himself, up and down. They were some of Simpatica's love birds, who had crept out to seek seeds in the road before she was awake enough to stop them, and when he had gathered them up, gently chiding them, and turned about to see if there were further sinners, he thought that he saw just one more, a dark speck down the highway. But it was too large, he thought—too swift for a bird that tried

to use its feet; and as he stepped quickly forward he knew that it was a bent, birdlike figure hundreds of feet away, running madly toward him in the glittering morning light.

"*Mio Dio!*" he breathed, with set teeth; and, as the old man, with bent, unseeing head, fled on within his reach, he seized him by the shoulders in a passionate grasp.

"Old man," he cried, "once before I met you as you tried to enter this town! You shall never enter it again! You have come to get your wife, but you shall not! You stole from me then, but you shall not steal from me to-day! Did you not learn to fear me when I chastised you on the green? You revenged yourself upon me, and upon God, perhaps, for that, but you shall have no more revenge!"

He hurled him away, and stood breathing heavily before him in the road, threatening him with his outstretched hands; but the old man paid no heed to him, for a cry had come from Toninio's house, and a man rushed through the garden into the highway, and, as he ran toward the old man, the old man ran toward him.

The three cried out together: Francisco, and the old man, and the padre. And two others cried out as they ran near—Rosa and the parrot woman.

Francisco fell upon him with his desperate hands; yet the old man squirmed from them, and, running a few paces off, turned and ran back toward him, and something in his uplifted fist flashed a bright silver light into the surrounding eyes.

But, from above them, something else flashed, too—out, straight as the overbeam of a gibbet, down, straight as a gibbet's upright; and the silver gleam vanished in a cloud of brown and white.

The knife appeared again, but it was not silver; and, as Rosa and the parrot woman, screaming, seized the old man by his arms and dragged him away, madly beating him, the padre, moaning, slipped to a sitting posture and drew her against his breast, leaning her head on his shoulder, and striving to keep his frantic hands quiet and tender as he lifted her across his lap.

"My beloved! My own! My Margarita!" he wept.

Margarita laughed.

"A white mantilla!" she said. "Yet it has a little color on it now, if it could not be black. See Francisco, standing there with his mouth open, and saying nothing. There is nothing to say, Francisco, so do not try. You could say only one thing, and that I know already. We said it, without speaking, in the theater. You said it again in going to the little house. I have died for you. *Mio Dio,* I thank you for letting me do that for him! The padre could not stop that much! Forgive me, padre. And let me die happily. I have lived with a laugh, and I have sworn always that I would die with a kiss. Padre, padre, let me have it! Think how far he traveled! Think how tired he is! You hold me here in your arms, and though pain is easy, I am helpless! I can struggle against you no longer. Be kind, padre! Let me have one kiss, just as I die!"

The trembling padre lifted up his face.

"Pity me, my Father, if I am doing wrong! I give you leave, my darling!"

A great, satisfied light suffused her eyes as she drank in the words; and Francisco, moaning, tottered nearer to them and bent over her.

But, with a hand feebly lifted against him, Margarita smiled.

"Francisco, my Francisco, what good could this body, with a great tear in it, do you now? As I must die, having had but one kiss, let it be to—the padre!"

She said nothing more, unless with her lips, silently, to the padre's, which whispered, a moment later: "She is dead."

II.—THE EDGE OF THE WILDERNESS

What shall I please to-day?
My morn, noon, eve, and night—
how spend my day?
To-morrow I must be Pippa.—*Pippa Passes.*

MONTY CREWE swung himself across the Place Vendôme in big strides that somehow seemed out of place in town—above all in Paris. He was exceedingly large, strikingly brown and muscular, and sensationally good looking. He was fresh from the Southwest of America, and he was, at twenty-five, having his first taste of the Continent. Once upon a time he had been a spoiled baby in New York, but when he had left college at twenty-two he had gone West and roughed it for nearly four years. The effect upon him had been admirable; he had emerged very much a man, with a boy's high spirits. And now, having come into his money on the death of his uncle and guardian, he was reëntering upon the life to which he had been born. It had taken a year or two to make him a first-class cowboy. It was probable that the task of forgetting that he had been one would be a less lengthy process.

He felt distinctly in his element in this world of good-looking men and gentle-mannered women and high-power motor cars. He had enjoyed Arizona, but he found himself quite capable of enjoying smart Paris—not the painted city of the Latin Quarter and Montmartre. He was not overkeen on the so-called bohemianism of which he had heard so much. He classified it under a vague general heading of "off color." At present he had yearnings toward his own kind and class. He wanted to talk with men who belonged to decent clubs and played polo. He wanted to go to the races, and dine at the Ritz.

It was very absurd of him, of course, but just a little pathetic perhaps. You see, one has chances for a great many adventures and interests in the Far West from time to time, but one doesn't get much afternoon tea. And the women one sees don't wear dark, inconspicuous street gowns, with drooping hats and odorous violets, or speak softly, or ask one to dinner "just to meet a few nice people that you'll like awfully." In fact, Monty Crewe wanted to "get back"; and here in Paris, in the delicious May season, he was proceeding to do it. His people had always "belonged," and he had already run across two or three men whom he had known in his earliest salad days, and had received half a dozen invitations. Paris was teeming with Americans, and he

felt, with a ridiculous, boyish sense of elation, that he was going to have a very good time indeed.

Some pretty women smiled at him with that suggestion of romance which the French contrive to infuse into that which the Anglo-Saxon races make wholly ignoble; but though Monty smiled back he was not beguiled. He had turned into the Rue St. Honoré, and was striding along at a pace that indicated a pressing date, though, as a matter of fact, he hadn't a thing to do in the world. As he passed Rumpelmayer's tea rooms, a lady came out and descended the steps. They found themselves standing stock-still, looking at each other with that curious sense of recognition occasionally felt by perfect strangers. This time, however, though Monty had no specific recollection of having ever seen the lady before, she appeared to know him.

After a moment of hesitation, she bowed prettily, and said: "How do you do? You're quite a deliverer. Do you think you could find me a *fiacre* or a *taximetre* or something?"

A taxi marked *libre* was passing at the moment, and he put her into it, wishing that she would vouchsafe her name. She seemed to read his mind, for from the open machine she smiled at him, and said: "I met you in New York at somebody or other's wedding a thousand years ago. You were quite a child. You don't know my present name, I think. It's Carpenter."

He bowed gratefully, thinking that he had never in his life seen such lovely, persuasive, pathetic eyes. He felt, indeed, so oddly moved by her that he was actually tongue-tied and ill at ease —*Monty!*

"Can't I give you a lift?" she inquired, in her rather plaintive voice. And he regained the power of speech:

"Indeed, you can!"

"Where?" she asked, smiling faintly at him.

"Anywhere," he returned promptly, and sprang in beside her.

She laughed deliciously, and said: "Well, tell him—anywhere!"

"To the Bois," he said to the man.

Mrs. Carpenter was slender and tall, and made up of long, lovely, melting lines. Her skin was very white and smooth; her lips very red, and drooping at the corners. Monty was then new to the type, and it thrilled him. She had glittering, dark-red hair, brushed smoothly down over her ears and fastened in a great heavy knot in the back. And she had enchanting eyes—purplish-gray, with huge pupils, and lids that were most of the time half closed. Her clothes were marvelous, very severe in outline, and very elaborate in detail, of a violet tone that matched her eyes and harmonized uncannily with certain shades in her hair. She wore a great black hat, and one perfect orchid on her breast. She was very exquisite, very *soignée*, very dangerous, and she exhaled a new and demoralizing perfume. She seemed to Monty Crewe quite the most perfect creature he had ever met in his life, and altogether grande dame. I repeat, the type was new to him.

The grande-dame hypothesis, by the bye, happened to be correct. Mrs. Carpenter, in the years gone by, when she was not Mrs. Carpenter, but Mrs. Somebody Else, and the wife of a New York broker, had been very much worth-while socially. She had never quite outgrown it, even in these latter years, when she was a dweller in the wilderness, and a wanderer on the edge of the green, civilized places, though bidden by Mrs. Grundy to keep off the grass. Once upon a time she had run away with a man whose only assets had been a Grecian profile and a genius for lying, and after he had left her she had led the life of others of her class. Was she respectable? Was she disreputable? Was she rich or poor? I certainly cannot answer those questions. She was a woman of caprices and violent impulses. She lived her life without need of accounting for it to man or woman. Yet she contrived to remain young and beautiful; she dressed perfectly; and, except to the connoisseur—and the Continental connoisseur, at that—she still looked like a lady.

Probably in all her strange life she had never come across quite such virgin soil as Monty Crewe. Not that the boy was in any sense a prig, or different from his very human fellows, but his life in the big solitudes had kept his soul singularly childlike and untouched.

When Monty tried to remember afterward just how it happened that he and Mrs. Carpenter got so wonderfully friendly all at once, he always felt vaguely confused and nonplused, as if he were trying to recollect something that had happened while he was drunk. Only he wasn't drunk—unless it were with emotion. It struck him as odd, later on, that at first he had not been at all conscious of the emotion. He had believed himself stirred only by warm comradeship and a lively appreciation of her beauty and graciousness —nothing more. And all the time the waves were creeping up to engulf him.

They went around the Bois for two hours, and he talked. Heavens, how much Monty talked! He told her about his loneliness out on the plains, and the longings he had had for civilization and for men and women who talked his language, the language he had learned as a baby. He unfolded to her, quite unconsciously, odd, touching vistas of boyish dreams and whimsicalities and ideals, and showed her little, unmodernized corners in a curiously chivalric soul. She felt abashed before his simplicity, and she yearned to him in diverse ways. He was new to her, and she expanded softly and imperceptibly in the glamour of the fresh emotion, just as a slightly faded rose expands in clear water.

It would take far too long to relate precisely how they finally progressed to a private room at the Café de Paris for dinner. But they did, in fact, find themselves there at seven o'clock, with a May wind blowing in and a sympathetic waiter in attendance.

"Oh, *you* order!" said Monty Crewe, with a grin. "I've lived on coffee and canned stuff so long that I don't believe I'd know oysters from sweetbreads. Order all the things that I ought to begin to learn to like over again. Order anything and everything except bacon and beans!"

Mrs. Carpenter had rather a pretty taste in dinners. It was one of her specialties, in fact, learned from a distinguished Bavarian gourmet whom she had known rather well. She started with fresh caviare and *moules marinière,* and ended with *omelet soufflé* and *café brûlé;* and in between came sundry delectable things with mysterious flavors oddly and propitiously combined. They had vintage champagne as dry as sunlight and as aromatic as the spring season.

Monty ate an extraordinary amount of everything. Mrs. Carpenter tasted everything daintily, idly, even languidly. It was plain that these were the sorts of things she usually ate, and no more amusing to her than mutton and mashed potatoes to ordinary people. She drank, in a dreamy and unnoticeable manner, a great deal of champagne, which did not affect her in the least.

The window was open, and the voice of Paris came to them. *"Jolie! Jolie!"* it sang to Charpentier's *Louise,* and she followed it. Monty did not quite know what it sang to him, but it was something delicious and rather confusing. We are extraordinary creatures of general and mixed impressions. We group numberless separate individual causes into one harmonious composite effect. Thus Monty Crewe massed together the magical spring night outside, the faint echo from the streets, the distant sound of a girl singing in an open-air *café chantant,* and the sometimes plaintive, sometimes provocative voice of Mrs. Carpenter into one chord of pulse-stirring music. Somehow, the highly sensational food went into the harmony, too, and the queer violet tints of her dress, and the startling red of her lips against her cool white cheeks. Paris was going to Monty Crewe's head, and he liked the sensation.

"You can't know," he said unsteadily—he had had only three glasses of champagne, and he could drink whisky with any man in the Southwest—"you can't know what it means to me to see

and talk to a woman like you—a woman of my own kind, of the class I've come back to. One—one doesn't talk of these things much. People usually make light of them, or run them down, or make fun of them, or say they don't count. But I reckon all that strikes pretty deep down—blood and race and traditions and—and—oh, you know! All the stuff they call *noblesse oblige*. At least, I *guess* that's what I mean," floundered Monty, his brown face flushing duskily. "Anyway, you stand for—well—for pretty much everything. The nice things that every fellow hangs onto through thick and thin. I—I've been waiting a good while to find some one like—you," he finished, in a low voice.

Monty was very good to look at. Mrs. Carpenter found him so, but the charm that he had for her was being conquered by a queer, disconcerting call that was sounding from somewhere in space—a call that she had not heard for many years.

"Did you ever read a thing of Kipling's called 'Griffith's Debt'?" she asked abruptly.

Monty shook his head. He had read stray volumes of the magician thirstily, but could not recall the labels.

"It was about a man who had dropped out of his own class," went on the woman, clasping her slim hands on her knees and staring into space. "He came down to living with the natives —naturally it was in India—and he drank, and lived a beast's life generally. The people gave him gifts of coarse food to keep him alive, and even they, the lowest of the Indians, looked down upon him. He seemed to be practically dead except in his body. But one day there came a great flood, and suddenly he remembered that he was a white man of the sahib class, with responsibilities and obligations, and that he must protect these wretched, terrified native people. And he rose up and drove them up the valley to safety. Because he was a sahib, and a sahib must never forget what should be expected of his class in times of danger."

She stopped. The brief story had been told without expression, simply as a colorless little recital into which one might read what individual interpretation or lesson one might.

"Well," said Monty, "all that's natural enough. It just means blood will tell. You've got to hold up the—the things your class stands for. Isn't that the idea?"

"Yes. Oh, yes!" she said, still staring ahead at nothing. "Quite the idea. I wonder—would one live up to it?"

"Of course!" said Monty Crewe, with cheery, youthful confidence. "I've seen awful down-and-outers out West—regular rotters, you know—who'd come up to the scratch in the most amazing way if things got really serious. If a man had once been a gentleman, it came out in emergencies—under fire, so to speak," ended Monty lamely, for he was not used to expressing delicate human psychology in words.

With a curious little shrug, the woman seemed to dismiss the matter, and the talk drifted back to the dangerous, delicious waters of personalities. She told him her name was Philippa, which happened to be the truth. People called her Pippa, she explained, and though Monty was not up in his Browning, he found the little name very quaint and appealing, "And like you, somehow, though I don't quite know why."

She smiled the melancholy small smile that she affected. Others had felt the charm of the little name, as they had felt the charm of herself. Leaning forward, with her beautiful slim hands folded beneath her chin, she looked across the table into Monty Crewe's eyes.

"You don't know women awfully well, do you?" she said softly.

"Not—your sort," he said, flushing with honest adoration. If a doubt as to his meaning shadowed her mind, it was dispelled by the worshipful look he gave her. "I mean—women who are lovely and well bred and sweet and—apart, somehow——"

Just for a second she did not meet his eyes. Then she glanced at him

again, and raised her brows very slightly. "You mustn't set us too far —apart—from you, you know. We don't like it much. We feel neglected."

"But surely," protested the boy, "nice women like to be looked up to?"

"Of course," she said softly; "as long as we are not—out of reach."

She was certainly not out of reach now. The table was not a large one, and Monty found it very easy to stretch his hand across it. Hers came slowly to meet his, and he shook with the thrill of the contact. Her fingers were exquisitely cool and smooth, like lily petals, but there was something tense and nervous in the clasp of them that was the reverse of passivity.

"I'm most horribly impertinent," said Monty huskily. "I don't know that you'll ever forgive me. But—but I've never cared so much for any one before in all my life."

She did not take her hand or her eyes from his. Again, very faintly and wistfully, she smiled. With a pounding heart and a dizzy brain, Monty realized that she was not angry with him for his effrontery. Then she withdrew the cool, tense fingers, and, rising quickly, walked to the open window.

"Listen, you, boy," she said. "You are a child, standing at the edge of the wilderness. There is Paris outside; that is the wilderness, for it stands for the world—the wild, mad world of joy and pain and life. It is not peaceful and happy and gentle; it is swept by storms and haunted by beasts of prey. But it is beautiful. And it is there for your taking. Do you choose it?"

Monty's throat felt dry. He did not understand her at all, but he answered instantly: "Yes, I want it—if I can have it with you."

She walked slowly back to the table, and, stopping beside his chair, bent suddenly to him. Her hands were on his shoulders, and her face close to his. They were alone in the universe, with the wilderness calling outside.

"You are mine for the taking," said Pippa, in a curious tone. He remembered it long afterward, and remembered it often. "The gods shall write it to my credit that in this hour you were mine for the taking, and that—I remembered."

