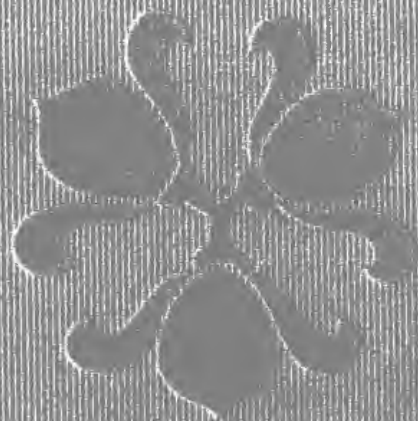


GOLDEN  
FLEECE



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## **GOLDEN FLEECE**

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DAVID GRAHAM PHILLIPS



*The Great God Success, Her Serene Highness*  
*A Woman Ventures*





*The three descended the grand stairway rapidly*

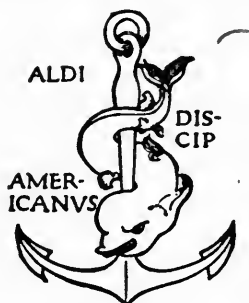
# G O L D E N F L E E C E

## *The American Adventures of a Fortune Hunting Earl*

*By*

*David Graham Phillips*

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*Illustrations by Harrison Fisher*



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*1903*

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## **GOLDEN FLEECE**



## I

**T**WO hours after Surrey's letter came his sister Gwen rode over to Beauvais House eager to tell Evelyn the news of his luck in America. It was almost five o'clock in the beautiful autumn afternoon, and she found Evelyn at tea on the porch that looks out upon the Italian garden.

"It's settled," she said. "They're to be married on the 5th of November—only two months! And George says she is sweet and lovely—not at all like the Americans we know. And her dot is a million and a half—he calls it seven and a half, but he means in their money, which sounds bigger, but counts smaller, than ours. She'll get twice that when her father dies—and he's nearly seventy and not strong. And I'm so glad and so sorry that I don't know whether to laugh or cry."

"What's her name? You told me, but I forget." Evelyn's hand was trembling just a little as she gave Gwendoline a cup of tea. She spoke slowly, in the

## GOLDEN FLEECE

clear, monotonous, but agreeable, English tone. Her voice, always calm, seemed stagnant.

“Dowie—Helen Dowie. He sent me a proof of a photograph they had taken together.” Gwendoline took a letter from the bosom of her shirtwaist, drew from it the proof, and handed it to Evelyn. She took it, lowered her head so that Gwen could not see her face. She looked long and intently, and, if Gwen had seen, she would have wondered how eyes could be so full of tears without shedding a single one.

“Quite aristocratic,” she said at last, giving it back. “How much style those American girls have!”

“But don’t you think her rather pert-looking?” asked Gwen discontentedly. “She looks ill-tempered, too. I’m sure we shan’t get on. Mother and I are making ready to go to Houghton Abbey at once. We’d have a jolly uncomfortable time of it, I wager, if she were to catch us at the Hall.”

Evelyn was gazing into her tea and stirring it absently.

“It seems a shame to have an American nobody come in,” continued Gwen, “and throw us out neck and crop from a house where we’ve always lived. Now,

## CHAPTER ONE

if it were an English girl of our own class,—you, Evelyn,—we shouldn't mind—at least, not so much, or in the same way.”

Evelyn paled, and her lips contracted slightly.

“But it's of no use to think of that. We need her money—everything is in tatters at the Hall, and poor George is down to the last seventy pounds.” Gwen laughed. “Do you remember what a time there was getting the five hundred for his expenses out of Aunt Betty? We've got to cable him another five hundred—he can't begin on her money the very minute he's married, can he now?”

“Arthur must go over,” said Evelyn suddenly, with conviction. “We're worse off than you are. Old Bagley was down yesterday. He and Arthur were shut in for two hours, and Arthur's been off his feed—horribly—ever since.”

Gwen, two years younger than Evelyn, could not conceal her feelings so well. She winced, and a look of terror came into her big blue eyes.

“We can't hold on another year,” continued Evelyn. “And it's quite impossible for Arthur to take Miss Cadbrough. She's too hideous, and too hideously, hopelessly middle-class. She could never, never

## GOLDEN FLEECE

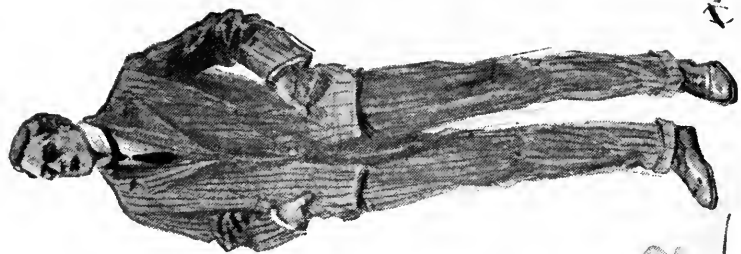
learn not to speak to ladies and gentlemen as if she were a servant."

Evelyn pretended not to notice Gwen's unhappiness. She glanced in at the great drawing room, with splendid furniture, and ceiling wonderfully carved by a seventeenth-century Italian. Then her eyes wandered away to the left, to the majestic wing showing there, then on to the brilliant gardens, the fountains and statuary. Her expression became bitter. "And we've been undisturbed for nine centuries!" she exclaimed.

Gwen, in spite of her inward tumult, remembered that this boast was rather "tall," that the Beauvais family had, in fact, been changed radically several times, and only the name had been undisturbed. Her mind paused with a certain satisfaction on these little genealogical discrepancies, because, though she was the sister and the daughter of a duke, she was the granddaughter of a brewer, who had begun life as an apprentice.

"George wishes Arthur to go over to the wedding," she said reluctantly, after a silence.

A servant appeared—his gaudy livery was almost shabby, but his manners were most dignified, and his



W. H. P. 1872



*A strongly-built, fairish young man of perhaps  
six and thirty*





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hair was impressively—or ridiculously, if you please—plastered and streaked with powder. “His Lordship says he will have tea in his study, Your Ladyship.”

“Please tell him that Lady Gwendoline Ridley is here,” said Evelyn.

A few minutes later, a strongly built, fairish young man of perhaps six and thirty came lounging out upon the porch. He had pleasing, but far from handsome, features—a chin that was too long, and hung weakly, instead of strongly, forward; uncertain blue eyes, with a network of the wrinkles of dissipation at the corners. A large, frameless, stringless monocle was wedged, apparently permanently, into the angle of his right eye-socket. He was dressed in shabby light grey flannels, and he looked as seedy as his clothes. He shook hands with Gwen. “Thanks. No tea. I’m taking whiskey,” he said to Evelyn. And he seated himself sprawlingly. The servant brought his whiskey and a note for his sister.

“Is the man waiting for an answer?” she asked, when she had read it.

“Yes, your ladyship.” She left her brother and Gwen alone.

## GOLDEN FLEECE

"George is marrying the heiress," Gwen began.

"So he wrote me," replied Frothingham sullenly.

"Evelyn says you must go and do likewise."

He scowled. "But I'd rather stay here and marry you."

"Don't be silly," said Gwen, with a shrug of her athletic young shoulders. "You've got nothing. I've got nothing. So—you must do your duty."

"Duty go hang!" said Frothingham fretfully. "Sometimes, do you know, Gwen, I come jolly near envying those beggars that live in cottages, and keep shops, and all that."

"Now, you're slopping, Arthur. You know you don't envy them; no more do I."

"Did Eve tell you old Bagley was down?"

"Yes. Ghastly—wasn't it?"

Frothingham sighed. "I shouldn't be so cut up if I'd had the fun of spending it."

"You did spend a lot of it." She was thinking what a great figure the young Earl had cut in her girlhood days; she had always listened greedily when her brother, with admiring envy, or Evelyn, with sisterly pride, talked of his exploits on the turf, and let us say elsewhere, to shorten a long story.

## CHAPTER ONE

“Only a few thousands that weren’t worth the keeping,” said Frothingham, a faint gleam of satisfaction appearing in the eye that was shielded by the monocle—he liked to remember his “career,” and he liked the women to remind him of it in this flattering way. “All I really got was the bill for the governor’s larks, and his governor’s, and his governor’s governor’s. It’s what I call rotten unfair—jolly rotten unfair. The fiddling for them—the bill for me.”

“Buck up, Artie,” said Gwen, stroking him gently with her riding whip. “See how Georgie has faced it. And perhaps you won’t draw such a bad one, either. She couldn’t be worse than Cadbrough.”

“But I want *you*, Gwen. I’m used to you, you know—and that’s everything in a wife. I hate surprises, and these American beggars are full of ’em.”

Evelyn came back. “Go away somewhere, both of you,” she said. “Charley Sidney’s just driving up. I wish to talk with him about the States.”

Gwen paled and flushed; Frothingham grunted and scowled. They rose, made a short cut across the garden, and were hidden by the left wing of the house. Almost immediately the servant announced “Mr. Sid-

## GOLDEN FLEECE

ney," and stood deferentially aside for a tall, thin American, elaborately Anglicised in look and dress, and, as it soon appeared, in accent. He had a narrow, vain face, browned and wrinkled by hard riding in hard weather in those early morning hours that should be spent in bed if one has lingered in the billiard-room with the drinks and smokes until past midnight.

"Ah, Lady Evelyn!" He shook hands with her, and bowed and smirked. "I'm positively perishing for tea."

"You mean whiskey?"