"Remembered what?" said Monty Crewe, and his arms went up to her.

"'Griffith's Debt,'" she said, smiling enigmatically.

For just a second she let her lips rest upon his hair; then she wrenched herself free suddenly, and covered her face with her hands.

"I—I think I am faint," she murmured breathlessly. "Can't you get me some cognac or something? No, please don't call the waiter. I don't want him to come in. I'm shaking with—nervousness. Get it yourself, please."

He bent to kiss her hand, and hurried from the room.

When he returned with the cognac, the place was empty. In the dim light, the disordered supper table mocked him with its sardonic suggestion of what was past. There was nothing left of Pippa except the orchid that she had worn on her breast. It lay on the chair where she had been sitting, as if, by some stroke of inscrutable alchemy, she had been changed into the flower. There was no other message.

And he never saw her again. She had gone back into the wilderness.

The Society Reminiscences of FREDERICK TOWNSEND MARTIN

CHAPTER XVIII.

AMERICAN SOCIETY AT COWES YACHT MEETING.

AS the whole world of fashion went on to Cowes for the week of yachting immediately after the close of the Goodwin races, Mr. Sands and myself were glad to join the gay crowds at the seashore in the summer of the season mentioned in the previous chapters. Our host on this occasion was Lord Wandsworth, who had taken a pretty little cottage among the colony of temporary residents. Next door to his villa was that of Mrs. John Mackay, who had come from Paris, and taken the largest cottage but one at Cowes. She had as her guests Mr. and Mrs. James Brown Potter.

The largest villa, called "Egypt," and the show place of Cowes, was taken by Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence, of New York, whose daughter married Lord Vernon. Among their guests was Lady Mandeville, who afterward became the Duchess of Manchester.

The Prince and Princess of Wales lived on their yacht *Osborne*. They had with them Lord Suffield, Colonel Arthur Paget—now General Sir Arthur Paget—and many others.

We were fortunate in having a most wonderful week of sunshine and warmth, which, of course, added much to the success of the occasion. There was not a single rainy day. The favorite rendezvous was in the beautiful flower-decked grounds of the Royal Yacht Club, where everybody met during the day. Sitting on chairs under the trees, one watched from the lawn the life of the yachts out at sea. In order to enjoy the privileges of this club one had to be put up by some member for the week. I remember that Lord Suffield, who was of the household of the Prince of Wales, put me up, and the brother of the Duke of Richmond, Lord Henry Gordon Lennox, put up Mr. Sands.

The first dance was given by Mrs. Lawrence, at her villa "Egypt," and long beforehand everybody was talking about it, because Mrs. John Mackay, who, it will be recalled, is the wife of the great Silver King of America, was expected to attend, wearing all her marvelous jewels. I had never met Mrs. Mackay, so my acquaintance with her began at that ball, but our friendship lasted from that time to the present day.

I remember that I arrived at the small dance quite early, and when the name of Mrs. John Mackay was announced everybody turned to look, expecting to see a great blaze of jewels. How delighted I was to see her enter—a young and charming woman, dressed plainly in white, with only a little lace, and without one single jewel! I said to myself that it could only be a woman of real character who would have the courage to come thus and meet the Prince of Wales and all the other distinguished guests. Whatever her motives, I always felt that she had heard that every-

body expected her to come wearing her marvelous jewels, and decided to depend simply upon her great natural charms.

With sharpened interest I asked to be introduced to her, and how pleased I was when I found that she could dance the cotillion with me. The charm of that evening seems to come back to me now, as I am writing these words. The Prince of Wales danced the cotillion with the daughter of the hostess, Lady Vernon; Prince George, his son, who is now King George the Fifth, danced with Lady Mandeville, while almost every other person around the room held some distinguished position in the world.

Presently, as we danced, Mrs. Mackay laughingly said: "Let us try the Boston!" It was a new step to those about us, but we danced it, in spite of the amusement of the guests looking on. When the Prince of Wales took out Mrs. Mackay, he asked her what the dance was, and whether she could teach him the steps. Altogether the incident seemed to have added greatly to the gayety of the evening.

We were all a merry party as we sat around the little tables for supper, and the laughter and gayety were kept up till we watched the sun rise.

Among Lord Wandsworth's other guests, besides Mr. Sands and myself, was the Honorable Alexander York, son of the Earl of Hardwick. He was the favorite gentleman in waiting to Queen Victoria. It was interesting to hear him give descriptions of his life at court, and one learned what a wonderfully interesting person Queen Victoria was. He had a great power of imitating people, and nothing delighted the queen more than that he should get up little plays and act for her, thus distracting her thoughts from questions of state. He also told me she loved to have him play on the piano some favorite hymns, while she stood by and attempted to sing them, though she merely repeated them, as she had long since lost her musical voice.

Lord Wandsworth's other guests were the Honorable William Maxwell, the son of the Earl of Harris; the Honorable Edward Dawson, the son of the Earl D'Arcy, also a quaint, old-fashioned little man; and Sir Oscar Clayton, one of the great physicians of his day. The Prince of Wales always liked him, and he was the physician of the royal household. It was thought that Sir Oscar's valuable advice helped a great deal to pull the prince through his case of typhoid fever in early life.

I remember once saying to this quaint, little old-fashioned gentleman, who was long past eighty then, and died at the age of eighty-seven: "What a wonderful success you have had with your profession!"

He smiled, and replied:

"Mr. Martin, I think I would have had a greater success if many times I had written checks for my patients instead of prescriptions, as in my profession I have seen so many people die from sheer worry over the want of money."

Our host coming back to lunch one day was greatly pleased because the Prince of Wales had told him that he would take supper with him that night. The house was so small that it was only possible to seat twenty at table, and the Prince of Wales had himself requested that the party should be a small one. Lord Wandsworth did what he could by telegraphing the mainland to get some singers to entertain the party, and he thought that all was settled, and that they would arrive by a late boat. The servants in the afternoon spent their time in decorating all the trees about the house with Japanese lanterns, and this they did so artistically that when night came, and they were lighted, it was like a scene in fairyland.

Our dinner finished, preparations were made for the supper. We were sitting on the lawn in front of the house when the Prince of Wales arrived with Lord Suffield, in the most quiet, simple way. He sat down and chatted pleasantly before the other guests arrived. While he talked our host was most distressed. Indeed, Lord Wandsworth wore such a harassed expression on his face that the prince said to him:

"What is the matter?"

"Your royal highness," he replied, "I

have done what I could to engage artists to come and amuse you this evening, but the boat's arrived without the artists!"

The prince looked up, and laughingly said: "Oh, you must not worry, Lord Wandsworth, at the nonarrival of your artists, because the lanterns are here, and we will call it a 'Fête des Lanternes'!"

We all joined in the merry laugh of the prince, which went a long way toward relieving the anxiety of our host.

It was only another demonstration by the Prince of Wales of his wonderful thoughtfulness for others, in always doing what he could to make his host or hostess happy and comfortable. Thus this fête, which began with such a disappointment to our host, ended as one of the most charming little suppers of that week.

That year I went down to Cannes for the winter. The mother of my friend, Mr. Sands, had taken a charming villa, and I was enjoying the social world greatly, when sad news reached me from America.

My beloved father had been taken with pneumonia, and they cabled me there was no hope of his recovery. But I started at once to return to his side. I got as far as London, when another cable reached me that he had passed from a peaceful unconsciousness into death. My relatives begged me not to return, as they said I could do no possible good in arriving after all was over.

Consequently I returned to Cannes, and led a most quiet life.

One of the most startling experiences of my life befell me there when I went through the terrific earthquake which visited the southern part of France and the northern part of Italy.

As I woke from my sleep in the "Villa Soleil," I felt the whole house rocking, as if it were a ship at sea. I sprang from bed, and had to balance myself, thinking that some dreadful illness had seized me, and never dreaming for a second that it was the earth that was rolling and rocking. But as soon as I heard the screams of the people in the house, I realized that it wasn't my head that was upset, but the earth. Everybody was rushing out in the corridor, getting their clothes on as rapidly as they could. There, in all directions, were people pouring out of their cottages, in all kinds of costumes.

The destruction of houses in Nice, and farther along the Mediterranean, was far greater than at Cannes. The rumbling and roaring in the bowels of the earth left such an abiding impression on my memory that for years after the noise of a great cart passing a house would send my memory back to the frightful experience of the earthquake in France.

After another delightful summer in Scotland, the weeks flying by so quickly in the joy and pleasure of being with my family, the time arrived for us all to take the steamer and return to our home in New York.

CHAPTER XIX.

A WEDDING.

Announcement was made of the engagement of the daughter of my brother Bradley Martin, Miss Cornelia Martin, to the Earl of Craven, in Scotland, in December, and that winter we all spent Christmas at Balmacaan. It was one of those old-fashioned Christmases, with plenty of snow and ice.

On Christmas Eve there was a ball for the servants and tenants, and, according to the invariable custom in Scotland, the family and guests opened the ball, and danced with every one. After it was well under way we retired to allow the others to keep it up till the wee hours of the morning. At all these entertainments for the tenants, the hostess generally opens the ball with the head keeper, and they really are most democratic gatherings from one point of view.

We all returned to New York in March for the wedding of my niece to the Earl of Craven, as my brother and his wife desired to have their daughter married in their own country, in Grace Church, New York, where she had been baptized and confirmed.

It was a fine spring morning when the chimes filled the air. For hours the police had kept about the church, directing into the side streets east and west of Broadway the crowds of men and women drawn by the wedding. It was a typical American gathering, good-natured and orderly.

The carriages containing the ushers arrived first. They were Mr. Hamilton Carey, Mr. F. Wadsworth Ritchie, Mr. James Abercrombie Burden, Mr. Bradley Martin, junior, Mr. Alonzo Potter, and myself.

Lord Craven's carriage followed. He was accompanied by his best man, the Honorable Rupert Cecil Craven.

My brother Bradley's carriages arrived a few minutes later from the family residence in Twentieth Street West. He occupied the first carriage with his daughter, the bride, while in the second was Mrs. Bradley Martin, accompanied by her mother, Mrs. Isaac Sherman.

In the carriages which followed were the bridesmaids—Miss Ethel Davies, the daughter of my sister, Mrs. Julian T. Davies; Miss Alice Rochester, the daughter of my sister, Mrs. William B. Rochester; Miss Daisy Post, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Post; and Miss Sybil Sherman, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Sherman.

While the guests were awaiting the arrival of the bride and bridegroom, selections from Tannhäuser and Aïda were played by the organist. The church was decorated with beautiful flowers, so that it was easy to imagine that instead of being springtime it was already midsummer. An arch of delicate lattice-work had been erected in the chancel, forming a bower of bridal roses and lilies of the valley.

The bride-to-be entered the church on the arm of her father. No doubt she was one of the youngest brides that any one in the church had ever seen, and her youthful appearance was intensified by the fact that she wore no jewels on her white satin gown, but simply some orange blossoms.

Soon the joyous music of the Lohengrin Wedding March filled the church.

Following the bride were the four bridesmaids, all dressed alike in white satin gowns. They wore white Gainsborough hats, in which were ostrich plumes, the upturned brims lined with blue velvet. Each wore at the side of her waist a large bow of blue velvet ribbons, and carried a bouquet of white lilies, with one Mabel Morrison rose drooping from the side. To each bridesmaid had been given by the bride a handsome pin—an earl's coronet in platinum set with diamonds.

The ceremony was performed by the Right Reverend Bishop Henry C. Potter and the Reverend Doctor William R. Huntington, rector of Grace Church.

As the bride and bridegroom were leaving the rail, the organ burst forth into triumphant peals of music, and I remember the expression of kindly interest that seemed written on the faces of all present as they smiled their best wishes to the handsome young couple.

Five hundred guests afterward attended the reception at my brother's house. Great attention had been given to the floral decorations. The canopy by which the main entrance to the house was protected was decorated with tropical palm leaves and white-blooming shrubs. An arch of white wedding lilies extended from wall to wall in the main hall. Fans of natural flowers were arranged on the corners leading into the library, drawing-room, and large salons. On the grand staircase were immense clusters of American Beauty, Magna Charta, and other rare varieties of roses, extending to the third landings.

The electric chandelier, suspended from the dome, through the space of three stories, was decorated its whole length with clusters of the same roses as those which ornamented the grand staircase.

The billiard room was decorated with yellow flowers, acacias, genestas, and roses. In the corners of this apartment were four huge plants of acacias, while the mantel was handsomely banked with the same flowers, trailing to the floor.

The dining room on the south side was banked to the ceiling with tall, tropical palms, behind and overhanging the buffet table, which was lavishly filled

with long-stemmed Ulrich Brunner and Jacqueminot roses. Against the tapestry were big plaques of roses of the same hues. In the drawing-room and libraries orchids, gardenias, lilies of the valley, and roses were beautifully arranged.

After the wedding, when Lord Craven and his bride had started on their honeymoon, we went to Chicago to see the World's Fair. Our party included my brother Bradley and his wife, Mrs. Bradley Martin's mother, Lord Craven's brother, and myself. After their honeymoon, Lord and Lady Craven joined us at Chicago.

I have always been glad that I saw that wonderful exhibition. In my opinion it surpassed all the others that I have seen.

After our visit in Chicago we all returned to New York, and sailed for England, where the Cravens were to open their ancestral home at Coombe Abbey, the foundations of which were laid in 1150. For many a long year no mistress had reigned in the ancient abbey, as Lord Craven's mother lived in the dower house, in Berkshire.

My brother and I sailed for America in the autumn, to spend the winter as usual in New York.

CHAPTER XX.

NEW YORK SOCIETY AT ITS BEST.

The winter following the wedding of my niece to the Earl of Craven was one of the brightest in my recollection, although those years were filled with so many happy affairs in society that I have always felt they marked the time at which American society was at its best in the old days of the so-called Four Hundred. Nowadays, of course, we are living in an age of transition which is marked by the passing of the Four Hundred for one thing, and by many of the old abuses of the social world for another.

The season referred to, every one seemed to be trying to outdo his or her friends in an attempt to give handsome entertainments. Four prominent hostesses determined to give a dinner each week, and they decided beforehand at whose house the cotillion which followed this dinner should take place. All the other three sets of guests came on after dinner to join the cotillion. These four hostesses were Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt, Mrs. Bradley Martin, Mrs. Frederick Brunson, and Mrs. Ogden Mills.

The three fashionable leaders of these cotillions during that winter were Henry Le Grand Cannon, Lispenard Stewart, and Elisha Dyer, junior. And these dances, being small and informal, like dances in a country home, were kept up till all hours of the morning, much to the pleasure of the younger set. The cotillion contained in those days so many beautiful figures and simple favors, very different from the present day, when cotillion means scarcely a single figure, and entails giving presents to be taken away as souvenirs of the evening.

The wonder to me was that this was the only winter during which these cotillions were kept up, for they were a great success. But they seemed to die in a natural way, like many other novelties which come up from time to time to amuse society, only to disappear and be replaced by others.

No hostess understood better than Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish the art of continually having something new to entertain her guests. Her remarkable ability amounted to a positive genius for this, and to this day one entering her house never knows what is in store for them in the way of unique diversion.

During that winter Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin gave large dinners, to which twenty-six guests were invariably invited, every Tuesday night and every Thursday night, so that what with Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays at the opera, one can imagine the gayety in my brother's home. There was nothing forced about it, for nothing delighted my sister-in-law more than to do all she could to entertain both the young and old.

She gave a remarkable dinner at Delmonico's the winter after her daughter's marriage that will be long remembered. There were two hundred and seventy-

eight guests. My brother took into dinner Mrs. William Astor, and Mr. August Belmont took in Mrs. Martin. Fifteen unmarried men were invited to this dinner, but they had no ladies to take in! None of them seemed to mind this, with the exception of one bachelor, who took the matter so unkindly that he indignantly declined to dine, and, taking his hat and coat, left Delmonico's and went home.

Delmonico's was completely transformed for the occasion. The hallway, as the guests entered, was lined with pale-yellow genesta blossoms, which hung over in feathery clusters, while on the landing one saw a majestic suit of armor, and a great Gobelin tapestry, worth its weight in gold, covered the entrance, to keep out the draft. Beside it stood a hundred-year-old palm.

In the place of the old hall was a magnificent private passage, with swords and helmets on the walls, over Bouvé and Gobelin tapestries. A great standard bronze candelabra with wax candles shed a soft luster on orange trees laden with luscious fruit, and on orchids and rare palms. The furniture was of Louis XVI. style, while an antique clock chimed the fleeting hours in one corner.