"Ah, yes—to be sure. I see there is whiskey."

Evelyn's manner, which had been frank and equal before her friend and her brother, had frozen for Sidney into a shy stiffness not without a faint suggestion of superior addressing inferior. She had known Sidney for the ten years he had lived within two miles of Beauvais House, but—well, he wasn't "one of us" exactly; he had a way of bowing and of pronouncing titles that discouraged equality. The conversation dragged in dreary, rural fashion through gossip of people, dogs, and horses, until she said:

"Have you heard the news of Surrey?"

"No—is His Grace coming home?"

## CHAPTER ONE

“He’s marrying—a Miss Dowie, of New York. Do you know her?”

“I’ve heard of her. You know, I’ve not been there longer than a week at a time for fifteen years.” Sidney put on his extreme imitation-English air. “I loathe the place. They don’t know how to treat a gentleman. And the lower classes!” He lifted his eyebrows and shook his head. He was at his most energetic when, in running down his native land to his English acquaintances, he reached the American “lower classes.”

Evelyn concealed the satire which longed to express itself in her face. She despised Sidney and all the Anglicised Americans; and, behind their backs, she and her friends derided them—perhaps to repay themselves for the humiliation of accepting hospitalities and even more concrete favours from “those American bounders.” The story among Sidney’s upper-class English tolerators was that his father had kept a low public house in New York or San Francisco, or “somewhere over there”—they were as ignorant of the geography of the United States as they were of the geography of Patagonia.

“So he’s to marry Dowie’s daughter?” continued

## GOLDEN FLEECE

Sidney. "He was brakeman on a railway thirty years ago."

"How you Americans do jump about!" said Evelyn, forgetting that Sidney prided himself on no longer being an American. "He must be clever."

"A clever rascal, probably," replied Sidney spitefully. "Over here he'd have been put into jail for what they honour him for over there."

"We've many of the same sort, no doubt," said Evelyn, thinking it tactful to hold aloof when a son was abusing his mother.

"Yes, but usually they're gentlemen and do things in a gentlemanly way."

"Mr. Dowie is rich?"

"Just now he is—they say." Sidney had the rich man's weakness for denying, or at least casting doubt upon, the riches of other rich men. He knew that his was the finest and most valuable wealth in the world, and he would have liked to believe that it was the only wealth in the world. "I trust the Duke has looked sharp to the settlements."

"Why?" asked Evelyn, preparing to make mental notes.

"He may never get anything but what's settled on

## CHAPTER ONE

him and her now. Dowie is more or less of a speculator and may go broke. But that's not the only danger in marrying an American heiress. You see, Lady Evelyn, over there they have the vulgarest possible notions of rank and titles. And often, if there isn't a cash settlement when they 'buy the title,' as they describe it, they refuse to give up anything. Many of their rich men have the craze for founding colleges and asylums and libraries. They reason that they've got the title in the family, therefore it isn't necessary to pay for it; and so they leave all their money to build themselves a monument. Dishonourable, isn't it? But they stop at nothing."

"Then," said Evelyn, "an American heiress isn't an heiress so long as her father is alive?"

"Exactly. It's misleading to call her an heiress. She simply has hopes."

"I hope Surrey knows this."

"If he doesn't it's his own fault. I cautioned His Grace before he sailed."

"That reminds me, Mr. Sidney. Arthur may be going over to the wedding. Could you——"

"I'd be delighted," interrupted Sidney. "Anything I could do for Lord Frothingham it would be

## GOLDEN FLEECE

a pleasure to do. I can give him some useful letters, I think. Will he travel? ”

“ Possibly—I don’t know. He has no plans as yet.”

“ I shall give him—if he will do me the honour of accepting them—only a few letters. The wisest plan is a proper introduction to the very best people. Then all doors will be open to him.”

“ The Americans are hospitable to everyone, are they not? ”

“ Not to younger sons any more. And not to un-accredited foreigners. They’ve had their fingers jolly well burned. I knew of one case—a girl—quite a ladylike person, though of a new family from the interior. She married a French valet masquerading as a duke.”

“ Poor creature,” said Evelyn, smiling with amused contempt.

“ Yes, and another girl married—or thought she married—a German royal prince. And when she got to Germany she found that she’d bought a place as mere morganatic wife, with no standing at all.”

“ Fancy! What a facer!”

“ And she never got her money back—not a



## CHAPTER ONE

penny," continued Sidney. "But, like you, I don't sympathise with these upstart people who try to thrust themselves out of their proper station. The old families over there—and there are a few gentlefolk, Lady Evelyn, though they're almost lost in the crowd of noisy upstarts—never have such humiliating experiences in their international marriages."

"Naturally not," said Evelyn.

"But, as I was about to say, a foreigner with a genuine title, the head of a house of gentle people, is received with open arms. Lord Frothingham would be overwhelmed with hospitalities. My friends would see to that."

After a few minutes, without any impoliteness on Evelyn's part, Sidney began to feel that it was time for him to go. As he disappeared Gwen and Arthur came strolling back.

"What a noisome creature Sidney is!" said Evelyn.  
"But he'll be of use to you, Arthur."

"Did he talk about the old families of America and the gentle birth?" asked Gwen. Her eyes were curiously bright, and her manner and tone were agitated.

"All that again."

## GOLDEN FLEECE

"He's an ass—a regular tomtit," growled Frothingham.

"I should think he'd learn," said Evelyn, "that we don't take him and his countrymen up because they're well born—we know they aren't."

"If those that are sensible enough to fly from that beastly country are like Sidney," said Gwen, "what a rowdy lot there must be at home." She spoke so nervously that Evelyn, abstracted though she was, glanced at her and noticed how pale and peaked she was. When she had ridden away Evelyn looked at her brother severely—she was only three and twenty, but she managed him, taking the place of both their parents, who were long dead.

"You've been making love to Gwen," she exclaimed reproachfully. "You should be ashamed of yourself."

Frothingham removed his monocle, wiped it carefully in a brilliant plaid silk handkerchief, and slowly fitted it in place. Then he sent a mocking, cynical gleam through it at his sister. "You forget," he drawled, "that I caught you and Georgie kissing each other and crying over each other the day he went off to the States."

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Evelyn flushed. "How does that excuse you?" she demanded, undismayed.

He was silent for a moment, then with tears in his eyes and a break in his habitual cynical drawl, "I can't go, Eve. I can't give her up."

Evelyn's heart ached, but she did not show it. She simply asked in her usual tone of almost icy calm, "Where's the cash to come from?"

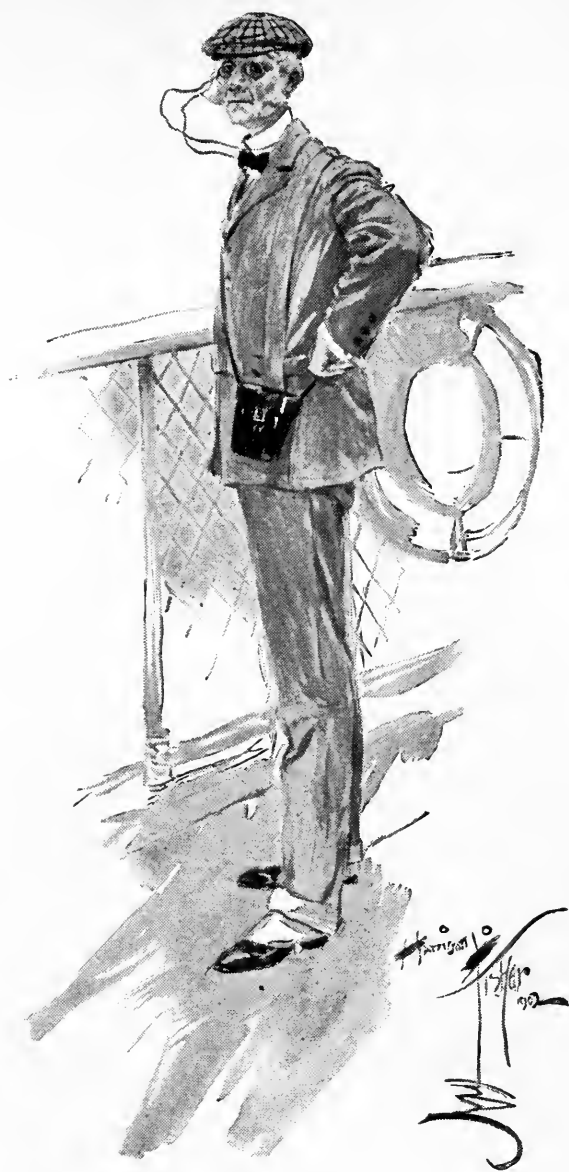
He collapsed helplessly into a chair. There was no alternative—he must go; he must marry money. He owed it to his family and position; also, he wanted it himself—what is a "gentleman" without money? And—why, if he did not bestir himself he might actually have to go to work! And "what the devil could I work at? I might go out to service—I'd shine as a gentleman's gentleman—or I might do something as a billiard marker——"

With such dangers and degradations imminent, to think of love was sheer madness. Frothingham sighed and stared miserably through his monocle at the peacocks squawking their nerve-jarring predictions of rain.