Mr. and Mrs. Martin stood at the doorway of the red drawing-room to welcome each guest. The hostess wore a gorgeous Worth gown of real ruby velvet, made décolleté, with a full train, and trimmed with bands of Russian sable. Her famous diamond tiara was worn, also necklace, and strings of gems on the bodice.

The other two drawing-rooms had tapestries over each doorway, and in every available spot were placed rare orchids, flowering azalias, the delicate pink matrimony vine, and Japanese crab-apple trees. Antique cabinets filled with rare china and bric-a-brac were in all of the corners, and rare vases and clocks were placed on them. In the blue rooms were yellow jonquils everywhere.

The six long tables were placed in the ballroom, and here the dinner was served and the cotillion danced. The somewhat gaudy walls were hidden behind palest blue satin damask, and a frieze of pale blue near the ceiling. Between the great gilded mirrors were placed little oval mirrors in gold frames, with six candles at the base of each one. The candles were alight, and beneath them were gilded baskets filled with lilies of the valley, tied with pale-blue satin ribbons. Over the large mirrors were ropes of deep-pink American Beauty roses, several hundred roses being used for each mirror. The effect of the delicate blue and gold, and the pink and white flowers, was exquisite.

From the center of the ceiling was a huge six-foot bell of catalaya orchids, with a tongue of lilies of the valley, making, as it were, the *pièce de résistance* of the decorations.

At each table sat forty-six guests, reveling in the decorations that turned the tables into poems of pink and white. Down the center of each board were placed eight gilded, circular baskets, tied with broad pink satin ribbons, and filled with Gloire De Paris roses. Between each basket was a tall silver candelabrum holding six candles, each one having a pale-pink shade. The electric lights overhead had pale, straw-color coverings over the globes. The whole effect was mellow in the extreme, and conducive to a most conscientious discussion of the elaborate menu that lay by each plate—two soups, two fish, two of everything except the wine, of which there was an endless variation from Bradley Martin's own cellars.

Dinner was announced by trumpeters, and, to the music of the Hungarian band stationed in the gallery, the large company filed in—the hostess and host leading, as I have said, with Mr. August Belmont and Mrs. William Astor respectively. The first couple occupied the center seats before the mirrors at the table on the south side of the room, and Mr. Martin and Mrs. Astor the similar seats at the table on the north side.

One of the center tables was occupied by twenty-three young girls, most of them débutantes, and as many of the younger men. At another was the Hempstead hunting set.

The menu was printed in gold and white, and recorded the most elaborate

dinner Delmonico's had ever prepared. While it was served, forty-five Philharmonic musicians, stationed in the large room on the Broadway side of the ballroom, played soft music.

It was ten o'clock when the hostess arose, and led the way to the red drawing-rooms. The men as well as the women followed. When the last guest had passed through, the ballroom doors were closed.

Liqueurs and coffee were served in the red parlors to the music of the Hungarian band, and the men went upstairs to smoke. Meantime a corps of fifty waiters removed every evidence of dinner from the ballroom, rolling up the great carpet, and revealing a shining dancing floor beneath.

The young gentlemen on the third floor, who were leisurely smoking, peeped over the music balcony, and saw some "pretty tall hustling" going on, as the corps of waiters in a few minutes transformed the whole scene into a ballroom.

At half past eleven the doors of the ballroom were once more thrown open, and through the tapestry curtain passed a brilliant throng of men and women eager for the cotillion.

The soft music of twenty violins came through the opposite door, and in a few moments a hundred couples were gliding over the floor, catching glimpses of themselves at every turn in the many mirrors. The great bell of orchids overhead swayed softly like some brilliant bird of plumage, the lilies of the valley and the blush roses mingled their perfumes, diamonds flashed in every direction, and dresses of every shade of velvet and tulle, seen amid the many-colored flowers, made the room seem like a shower of Arabian jewels.

Two rows of chairs were placed for the cotillion on three sides of the room, introducing a charming innovation in seating the guests. The women occupied the front row all around, and behind each one sat her partner. The effect of an unbroken line of feminine beauty was excellent, and at once won the appreciation of Mr. Ward McAllister, who was always regarded as a connoisseur of all unique entertainments. One hundred couples danced, and the remaining guests, mostly dowagers, occupied seats on the raised dais on one side of the room. The favors were placed on screens, and were given out with nice discrimination.

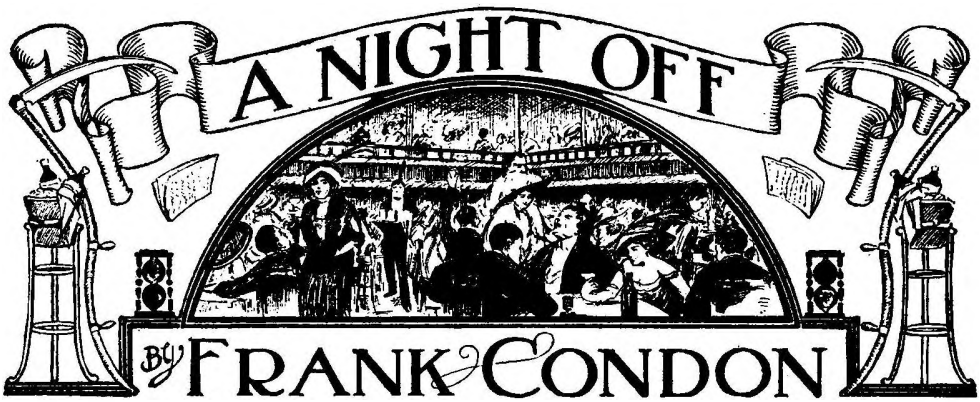
Mr. George H. Bend, the father of the beauty, Miss Amy Bend, led the dance, with Mrs. Martin. There was no cessation of the music, and about five figures were danced.

The favors were unusually handsome. In one set, the girls received solid silver chatelaines, with housewives containing thimble, scissors, and needle-cases. The men had jeweled daggers, made in many curious shapes. There were satin bags, hand-painted in flowers, and marked with the date; sashes, hand-painted; and exquisite little French bonnets decorated with artificial flowers; orders of the Golden Fleece on broad ribbons; and, in the last figure, the Gloire De Paris roses, which were on the tables, and the gilded baskets of lilies of the valley under the little mirrors, were given out.

It was four o'clock before Delmonico's was empty again, and Mr. and Mrs. Bradley Martin had earned the proud distinction of having entertained New York society royally, joyously, and continuously for eight hours.

After the fête was finished Mrs. Bradley Martin, with her usual thoughtfulness for others, sent all the beautiful flowers to brighten up the wards of the various hospitals.

TO BE CONCLUDED.



IF you know anything at all about New York, you know that on New Year's Eve, the time lock is temporarily removed, the lid is taken off, Jollity and Gay Abandon sally forth hand in hand, and the mayor of the metropolis mounts to the topmost minaret of the city hall with a megaphone and says to the multitudinous populace of the greatest city in Christendom:

"Fellow citizens, go to it!"

For the time being, the municipal emblem, coat of arms, and official design is a corkscrew rampant upon a champagne-cooler couchant. Citizens enter confidently upon their last and final jamboree, the confidence arising from the belief that, at the stroke of midnight, the water wagon will drive up, and all will embark upon it automatically.

Resolutions are trotted out and told to stand still until the morrow. Tables are reserved in the palaces of food and drink. After nine o'clock in the evening, nothing is sold except champagne, and it is referred to familiarly as "wine" by persons whose usual conception of wine is a red liquor in a bottle with wickerwork on it.

Delicatessen dealers' wives from the upper Bronx appear on Broadway, wearing seven pounds of assorted jewelry and assuring strange passers-by that this is the sort of life they were cut out for by nature. Confetti is sprinkled, tin horns are poked into slow-moving countenances, and every one laughs continuously and without cause.

Such is New Year's Eve in New York City. In Louisville, Kentucky, and other places in the United States, the barber in the Palace Hotel comes home on New Year's Eve carrying a slightly larger package than usual, but beyond this manifestation of joy, nothing happens. In New York, the birth of the new year is a tremendous event. Persons who sit up to drink out the old and in the new, with ardor befitting the occasion, will feel the effects for days afterward. The celebration is a habit—one that fastens itself to a New Yorker with the silken, powerful ropes that bind the opium user to his poppy; and, as he sat alone in his comfortable apartment, at five o'clock of Saturday afternoon, December thirty-first, George Hobart Bedell, New Yorker, tugged at the leashes of his domesticity and added up his unhappiness.

For fifteen years, George had been a New Yorker—one of the passionate, determined kind, that comes, in the beginning, from East Columbus, Ohio, or Warsaw, Idaho. Let no man speak evil of the metropolis in the hearing of George Bedell, for George would not have it. George did everything that all good New Yorkers do, and shunned everything they shunned. When he dropped into Suit Case, Pennsylvania, to sell the folks a bill of goods, he signed "New York" after his name in

giant letters, with a whole-hearted consciousness of the act and the air of a philanthropist who was about to buy the village a new ball park or give the children free shoes.

And yet, in spite of being a New Yorker, George Bedell was a first-class young man, honorable in his dealings, given to telling the truth, slightly inclined to saving part of his income, and clean in his habits.

Three years before, he had reached forth into the surf for the delicate ankle of a young woman who, at the moment, was standing upon her head and swallowing as much of the Atlantic Ocean as possible. He secured the ankle, dragged the young woman to the sands of the shore, and, when she was revived, it became known that her name was Miss Angela Culver, of New Bremen, Michigan.

George and Angela were married six months afterward, and had slowly become convinced that, until their happy union, the institution of matrimony was a failure. George changed positions, and took up work in the general office of the railroad company. Angela learned to run a Harlem apartment without skidding or stripping the gears. She put off some of the New Bremen habits of thought and dress, and began to wear silk stockings, even on days when she had no intention of going downtown shopping, which, in New York, is a clear indication of culture.

They had passed through the "Oh-so-happy" stage of wedded bliss, and George could now bear up under it stoically, if he happened to reflect, at the office, that he had come away that morning without bestowing the matutinal kiss upon the Angelic forehead.

But now, on the afternoon of this last day of the year, George Hobart Bedell stared out of the window, waiting for the return of Angela and pointing out to himself that married life was a great thing, but that it undoubtedly had its disadvantages.

The hall door slammed, and Angela appeared, her arms filled with bundles, and a smile upon her very good-looking face.

"Good evening, sweetheart," she said cheerfully. Then she hurried over to George and saluted him.

"Good evening," George replied, with all the animation of a dried herring.

Angela looked at her husband in surprise. She knew the tone of voice he had just used. It meant trouble ahead.

"What's wrong, dear?" she asked.

"Not a thing," George answered. Then he arose and walked into the bathroom, closing the door with force slightly exaggerated.

Angela began to sing in a low tone, and proceeded with the preparation of the evening meal. She had learned what a great many young wives finally comprehend—that when a husband growls before dinner, the best thing to do is to let him severely alone, and get food into him as quickly as possible.

When the coffee was served, Angela said, in her most cheerful tone:

"George, dear, let's not have any secrets from each other. I know there is something troubling you, and I want you to tell me all about it. It will be far better than brooding in silence."

"All right," George answered. "I'm not going to brood in silence. I'm going to do something that is exactly opposite brooding in silence. *Do* you happen to know what day this is?"

"Certainly," Angela smiled. "This is New Year's Eve."

"And to you," George replied, "it means practically nothing. It means that the old year ends at midnight, and a new one begins. You make a few harmless little resolutions, and that's the end of it. But to me, it means something vastly different. I don't want you to think, Angela, that I am dissatisfied with you or our marriage, or anything else; but I do want you to understand that the eternal quiet of married life sometimes gives me the willies, and tonight is one of the times."

"I thought we were moderately happy," Angela said inquiringly.

"We are happy," George answered. "But you don't understand some things. You were accustomed to a quiet life before I married you, and I was not. I gave up my old friends, my clubs, the

little dinners, dances, and theater parties. I gave up all the loafing places where we had so much fun. I stopped playing billiards and poker, and cut out drinking. All I've done for the last three years is to sit still and slowly petrify. My maddest dissipation has been the moving-picture show, and when I go into one of the old-time saloons, they push a lemon and seltzer at me without a word of conversation."

"Your health is better than it used to be," Angela remarked mildly.

"Certainly it is!" George retorted, his heat rising slightly. "Whose health wouldn't be? I'll probably live to be eight hundred years old, but what's the use? I was a live wire in this town once, and it's a pretty big town. They used to know me downtown. Now, when I strike Broadway after dark, I have to hire a policeman to lead me around, so's a bear won't bite me. You don't understand these things, Angela, because you were brought up in a country town."

"New Bremen is almost as large as Fair View, Illinois," Angela said, without intending insult.

"I came to New York when I was young, and absorbed the ways of the city," George said, ignoring the Fair View remark. "Since we were married, I have dropped all the old interests and amusements. I never go anywhere unless you go along with me, but to-night I am going back to the old game for just one more whirl. To-night is New Year's Eve in New York. It may be New Year's Eve elsewhere, but they won't notice it."

"Without me?" Angela said, raising her eyebrows.

"Yes, without you. You wouldn't enjoy yourself a single minute. It's too boisterous and noisy. People sometimes drink too much wine and make a racket, and you know how you abhor rackets. I'll probably run into the old bunch, and they'll help me see the old year out and the new year in. I'm sure you won't object to my having one more fling at the game—one more celebration, just as I used to celebrate before I became a married man."

"Of course I won't object," Angela said, smiling. "I wouldn't like to have you think that I would stand in the way of your enjoyment. You go ahead to-night, and have a good time. I suppose you'll want your evening clothes?"

"Certainly," George answered genially. His surprise left him momentarily speechless. He had expected from his wife what any other married man would expect from his wife, after a similar proposal.

Angela cleared away the dinner dishes with greater speed than usual, and George began to dress. Angela brought out his evening clothes and brushed them with care. She darned a small hole in one of his super-silk hose, and went over his silk hat with a bit of velvet. She tied his necktie with infinite care, and at length assured him that the art of dressing could go no farther. He was perfect. George surveyed himself in the full-length mirror with unmitigated satisfaction.

At the doorway he paused. Angela placed her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"Have a good time, George, dear," she said. "I wish you a Happy New Year."

"Don't wait for me," George warned. "I'm likely to be a trifle late. This is the first time, you remember."

"Don't worry about me," Angela smiled. "And don't get into trouble."

Once on the street, George Hobart Bedell drew in a great breath and glanced about him with an eager light in his eyes. He was free, for one night, and it was New Year's Eve. Already, bonfires were beginning to blaze on the cross streets, and the horns were starting. Parties of two, and three, and five hurried toward the elevated and subway stations. The metropolis was tuning up for the events of the night.

"And I'm in it!" George muttered nervously. "I'm in it to-night!"

He found a telephone and informed a number of surprised friends that it was his night to howl. Would they meet him downtown later on? Certainly, they would.

An hour later, George was in the

midst of the Broadway crowds, breathing in bliss and confetti. In the morning, the newspapers would speak of it as a "monster, good-natured throng."

The city never throws the gears into the high speed on New Year's Eve until fifteen minutes after eleven. From that time forward, everything is permissible, and a man will not be arrested until he commits murder. George Bedell was feeling better and gayer every moment. He had found friends—some of the old companions of his unmarried years—and they now sat at a table for six in the Café Mignon.

There are all sorts of cafés in New York, but to celebrate New Year's Eve properly and lavishly, one should spend part of the evening in the Café Mignon. Strange and unconventional are the happenings. Every one kisses every one else, at the stroke of midnight. Champagne flows as if it suffered no import duty. A lady in a red cloak invariably dances on the middle table, and a fat man falls on the floor and is carried out. In the middle of the excitement and when the fun is at its whitest heat, a flash-light picture is always taken.

George's party had doubled in number. Tables were drawn together, and each man and woman talked, laughed, and sang. George was telling a girl in a black velvet dress that her eyes reminded him of Nethersole, and she was telling George she had often noticed him on Broadway, and had wondered who the striking-looking man was.

Everything passed off perfectly. The lights were extinguished for one minute at the stroke of midnight. Toy balloons and cupids were distributed, Clamorous couples waltzed among the tables, and the usual dowager in the corner had the lace of her gown set afire by the usual cigarette. George had sung a number of wild ballads. Bill, and Joe, and Tommy, of the old days, had informed George that he was the same, wild, gay spirit, and that matrimony could never change him.

At three in the morning, things were humming along pleasantly, but George Bedell was getting sleepy. He fought off three old and nine new friends, and backed his way out into the clear, cool air. Later on, he paused in the hall before his own doorway and inserted the key.

"I presume she's asleep," he said, moving carefully and noiselessly.

In the dining room, at the opposite end of the apartment, George switched on the electrics and placed his hat on the table. An ordinary writing tablet, with the colored cover rolled back, rested slantingly against the water carafe, and George observed that the first page was covered with writing—fine, closely woven handwriting that belonged to Angela, and to no one else. He pulled a chair up beneath the light and picked up the tablet.

"Husband, dear," wrote Angela, "I am rather glad that you started it tonight, because I can follow, and it is more befitting a wife to follow than to lead. You have gone away to have one more good time—gone back to the scenes of pleasure, and noise, and gayety that you love so well, and that formed such a large part of your former life. I am sitting here thinking of you, picturing you surrounded by a happy, laughing crowd, with music, and flowers, and well-dressed people, but I shall not be here long, because a taxicab is standing before the door, and in my purse are the reservations on the ten o'clock train, westbound, the train that carries me back to New Bremen, Michigan.

"For three years we have lived together. You gave up your old friends and your old habits—all of them. You led a quiet life with me, and, to-night, the old spirit overcame you, and you went back. Perfectly proper and sensible. But what of me? For three years I have lived with you in various apartments here in New York City, and I, also, have not complained. You know, George, I, too, had a former life. I had habits, and occupations, and pleasures, and I gave them up for you. It may never have occurred to you that I grew weary of four walls about me—of elevators, and stone streets, and con-

stant housework. I never spoke of it, so you may not have thought. The same spirit that seized you to-night and carried you off to your old, familiar scenes, also laid hands upon me, and I am going back, too. I am going to take one more fling. I am going back to that big, white farmhouse. I am going to be hugged by my mother, and father, and sisters, and brothers. I am going to call on Jennie Wilson, who taught me how to spell 'cat' in the red schoolhouse next to our farm, and I'm going to feed green apples to my pet calf, which has since become a dignified cow. I'm going to shake hands with the hairy Newfoundland dog you failed to like, but which was once my best pal. I shall wander around to the swimming hole, where we girls paddled in summer without clothes of any sort on us. And Jimmy Watson may take me out duck shooting. He always did. I shall eat fresh, new butter that doesn't come in silver foil, and fresh eggs out of the hayloft. I shall sit before the big log fire and pretend that I am a little girl again, wondering what the world is, when one passes beyond the limits of New Bremen.

"I am afraid, George, dear, that I shall be able to write but little more. I have half an hour to make the ten-o'clock train, and I sincerely hope that you had as good a time to-night as I am going to have.

"Your loving wife,

"ANGELA."

George Bedell read the last paragraph over several times. He felt queer all over, as if he had just come from under the influence of an anæsthetic.

"She's gone," he said dumbly, staring at the top of the carafe. "She's gone back home!"

He folded his arms on the table and laid his head upon them. For the time being, the blow had deprived him of the power of action or speech. His home suddenly took on a farcical atmosphere. It was after four in the morning.

At length, George stirred himself and sat up. He moistened his dry lips and peered out at the first signs of the coming day.

"She's right," he whispered. "Everything she says is true. I was a brute, and a selfish, blind fool. She never cared for the things we did, and the places we went, and I never knew it. I thought she enjoyed herself. I thought I was making life happy for this country girl, and astonishing her by showing her bits of city life. She's been longing for the green grass and the open spaces, and all I've been thinking about was a chance to get out by myself and cut loose once more."

During the following twenty minutes, George was active. He roused a sleepy hall porter and commanded him to summon a telegraph messenger. He composed a number of important telegrams, one of which he directed to the general manager of his own company, explaining in detail that he was going out of town, and would be absent for several days.

He spent ten fiery minutes on the telephone, reserving accommodations on the noon train for New Bremen, Michigan, and causing the railway company to wonder what sort of rare idiot it was who arose at four o'clock in the morning to annoy it. He even succeeded in arousing the tailor in the building, who promised to press a suit of clothes for him within an hour, and, after accomplishing several other duties, by telephone and telegraph, he began to pack, furiously and without paying any great attention to what he was doing. With appropriate gestures, he conversed with himself, explaining to himself, that he, George Bedell, had made the gravest mistake of his life, and that he intended to spend the remainder of his married career atoning for it, and contributing happiness and nothing else to the absent Angela.

With a black traveling bag in his hand, and neckties trailing on the floor, he dashed down the long hall, entered the bedroom, and pushed the wall button that switched on the lights. A sleepy, tousled head turned slightly on the pillow, and the owner of the tousled head sighed deeply, with the great intake of breath of one who is very tired and very fast asleep.

For several seconds George remained standing in the doorway, the bag hanging limply in his hand, and his lower jaw hanging still more limply. Incredulity, amazement, fear, and delight passed across his countenance. He opened his mouth to speak, and then thought better of it. Instead, he backed softly into the hall, and, on tiptoes, hurried in retreat to the dining room, dropping the half-filled bag into a closet as he proceeded.

He snatched up the tablet that had brought him confusion and light, tore out the written leaves, and ripped them into small bits. He opened the window and allowed the pieces to flutter away into the dawn. The tablet itself he removed from sight.

Then he returned to the bedroom. Angela was still sleeping soundly, as one thoroughly fatigued. One of her arms lay extended, thrown across the pillows. George dropped on his knees beside the bed and took the small hand on the pillow in his own. He kissed it reverently, and gazed upon his slumbering partner as if he half expected her to dissolve into nothingness. Then, with great caution, he put out the lights.

At an early hour in the morning, Angela awakened and blinked for a moment or two. Then, as if a sudden fear had overcome her, she slipped to the floor and made her way silently into the dining room. She stared for a few moments at the water carafe on the dining-room table, as if she had never seen it before. Her eyes widened, and a long, heartfelt sigh escaped her.

"Thank goodness!" she whispered, gathering her nightgown about her. "I thought—I thought—but it *was* only a dream, after all."

George, her husband, with a countenance exceedingly solemn, found her at her usual place behind the coffeepot. A strange feeling of embarrassment possessed both husband and wife, and even the usual morning greetings were said hesitatingly.

"You look dreadfully tired, dear," George remarked. "Bad night?"

Angela laid down a spoon and gazed at George pathetically.

"George," she said, "I have had a perfectly frightful night of it! I have had scares, and dreams, and nightmares until it is a wonder I am alive this morning. I dreamed the most terrible thing about—about you—about us, George, dear—that I suddenly flew into a rage and accused you of neglecting me, and thinking only of your own pleasure; and I dreamed that I had started back to New Bremen, because I longed for everything out there, and had wearied of New York and our life. Ugh!" said Angela, shaking her shoulders emphatically. "It was perfectly horrid, and as vivid as anything in this world could be."

George smiled. He had been serious and smiling by turns during Angela's brief speech, but the end of it found him cheerful.

"New Bremen!" he said. "If that isn't the strangest coincidence in the world, I'll eat four old hats!"

"What's a coincidence, George, dear?"

"Your dreaming that you wanted to go back to the old place, and the fact that at this moment there is a reservation on the noon train for you; everything is fixed up. I wanted to surprise you, but you outdreamed me. All you have to do is to pack a few things and get to the station. The rest is taken care of."

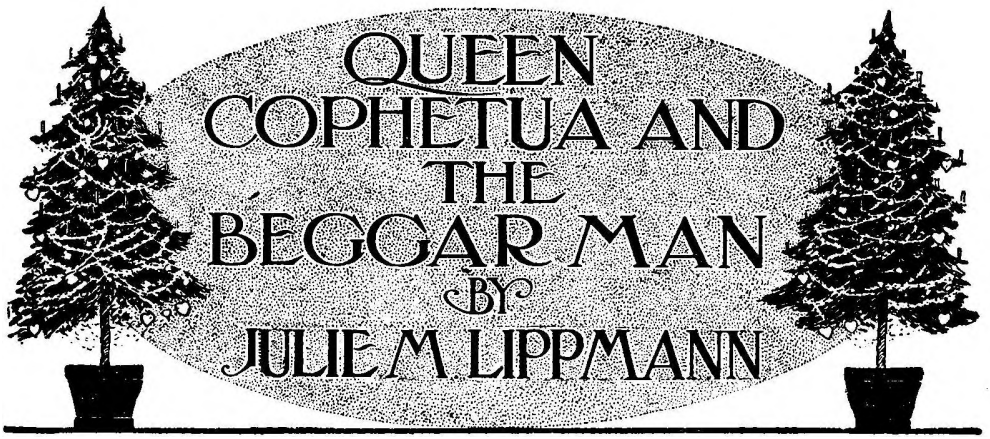
"George," Angela said plaintively, "you wouldn't let me go away out there *alone?*"

"One moment," George answered, pushing back his chair and rising.

He walked over to the telephone with the stride of a husband who is about to do his wife a good, though justified, turn. He shook the receiver and waited, and, after a while, said:

"Is this the railway company? Very well. You have a single reservation for Bedell on the noon train to New Bremen, have you not? Very well," George said, more dignified than ever, "make that for two. I've changed my plans."

Then George returned to the table and kissed Angela, who was smiling.



GIDEON LOWE had been "in the wilds" for so many years it was natural, perhaps, he should not understand the demands that an attractive, young college professor had made upon him, but it was particularly grievous to Mrs. Lowe and Anne when, in his stern, elder-brotherly fashion, he presumed to condemn conditions to which his own experience could provide no clew.

For Gideon was not handsome, and he was not gifted. He had none of those endearing, personal charms that so often accompany the "artistic temperament." He confessed himself "a plain moneygrubber." It was absurd that he should attempt to judge his handsome young brother, and lay down the law to him. A man has a right to live his own life, and "poor old Gideon" never could be made to comprehend that the very fact of his having put Lawrence through Harvard, and given him every opportunity afterward, committed him, Gideon, in a way, to a still larger generosity, a generosity in proper proportion to the broad ground plan he had designed for his junior. For you can't lay a foundation for something monumental, and then carry it forward on a scale of ridiculous insignificance—or refuse to carry it on at all—without being manifestly unfair and placing everybody, yourself included, in an uncommonly awkward position.

This trip abroad, for instance, from which Lawrence and Anne were just now returning, Gideon had made very hard for his mother. She had set the case before him as fairly and squarely as she could—though, of course, there are always certain particulars it would be foolish to "go into" by letter. She had told him frankly that the years following his college course had "told on Lawrence." He had had a hard struggle to win out, and lately there had been "extra harassments." If his health were to give way at this point, under the general strain, it would be fatal to his career. He had worked, patiently, uncomplainingly, and had fairly earned a Sabbatical year. She hinted delicately that a trip abroad was what, by rights, he ought to have.

Gideon wrote back from his mines in the West:

> What in thunder is a Sabbatical year? We don't have 'em out this way. They don't figure in our calendar. We're just a lot of plain, hard-working little Jacobs, who put in a good seven years, and then begin over again and put in another good seven, and so on, and so on. By the way, what is the nature of Lawrence's "extra harassment?" The special last straw that threatens to break our *patient* camel's back? I'd be glad to believe it's an actual "hump." You can get back at me, mother, for the Sabbatical-year query by asking: "What is a hump?" Well, it is what has enabled me to send you the accompanying check for the European trip. Please note the amount is double the sum suggested. That's because I want Anne to go with Lawrence. If Sabbatical years are being handed around as rewards of merit, good little Nan may as well step up to the

captain's office, and get her prize along with the other winners. Therefore, tell her from me to put on her Sunday-go-to-meeting duds and sail along with the *patient*—the italics are mine—the *patient* ship of the desert aforesaid.

So Lawrence and Anne had gone, and now they were coming back, and it was on the ship that was bringing them home, in time for Christmas it was to be hoped, that they had met "Queen Cophetua." For so Anne had at once dubbed the rich and beautiful American heiress on whom a British peer had conferred a title, only to leave her widowed after a brief two years of married life, with all her honors fresh and unencumbered on her girlish head. A prosaic passenger list, however, announced her as "Lady Raveloe"—not forgetting to add "and maid"—and an equally prosaic stewardess confided to Anne that she had "crossed with 'er ladyship before. Two years ago, in December, just like now. In time for Christmas. It seems it is an 'abit of 'er ladyship to spend the 'olidays on the hother side."

It was inevitable that democratic young Anne should become interested in the lady of title, but it did not so obviously follow that the lady of title should be interested in Anne. And yet Lady Raveloe openly distinguished unpretentious Miss Lowe from the start, to the surprise and chagrin of more than one social climber, and Anne was quite unconscious that, behind her back, Gossip was whispering, "So much for having a handsome, eligible brother." Happily the great idea came to her untarnished by evil thinking, or evil speaking—as wonderful as her first memory of Santa Claus, as beautiful as her first Christmas tree.

Indeed, it was a regular Santa-Claus idea. The sort no rational creature would have the audacity to entertain for a moment at any other season of the year, but that yet may magically work itself out to a triumphant finish at Christmas time. How it occurred to the simple, uncalculating mind of Anne Lowe, in the first place, will never be known, but, one day, there it was in her consciousness, suggesting itself to her in the form of an innocent question: "What if Lawrence were to marry Lady Raveloe?"

But she was not left undisturbed in her innocent happiness. Though she had not heard that first cynical question, others she heard in plenty, and these were singularly irritating when she was busy watching the two splendid young creatures pacing the deck together, and wanted to give herself up to the luxury of developing her Santa-Claus plan for them.

That Lady Raveloe should choose to hold herself aloof from the other passengers was natural perhaps, "considering," but certainly she need not carry her exclusiveness as far as innocent, little children.

"And, my dear, I saw her with my own eyes draw away from that adorable Miller baby one day when he had got loose from his nurse, and was staggering about the deck alone, like a heavenly little tipsy cherub. He made straight for her chair—and—I wouldn't have believed it myself, if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes—what do you suppose she did? She deliberately turned her head away, as if he'd been a toad, and paid no more attention to his blessed blandishments than a stone image. The whole thing was so new to him—being snubbed, I mean—that at last he put out his lip and set up the dismalest howl you ever heard in your life. And he might have kept it up till doomsday, poor lamb, if his nurse hadn't come to the rescue. Now, you may depend upon it, a woman who doesn't love babies isn't half a woman, and I wouldn't trust her out of my sight for anything that needed *heart*. With all her beauty, there's a screw loose somewhere with your Lady Raveloe, my dear."

Anne would have dismissed the matter as a piece of idle gossip, but, as it happened, she had seen the significant little episode herself, and it had ever since lurked in the back of her consciousness, a dark shadow across the bright dream she was weaving. And yet she could not let go the dream. Rather, she deliberately thrust the

shadow farther and farther into the background, until it was almost forgotten, and might not have obtruded again, if a word from Lady Raveloe herself had not recalled it.

She happened to mention that she would be making only a fortnight's stay in New York, and, during that time, would be stopping at the Ritz.

"I should think," said simple Anne, "that it would be rather forlorn spending Christmas in a hotel. But I suppose your people will be there, and——"

"I have no people," was the quiet answer.

Anne had the good taste not to press her invitation then, but later she asked Lady Raveloe to spend Christmas with her mother and herself. "We always have a special jollification. A Christmas tree, and——"

"Are there any children?"

The question was quick, sharp, almost cutting.

"No," Anne answered, trying to remember the Miller baby. "We'll be quite by ourselves, mother, Lawrence, and I."

Lady Raveloe smiled with recovered cordiality.

"Then I shall be very glad to come."

Anne told herself she ought to be elated by such a mark of favor, and, metaphorically, shook herself because she was not elated at all, because, on the contrary, she was rather despondent.

Why was it that things in this world so often turned out wrong when it would seem to be easier all around for them to turn out right? Why couldn't Queen Cophetuas be as altogether noble as they looked? Why couldn't Lawrence—— But when it came to Lawrence Anne could not follow up the question. Lady Raveloe was puzzle enough.

"I once met a—a person in the north of your name," Lady Raveloe idly let fall one day.

"In Scotland?" Anne asked. "I believe that is what you English mean when you speak of the north, isn't it?"

"But I'm not English, you know, only a connection by marriage—and I didn't mean Scotland."