## II

ON the second day out, in the morning, Frothingham was at the rail, his back to the sea, his glassed gaze roaming aimlessly up and down the row of passengers stretched at full length in steamer chairs. He became conscious of the manœuvrings of a little man in a little grey cap and little grey suit, with little grey side-whiskers that stood out like fins on either side of his little grey face. Each time this little person passed it was with a nervous smile at Frothingham, and a nervous wiping of the lips with the tip of his tongue. When he saw that Frothingham, or, rather, Frothingham's monocle, was noting him, he halted in front of him. He was too painfully self-conscious to see that the Englishman's look was about as cordial as that of a bald-headed man watching the circlings of a bluebottle fly.

"The Earl of Frothingham, is it not?" said he in a thin, small voice, his American overlaid with the most un-English of English accents.



*"My name is Longview"*



## CHAPTER TWO

Frothingham moved his head without relaxing from his stolid, vacant look.

“My name is Longview. I had the honour of meeting you at the hunt at Market Harboro two years ago—my daughter and I.”

Frothingham stared vaguely into space, little Longview looking up at him with an expression of ludicrously alarmed anxiety. “Oh, yes,” he drawled finally. And he extended his hand with condescending graciousness. “I remember.”

Longview expelled a big breath of relief. He was used to being forgotten, was not unused to remaining forgotten. “You may recall,” he hastened on, eager to clinch himself in an earl’s memory, “we had your cousin, Lord Ramsay’s place, Cedric Hall, that year.”

Frothingham remembered perfectly—the rich, Anglicised American who fed his neighbours well, was generous in lending mounts and traps, and was, altogether, a useful and not unamusing nuisance. Rich, but—how rich?

“And your daughter?” said Frothingham—he recalled her indistinctly as young, hoydenish, and a daring jumper.

## GOLDEN FLEECE

"She is with me," said Longview, delighted to be convinced that he was remembered, and remembered distinctly—and by a Gordon-Beauvais! "It would give me great pleasure to present you."

As they went down the deck the little man peered at everyone with a nervous little smile—"as if he were saying, 'Don't kick me, please. I mean well,'" thought Frothingham. In fact, back of the peering and the smile was the desire that all should see that he had captured the Earl. They entered the library and advanced toward a young woman swathed in a huge blue cape, her eyes idly upon a book.

"Honoriamy dear," said Longview, as uneasy as if he were speaking to the young woman without having been introduced to her, "you remember Lord Frothingham?"

Honoriam slowly raised her eyelids from a pair of melancholy, indifferent grey eyes, and slightly inclined her head. The men seated themselves on either side of her; Longview rattled on in his almost hysterical way for a few minutes, then fluttered away. Honoriam and Frothingham sat silent, she looking at her book, he looking at her.

"You are going home?" he said when he saw that



## CHAPTER TWO

she would not "lead," no matter how long the silence might continue.

"No," she replied. "We are English—at least, my father is."

"And you?"

She just moved her shoulders, and there was the faintest sneer at the corner of her decidedly pretty mouth. "I don't know—what does it matter about a woman? I've lived in England and France since I was five, except a year and a half in America. Father detests the country and the people. He was naturalised in England last year. I believe he decided that his social position, won through his being an American, was sufficiently established to make it safe for him to change."

Frothingham smiled. As he was used to the freest and frankest criticisms of parents and other near relatives by fellow-countrymen of his own class, it did not impress him as unfilial that a daughter should thus deride a father. Honoria became silent, and apparently oblivious of his presence.

"I've never been to America," he said, hoping to resurrect the dead conversation. "I'm looking forward to it with much pleasure. We have many

## GOLDEN FLEECE

Americans in our neighbourhood—such jolly people.”

“I know few Americans.” Honoria looked disdainful. “And they are like us, the most of them—expatriated. They say their country is a good place to make money in, but a horrible place to live—crude and ill-mannered, full of vulgar people that push in everywhere, and the servants fancying they’re ladies and gentlemen.”

“I hope it’s no worse to live in than England,” said Frothingham. “You know we’re always flying to the Continent to escape the climate and the dullness. And our middle classes are very uppish nowadays, don’t you think?”

“I detest England.” Honoria put the first emphasis into her voice, but it was slight.

“Beastly hole, except for a few weeks in the spring, ain’t it? If it wasn’t for the hunting it would be deserted.”

He saw her cold, regular features light up. “I love hunting,” she said. “It’s the one thing that can make me forget myself, and everything except just being alive and well.” Then her face shadowed and chilled, and she looked at her book so signifi-

## CHAPTER TWO

cantly that Frothingham was forced to rise and leave.

At luncheon the man in the chair next him—Barney, who had told him in the first half-hour of their acquaintance all about his big dry-goods shop in Chicago—said: “I saw you talking to Longview on deck. Is he a friend of yours?”

“An acquaintance,” replied Frothingham. He rather liked Barney because he was shrewd and humorous, and treated him in an offhand fashion that was amusing in a “tradesman”—from America.

“He’s a low-down snob,” said Barney, encouraged by Frothingham’s disclaimer. “One of those fellows that think their own country ain’t good enough for them. I was glad when he got himself naturalised over in your country. You’re welcome to him. What kind of people does he herd with in England?”

“We like him very well, I believe. He seems to be an agreeable chap.”

“I suppose he kowtows and blows himself, and so they let him hang onto the tailboard—he ain’t heavy and don’t take up much room. His grandfather stole with both hands, and put it in real estate. Then his

## GOLDEN FLEECE

father made quite a bunch in the early railroad days. And now this fellow's posing as an aristocrat. If he wasn't rich who'd notice him? "

"Then he's rich?" inquired Frothingham.

"Yes and no," replied Barney, his rich man's jealousy visibly roused. "There was a big family of them. He's got maybe a couple of millions or three. That ain't much in these days. You heard about his knockout? "

"Has he lost part of his money? "

"I thought everybody knew that story—it was in all the papers. No, it wasn't money—worse than that, from his point of view. His daughter—she's with him on the ship—fell in love with the second son of some marquis or other. But he didn't have anything, and I believe you titled people ain't allowed to work. Longview was red-headed—wouldn't give his daughter a cent unless she married a big title. And then the young man's older brother died."

"Was it the Marquis of Dullingford? "

"Yes, that was it. And right on top of it his elder brother's two sons were drowned, and he came into the title and estates. And what does he do but up and marry an English girl that he'd been struck on all the

## CHAPTER TWO

time, but couldn't marry because he was so poor. Longview nearly went crazy at missing the chance. And his daughter—it must have made her mighty sour to find out that the fellow had been only pretending to be in love with her, and was really out for her cash, and didn't care a rap about her. A low pup, wasn't he? ”

Frothingham began to detest Barney—“an impudent, malicious beggar,” he thought. He gave him his monocle's coldest stare.

“No,” went on Barney, unchilled, “Longview's not so rich. I could buy him twice over, and not take a cent of it out of my business. But I want to see any scamp, foreign or domestic, hanging round my daughter for her money. She'll get nary a red till I shuffle off. And she'll get mighty little then if she don't marry to suit me. That's *our* way.”

Frothingham changed his mind about dropping Barney. He had begun to modify the low view of him as soon as he heard that he had a daughter, and “could buy Longview twice over,” and leave the big business—“seventy stores under one roof”—intact. “Miss Barney may be worth looking at,” he reflected. “And her papa might relent about settlements. I

## GOLDEN FLEECE

suspect he isn't above loving a lord—he's too good an American for that."

What Barney had told gave him the key to Honoria. He felt genuine sympathy for her—their sorrows were similar. "Poor creature," he thought. "No wonder she's so down in the mouth." After luncheon he met her father on deck, and did not repel his advances. "But," he said to himself, "it don't do to be too friendly with these beggars. It's like shaking hands with your tailor. He don't think you've pulled him up, but that you've let yourself down."

To the "beggar" he said:

"I looked all round the dining room, but I didn't see you and your daughter."

Longview smiled proudly. "We have our meals in our sitting room," he replied. "We dislike being stared at, and mixed in with a crowd of eating people. We like privacy. We'd be glad to have you join us."

Frothingham's first impulse was to accept. It would cost him nothing—probably he'd get his wine and mineral water and cigars free. And he'd have a rare chance at Honoria. But her face came before his mind. He decided that he would do well to wait until

## CHAPTER TWO

he could learn whether she was really part of the inviting "we."

Although he was not welcomed, but merely tolerated, he seated himself on the extension of a vacant chair beside her and talked—hunting, which, as she had shown him, was her weakness. She was soon interested, and she unbent toward him so far that, when her father came and renewed his invitation, she joined in it. Just as Frothingham accepted he saw Barney half a dozen chairs away glowering at Longview. "I'll offend Barney, no doubt," he said to himself. "But I'll risk it. I must play the cards I have in my hand."

Barney came into the smoke-room late in the evening as he was sitting there, having a final whiskey and water before going to bed. "Won't you have a high ball or something?" he asked, making room for Barney's broad form.

"No, I never touch liquor. Don't allow it in my house. It's no good—no business man ought to touch it."

"I suppose not," replied Frothingham, feeling that here was new evidence of the essentially degrading nature of business.

## GOLDEN FLEECE

"I missed you at dinner," Barney went on.

"The Longviews invited me to feed with them," replied Frothingham carelessly. "They eat in their sitting room. Sorry to leave you, but the service is much better."

Barney's maxillary muscles expanded and contracted with anger. He half snorted, half laughed. "You might know," he said, "that that shark-faced snob would invent a new way of making himself ridiculous. So, the general dining room ain't good enough for him, eh? He *is* a swell, ain't he? I should think he and his—no, leave the young lady out of it—I should think he'd be ashamed to fish for you so openly." Barney's tone softened apologetically, greatly to Frothingham's surprise, as he added: "I don't blame you, Mr. Frothingham. I understand how it is with you titled people in your country. I don't blame anybody for walking round on human necks if their owners 'll allow it. But *we* feel differently about all those kind of things."

Frothingham smiled conciliatingly. "Oh, I say, now! I don't see anything to make a row over. The beggar's a right to eat where he pleases, hasn't he?"

"Of course he has, and to stick his tongue out at





*Barney half a dozen chairs away glowering at  
Longview*



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all the rest of us, as he does it. You don't understand. It ain't *what* he does. It's *why* he does it. We Americans can't stand those kind of airs."

"It seems very mysterious to me," confessed Frothingham. "I admit I don't understand your country."

"Oh, you're all right," reassured Barney, slapping Frothingham's leg cordially. "I never thought I'd like one of you titled fellows. I despised you all for a useless set of nobodies and nincompoops. And whenever my womenfolks got to talking about that kind of thing I always sat on 'em, and sat hard—I'm a hard sitter when I want to be. But I like you, young man. You're more an American than an Englishman, just as Longview's more English than American—he ain't American at all. You talk like an American. You behave like an American. And when you've been in America long enough to wear your clothes out, and get some that fit you, you'll look like an American."

"Thanks," said Frothingham drily.

"You don't like it?" Barney laughed good-humouredly. "Well, I don't blame you. You're judging America by Longview and me. That ain't fair. I'm a rough one—never had a chance—first thing I

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remember is carrying the swill buckets out to feed the hogs before sun-up when I still wore slips. But I mean right. And I've got a son and a daughter that are a real gentleman and a real lady, and don't you forget it."

"Oh, you're all right," said Frothingham, slapping Barney on the leg—Frothingham was a sentimental dog where his pocket and his pleasure were not concerned, and he liked Barney's look as he spoke of himself and the hogs, and his children.

"You don't want to go back to that little old island of yours," continued Barney, "without seeing Chicago. *There's* a town! And I'll give you the time of your life. I want you to meet my family."

"I hope I shall," said Frothingham. He was smiling to himself—evidently Barney wasn't above a weakness for a lord. "It was a good stroke any way you look at it, my going with the Longviews," he reflected. "It's made Barney jealous, and he thinks more of me than ever."

He divided his time unevenly between the Longviews and Barney. He wished to introduce Barney to them, but Longview hysterically refused. "It's all right for you, Frothingham," he explained. "But we

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can't afford to do it. How'd you like to be introduced to middle-class English?"

"Oh, I shouldn't mind. I'd just forget 'em the next time we met. The beggars 'd expect it and wouldn't think of annoying me."

"Precisely—precisely," said Longview. "But our—that is—the American middle-classes are different. They don't understand differences of social position, or pretend not to. If this Barney person were presented to us, he probably wouldn't take the cut when we met again, but would come straight up to us. You've no idea how impudent they are."

"But why do you call him middle-class? Ain't he rich?" asked Frothingham.

Longview looked at him tragically. "Birth and breeding count with us just as—I mean count in America just as in England."

"Gad, they don't count in England any more, except against one. But we can't get it out of our heads that you Americans go in for equality and all that sort of thing."

"Not at all. Not at all," Longview protested. "The lines are the more closely drawn because there are no official lines."

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“But what’s the matter with Barney? He seems right enough. I’ve got uncles that are worse. Gad, there’s one of ’em I could get rich on if I could cage him and show him at a shilling a look.”

“My dear Frothingham, this Barney keeps a retail shop. Even in New York they draw the line at retail shops.”

“It’s very mysterious.” Frothingham shook his head. “I fear I shall never learn. Why don’t they put it all in a book, as we do? Then we could take it at the university instead of Greek.”

He looked at Honoria. She was giving her plate a scornful smile. Her father looked at her also, and reddened as he noted her expression, and shifted the conversation abruptly to the day’s run. Frothingham was becoming interested in Honoria, now that he had assured himself of her eligibility. She was not beautiful, not especially distinguished-looking. But she had as little interest in him as in the rest of her surroundings, and that piqued him. Then, too, her figure was graceful and strong; and when her face did light up it showed strength of character, and either what she said or the way she said it created a vivid impression of personality. He soon felt that

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she liked him. Her manner toward him was friendlier far than her manner toward her father, her lack of respect for whom was scantily concealed.

The night before they landed she and Frothingham sat on deck late, her father dozing in a chair at a discreet distance. Both were depressed—the sense that they were once more about to plunge into the whirlpool of life made each sad. Honoria was remembering the past; Frothingham was brooding over the future. If he had dared he would have proposed to her. “She’d make a satisfactory wife,” he said to himself. “She’s just enough English to understand me and to make my people like her. She wouldn’t get on their nerves. And she doesn’t talk through her nose except when she’s excited. She’s a little too clever—but a steady goer, once the harness is on. If I could get her it would be good business, good swift business.”

“You’re a queer sort,” he said to her suddenly. “Most girls are full of getting married. But I don’t believe you give it a thought.”

“I sha’n’t ever marry,” she replied.

He laughed. “Oh, I say, that’s nonsense. Every girl must marry. You may as well make up your

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mind to it, close your eyes, shut your teeth, and dash in."

"You might not think it," she said after a pause, "but I am like you English—I'm horribly, incurably sentimental. I know it's foreign to my bringing up, but——" Her jaw set, and her eyes fixed upon something visible only to her in the blackness beyond the rail. "My bringing up was all wrong and rotten," she went on presently. "I don't know just how or where, but I know it's so. I began to feel it dimly when I visited my aunt in America four years ago. My mother died when I was a baby, and I was trained by my father and governesses—governesses that suited him. My father—— But I needn't tell you, and you probably don't sympathise with me. His one idea in life is social position. It seems to me a contemptible ambition for a man. With women—there's some excuse for it. We're naturally petty. And, so far as I can see it, as the world is made up, if we haven't got that we haven't got anything. We can't have any other ambition—it's the only one open to us. Well, I haven't got even ambition. I want—that is, I wanted——"

She paused again, resisting the mood that was urg-



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ing her on to confidence. "By Jove," thought Frothingham, "it wouldn't be hard for a man to like her."

"No matter what it was I wanted," she went on, "I didn't get it—and sha'n't, ever." She turned her face toward him. "You may misunderstand me—may think I am in love and hopelessly disappointed—there's a story of that kind going round. But I'm not in love. I was—but I'm not now."

"Do you think one ever gets over it?" he asked absently.

She did not answer.

"I'm afraid not—at least, not thoroughly," he answered himself. There were two faces out there in the blackness into which they were staring, but each was seeing only one.

"One ought to get over it—one *must*," she said slowly, "when one finds that the person one cared for is a bad lot. But"—she sighed under her breath—"I might marry, yes, would, if I needed a home or money. But I don't. So I shall be much better contented alone. I'll never believe deeply in any human being again."

"You mustn't take life so seriously," he said gently. "You'll change before——"

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“So my father thinks.” She looked at Frothingham with a mischievous, audacious smile. “He thinks I shall change immediately—and marry—you!”

Frothingham gasped.

“How funny and fishlike you look,” she said, laughing at him. “You are in no danger. Do you suppose I’d have said that if I’d had you on my list? No, I like you, *but—but!*”

“You may change your mind,” he recovered himself sufficiently to say.

“No—you’re safe. I spoke out because I wish to be friends with you. I don’t especially admire your purpose in going to America. But at least you’re frank about it.”

“I? Why, Miss Longview—I——” Frothingham began to protest, pushing at his dislodging eyeglass.

“Don’t prevaricate. You wouldn’t do it well. As I was about to say, I wish to be friends with you. And it’s impossible for a woman and a man to be friends when either is harbouring matrimonial designs against the other, or fancies the other is harbouring them.”

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"I certainly have to marry somebody," said Frothingham mournfully.

"Yes—I know. Father explained about you. He's up on every titled family in England above the baronets. And he's determined that I shall be a countess at the very least. He says he has the money to buy it—and possibly he has. But"—she was intent upon the blackness again—"I shall never go back to England. I shall stay in America—with a visit to Paris and the Riviera now and then."

"That 'll cheer your father when he hears it," drawled Frothingham. He coughed and stammered, and added in an embarrassed, apologetic tone, "And I don't like to hear a girl as young and attractive as you are talk in that ghastly way."

She looked at him with a teasing smile.

"You'll make some woman a good husband," she said. "Selfish and flighty, perhaps, but on the whole good. I'll be glad to help you—with some other girl. In fact, I've one in mind—an acquaintance in New York—we call each the other friend, and I'm fond of her, as that sort of thing goes with women."

He began to stammer again, and she saw that he was still hanging hopefully over her father's plan.

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“If I were a marrying woman and ambitious,” she went on, “I’d think seriously of having a cast at you. But I’m neither, so I can appreciate your assets quite impartially.”

“I’ve got nothing,” he said, “nothing but debts.”

“Debts are an asset—if contracted in a way that would seem romantic to a girl. Then, there’s your title. That’s a big asset either in England or America. And you’ve got a fairly good disposition and nice manners, and you pretend indifference charmingly, assisted by your eyeglass. And your character is not too bad. Not too good, either. I’ve heard one or two rather thick stories of you. If I were your wife I’d keep an eye on the money—you *will* gamble. But your character is well up to the average for our kind of people.”

“I’ve been rather bad, I’m afraid,” he said, in the shallowly penitent tone in which human beings glory in the sins they are proud of. “I’ve been as bad as I knew how to be.”