"We probably have North-of-England connections, but they are quite far away in every sense of the word. Lowe isn't an uncommon name, but our immediate branch has dwindled down to my two brothers and myself. My Brother Gideon in the far West is——"

"Gideon!"

It was the way in which Lady Raveloe repeated the name that brought Anne's tongue to a standstill, the look in her eyes that made her flush painfully, and demand, after a moment, with proud emphasis:

"Yes. Gideon. You find the name amusing?"

Lady Raveloe had the grace to change color. She bit her lip.

"Forgive me. I did not mean to hurt you. I'm sorry. Doesn't the mere sound of certain syllables sometimes make you smile? I have a young friend who can never hear the word *archipelago* without falling into peals of laughter. I hadn't realized I was susceptible in that way to the name Gideon. But don't you think, yourself, there's an angular patriarchal dinginess about it?

There was an old man with a beard
Who said: "It is just as I feared——"

She broke off short in the midst of her nonsense rhyme with an abrupt return to her customary listless, idle manner.

"Will your Brother Gideon be at the Christmas dinner?"

"No," said Anne stiffly, feeling that neither question nor answer had any more purpose than to fill in an awkward pause. She was grateful to Lawrence for happening to saunter up just then with the suggestion that Lady Raveloe take a bit of a tramp before dinner.

"You didn't do your two miles this morning, and it's getting cloudy fast. I shouldn't wonder but we're running into a fog. If we are, walking won't be so pleasant."

Anne watched them for a moment before gathering her wraps and rugs together to go inside. On the way she overheard one spectral, mummylike fig-

ure, stretched out in her deck-chair sarcophagus, say to another:

"Well, what do you think now? Are you ready to admit it is really *a case,* eh?"

"I have it on good authority he hasn't a penny, and—dollar princesses aren't marrying beggars these days."

"You never can tell!"

A cold, gray mist seemed to gather in Anne's mind, just as the cold, gray mist was thickening outside. As evening came on, the air grew dense and wet with impenetrable fog. By the next morning the ship had slowed down to a snail's pace, and the passengers were beginning to discuss the possibility of a fog-bound Christmas aboard. When they plied the captain with questions, he replied that if the worst came to the worst he had no doubt the cook could conjure up a plum pudding and a sprig of holly, and, "after all, you know, Christmas isn't a thing of time or place, it's a condition of the heart, isn't it?" Which little homiletic sly dig did not seem to the passengers to mend matters much.

Followed forty-eight hours of suspense, and then, suddenly, the pall lifted. With extra steam and continued clear weather, it was promised they would make port by dawn of Christmas Day, and Anne calculated that would serve to get her and Lawrence home well within the early forenoon.

She told Lady Raveloe so, made sure that she had their address right, so there might be no mischance about the Christmas-dinner engagement, and saw her drive away from the pier with only a maid beside her, and a cheerless hotel before.

In their own cozy flat "the little mater" was ready to receive them, but, after the first tearfully hearty greeting, she drew a long lip.

"What do you think?" she asked tremulously, and then, without waiting for an answer: "Gideon has come home!"

"The dickens he has!" exclaimed Lawrence.

"Where is he?" Anne inquired.

Mrs. Lowe dropped into the nearest chair.

"He meant it for a surprise, poor dear, but it was really a—a—shock. He hadn't written a line or wired a word. He just dropped down upon me yesterday, and I cried quite disgracefully all over his waistcoat, though he insists I only filled one of the pockets."

She paused with a frightened look at Lawrence.

"He wants to know all about everything and—and—he doesn't say much, but when his eyes are on you, you have to answer."

"Well?" demanded Lawrence sharply, when his mother did not go on.

"He asked about you, dear," she faltered.

"Well?"

"I tried to lead away, but always he would come back to the same thing, and at last—around midnight—I could not help it—I told him the truth."

"You mean, you told Gideon about—Etta and——" he demanded, in a choking whisper.

"Yes—and the baby. He said, 'They must be brought home.' He said, 'Whatever Etta was in the beginning, Lawrence has made her our kin, and the baby is blood of our blood.' I couldn't move him, and when I told him that Etta was dead, he said, 'Then the baby must be brought home.' He went after her an hour ago."

"And Lady Raveloe?" Lawrence burst out in mingled rage and terror. "How can we have a child here when she hates them?"

"And—and I promised her—and now she will never——" wailed Anne, in desperation.

Lawrence cut her short with an oath, and left the room.

Meanwhile, Gideon was making his way by train and trolley toward a most unlovely district, a quarter lying beyond Greenwood Cemetery, where Mrs. Lowe had told him Lawrence's baby daughter was to be found.

Roundabout were laughing, frolicing folk, youngsters gloating over Christ-

mas goodies, elders merry in the children's fun.

Nothing could have been farther from Gideon than the Christmas spirit of peace and good will supposed to rule all hearts on this day of days. His life had not been all cakes and ale. He had often felt lonely, for even an eel, supposed to have become used to skinning, may be allowed an occasional muscular pang, but now he would have given worlds to go back to the time when he had been really solitary—solitary, but with the assurance of an unblemished name.

Suddenly he realized that there was a block. The conductor resignedly got off the platform, and went forward to investigate. Some of the passengers, growing impatient, gathered themselves and their belongings together, and left the car. Gideon, who had no great holiday event to urge him on, sat by his window, unmoved, staring out at the halted traffic uncuriously. But, on a sudden, he started, stared, then stared again, into the window of a motor brougham that had been halted close by his car. In an instant he was upon his feet, almost running out of the trolley, signaling a passing taxicab.

"Follow that motor ahead there," he said authoritatively, "and I'll give you a Christmas gift worth having."

The chauffeur looked him over critically, decided in his favor, and opened the cab door.

The motor ahead being presently able to thread its way through slowly opening channels in the blockade, Gideon's cab followed at its heels like a palpable shadow. With a free road before it, the first car sped along at a smart pace, evidently trying to make up time, and Gideon's man put on power and followed, a close second.

Where they were going Gideon did not attempt to guess, but if he had, he would certainly have missed the truth.

Greenwood. They passed through the arched gateway, into the cemetery inclosure, beautiful even under the bleak December sky, along the deserted broad driveways, until, at a point where two roads parted, the motor stopped.

Gideon gave his man a warning sign. His cab speeded innocently on until it was well out of sight of the first. Then it stopped, and Gideon made his way back by side paths and no paths at all.

The occupant of the first car had evidently left it, but, as he waited, hidden behind a sheltering hedge, he saw the chauffeur gather up an armful of packages from the inner recesses of the brougham, and carry them beyond to a point hidden by shrubberies and intervening tree trunks. Gideon watched, and, the man having returned, stealthily made his way along the path the chauffeur had taken. It led to an ample plot, fenced in by low, granite posts, supporting a heavy copper rail. In one corner of the plot was a tiny mound, marking a baby's grave, and beside this mound a woman knelt.

She had placed a little Christmas tree upon the grave, and, as Gideon approached, she was decking it with gifts —not useless, meaningless trifles, but actual and costly gifts, things to make mothers rejoice and children laugh with glee. As she bent over her task he could see that she was crying, silently, piteously. He took a step forward. The dead leaves rattled under his feet. The bowed head lifted, and Lady Raveloe looked up. As her gaze met his, her eyes took on the slow, wide, wondering look of childhood. Her lips parted, and her breath came fast.

"Gideon!" she breathed.

He covered the space between them in a stride, he raised her to her feet.

"The ground is cold," he said admonishingly, and, lifting her fur from the ground, where it had fallen unheeded, he wrapped it clumsily about her.

A happy, sobbing breath escaped her.

"How like you, oh, how like you! I was always doing things you had to scold me for. Do it, do it, Gideon! Scold me! Anything, to go back to the dear days before I——" A violent trembling seized her. "Did you know my baby died?" She pointed to the little grave. "I've made a Christmas like this for him every Christmas since he died. I come over each year to do it. The

cemetery people know me, and they let me put the things on his grave. When I'm gone they take them away, I suppose, and give them"—her voice was bitter—"to happy, living babies. But I don't think of that. I can't."

"You would be happier if you could," Gideon said simply.

"I could not bear it," she cried.

"I wonder what motherhood really means," Gideon said, with awkward hesitation. "The Christ spirit wasn't born into the world to bless one child only, was it? But all children. Jesus didn't say, 'Let one child come unto me,' but all children. He did not die for the sake of one man, but all men. Your boy will be dead so long as you see him buried in this narrow grave. But when you look out on the broad world with love in your heart for every blessed mother's son in it, you will see your kiddie never really died at all. You will see him looking love at you from out of the eyes of every other youngster on the road. When *you* were a youngster—not so *very* long ago, either—up there, in the Northwest, before"—there was a quizzical gleam in his eyes—"before you got—*notions,* and went to England to be 'finished off,' and married an earl, like a storybook princess, to live——"

"*Un*happy ever after, Gideon. Oh, you don't know, but—he was cruel to me. That was why, after he died, I brought my baby over here. I wanted to bring him up to be—different from his father. To be like—the *good* men I had known at home. To be like—you."

Gideon winced, then hurried on:

"You used to love to trot along with me and 'help,' d'you remember? Well, you did help. And you can do it again. This morning I started out to find a forsaken little scrap, and bring it home where it belongs. Will you come with me?"

"Will I come?" Lady Raveloe's eyes were shining. She put out her hands. "Take me, Gideon. We mustn't waste a minute."

That night it was from her sheltered nest in Lady Raveloe's arms that Lawrence's baby girl looked out with wide, dazzled eyes upon the blazing Christmas tree. She would "go" to no other. How it happened was, and remained, a mystery to Mrs. Lowe and Anne, but when, after many days—that is to say, after a fortnight or so—Lawrence did his part toward making Anne's Christmas story come true, Queen Cophetua shook her beautiful head.

"Once upon a time I made a terrible mistake," she said. "I must not make another. If I ever marry again, it will be a man I've loved and honored since I was a child, only I was too foolish to know it, until it was too late. If I don't marry, it will be because he doesn't—ask me—again."

But, presumably, he did ask her "again," for when Gideon went back to the Northwest, he took his wife with him, and Lady Raveloe did not return to England. Instead she sent a telegram en route to Mrs. Lowe.

Forgive us for our foolish secrecy. Our Christmas story was too dear to tell aloud. I *know I* am happy, and I *hope he* is. Hebrews xi: 32.

Mrs. Lowe and Anne read the message together, but later, in shamefaced solitude, each flew to her Bible, wherein was written, Hebrews xi: 32: "And what shall I more say? For the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon."

THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S WIFE

Thomas Addison

DOWN the storm-swept side street Jack Decker—gambler, swindler, and finished crook—hurried toward the district attorney's house. His head was sunk in the collar of his raincoat, and he kept his umbrella lowered as an additional guard against chance recognition.

On the other side of the street, a block away, came Decker's "shadow," timing his distance from his "mark," keeping always just so far behind him. He was not the accepted shadow of fiction. He did not slink along, hugging the dark places and avoiding the glare of the spitting arc lamps; he carried a hand bag and held his umbrella well up, and he strode sturdily onward in the stinging sleet, like an honest citizen too frugal or too poor to pay for a cab.

Decker had appraised this man in one swift, backward glance. He knew that since his arrest and release on bail he was being watched by the district attorney's men, but he did not suspect the plodding chap behind him, and for the moment there was none other in sight. Decker thought he had given his shadow the slip. He had chosen this dismal night for its biting bleakness—even the alley cats, starving for a stray bit of garbage, were keeping cover in such weather. If ever he was free from espionage, it was now.

The gambler came to a certain small house, and, without pause, went up the steps. He looked neither to the right nor to the left as he did so; boldness alone was left to him. One of the vestibule doors stood open. He walked in, and, with rabbitlike rapidity, placed himself in the shelter of the other door. Here he waited, breathing hard. The man on the opposite side of the street did not slacken or quicken his pace. He plodded on past the house and rounded the corner below. To all appearance, he had not cast an eye in Decker's direction.

On the inner side of the house door, not twenty feet from Decker, the young wife of the district attorney was restlessly pacing up and down. The library shades were drawn, and the room was lighted only by the glow from the fire in the grate.

Back in the dining room, a few moments before, a clock had struck ten, and Jennie Floyd had jumped to her feet with a little cry of surprise. For two hours she had been sitting there, gazing into the fire. Subconsciously, she had been aware of the storm howling its spite against the windowpanes, but actively she was concerned only with the storm raging in her bosom. Now she had reached a decision—she had ceased to love her husband, and to live with him longer would be a crime. She would wait up until he came home, and tell him this. She would make no reproaches, no complaints. She would simply recite—very calmly and dispassionately—the history of their married life for the past three years, since he had wooed and won her in her Georgia home, and brought her North with him to live. He had penned her within four

brick walls, a girl accustomed to the free life of out-of-doors—to riding, shooting, fishing, all the sports of her brothers and their friends—and had left her spirit to beat its wings against prison bars of courteous indifference and polite neglect. He had sought only his own advancement, the while her love had slowly starved to death, and now lay stark and cold, awaiting the burial this night should give it.

Of course—she admitted it quite casually—Edgar provided for her generously, and was considerate of her comfort in many little unobtrusive ways; but these, she told herself, were things any man would do for his wife; they were ordinary incidents of the married estate. What Jennie Floyd craved—what in her heart she had bargained for—was an outpouring of spoken love, morning, noon, and night; and this she did not get. The trouble, as she summed it up, lay in the difference in their ages. He was thirty-six, and she was twenty-three! They had nothing in common—a great gulf of years rolled between them.

By now the storm outside had risen to a tempest. The sleet volleyed against the windows like discharges from a sand blast, and the wind hissed venomously in its wake. Mrs. Floyd stopped in her walk and listened to the uproar. She stood with her hand resting on the center table near the extension telephone, and it was in her mind to call up her husband. She knew he was at his office holding some sort of conference about this tiresome graft business the papers were full of, but it was absurd that such a thing should keep him there night after night. He could come home if he wanted to, only—so she argued—that was just what he did not want to do. Well, she would call him and tell him that something of greater importance than graft inquiries was awaiting his attention in his own house.

She was in the act of reaching out for the telephone when a sudden thought stayed her. Paul, her husband's brother, had been with her early in the evening, and had attached to the electrodes two fine, insulated wires. These he had twisted around the telephone cord, leading them down it, and off to a box that he had screwed to the under side of the table. This box contained a wax record of five thousand words' capacity, revolved by a noiseless mechanism. By turning a switch just beneath the overhang of the table, and pushing a little spring plug into the slot in which the receiver hook worked, the innocent-looking telephone could be cut off from its ordained functions, and transformed into a dictaphone. It was Paul's invention, and he wanted Edgar to try it out. If convinced of its utility, the district attorney could find valuable employment for the device in the labyrinthine examinations he was conducting in the graft cases.

Paul had shown Jennie how to operate the switch, and told her that the new mouthpiece he had fitted to the transmitter would pick up any ordinary conversation held within ten feet of it. It was the thought that she would record the talk she intended to have with her husband, here in the library, which had caused the girl to pause. It was something he could not get away from in the future; his own words—and hers—would sound forth to confute him.

She sat down at the table and examined the switch to see if it was set for the telephone proper. Finding it was, she took up the receiver, and it was at this moment that Jack Decker rang the doorbell.

Mrs. Floyd started slightly, and placed the receiver back on the hook. Who could it be at this hour? She was not frightened—she did not come of timorous stock—but she was alone in the house. Her maid was spending the night out, and her cook did not count; she had gone muttering to bed hours since, comfortably stupefied with a "guaranteed perfectly harmless" headache powder.

Again the electric bell shrilled out, this time impatiently—once, twice, thrice. Mrs. Floyd got up, and, crossing around the table, turned on the lights. It was Edgar, she decided. He had forgotten his key, though this was

something quite foreign to his precise order of mind. She composed her features into a glacial smile, and went to the hall door and opened it.

Decker stepped in abruptly. Mrs. Floyd drew back, and the gambler seized the door and closed it quickly behind him.

"I want to see Mr. Floyd," he explained smoothly.

Mrs. Floyd did not like the man's long, dead-white face, nor his narrow-set, dead-black eyes—eyes that seemingly saw nothing, yet saw everything. She drew away from him still farther.

"Mr. Floyd is not at home," she made answer coldly.

"I know it," agreed Decker. "I phoned downtown and found out. I'll wait for him."

He had removed his raincoat while saying this, and now he dropped it on the hall bench. His umbrella he had left in the vestibule.

"You will have to call again in the morning," said Mrs. Floyd haughtily. "My husband may not return until midnight, or later, and I am alone."