“All of us are that, I fancy,” replied Honoria, rising. “I sha’n’t trouble you to confess to me. Save it for—her. Good-night.” She put out her hand friendlily. “I think we shall be friends.”

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Frothingham looked after her as she went with her father down the deck toward the main companion-way. "She is a queer lot," he muttered. "I suppose that's American. Well, if it's a fair specimen, I certainly sha'n't be bored in America."

### III

NEW YORK, 6 November.

*My Dear Eve:*

I'M just sending you off the newspapers with the accounts of George's wedding. Don't show them about, please, as he's frightfully cut up over them. He swears he'll never set foot in this country again, or let his Duchess come. You'll be tremendously amused as you read. You'll never have seen anything so frank and personal. And the illustrations! We've done nothing but dodge cameras when we weren't dodging reporters. I don't agree with George—I think it's great fun.

They let me off easy, as you'll see, and some of the pictures of me are not half bad. But I don't wonder that George is furious. Just read the descriptions of his looks—and really he's looking horribly seedy. And don't neglect the accounts of the new Duchess' papa, and how he came by his cash. He must be a gory old vulture—though really he doesn't look it,

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and except when he gets to going it hard his English is fairly good, of the nosey, Yankee kind.

George came down to the dock to meet me. He was in a *blue fury*. It seems the newspapers had been making a fearful row over him from the moment he left the other side. And then by illustrated accounts of his houses, his property, his family, and himself, not to speak of what they printed about the Dowies' past and present, they set the crowds to collecting at his hotel, and to following him round the streets. They published even what he ate and drank, and the size of the tips he gave the servants. And after the engagement was announced the excitement became something incredible. He couldn't poke his nose out of his rooms that somebody didn't collect the crowd by shouting, "There's his Dooklets, there's the little fellow"—and you know Georgie is a *bit* sensitive about his size.

Well, the newspapers published everything—his height and weight, the tooth he has out on the left side, every rag in his boxes, pictures of them, everything in Miss Dowie's trousseau—columns and columns. And how he *did* hop round when he found that the Dowies had actually hired a fellow and a woman

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to give out facts to the press! What do you think of that for a Yankee notion?

You can't imagine the presents. You'd have thought the crown princess was marrying. The newspapers say they alone were worth a million and a half, American money. I and Cleggett went over them, and we decided they'd fetch more. You know, Cleggett—he's Georgie's solicitor—is over here looking after the settlements. He simply had to put the screws onto old Dowie. I got a good many hints from him on how to deal with these beggars in money matters. Dowie's a shrewd chap. He and Cleggett did all the money talk. Georgie was supposed to know nothing about it. But maybe he wasn't in a funk when it began to look as if the whole business were off at the last minute. I had to work hard to keep him up to the mark. Clegget won out, though—got a hundred thousand pounds more than Georgie expected.

To go back to the presents, her uncle—one of the ha'penny rags here said he's been in the penitentiary, but I hear it's not true—he gave her a yacht, a regular ocean steamer. You'll admire the necklace her aunt sent her—it can't have cost less than fifty thousand, our money. It makes me ill to see these beggars wad-



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ing and wallowing in money. By the way, I notice that while they talk of spending money, they talk of making it as much as they talk of spending it, if not more.

Wallingford, a fellow I've met here, said to me at dinner the other night, a few minutes after the women had gone: "Shall we stay here with the men and discuss making money, or shall we go up to the women and discuss spending it?"

But to go back to Georgie and his coming down to meet me. I saw him on the pier, his face like a sunset and his arms going like mad. He was haranguing a crowd in which there were several cameras. I shouted to him—I and Miss Longview and her father were at the rail together. As I shouted the crowd looked, and the cameras were pointed at us. Miss Longview darted away, and her father pulled at me.

"Come, come!" he said, all in a flurry and a sweat. "They'll take your picture if you stay."

"Who?" said I. "And why should they take my picture?"

"The reporters," he answered, dragging at me. "You don't understand about American newspapers." I let him drag me away, and then he explained.

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“ They know you are coming to the wedding,” he said, “ and they’ll photograph you and interview you and print everything about you—insulting, impudent things. There’s no such thing as privacy in this horrible country. Didn’t I tell you they haven’t the faintest notion what a gentleman is, or what is due a gentleman? ”

Barney,—I’m sure I told you about him in the letter I wrote you on the way over,—Barney was sitting near us. He burst in with, “ I think your friend is unduly alarmed, Earl.” (He always calls me Earl. He says he’ll be blanked if he’ll call any man lord.) “ *You* haven’t committed a crime, or done what you’d be ashamed to see in print. No *honest* man objects to having his face published, or anything else about him that’s true.” And he glared at Longview, who sniffed and walked away. Barney sent a jeering laugh after him, and said, “ The scrawny little chipmunk! ”

“ What’s a chipmunk? ” said I.

“ A kind of squirrel,” said he, “ only littler, and even easier to scare.”

We went to the rail, and there was George, with his crowd pushing and jostling him. As soon as the gangway was let down he rushed aboard, the crowd

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with the cameras on his heels. At the top he turned like Marius, or whoever it was, at the bridge. And he shouted to the officers, in a funny, shrill voice, "Drive those ruffians back!" But the officers were smiling at him, and only pretended to restrain the reporters and photographers. On they came, reaching us about as soon as George did. They poured round and between us, and began to ask me questions. I must admit they were polite, in the Yankee way, and friendly, and good-natured.

I said to one of 'em: "I say, my good fellow, can't you give me time to get my breath?"

"No, I can't, Lord Frothingham," he said, laughing. "What would you do if you were I, and your paper were going to press in ten minutes and you were five minutes from a telephone?"

I got on famously with them. I didn't in the least mind. They must have liked me, as you'll read. But Georgie! *How* they have been dishing him!

It wasn't until we got into the carriage that I and he had chance at each other. "Did you ever see or hear of anything like it?" he said. His hands were shaking, and the sweat was rolling down his cheeks. "They act like a lot of South Sea savages when a

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whale comes ashore. They *are* savages. I had heard it was a beastly country, but——” And he actually ground his teeth.

You know George is very touchy on his dignity, and has old-fashioned ideas of what's due a Duke from his inferiors. It seems he got into a huff when he first came because they treated him in offhand fashion, as they treat everybody. And he tried to snub them. And when they snubbed back, only they had illustrated newspapers to do it in, he went wild, and has been making matters worse and worse for himself. Some of the papers have had leaders pitying Miss Dowie, and predicting that she'll have him in the divorce court for brutality shortly—think of it—Georgie, quiet Georgie! Everyone is hating him, for he assumed that even Miss Dowie's friends were like the newspapers that had slated him, and he snubbed right and left.

He took me to his hotel. He had an apartment that costs him fifteen pounds a day—ain't that cruel? But he said he didn't propose that these savages should sneer at his poverty—they're doing it, anyhow, and they hint that the Dowies are paying his hotel bill, or will have to pay it. However, I think he did well

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to spread himself. There's something about this country that makes you ashamed to seem poor. You spend money and pretend you've got plenty of it. They call it "throwing a bluff," or "making a front."

George had taken an apartment for me at a tall price, but I wouldn't have it, as I wouldn't saddle him with the expense—he hadn't her money in hand then. Besides, I knew that as soon as he was gone I'd have to come down, and that would have looked bad. After I was installed in a very comfortable little apartment thirteen floors up—think of that!—at three pounds a day, we drove to Dowie's. A crowd saw us off at the hotel, people pointed and stared at us all the way up the street, and there was a crowd waiting for us at Dowie's. They live in a huge greystone castle,—there is no end of smart houses here, but a queer jumble—samples of everything. I hadn't known old Dowie an hour before he told me the house and ground and all cost him six hundred thousand, our money.

The girl—but you'll judge her for yourself. I rather fancied her. Affected, of course, and trying to act a duchess out of one of Ouida's novels. Rather fat, too, and her hair is thin, and a *mussy* shade of yellow. I think she'll waddle in about five years.

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Still, she's sensible and quick, and dresses well. All the women here do that. But the money! It's heart-rending to see it parade by. And they seem to be throwing it away, but they don't. Everything is horribly dear here. I must look sharp or I sha'n't last long.

The newspapers will give you all you want to know about the wedding—it was quite a show—perhaps vulgar and overdone, but really gorgeous. I like America, and I like the people. They're jolly good-natured, and the nice ones here are much the same as nice people anywhere else. The Longviews have taken a big furnished house, and I'm staying with them. Next week a friend of Miss Longview—a Miss Hollister, who lives here, but her people are still in the country—is coming to visit her. Her (Miss Hollister's) father owns a lot of railways and mines, and is no end of a financial swell. I'm too sleepy to write another word, except

ARTHUR.

How is Gwen? Be good to me, Evelyn—with love—

A.



*He liked the very first glimpse of her*





#### IV

**H**ONORIA took Frothingham to the Grand Central Station to meet Catherine, and he liked the very first glimpse of her as she came striding down the platform. She was tall and narrow, and she wore dresses and wraps that emphasised both these characteristics. She had a long, thin neck and a small, delicately coloured face, which she knew how to frame most fascinatingly in her hair, with or without the aid of her hat. She had dreamy young eyes, long and narrow, and her red lips and her slender, nervous fingers made it clear that she lived in her senses rather than in her intellect—that she would neither say nor think anything brilliant, but would feel intensely, and could be powerfully appealed to through her imagination. She was wearing a light brown, brightly lined coat that trailed to her heels; and she was holding up from the dust and close about her many folds of soft, fine materials, cloth and silk and linen and lace. In her wake came a maid and a porter, each laden with

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her belongings, an attractive array of comforts and luxuries of travel.

“I’m glad you brought a closed carriage,” she said, with a shiver, as they started for home. “It’s raw, and the sky seems to weigh upon one’s shoulders and head. This is a day to hide in the house, close by an open fire.”

Frothingham was surprised by this fairy-princess delicateness in so robust a creature. He thought the day mild, and as for the sky, why bother about anything that far away, so long as it sent nothing down to bother one?

“You forget we are English,” said Honoria. “We call this good weather. I must confess the closed carriage was a happy accident.”

“So like you, Honoria! Isn’t it, Lord Frothingham?” Catherine gave him a sweet smile. “She never permits one to keep agreeable illusions. Now, I was loving her for being so thoughtful for me.”

As Frothingham only stared, shy and stolid, through his eyeglass, the two girls began to talk each to the other—they had not met in two years, not since Catherine and her mother visited Honoria at Longview’s place in Bucks.

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"What a beautiful place it was!" said Catherine. "I often dream of it. But then, I love England. It is of such a wonderful, vivid shade of green, and everything is so cultivated, and refined, and—and—like a fairy garden. Don't you find the contrast very great, Lord Frothingham? We are very new and wild."

"I've seen only people since I've been here. I must say the people—at least, those I've met—remind me of home, except that they speak the language differently. As for the city, it's not at all as I fancied. It's much like Paris—more attractive than London, not so gloomy."

"Paris!" Catherine smiled, with gently reproachful satire. "Oh, you flatter us."

"I like it better," insisted Frothingham. "It's Paris with English in the streets—I hate Frenchmen."

"No, they're not nice to look at—the men," admitted Catherine. "But I adore what they've done. What would the world be without France?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Frothingham, with his cynical, enthusiasm-discouraging drawl. "They're hysterical beggars, always exploding for no reason. It makes me nervous. I like quiet and comfort."

"Lord Frothingham isn't so sensible as he pre-

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tends," put in Honoria. "He's really almost as sentimental and emotional as you are, Catherine."

"Oh, but I'm neither," replied Catherine. "I don't dare to be. If I find myself the least bit enthusiastic I catch myself up and look round, frightened lest somebody may have noticed. I'm such a liar—we all are over here. Don't you like sincerity, Lord Frothingham?"

"I—I suppose so." Frothingham looked vague. "What do you mean?" Catherine's "intensity" confused him.

"I mean being true to one's self, and not ashamed to show one's self as one is, and never afraid to tell the truth."

"But all of us do that, don't we?" said Frothingham. There was a twinkle in his eye—or was it only the reflection of light from his glass?

Honoria gave him her "candid friend" look. "Nobody does," said she. "That is, nobody who has temperament enough to lead any sort of life above an oyster's."

"But I can see at a glance that Lord Frothingham has temperament." Catherine looked at him with intensely sympathetic appreciation. "Yes, men can be

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sincere and truthful. But women must always repress their real selves."

Frothingham looked stolid and hopeless. Whenever conversation turned on abstractions he felt like a man fumbling and stumbling about in a London fog. "Really?" he said. "Really, now?"

"I don't know why women fancy they must be liars," said Honoria. "Do you mind dining at Sherry's to-night?" Catherine in her psychological moods bored her. She sometimes ventured on ærial flights, but had no fancy for ærial flounderings.

"Sherry's? That will be delightful! I like dining at restaurants—I'm very American in that respect."

"But so do I," said Frothingham. "That is, in your restaurants here. The people are interesting, and they talk a lot, and loud enough so that one hears every word and isn't annoyed by missing the sense. And how they do waste the food!"

"Food!" Catherine repeated the word with a smile that was half-humorous, half pleading. "Please don't use that word, Lord Frothingham. It always makes me shiver. It sounds so—so animal!"

Frothingham put on the blank look behind which he

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habitually sheltered himself when he did not know what to say, or to do, or to think. Honoria was disgusted with him and with Catherine. "They're not going to like each other, not even enough to marry," she said to herself. "And it's a pity, as they're exactly suited. If Catherine only wouldn't pose!"

She was, therefore, somewhat surprised when, immediately she and Catherine were alone, Catherine burst into rhapsody on Frothingham. "What a fine, strong face! So much character! What a sincere, sensitive, pure nature. He's a splendid type of true gentleman, isn't he, Nora? How well he contrasts with our men! Doesn't he?"

Honoria smiled to herself. "She wants to marry him," she thought, "and she's building a fire under her imagination. I might have known it. She's the very person to weave romance over a title and imagine it all gospel. What a poser!" To Catherine she said: "He's a decent enough chap, Caterina. And you'll admire him more than ever when you've read him up in Burke's Peerage and looked at the pictures he's given me of Beauvais House."

"How do you spell it? B-e-v-i-s?"

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“No, that’s the way you pronounce it. You spell it B-e-a-u-v-a-i-s.”

“Isn’t that interesting? It’s so commonplace to pronounce a word the way it’s spelt, don’t you think?”

“I never thought of it, my dear. Why not marry him?”

“You are so abrupt and—and practical, Honoria,” said Catherine plaintively. “But you are a dear. I should never marry a man unless I loved him.”

Honoria looked faintly cynical. “Certainly not. But surely you can love any man you make up your mind to marry. What is your imagination for?”

At Sherry’s that night, besides Honoria, Catherine, Longview, and Frothingham, there were at Longview’s table Mrs. Carnarvon, of the hunting set, and Joe Wallingford—he hunts and writes verse, both badly, and looks and talks, both extremely well. Honoria devoted herself to Wallingford and so released Catherine and Frothingham each upon the other—she listened for a few seconds now and then to note their progress.

“It’s a go,” she said to herself with the match-maker’s thrill of triumph, as the cold dessert was served. She saw that Frothingham had ceased to

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listen, and so had ceased to puzzle; his eyeglass was trained steadily and sympathetically upon Catherine's fascinating beauty—why weary the brain when it might rest and enjoy itself through the eyes? Catherine was talking on and on, quoting poetry, telling Frothingham of her emotions, telling him of his emotions—he did not have them, but she was so earnest that he was half convinced.

“When you said this afternoon that you liked things quiet and comfortable,” she said, “I felt that it was splendidly in keeping with your character. I saw that you hated all this noise and display, that you like to get away in your own corner of your beautiful England and live grandly and quietly—near Nature.”

If Catherine had not been beautiful and rich he would have said to himself, “What rubbish!” But, as it was, he thought her profound and spiritual. And he said, trying to touch bottom and get a firm stand upon firm earth, “I think you'd like Beauvais.”

“I'm sure I should,” replied Catherine with enthusiasm. “Honorina was showing me the photographs of it. I admire the great, stately old house. But I liked best of all the picture of the woods and



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the brook. It reminded me of those lines of Coleridge's—they are so beautiful—where he speaks of the brook—

“‘*In the leafy month of June  
That to the sleeping woods all night  
Singeth a quiet tune.*’

Don't you think those lines fine? Do I quote them right? ”

“ Yes—I think so—that is,” stammered Frothingham, “ it's a jolly brook, but we call it a river.” Then to himself: “ What an ass she'll think me!” But the starting sweat stayed, for she asked him no more questions; and he, freed from the anxiety of having to try to soar with her, was able to sit quietly and enjoy her beauty, and the murmurous rush of her low, musical voice—“ It's like the brook that brute she quoted wrote about,” he thought.

He did not drive home with his party, but accepted Wallingford's invitation to walk in the fresh night air to his club. “ Your American women are tremendously clever,” he said, as they were strolling along. He was feeling dazed and dizzy from the whirl of his emotions, the whirls and shocks Catherine Hollister had given his brain.

## GOLDEN FLEECE

"Yes, they're clever," replied Wallingford, "but not in the way they think they are. Take Kitty Holister, for example. She's all right when she wants to be. She thinks sense. But what a raft of fuzzy trash she does float out when she gets a-going. I pitied you this evening. She laid herself out to impress you. You're staying in the house with her, aren't you? I suppose she whoops it up whenever you're round?"

"I find her very clever—and interesting," said Frothingham somewhat stiffly.

"Of course she is. I've known her for seventeen of the nineteen years she's gladdened the earth—and I ought to know her pretty well. But she's like a lot of the women in this town. They haven't any emotions to speak of—nothing emotional happens. But they think they ought to have emotions such as they read about, and so they fake 'em. Then, they've got the craze for culture. They haven't the time to get the real thing—they're too busy showing off. Besides, they're too lazy. So they fake culture, too. Oh, yes, they're clever. And they look so well that you like the fake as they parade it better than the real thing."

"We have that sort in London," said Frothingham.

"So I've observed. But it's done rather better

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there—they're older hands at it. If you weren't an Englishman, I'd say it fitted in better among the other shams. I suppose you've noticed that many people here are imitation English or French? You've seen the tags 'Made in England,' 'Made in France,' 'Made in England, finished in France'?"

"I've noticed similarities," replied Frothingham tactfully.

"It's all imitation stuff—the labels are frauds. We over here don't know how to be gracefully idle and inane, as your upper classes do. It's not in us anywhere. We haven't the tradition—our tradition is all against it. Whenever we do produce a thoroughly idle and inane person, he or she goes abroad to live, or else loses all his money to some sharp, pushing fellow, and drops out of sight. All this aristocracy you see is pure pose. Underneath, they're Americans."