She bit her lip as this admission escaped her, but her eyes looked into his unafraid.

"I took a chance on that," said Decker coolly, "and to-morrow won't do. I've got to see Floyd to-night. It's a life-and-death matter to him—to him, you understand? Suppose we talk it over before he comes. To be plain, I'm thinking you can help me out a bit. Shall we go in?"

He motioned toward the library with a bow and a fine, long-fingered hand, white, and supple, and strong—in short, a magician's hand, a magician with the cards.

"Shall we go in?" he repeated, still urbanely, as Mrs. Floyd made no move. He was somewhat of a polished scoundrel, this Jack Decker, and could wear the air of a gentleman for ten minutes at a stretch, were his surroundings in tune with his designs. But Jennie Floyd saw lurking beneath this flimsy cloak of suavity a sinister intent, and her heart was throbbing in her throat.

"If it is as you say," she answered him presently, "of course I will hear you." She had managed to steady her voice, and her wits were never more alive and active. "My husband, as, perhaps, you know, is a man quite capable of taking care of himself," she added.

With this she led the way into the library. Decker, spying the telephone, instantly went around to that side of the table and took his seat by it. In the same moment it flashed upon the girl that here, with her in the room, was a silent witness to the interview, if she could but make use of it. And in the drawer of the table, just under Decker's hand, was a potent means of defense, should she need it. How was she to get the man from that side of the table to this, where she was standing?

As if in direct response to her question, the telephone rang. Repressing her eagerness, she made a movement toward it.

"If you will let me sit there——" she began—and got no farther.

"Stay where you are!" commanded Decker, throwing off his mask. "I'll have you play me no tricks with that phone. It may be Floyd, and I'm here to surprise him when he comes. Understand?"

The summons sounded again.

"Answer it yourself, then," retorted Mrs. Floyd spiritedly, "and don't speak to me in that way. You may regret it."

She sat down, facing him across the table. A red spot flamed in each cheek, and her blue eyes were dark with anger. The last vestige of fear had fled from her.

The bell began to ring continuously. Decker unbuttoned the upper part of his vest and slipped his right hand inside of it. With his left hand he shoved the telephone toward the district attorney's wife.

"Speak to whoever it is," he ordered sharply, "but cut it short. Say you're alone here—or——"

He ended by leveling a pistol at her, leaning over and thrusting out his arm until the muzzle of the weapon was not two feet from her breast. Jennie Floyd's lips wreathed themselves into a disdainful smile.

"You miserable coward!" she said, uttering the words clearly and calmly. The hammer of Decker's thirty-two clicked.

"If you betray me," he told her, "I'll pot you as I would a sparrow. Now go on."

Mrs. Floyd held the receiver to her ear, the withering smile still upon her lips.

"This is Mr. Floyd's house," she spoke into the phone. "Who is it, please?"

A voice so low and rapid that she could just make it out came to her. It was Decker's shadow talking.

"Pretend you are speaking to a woman friend," he cautioned. "I'm in your husband's employ—a detective."

"Oh, how nice, Mary!" exclaimed Mrs. Floyd. "I'll be charmed to go. I've heard so much about that play."

"It's Jack Decker, the gambler, who's with you," went on the shadow. "I followed him. Mr. Floyd is racing uptown by this, as fast as the bad going will let him."

"I'll wait for you—of course," returned Mrs. Floyd, "but do try to be on time, dear. Perhaps I'd better call for you. Shall I?"

"Cut it out," growled the gambler warningly. "I've no time to waste. Ring off on her."

While he was thus speaking, the shadow was saying: "I'll be standing at your door in three minutes, and I'll wait there till your husband comes. Don't be afraid of Decker. He knows better than to harm you, but if you should want me, scream and get to the door."

"Ring off, I say!" hissed Decker.

"Till to-morrow, then, Mary," said Mrs. Floyd sweetly. "Dreadful storm, isn't it? Growing worse every minute. What? No, Edgar isn't home yet, and I'm going to bed. Good night, dear."

Decker, bending far over, snatched up the telephone and put it down on his side of the table.

"I've a mind to cut the wire," he fumed, "but—oh, well, if it rings again we'll let it ring. They'll think you're in bed. Now, you listen to me, Mrs. Floyd. I'm going to put you next to the play I'm about to make. If you care for your husband, you'll copper my ace."

The blood pounded in the girl's temples until she felt it must be audible. Edgar's life was in peril, this man had hinted darkly—at his hands, no doubt, for he was armed and evil. She must find out what she could from him, and —oh!—she must get possession of the telephone and the table drawer! She must! She must!

"I am listening," she replied. "You spoke of danger to my husband. Is it from you it is to come, Jack Decker? Oh"—as he started—"don't be surprised. Your picture has been a favorite with the newspapers lately. It was stupid of me not to place you sooner."

Decker's black eyes glowered at her.

"All right, but I was going to tell you, anyway. Yes, I'm Jack Decker. Floyd wants me to do a long stretch up the road—ten years, by God! He is going to have me indicted by the grand jury, and I'll get mine, sure. Now, Floyd's got to put the brakes on, or he'll get his. It's come to a show-down right here to-night. Understand?"

"I am afraid I don't," objected Mrs. Floyd. "Suppose you explain yourself."

Her tone was conciliatory—persuasive, almost. Decker felt it, and unconsciously responded to it.

"It's this way," he said with alacrity: "Your husband was elected a year ago on the straight Democratic ticket, but what does he do when he gets into office but throw the boys down and begin nosing out the graft! Said his oath required it of him. Huh! He had notice a-plenty served on him that it wouldn't do, but he keeps on until at last he roots up a bunch of rotten bones, sure enough. There's been hell to pay ever since, and more than once Floyd has come near getting a pill in his punch bowl—shot up, you know," interpreted the gambler, seeing his listener's bewildered look.

"Oh," said Mrs. Floyd, very softly. "So they wanted to kill my husband. Has he known this right along?"

The other nodded curtly.

"They wanted to kill him for doing his plain duty—is that what you mean?" persisted Mrs. Floyd.

"Duty!" sneered Decker. "What call has he got to go nosing outside his own little dunghill—working overtime at it, too! His job is to try the cases the police fix up for him, and to keep hands off everything else. He's got me and a dozen others, and now he's turning the town inside out looking for the 'man higher up.' He's made such a holler that the Sunday-school boys talk of running him for governor."

"Well," gently inquired Jennie Floyd, "what do you yourself purpose doing about it?"

Her heart was thrilling in her bosom —singing—at the picture of her husband which the gambler, in ravening scorn, had drawn for her. Ah, now she understood him, now she saw the true spirit of the man she had wedded—serene, strong, fearless! And lonely! It was she who had been selfish, seeking only her own ends. She had walked with him but in the flesh. She had asked of him only things material. Not once had she tried to attune her soul to his. She had let him struggle on without the comfort and encouragement of her spiritual presence.

Her eyes grew misty and ashamed as she dwelt on this, and a great longing laid hold on her to cry to her husband for forgiveness and to pour out on his breast the love she bore him, kindled now into a pure and sacred flame.

"What am I going to do about it?" spoke up Decker, who had paused at the question. "There are three things I can do. Floyd will let me off if I squeal on the boss; but that would mean 'no flowers' for me in twenty-four hours. Not on your life!"

"And the other two?" urged Mrs. Floyd, busy with a sudden thought.

"I can kill Floyd to-night and get thanked for it—and a pardon later on."

"And the third thing?" Mrs. Floyd's head was lowered, and Decker could not see the fierce light burning in her eyes.

"Why, that's the sensible one, and I'm counting on you to help me pull it off. Floyd is a poor man, and he lost heavily in the Brandon Bank failure. You know that, of course?"

"No," breathed the girl. "He—he spared me that."

"It put his back to the wall, all right," said Decker cheerfully, "and if he isn't a total damn fool we can reach him."

"Yes? How?" Mrs. Floyd's voice was but just above a whisper.

"I got twenty thousand dollars in my pocket that Floyd can have if he'll let up on me; and if that ain't easy money—and no one the wiser—I'll never eat again," was the gambler's reply. "What do you say?"

"You will kill him if he doesn't take it?"

"I'll kill him as dead as a mack'rel. I'll have the drop on him when he comes in. See? What do you say?"

Jennie's head sank lower still.

"I—I will see that he takes it."

Decker could scarcely catch the words.

"What's wrong with you?" he demanded, rising to his feet.

"Water—in there!" Mrs. Floyd motioned feebly with her hand to the dining room, and then her head fell over on her shoulder.

"Fainted!" ejaculated the gambler, and followed it with a shocking oath, as he strode into the other room.

When the portières had dropped behind him, Mrs. Floyd sprang up and passed softly around the table. She eased the drawer open, and took from it a Savage automatic. Then she waited for Decker to reappear. She could hear him at the ice pitcher, fussing among the glasses.

A moment later, Decker parted the curtains. He made one forward step, and pulled up short. Mrs. Floyd's elbow was resting on the table, and the Savage was trained full on him. The blue eyes back of it blazed into his.

"Don't move!" The charge rang out poisonously clear.

Decker, his face a bluish white, froze to the floor; but his heart was as jelly, and the glass he carried shook in his hand.

"The clip is full," Mrs. Floyd in-

formed him evenly. "I have eleven shots in all, but I shall waste one of them to prove to you I am mistress of this weapon. I am going to break that glass; do you prefer to have me do it as you stand, or——"

Decker hastily held out the glass at arm's length. It wavered so that the water spilled from it.

"You seem to be somewhat disturbed," observed Mrs. Floyd tranquilly. "You offer me an indifferent mark."

Even as she spoke, she was thinking of the man outside and wondering whether he would hear the shot. It was not a part of her plan to be interrupted now. She decided that the force of the storm would drown any noise from within—and with this she fired.

The glass disappeared—scattering in a rain of jagged crystals. It might have been a conjurer's trick, so neatly was it done. Decker staggered back with an affrighted cry.

"Hold up your hands—quick!" The command came almost simultaneously with the shot, and the gambler, his knees knocking together, complied. "Now take the seat opposite me."

Decker walked over to the chair Mrs. Floyd had just vacated, and lowered himself into it.

"Lay your hands on the table full length before you," decreed the girl. "So."

"What are you going to do?" choked out the man from between drawn lips.

Jennie had set the switch beneath the table, and now, as if in thought, she carelessly fingered the telephone; but as she did so, she pressed the plug into place under the receiver, thus opening the connection with the record in the box below.

"Unless you instantly obey me," she answered Decker measuredly, "I shall shoot you straight between the eyes; in other words—your own—kill you as dead as a mackerel. I will not only be thanked for it, but there will be no question of a pardon. You forced your way into my house—insulted me—threatened my husband with death—threatened me at the pistol's point. To kill you would be justifiable homicide, and a riddance of excessively bad rubbish. Have I succeeded in making myself understood?"

Mrs. Floyd put the question with ironical politeness, and it struck the last dart of fear into the gambler's vitals. Rage, fury, any passionate outburst, he could understand in a woman—his kind of woman; but this cold, calculating, unemotional poise baffled him.

"You've got me," he managed to articulate hoarsely. "What do you want me to do?"

"Hand over your revolver. Move carefully—slowly. Bring it out butt foremost, and lay it down. Between the eyes—remember!"

Decker brought forth his gun as directed, looking the while fearfully into the black snout of the automatic.

"Push it over to me," was the injunction. "Slowly—slowly! Now, hand over the twenty thousand dollars you thought to buy my husband with."

Decker hesitated the fraction of a second. The whiplike crack of the Savage sounded, and the ball spat its warning in Decker's ear as it whizzed by and pinged into the mantelpiece.

"Just a reminder," remarked Mrs. Floyd pleasantly. "The next time——"

A wad of twenty yellowbacks was tossed on the table, and Decker collapsed into his chair, great beads of cold sweat bursting from every pore.

"Sit up! Put your hands out!" The mandate was merciless. "I am going to ask you a question. Answer it truthfully, and I will let you go. Do you suppose"—Mrs. Floyd smiled cruelly—"you can tell the truth, or am I asking an impossible thing of you?"

Decker had straightened up with a painful effort. The fingers of his fine, white hands quivered as they lay in front of him. If he could but twine them about the firm, beautifully rounded throat of this woman! But his hands were powerless, strong and ready though they were. He was in the face of sudden death; he could see it in the cold, hard eyes searching him over the stubby barrel of the automatic.

"You said," continued Mrs. Floyd,

deeming an answer to her question superfluous, "my husband was hunting for 'the man higher up.' By this I presume you mean the one who gets the lion's share of the graft—the one who shelters and protects the others. Is it so? Speak out!"

"Yes," said Decker.

"I see. If my husband could find this man—could lay hands on him and punish him—it would be a great thing for the city, and a great thing for him. Well, who is he? Tell me his name?"

"My life won't be worth a cent if I do!" cried the gambler. "He will have me killed!"

Mrs. Floyd stirred a little. It seemed to Decker that the pistol grew larger—that it was coming nearer to him—that it was on the needle point of spouting flame.

"For God's sake—don't shoot!" he begged in an agony of terror. "I'll tell you straight. It—it's——" He blurted out the name.

"The proof."

"Ask Inspector Hennesey, or Captain Ray, of the Tenth. Tell them I put you wise—Jack Decker. They know I've got the goods on him, on all of them. Damn them! They'll kill me if I squeal, and they'll let Floyd railroad me to the pen if I don't. I'm done for either way!"

Decker's voice had risen to a scream. The man was beside himself, scourged by two dreadful fears—the one he was facing now, and the one he must face on the morrow. He beat upon the table with his outstretched hands, and his teeth showed in the frightened grin of a trapped animal. Jennie Floyd sickened at the sight of him. She felt for the switch under the table, and closed it.

"Go!" she said. "Take the money, and hide yourself somewhere in a foreign land—if you think your life is worth the saving."

Decker did not move from his chair; he merely drew in his hands.

"You mean you're not going to keep me here until Floyd comes? You're not going to make me repeat to him what I've told you?"

Reading his purpose—to deny his words—Mrs. Floyd's loathing for the creature grew insupportable.

"It is not necessary to repeat it," she answered him wearily. "Every word you have uttered is recorded. Now—go!"

Still Decker did not heed her bidding. The ebb tide of his courage had ceased. From low water it was beginning to flow back to him. He sneered at her openly.

"There's no one else here, and you know it," he scoffed. "If there was, those pistol shots would have brought 'em running. You're lying to me."

But even as he scowled at her across the table, he saw a glad light leap into her eyes. Her lips parted, and her breath came in little gasps. The Savage faltered from its steady bead on him, lowered slowly, and dropped from her hand.

Decker half turned toward the door, and then his head seemed to split asunder, and he rolled unconscious to the floor. Floyd had let himself noiselessly into the house, and had heard the lie given to his wife. He had broken two knuckles of his right hand, and did not know it.

"Jennie! You little girl!"

There were choking sobs in the man's throat as he crushed the slim form to his breast and showered kisses on hair, lips, eyes—crying out in the language only love knows.

The "shadow," standing in the doorway fingering a pair of bracelets, drew back into the hall. Decker was safe from his attentions—quite so—for at least five minutes. Presently he heard the district attorney say:

"The unspeakable scoundrel! I'll put him away for twenty years; it's worse than hanging."

And then the shadow heard the happy voice of the district attorney's wife reply:

"Let him off with ten, Edgar—five—nothing. He 'squealed' to me. It is all here in Paul's dictaphone."

The shadow grinned to himself.

"You can shoot me," he protested to the hall lamp, "if she hasn't made him governor of the State!"

TO those—the legions—who love the theater primarily for the charm with which it entertains them—and the theater's charm is like no other—the signs of this season are most welcome. David Belasco voiced the signs in a statement recently when he said:

"The day of the costume-romance play is here again. The people are beginning to want again that which graces the drama and charms the eye."

The romance periods of history are so called by us because there have been brilliant writers in both literature and drama who have seen history romantically, and transcribed it thus for their generation. Their works have lived, been revived from generation to generation, because whatever history may do externally, romance remains internally the interpreter of it to every son and daughter of the nation. We have brief periods of so-called realism—that is, the picturing of externals, actualities, without the spirit which—in real life—gives them birth, and which they only image. Here in America we have been going through rather a tough siege of this sort of realism, when we were told that a play was a slice of life if the policeman's uniform was exact, and if the telephone had a real number on it. If we could hear the noise of an elevator off stage, it was real art. Our plays were expert journalism, headlines and all.