"What is an American?" asked Frothingham. "Every time I think I've seen one, along comes some native and tells me I'm wrong. Are you an American?"

"Underneath—yes. On the surface—no. I used to be, but now I'm posing with the rest of 'em. You'll have to get out of New York to see Americans. There

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are droves of 'em here, but they're so scattered in places you'll never go to that you couldn't find them. You'd better go West if you wish to be sure of seeing the real thing."

"It's very confusing. How shall I know this American when I see him?"

"When you see a man or a woman who looks as if he or she would do something honest and valuable, who looks you straight in the eyes, and makes you feel proud that you're a human being and ashamed that you are not a broader, better, honester one—that's an American." And then he smiled with his eyes so queerly that Frothingham could not decide whether or not he was jesting.

At the club Wallingford introduced him into a large circle of young men, seated round two tables pushed together, and covered with "high balls," and bottles of carbonated water, and silver bowls of cracked ice. He said little, drank his whiskey and water, and listened. "It's the talk of stock brokers and tradesmen," he said to himself. "Yet these fellows are certainly gentlemen, and they don't talk business in the least like our middle-class people. It's very confusing."

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After he left the others were most friendly, and even admiring, in their comments upon him.

“He’s monotonous, and poor, and will never have anything unless he marries it,” said Wallingford. “If he were a plain, poor, incapable, rather dull American, is there one of us that would waste five minutes on him?”

There was silence, then a laugh.

## V

**W**ALLINGFORD and Frothingham developed a warm friendship. Wallingford was extremely suspicious of himself in it, but after a searching self-analysis decided that his liking for the Earl was to a certain extent genuine. "He doesn't know much—at least, he acts as if he didn't. But he's clever in a curious way, and a good listener, and not a bit of a fakir. No doubt he's on the lookout for a girl with cash, but English ideas on that subject are different from ours—that is, from what ours are supposed to be. He's a type of English gentleman, and not a bad type of gentleman without any qualification."

When he expressed some such ideas to Catherine Hollister, at a dance given for her by Mrs. Carnarvon, she went so much further in praise of Frothingham that he laughed. "So that's the way the wind blows, eh?" he said, grinning at her satirically.

She coloured, and put on the look of an offended saint.

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“Countess of Frothingham,” he went on, undisturbed. “That *would* sound romantic, wouldn’t it? Catherine, Countess of Frothingham!”

“How can you be so coarse-fibred in some ways, Joe, and so fine in others?” she said reproachfully.

“I don’t know, dear lady. I suppose because I’m human—just like you.”

“Let us dance,” was her only reply. She had known Joe so long that she couldn’t help liking him, but he certainly was trying.

Later in the evening, remembering Joe’s cruelty and sordidness, she said to Frothingham: “You don’t know what a pleasure it is to the finer women over here to meet foreign men. They are so much more subtle and sympathetic. They are not coarsened by business. They are not mercenary.”

She raised her dreamy eyes to his as she spoke the word “mercenary.” He reddened and stumbled—they were dancing the two-step. “I wish *you* wouldn’t look at me like that,” he said, with an ingenuousness wholly unconscious. “It reminds me of my sins, and—and—all that.”

She trembled slightly, as he could plainly feel in his encircling arm. He looked down at her—she al-

## GOLDEN FLEECE

ways was ethereally beautiful in evening dress. In his admiration he almost forgot how rich she was ; he quite forgot how oppressively intellectual she was. "Do you—do you——" he began. Then he stopped dancing and led her into the hall, through the hall to the library. Two other couples were there, but far enough from the corner to which he took her.

"May I smoke?" he asked.

"I love the odour of a cigarette," she replied, in a voice that encouraged him to resume where he had abruptly left off.

"Perhaps you will smoke?"

"No," she said, in a tone that was subtly modulated to mean apology or reproach, according as he liked or disliked women smoking.

"Do you really like England?" he began nervously, seeing to it that his glass was firmly adjusted.

"I adore it!" Usually she would have gone on into poetical prose unlimited. But this, she felt, was a time for short answers.

"Would you—mind England—with—with——"

He halted altogether, and she slowly raised her heavy lids until her eyes met his.



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“Catherine!” He seized her hand, and the thrill of her touch went through him. “You are so lovely. I—I’m horribly fond of you.”

She sighed. “Isn’t it beautiful?” she said. “This lovely dance—these fascinating surroundings—the music—the dim lights—and—and——” She lifted her eyes to his again.

He murmured her name, threw away his cigarette, looked round to see where the other eyes in that room were, then clasped her round the waist for an instant. “Will you? Will you?” he exclaimed.

“Yes,” she replied, in a tone so faint that he barely heard.

“You have made me happy.” And he meant it.

“How satisfactory she is in every way,” he was saying to himself. “Looks, money, everything. I’m a lucky dog.” And she was saying to herself, “Countess of Frothingham! How strong and fine and simple he is. I love him!” But when he suggested speaking to her father at once she would not have it. “No—I want it to be just our secret for a little while,” she pleaded. “Don’t *you*?” He did not see any reason for it, but he said “Yes” with a surface reflection of her earnestness.

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“It’s a pity the world ever should know anything about it, don’t you think so?” she went on.

“I’m very impatient to claim my countess,” he answered.

She liked the “countess,” but the “my” jarred slightly in her sensitive ear—she was “acquiring” an earl, not he a countess.

“Not too long,” he remonstrated. It was all very well for her to be romantic—he wouldn’t have liked it if he had not inspired some romance. But why should either of them wish to delay ratifying the bargain that was the real purpose in view? Certainly he wished no delay. And there was much to be arranged—settlements, a trousseau, a host of time-consuming preliminaries. Not a day should be lost in getting under way. His creditors, impatiently awaiting the event of his American adventure, might become ugly. He hated ugly letters and cablegrams almost as much as he hated ugly “scenes.” No, he felt strongly on the subject of long engagements.

His heart was full of her beauty—he had drunk a good deal at supper half an hour before. His head was full of her dowry—he never drank so much that he forgot business. “How could I evade if anyone

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should congratulate me?" he asked. And then he wished he had not said it, but had made that the excuse for not obeying her.

"You must deny it, as I shall. You know, we're not really fully engaged until I'm ready to have it announced. Besides, as Joe Wallingford says, a lie in self-defence isn't a lie. And self-defence isn't either a crime or a sin, is it? I think self-defence against prying is a virtue, don't you?"

A man came to claim her for a dance. She smiled sweetly at him, plaintively at Frothingham, and went back to the ballroom. Frothingham stood in the doorway watching her for a few minutes, then went away from the dance to walk and think and enjoy. But his mind was depressed. "Too much supper," he grumbled. "I ought to be tossing my hat. I don't deserve her and my luck. Her cash will put us right for the first time since my great-grandfather ruined us by going the Prince Regent's gait. We shall restore Beauvais House and take the place in Carlton Terrace again. Gad! what a relief it will be to feel free in my mind about cab fares, and not to claim commissions from my tailor when I send him customers. I shall be able to live up to the title and the tradi-

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tions——” He painted vividly, but in vain. He caught himself looking away from the glowing pictures and sighing. “Yes, she’s pretty—devilish pretty—and a high stepper, but—Gwen would be so comfortable so *d——n* comfortable!”

Honorina suspected their secret, yet doubted the correctness of her intuitions. “She’d parade it,” she reflected, “if she were really engaged to him. There must be a hitch somewhere.” And her wonder grew as the report of their engagement spread only to be strenuously denied by Catherine.

Catherine was almost tearful in lamenting this “impertinent gossip” to her. “Isn’t it hateful, Honorina,” she said, “that a young man and a young woman can’t be civil and friendly to each other when they’re visiting in the same house, without all the busybodies trying to embarrass them? Did you see the papers this morning? How *dare* they print it!”

Honorina smiled at this mock indignation. “Where’s the injury to you in crediting you with landing an earl?” she asked.

Catherine gave her a look of melancholy reproach. “Do you know,” she said dreamily, “I don’t think of him as an earl any longer? His character makes

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everything else about him seem of no consequence. Don't you think he is a *remarkable* man?"

"A little less remarkable than a marquis, a little more remarkable than a viscount—and in comparison with a baronet or a plain esquire, a positive genius!" replied Honoria.

Frothingham was more and more uncomfortable. Catherine took him everywhere in her train and, with seeming unconsciousness of what she was doing, fairly flaunted him as her devoted attendant. Yet only when they were alone did she ever betray that she had more than a polite, friendly interest in him. He would have got angry at her, would have made vigorous protest, but how was it possible to bring such sordidness as mere vulgar appearances to the attention of so innocent and high-minded a creature? He restrained himself, or, rather, was restrained—until Horse Show week.

Those afternoons and evenings of dragging at the divine Catherine's chariot wheels before the eyes of the multitude were too much for him. It was one of the years when the Horse Show was the fashion for the fashionable. Not only the racing set and the hunting set, but also the dancing and the dressing and the

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literary and artistic sets, and the fadless, but none the less frivolous, set, flocked there day and evening to crowd the boxes with a dazzling display of dresses, wraps, jewels, and free-and-easy manners. At first Frothingham gaped almost as amazedly as the multitude that poured slowly and thickly round the promenade, eyes glued upon the occupants of the boxes, never a glance to spare for the ring from the cyclorama of luxury and fashion. "And at a horse show!" he muttered, as he noted the hats and gowns made to be shown only in houses, or in carriages on the way to and from houses, but there exhibited amid the dust of the show ring. "What rotten bad taste!"