Sometimes writers on theatrical topics hold what sound like extreme opinions to those whose interest in the theater is less keen, who are less analytically observant. It is the extreme opinion of this writer that Israel Zangwill's "Melting Pot" and Edward Sheldon's "Salvation Nell" dealt the first and heaviest blows at the false "realism" of American drama, and really pioneered the way for the romance realism which is even now pushing its way into most of our theaters.

These two plays were as photographically realistic, as actual in external things of setting and the presentment of the characters' outward appearance, as uncompromising with street-corner facts as any that had preceded them. But, over the street corner, they hung lights of the pure sky. Behind the carefully photographed faces there glowed the human spirit. There was tenderness and heart's adventure, fire, imagination, romance—*always romance*—in the two men who wrote these plays. The one man, our own Edward Sheldon, not yet at his twenty-fifth milestone on the year track; and Zangwill, the philosopher, settled in years and experience, but meeting the American hand to hand and face to face, even as they both met us, the public, on that one immense common ground—Romance.

From that time the theater has been conscious that its populace was demanding beauty; and the tendency has been steadily toward the costume romance.

The eye welcomes the color and contour of plumes and polonaise. It delights in the grace of body which the costume play demands, in the delicacy and ease of manner, and in the lively and hazardous customs of the romance periods. So here we are, in this season of 1912-1913, caroling lyrically of love in brocades and powder, in most of the big theaters of our cities.

In "Milestones," Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblauch have shown us three periods; the last is practically our own. It is amusing to note that we all sigh a trifle when we reach that last act. We wish that the quaintness of 1830 had remained with us. The crinoline and the bustle we could forego; but we would be willing now to give up some of our 1912 "wiseness"—not wisdom—for the naïveté of the generation which could look upon a bustle as an object both elegant and refined.

"Milestones," in its story, deals with the building of ships. It opens in the day of wooden vessels, and the women are seen in the curious garbs, dainty withal, that our grandmothers wore when they were girls, and sat about sedately until Sir Youth Eligible came to woo, and paterfamilias said: "Yes, daughter, you may."

The first thing to be said about the "story" of "Milestones" is that there is practically no story at all. There is just one little incidental story which is repeated in each act. In Act I., *John Rhead,* a young and very progressive member of a shipbuilding firm, is weaned from the stable old wooden hull to the Kitingwild notion of iron bottoms. He pours forth his enthusiasm to the head of the firm, whose daughter is to be *John's* wife. The stout and doughty old builder of "hearts of oak" is flabbergasted, enraged, contemptuous, by turns and all at once. He tries to dissuade the young madman by every means in his power, including: "I forbid the banns." The notion of iron ships is preposterous. Iron sinks. The boy is insane. Lock him up. But no; the young man breaks all traditions at once. He leaves the wooden hull for the iron, which will swim round the world if his labor can make money enough to pay tolls to the keeper of the ports in every sea upon the globe. And he will take his sweetheart, despite all the thunders of her father—and fathers *could* thunder in the early nineteenth century. So the two poor, mad things leave the parental roof, to sink or swim with iron.

John's sister, *Gertrude,* and her lover, the son of the wooden defender, are obedient to their elders. They take the opposite course—as ordered, they part. Poor things; nothing goes very well with them after that. The day of wooden hulls and wooden-headed subservience was really and forever over, but they did not know it. *Gertrude* never marries. The pressed-lavender odor of her unlived romance delicately perfumes all the after scenes of the play. The authors would seem to be exponents of the oft-broached theory that it is better to marry once for love, "come what come may," than to renounce for any reason whatsoever. Any hazard for love, rather than the most serene spinsterhood.

This story is repeated in two later periods, as shipbuilding reaches its improved stages, and the descendants of *John Rhead* go through the same tragedies that marked his progress from wood to iron. Other shipbuilders rise up; men who dream in copper, men who see truths of steel. And the ships of iron are left tossing like derelicts on a sea of ancient beliefs. Forgotten ships, ships that pass in the night, iron and wood alike they pass with the theories and the convictions and the laws of the men who builded them; but maids love, and leave their fathers, just the same.

Steam begins to puff upon the horizon, and the ocean greyhound leaps from continent to continent, and the great Forward Wind blows new sails down the channel of the centuries.

The staging of the play is an unmitigated joy. Each period is faultlessly presented in its settings. The detail of the scenes is admirable. The whole is combined to give one the atmosphere of the period in a way that

leaves no room for question. You accept what is given you the moment the curtain rises. Excellently presented, also, are the manners and feelings of each period. The acting is excellent, too; it must be. If it were not, the staging would fail to hold the audience in the spell which it creates so well at the rise of each curtain. There is no star, no featured player, in the aggregation. The feature and the star is the play, and it is the play that draws and holds and delights and keeps all the tea parties and club lobbies full of discussive chatter. It is playing at the Liberty in New York, and the Blackstone in Chicago. It was brought to America by Klaw & Erlanger, and is done by two English companies.

Mr. Belasco has another of his chronic successes in his production of "The Governor's Lady," by Alice Bradley, a new writer. The play is a simple and rather sentimental affair, but it has taken hold of the public. The acting of Emma Dunn is generally considered its best feature.

Miss Annie Russell, always a charming comedienne of the refinedly sprightly type, has associated some talented players with her in an adventure into early English romance at the Thirty-ninth Street Theater. Her first production is "She Stoops to Conquer." George Giddings, the famous English *Tony Lumpkin,* plays that rôle in Miss Russell's company; and Frank Reicher is the *Marlowe.* Mr. Reicher will play *Benedict* to Miss Russell's *Beatrice* later on, ere Winthrop Ames presents him in a comedy specially selected for him, which will open the new Ames theater, the Gotham. The old English comedy season is backed by a subscription list, on which are the most important society names in New York—not merely names of smart folk, but of those who make their standing mean something worth while to the community.

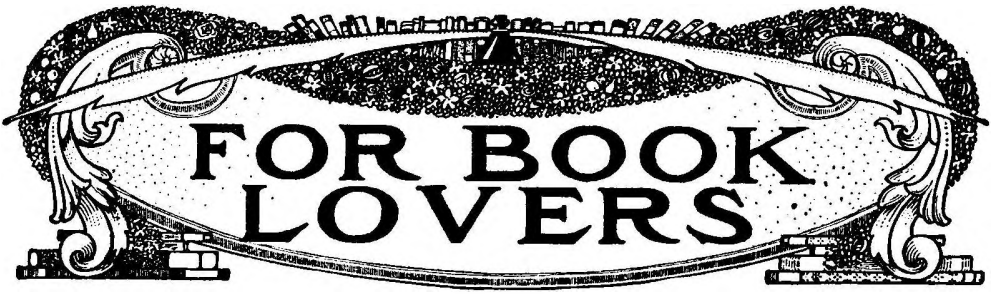
The Little Theater opened its second season with Schnitzler's comedy-satire, "The Affairs of Anatol," with John Barrymore playing *Anatol.* The cast includes Doris Keane, Marguerite Clarke, Gail Kane, Katharine Emmett, and Isabel Lee, and a sound and thorough performance by Oswald Yorke, as the friend and confidant of *Anatol.* Mr. Ames did such a noble thing last year in presenting "The Pigeon" and "The Terrible Meek," and his little house is so cozy and beautiful that the press was inclined to be very lenient to his mistakes this season. *Anatol* is a character which might have been brilliantly played by Frank Reicher, the only actor at present in New York who could have presented the subtleties of this egotist, who is pseudo-everything, in every degree of art and mind, a sensualist of the kind they can write and act and discuss openly abroad without self-consciousness; the shallow male butterfly, always the dupe of his conceit. Mansfield could have played the part. It needs the technique of a Mansfield to achieve the needed variety in these "affairs" which are so similar; it requires the profundity of an artist to be entertainingly, deftly, chameleonly shallow. Without these traits, the part becomes an awful bore, both tedious and common.

In "The Daughter of Heaven," Liebler & Co. have given the stage a new thrill. It is not a thrill of drama, and was not designed to be so. It is a thrill of spectacle and color; great pageants of harmonized tints sweep by continually. Picture after picture of beautiful or dramatic moment—sometimes both—goes across the enormous stage of the Century Theater, and impresses its color upon the spectator until his brain reels delightfully. The romance idea is worked out atmospherically rather than through the lines and the action. The spectacle is so sumptuous, so majestic, indeed, that it inspired the dean of critics, William Winter, to write an open letter to George Tyler, manager of Liebler & Co., expressing his appreciation of the production, and saying that he has seen nothing to equal it in all his years of theatergoing! This means much, for Mr. Winter is not inclined to show any sympathy at all with the modern manager's efforts to dazzle the populace. Nothing but Mr. Win-

ter's conviction and desire to do justice could have extracted such a letter from him.

Mr. Tyler has a knack of bringing interesting players into the limelight of the "effete East" Manhattan. He does not always or often retain them under his management; it does not seem to be his object to overload Liebler & Co. with stars. Rather, he finds the man or woman for his momentary need, presents this individual as carefully as possible in a special production, and then leaves the player's destiny in his own hands. To Mr. Tyler America owes Zangwill's "Melting Pot" and Whiteside's *Quixano,* which combined into one of the chief inspirations for a revival, or rebirth, of idealistic drama. To Mr. Tyler we owe the presence of Lewis Waller, England's foremost romantic actor, who has given us a taste of his quality in "Beaucaire" and "Henry V." Mr. Tyler brought Mr. Waller over to play the lead in "The Garden of Allah." People who saw that desert drama-spectacle divided their enthusiasm between the pictures and the superb reading—in both diction and interpretation—which Mr. Waller gave to the rôle he played. In a repertoire of his romance successes, Mr. Waller is now touring the larger cities. There is no actor who so well understands the graces of the drama, or who can so exquisitely and at the same time so forcefully visualize them. He has those qualities as an actor which the costume-romance demands, a dignity tempered with charm, a spirited, vigorous method mellowed with the humors and graces and varied mental hues of the fine actor of experience who is sure of himself and of his aim, and that fine temperamental adaptability to the romance feeling of any period which makes him appear not merely the star of his company—that is plainly never his concern in the least—but the dominating figure in the play; and he can do this as perfectly when he listens, or waits silent, as when he speaks or duels the villain into the Styx. It is always the "center of the stage" where Waller is standing, but he never seeks that spot. There is an amusing anecdote told of Mr. Waller when he first played *Henry V.* in London. It is told by an actor who knows him well and affectionately. It seems that Mr. Waller is so generous in his treatment of his associates in the matter of letting them win for themselves all the applause that they can, that he is frequently imposed upon by players whose spirit is less large than his, and who do not enjoy Mr. Waller's success as he enjoys theirs. The actor whose rôle was most prominent next to Mr. Waller's in one of *Prince Hal's* biggest moments, cleverly contrived to work up stage, so that when the great scene developed he was facing the audience, and Mr. Waller was squarely placed with his back to the audience. Not once through the whole act was Waller's face seen. As the actor who tells the story says: "The amusing thing is that Waller never noticed it—and neither did the audience. Waller was all they saw, and they didn't know it was only the back of his head they had been looking at, for his reading, his postures and gestures, his voice, had made them *see Prince Henry.* They never saw the other fellow at all!"

Liebler & Co. are at present much interested in the talents of Madame Simone, the French actress of note, whom they introduced to Broadway last season in a Bernstein repertoire, relieved by one wonderful week of Rostand. The poet, the romancer, is always the final victor. Remarkable as Simone's performance in "The Whirlwind" was, the play is forgotten; but Rostand's "Lady of Dreams"—*Princesse Lointaine*—lives vividly in one's memory, not a little because of the noble and intensely sympathetic mounting it received. This season Mr. Tyler is presenting Madame Simone in "The Paper Chase," by Louis Napoleon Parker, author of Liebler & Co.'s two other great romance hits—"Pomander Walk" and "Disraeli." Madame Simone will tour in Parker's play. We can all open our eyes suddenly, and discover delightedly, as did the philosopher: "The Age of Romance—it is always here!"



"MARRIAGE" is the title of the latest novel of H. G. Wells, published by Duffield & Co. The publishers call it "the most popular and far-reaching piece of fiction Mr. Wells has done"; but publishers' characterizations of the books they print are not, as a rule, addressed to the discriminating mind.

If it had been said that Mr. Wells had presented a most searching and minute, and withal faithful, analysis of modern problems growing out of the institution of marriage, a more correct idea of the book would have been given. It might also have been said with entire truth that Mr. Wells has again demonstrated his extraordinary ability to handle a big theme in a big way, and to present details always in their necessary relation to the central idea.

Trafford and Marjorie Pope, the husband and wife of this story of marriage, are made to illustrate the influences, mainly psychological, which tend to separate two individuals who are by nature fitted to each other. They gradually drift apart because of Marjorie's mistaken conception of their common interests. Trafford is a man of intellectual tastes and ambitions, and when he, almost in spite of himself, becomes a rich man, his wife sees in the opportunities that wealth brings only the means for attaining worldly position, and she pursues that ideal to the exclusion of everything else.

When Trafford reaches the point where he is unable to endure it any longer, he plans a trip to Labrador, and Marjorie insists upon going with him. There they get back to primitive conditions by means of which, through sickness, privation, and almost starvation, they achieve a readjustment of their relations, and find, as they think, a foundation on a spiritual and intellectual basis.

There Mr. Wells leaves them—a rather unsatisfactory conclusion unless he intends in another book to show how they applied their newly discovered principles to the problems of their London life.

H. F. Prevost Battersby has written a good many stories for AINSLEE'S, most of them under the name of Francis Prevost, which have always ranked very high in the magazine's fiction.

A new novel by him, therefore, is an event which will make a special appeal to the readers of AINSLEE'S. The John Lane Company has just published one by him, entitled "The Last Resort." In theme it is not unlike "The Siege of Sar," which appeared in these pages as a complete novel about nine years ago, and which is still referred to as nearly the best piece of fiction he has done.

Mark Sarrol is the hero of this new book. He is the type of man that England selects to take care of her interests abroad—the man who in the prosecution of his work has apparently a single idea—his duty to the old country. Sarrol is as jealous of his country's honor as of her material interests. Placed in control of a savage region on the borders of the Gulf of Aden, he had, under the authority of Downing Street, pledged to the natives the protection of the British government.

The story is the account of how he

struggled to redeem that pledge in the face of the indifference and double dealing of the officials in London.

He goes to London to make a plea for the means to complete the work intrusted to him, and this gives Mr. Battersby a chance to present a picture of the petty intriguing of official life in the English capital and the complication of social and political interests. He finds that he must use a woman's influence even to secure a hearing.

A couple of love stories run through the plot, and there is a good deal of exciting adventure after he returns to his post. The characters of Laura Burgoyne and her brother Armyn, and of Miriam Court, are attractive, because they are so vital, and add enormously to the interest in Mark Sarrol himself.

"The Tempting of Tavernake," published by Little, Brown & Co., is E. Phillips Oppenheim's latest novel. and, being his, it is, of course, a well-told story, though it is hardly up to his high standard in point of interest. Unlike most of his stories, it gives one the impression that the author found, after beginning it, that his conception contained too little material.

Leonard Tavernake is a young man of peculiar quality—or, rather, he is peculiar because he seems to be lacking absolutely in the quality of emotion which makes men and women human. Apparently he is ignorant of everything in life except the one idea of material success. Two women come into his life, but for a time he is utterly oblivious of the fact of sex. For some obscure reason, presumably pity, Beatrice Franklin interests him, and he goes so far as to take her under his protection and to provide a home for her, where they live together as brother and sister.

It is left for Mrs. Wenham Gardner, however, to stir any emotion in him, and she does so at last only by her determination to do so.

The story is concerned with Tavernake's gradual progress toward the success he seeks so tenaciously and his wavering between these two women.

Neither the plot nor the characterization is very convincing, and yet Mr. Oppenheim manages, as he always does, to hold a degree, at least, of the reader's interest.

The John Lane Company has published another of Eden Phillpotts' Dartmoor stories, "The Forest on the Hill."

The novel differs in no essential details from any of Mr. Phillpotts' other tales of Devonshire. The author's own love of Dartmoor and his sympathetic understanding of the people who live there, his descriptions of the beauties of the moor never fail to impart a vitality to his stories which is so often lacking in the work of other novelists. So far as type and ink and paper can express the realities of life they do so in "The Forest on the Hill."

The tale is taken up with the vicissitudes in the love story of Timothy Snow and Drusilla Whyddon. These two young people, especially Timothy, are of the rather somber, puritanical type which, if we are to believe Mr. Phillpotts, is prevalent in Dartmoor. If their affairs had not been complicated by the plans of old Lot Snow, Timothy's uncle, for his nephew, and by the murder of the old man by John Redstone, the book might make a pleasanter impression on the reader, and might also have had a happier outcome.

But Mr. Phillpotts never makes any concessions to publishers' conventionalities. He chooses his own theme and setting and characters, and follows their development to their inevitable conclusion.

"My Lady's Garter" is announced by Rand, McNally & Co. as Jacques Futrelle's last novel.

It is, like Mr. Futrelle's best work in the past, a mystery story, its complications growing out of the theft from the British Museum of the famous garter of the Countess of Salisbury—the particular one which was the occasion

of the remark by his majesty, King Edward III. We learn also from Mr. Futrelle's story that it was the lady's left garter.

The craze for collecting that obsesses our American millionaires prompted some enterprising individual whose identity is not disclosed in the book to remove this interesting relic and pass it over to a well-known New York "fence" named Daddy Heinz, who apparently had had dealings with Mr. Brokaw Hamilton. The latter, however, becoming alarmed at the stir caused by the theft, undertook to return it surreptitiously to the museum. And here comes another interesting character, known as The Hawk, an accomplished burglar. Merely by chance, he happens to make a haul, not only of the garter but of a valuable collection of jewels belonging to Hamilton's daughter Helen.

The New York police department, personified in Detective Meredith, takes up the chase of The Hawk. Into this are drawn another millionaire, John Gaunt; "Skeets," his son; Helen Hamilton, and a mysterious young man known as Bruce Colquhoun, who runs a motor boat.

All this furnishes material for a series of exciting adventures, not only in New York, but in the neighborhood of Cape Cod and its adjacent waters.

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After a considerable interval, another book by Charles Egbert Craddock is published by the J. B. Lippincott Company under the title of "The Raid of the Guerilla."

It is a collection of stories—ten in number—the scenes of which are laid in the Great Smoky Mountains of Tennessee.

The first of them, from which the book takes its name, is a story of the Civil War period, and is by all odds the best of the collection, considered simply as a story.

The others are important inasmuch as they give a very vivid presentation of the characters, manners, customs, and environment of the white population of the Tennessee mountains, their interest being, in fact, ethnological rather than fictional.

It needs no special acquaintance with these people, nor with the region, to realize that Miss Murfree's accounts of them have always been true to nature. Her stories carry conviction with them, and those readers who are primarily interested in true pictures of life will welcome these stories as heartily as they did "The Prophet of the Great Smoky Mountains."

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Important New Books.

"As Cæsar's Wife," Margarita Spalding Gerry, Harper & Bros.

"Don't Give Up the Ship," Charles S. Wood, Macmillan Co.

"Smoke Bellew," Jack London, Century Co.

"Mr. Achilles," Jeanette Lee, Dodd, Mead & Co.

"George Helm," David Graham Phillips, D. Appleton & Co.

"For Love of Mary Ellen," Eleanor Hoyt Brainard, Harper & Bros.

"The Rich Mrs. Burgoyne," Kathleen Norris, Macmillan Co.

"Her Soul and Her Body," Louise Closser Hale, Moffat, Yard & Co.

"With the Merry Austrians," Amy McLaren, G. P. Putnam's Sons.

"Whippin," Frederick Orrin Bartlett, Small, Maynard & Co.

"The Voice," Margaret Deland, Harper & Bros.

"Clara," A. Neil Lyons, John Lane Co.

"Mrs. Ames," E. F. Benson, Doubleday, Page & Co.

"Less Than Dust," M. A. Hamilton, Houghton, Mifflin & Co.

"The Yates Pride," Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Harper & Bros.

Talks With Ainslee's Readers

MERRY CHRISTMAS! We trust that this number of AINSLEE'S will have some slight share in making it one. If Marion Hill's story of "The Common Children," or Wells Hastings' tale of "A Conscript Saint," or any of the rest of them, adds even one mite to your feeling of the spirit of Christmas, then we will have had the good fortune to have given you something finer than any present that money can buy—something that can never be broken or lost or taken away from you; something more real and significant than any of the things that can.

But whether we have anything to do with it or not—a Merry Christmas to you!

WITH this number AINSLEE'S will have completed its fifteenth year. Not a great age, to be sure, even when we consider the many magazines that have come and gone, or changed their forms and names in that short time; but long enough to convince us that we were right in believing that there was a real demand for a magazine that would provide sprightly entertainment for cultured American readers.

From its beginning AINSLEE'S has aimed to present to its public the most entertaining fiction obtainable. In its very first year it published stories by Bret Harte, Anthony Hope, A. Conan Doyle, Opie Read, and Stanley J. Weyman.

These distinguished contributors did more than build up our circulation; they attracted a host of younger writers, little known, who were eager to associate themselves with such brilliant company. Theodore Dreiser, the novelist, was one of these; Jack London brought us many of his early tales of Alaska; the late O. Henry and Joseph C. Lincoln were AINSLEE'S discoveries, and we were the first magazine in this country to print work from the pens of William J. Locke, F. Prevost Battersby, and Jeffery Farnol. This is but a partial list of the names that led a friend to say: "The great writers of to-morrow are appearing in AINSLEE'S to-day."

But we did not let our good fortune in developing our own writers blind our eyes to the work of those who had already achieved fame. Many of you will recall E. W. Hornung's brilliant novelette, "No Hero," Kate Jordan's fascinating "Time the Comedian," or some of the particularly appealing stories by Eleanor Hallowell Abbott, Richard Washburn Child, Agnes and Egerton Castle, Holman F. Day, Jacques Futrelle, May Futrelle, Parker H. Fillmore, Mrs. Burton Harrison, Marion Hill, Emerson Hough, Robert Hichens, Wells Hastings, Will Irwin, Leonard Merrick, George Barr McCutcheon, Harold MacGrath, Lloyd Osbourne, Emily Post, Edgar Saltus, F. Berkeley Smith, E. Temple Thurston, Baroness von Hutton, Marie Van Vorst, Mrs. Wilson Woodrow, Edith Wharton, Harry Leon Wilson, and others of equal prominence.

In short we have tried to let no good story slip away from us because its writer is without fame; and we have tried to let no undeserving story sneak into our pages while we were dazzled by the brilliance of its author's reputation. Possibly we have made many mistakes; we know we have made a few. We think, however, that we may take the steadily increasing number of our friends as proof that we have in the main been successful.

THE February AINSLEE'S will be our birthday number. With it we hope to show you that we are able, because of our experience of the past fifteen years, to give you a brighter, stronger, more evenly balanced magazine of entertainment than ever before.

For the complete novel we have secured a new story by Elinor Glyn, whose remarkable successes, including "The Visits of Elizabeth," "Three Weeks," and "His Hour," have made her name one of the most widely known in the book world to-day.

"The Point of View," as this latest novel is called, is the romance of an English girl who has become engaged to a young high-church clergyman, more to please her typically British uncle and aunt than because of any real love on her part. Her unconventional meeting in Rome with a Russian nobleman of striking personality, and his subsequent wooing, open her eyes to the situation in which she has been placed. The ensuing complications and developments are bound to hold the reader's attention to the very end. It is a remarkable character portrayal.

IT is fitting that Marie Van Vorst, whose brilliant work has been so closely identified with "the magazine that entertains" for the last eight years, should contribute to this birthday number of ours. "Seven Fridays" is the tale of the interwoven love stories of a young New York heiress and a poor old Irish scrubwoman. That the tale is founded on fact probably accounts for a slight improbability of plot. It is told with rare appeal.

Do you remember "Puss in a Corner" and "The Green Bottle," fascinating mystery stories of society, in our October and November numbers? May Futrelle, their author, learned from her husband the art of writing mystery tales. Analysis of her stories discloses the same plan for keeping action awhirl that characterized the work of the late Jacques Futrelle. Each plot presents a mystery within a mystery; before the reader's interest in the first one has had time to lag his attention is whisked over to the second; the solution of one mystery is made dependent upon the solution of the other, so that when the end comes everything is wound up with surprising suddenness and completeness. To this soundness of plot construction, Mrs. Futrelle has added a sparkle and vivacity of style all her own. You will find "The Yellow Diamond Pendant," in the February AINSLEE'S, one of her best.

Anna Alice Chapin's "Woman With a Past," Pippa Carpenter, brings to the February number her third experience, "A Matter of Standard," in which she makes the same tender appeal to our sympathies that she does in "The Edge of the Wilderness," in this present AINSLEE'S.

"The Shanghaied Cherub," by Joseph Ernest; "The Beast," a colorful detective tale by F. Berkeley Smith, and characteristic stories by Nina Wilcox Putnam, Thomas P. Byron, Marie Conway Oemler, Constance Skinner, and Thomas Addison, complete an unusually entertaining collection of fiction.

EDGAR SALTUS recently asked us if AINSLEE'S cared for essays. We were under the impression that we did not. Whereupon Mr. Saltus sent us a brilliant paper upon "The Mystery of Charm," which very delightfully proved to us that we do care for essays. In writing of the art of pleasing, which Mr. Saltus so well understands, he tells us:

"Whether you like it or not you must be happy. Nothing except disease and genius can hinder you more than melancholy airs. If you wish people to welcome you, get them to tell you their troubles. If you wish them to avoid you, tell them your own. Better still, do not have any. . . . His (Whistler's) creditors offered to accept thirteen and six in the pound. Whistler refused. They offered to take twelve. Whistler again refused. 'But, sir,' one of them expostulated, 'we are trying to get you out of your troubles.' 'My troubles!' Whistler exclaimed. 'My troubles, did I understand you to say? Why, good Lord, sir! they are not my troubles, they are yours!'"

If you wish to acquire the happiness that Mr. Saltus so entertainingly urges, we can think of no pleasanter method than the reading of his essay in the February AINSLEE'S.

LOOKING over our program convinces us that we have arranged a birthday party that will be well worth coming to.

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A Gift of "ONYX" Silk Hosiery is a Tribute to the Giver's Taste.

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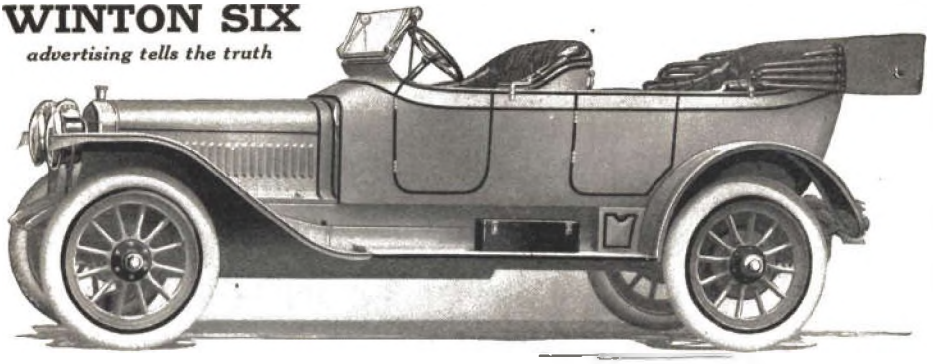

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Throughout the civilized world there has, for several years, been a recognized movement by educated medical men, particularly eye experts, toward treating sore, weak or strained eyes rationally. The old way was to fit a pair of glasses as soon as the eyes were found to be strained. These glasses were nothing better than crutches. They never overcame the trouble, but merely gave a little relief while being worn and they make the eyes gradually weaker. Every wearer of eyeglasses knows that he might as well expect to cure rheumatism by leaning upon a walking stick.

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Dr. John L. Corish, an able New York physician of long experience, has come forward with the edict that eyeglasses must go. Intelligent people everywhere are indorsing him. The Doctor says that the ancients never disfigured their facial beauty with goggles. They employed certain methods which have recently been brought to the light of modern science. Dr. Corish has written a marvelous book entitled, "How to Save the Eyes," which tells how they may be benefited, in many cases, instantly. There is an easy home treatment which is just as simple as it is effective, and it is fully explained in this wonderful book, which will be sent free to any one. A postal card will bring it to your very door. This book tells you why eyeglasses are needless and how they may be put aside forever. When you have taken advantage of this information obtained in this book you may be able to throw your glasses away and should possess healthy, beautiful, soulfully expressive, magnetic eyes that indicate the true character and win confidence.

Bad Eyes Bring Bad Health

Dr. Corish goes further. He asserts that eyestrain is the main cause of headaches, nervousness, inability, neurasthenia, brain fag, sleeplessness, stomach disorders, despondency and many other disorders. Leading oculists of the world confirm this and say that a vast amount of physical and mental misery is due to the influence of eyestrain upon the nerves and brain cells. When eyestrain is overcome these ailments usually disappear as if by magic.

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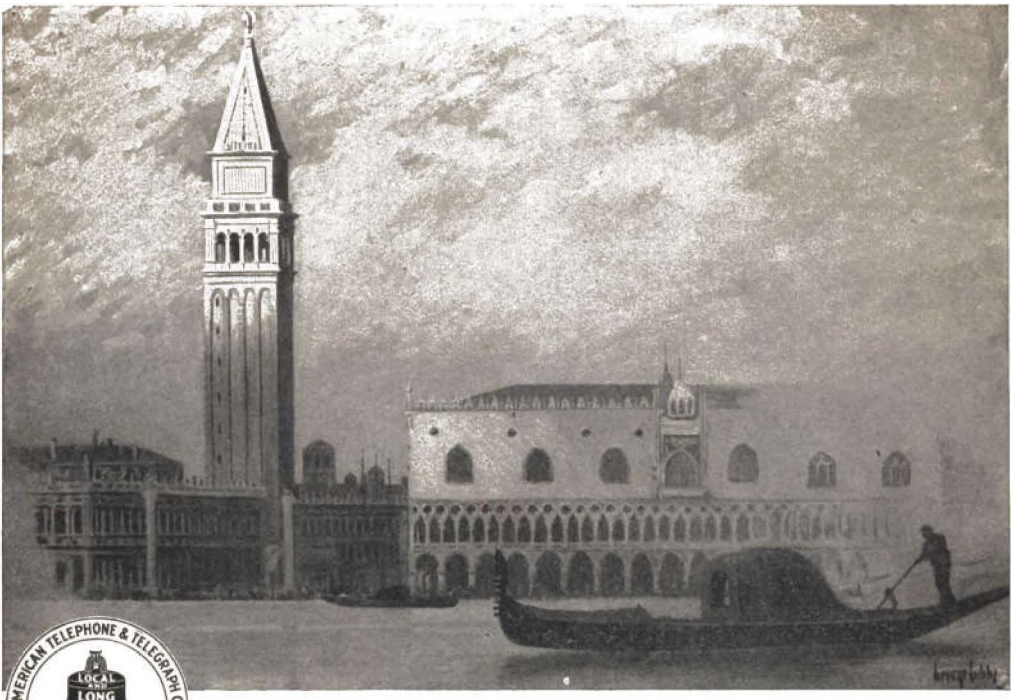

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Wool Soap — Wool Soap Chips (Boraxated)

"Swift's Premium" Hams and Bacon

are U. S. Government inspected and passed, and owe their delicate flavor and high quality to the "Swift's Premium" method of selecting and curing.

When you send for a Calendar address

Swift & Company
4102 Packers' Ave., Chicago.

THREE FRIENDS

Marie, Postum and Jack

(A story of fiction bristling with facts)

"Yes, Postum is one of our best friends, Jack, because it made our marriage possible.

"When we first met, you remember, I was rather a sorry specimen.

"Thin, sallow and so nervous and irritable that I must have been an unpleasant nuisance to everyone.

"Then came the knowledge that coffee had broken down my nervous system and was slowly killing me.

"Within a week after the change to Postum I began to digest my food because the old poison — caffeine, in coffee — was withdrawn and my whole nervous system began to rebuild, and I grew round and comfortable. As a nervous wreck I could never hope to win you for a husband, Jack. But now all is changed and we are happy and healthy."

Nowadays Postum comes in powdered form — called

INSTANT POSTUM

A teaspoonful stirred in hot water makes a perfect cup ***instantly.***

"There's a Reason"

Send grocer's name and 2c stamp for postage, for 5-cup Sample Tin.

Postum Cereal Company, Limited,
Battle Creek, Mich., U. S. A.

Canadian Postum Cereal Co., Ltd.,
Windsor, Ontario, Canada