He was astounded to find Catherine outdone by none in extravagant out-of-placeness of ostentation—as he regarded it. Day after day, night after night, she showed herself off to her friends and to the craning throngs of the promenade in a kaleidoscopic series of wonderful "creations." And she insisted that he should always be in close attendance. As he sat beside her he heard the comments of the crowd—there was always a crowd in front of Longview's box: "That's the girl."—"Yes, and the fellow beside her, with the eyeglass, he's the Earl."—"I don't know how much—

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some say a million—some say two or three.”—“ He looks dull, but then all Englishmen look that.”—“ I’ll bet he could be a brute. Look what a heavy jaw he’s got.”—“ She’ll be sick of him before she’s had him a year.”

Did Catherine hear? he wondered. Apparently not. He never surprised in her face or manner a hint of consciousness of self or of being stared at and commented upon. “ But she can’t avoid hearing,” he said to himself. “ These asses are braying right in her ears. And why should she get herself up in all these clothes, if it ain’t to be stared at? ”

And, between performances, the performers in the Longview box dined in the palm garden at the Waldorf, with their acquaintances at the surrounding tables, and gossip of their engagement flying, and curious glances straying toward them over the tops of wine-glasses, and whispers and smiles—and Catherine soulful and unconscious. On Friday night, as they drove from the Waldorf to the Garden—she had given him her hand to hold under cover of the lap-robe—she said, with a sigh: “ I’m so glad it’s nearly over. Only to-night and to-morrow night.”

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“Not to-morrow afternoon?” asked Frothingham.  
“Why do we miss a chance to exhibit?”

“Only the servants and the children go to-morrow afternoon,” replied Catherine sweetly. “I’m worn out and sick of it all. So many go merely for self-display; so few of us, not to speak of those dreadful people in the promenade, care anything about the dear, beautiful, noble horses.”

“Why look at horses,” said Honoria, “when there’s a human show that’s so much more interesting? It may be vulgar, but it’s amusing. I’m afraid my tastes are not refined.”

Frothingham looked at her with the expression of a thirsty man who is having a glass of cold water. “That’s what I think,” said he. “And I’m fond of horses.” A faint sneer in his satirical drawl made Catherine give him a furtive glance of anxiety—was the worm thinking of turning?

When they were in the box and the others were busy she said to him, in her tenderest tone: “You’re dreadfully bored by all this, aren’t you? And I thought it would give you pleasure for us to be together so much.”

The surliness cleared from his face somewhat. “No,





*“As if we were a pair of new chimpanzees in a zoo”*



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I'm not bored. But I hate to be shown off. And, while you've been unconscious of it, the fact is that you and I have been sitting here in this cage five or six hours a day, gaped at as if we were a pair of new chimpanzees in a zoo." As he remembered his wrongs, his anger rose upon the wine he had freely drunk at dinner. "It's what I call low—downright rotten, Catherine," he finished energetically.

"I wish you wouldn't use that dreadful word," she said, tears in her eyes, but a certain sting in her voice. "I know it's all right in England—some of us use it here. But it—every time you or anyone says it I feel as if someone had thrust a horrid-smelling rag under my nose. You don't mind my saying so, do you, dear?"

"Beg pardon," he said. "We do use rowdy words nowadays. I'm so accustomed to it I don't notice."

Just then up to his ears from the promenade and the crowd gaping at the "new chimpanzees" came a voice: "They're fighting—look! look! Hasn't he got an ugly scowl? And she's almost crying."

He flushed scarlet and sent a glowering glance down into the crowd. He turned upon Catherine: "Just hear that! They think I'm rowing you. By—beg pardon, but—well—I sha'n't endure it another in-

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stant." And he rose, brushed past Catherine's mother and Longview, Honoria and two men hanging over her, and stalked along the aisle down into and through the recognising crowd, and out of the Garden.

The boxes ate greedily of this sensation, and the crowd in the promenade scrambled frantically for the crumbs. It was presently noised round that the Englishman had become angered, had struck someone. Rumour at first said it was Catherine; but the crowd by the use of its legs and eyes, and the boxes by the use of their glasses, learned that this was false. There sat Catherine, calm, absorbed in the ring, applauding the jumpers, and turning now and then to her companions with outbursts of ladylike enthusiasm for some particularly clever performance. However, crowd and boxes saw that the Englishman was gone, felt that he must have gone in anger.

The Longview party stopped at the Waldorf for supper, and Frothingham, calmer and a little embarrassed, joined them. Catherine received him as if nothing had taken place, and the next night they appeared together at the Garden as usual.

Late in the evening she said to him: "I've told mother of our engagement. Do you mind, dear?"

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His face lighted up.

“She wishes you to come down to the country with us on Sunday to stay a week or two. It is beautiful there, and we shall be very quiet. Shall you like that?”

“And I may speak to your father?” he asked. “In my country it wouldn’t be regarded as honourable for me to act as I’ve been acting with you. I can’t help feeling uncomfortable because I’ve said nothing to your father.”

“I’ll speak to him first, Arthur. He lets me do as I please. And he’ll be contented with whatever makes me happy. He’s *such* a dear!”

Frothingham looked faintly annoyed. It was not in his plan to include “father” in their romance. Romance with daughter, business with father—that was the proper and discreet distribution of the preliminaries to the formal engagement. He had, deep down, a horrible, nervous fear that he might be drawn into matrimony without definite settlements—the father might be as difficult to pin down in his way as was the daughter in her way. “I must take this business in hand,” he said to himself, “or I’ll be in a ghastly mess.”

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Catherine, her mother, and he went down on the one-o'clock train. The Hollister country place—Lake-in-the-Wood—was a great pile of brick and stone, impressive for size rather than for beauty, filled with expensive furnishings and swarming servants in showy livery, and surrounded by a handsome, well-ordered park, with winding walks and drives, and romantically bridged streams flowing to and from a large lake. They lived with more ceremony than did Surrey at Heath Hall—but there was an air of newness and stiffness and prodigal profusion about it all, a suggestion of a creation of yesterday that might find a grave tomorrow. This impression, which had often come to him in the palaces of New York, began to form as the porter opened the huge gates between the park and the highway. It grew stronger and stronger as he penetrated into the gaudy, if tasteful, establishment. Everything was too new, too grand, too fine. The daughter alone was at her ease; the mother was not quite at her ease; the father was distinctly, if self-mockingly, ill at ease.

The two women left Frothingham alone with him, and the old man soon vented his dissatisfaction. “I suppose *you* like this sort of thing,” he said, with a

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wave of the arm to indicate that he meant the establishment. "But I don't. If I had my way we'd be simple and comfortable—no, I don't mean that exactly. I suppose at bottom I'm as big a fool as the women. But, all the same, French cooking gives me indigestion. That infernal frog-eater in the right wing has it in for me. He's killing me by inches. And I'm so afraid of him and the butler and all the rest of 'em that I don't kick the traces more than once a week." He laughed. "My wife and daughter have got me well trained. Whenever they tell me to, I sit up on my hind legs and 'speak' for crackers and snap 'em off my nose."

Frothingham liked him at once—he was a big, handsome old fellow, with keen, steel-grey eyes, and the strong look of the successful man of affairs. "I fancy he's almost one of those Americans Wallingford talked about," he thought.

After a smoke with Hollister he went to his rooms—a suite of vast chambers, like the show rooms of a palace, with a marble bathroom that had a small swimming pool sunk in the middle of it. He looked out upon the drive and the park and the half-hidden streams glittering in the sunshine. "These people

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will beat us out at our own game when they get used to the cards," he said.

There was the sound of wheels and horses—many wheels and many horses. He looked down the drive—one after another came into view a three-seated buckboard, a stylish omnibus, a waggon with the seats taken out to make room for a huge pile of luggage. In the buckboard and the omnibus he recognised men and women whom he had met in New York—the Leightons, the Spencers, the Farrells, the Howards, Mrs. Carnarvon, Wallingford, Gresham, Browne, a man whose name he could not recall, Miss Lester, Miss Devenant. "I thought Catherine and I were to be 'very quiet,'" he muttered.

There were thirty-two people at dinner that night, sixteen of whom, including himself, were guests in the house for stays of three days, a week, ten days. "You said you were to be alone," he said to Catherine, with ironic reproach.

She gave him her pathetic, helpless look. "I did hope so. But I asked some, and mamma asked others, and the rest asked themselves."

The days passed, and he had only fleeting glimpses of her. Everybody was hunting, riding, driving, go-



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ing to luncheons, teas, dinners, through a neighbourhood ten miles square. Every moment from early until late was more than occupied—it was crowded, jammed. His idea of country life was the quiet, lazy ease of England; a week of this rushing about fagged him, body and mind. He ceased to try for a moment alone with her; he saw that it was hopeless to expect so much in a place where he could not get a moment alone with himself.

“You never rest in this country?” he said, addressing the men in the library at midnight, as they were having a final nightcap.

“Why should we?” replied Browne. “Why anticipate the grave’s only pleasure?”

“You see,” explained Wallingford, “on this side of the water we take our pleasures energetically. When we work, we work hard; when we play, we play hard. If we’re having a good time, we crowd our luck, in the hope of having a better time. If we’re bored, we hurry, to get it over with.”

“Do you keep this up the year round?”

“Except on ocean steamers. But we’ll close that gap when we get the ‘wireless’ installed, with a telephone to the head of every berth.”

## VI

ON a Monday morning—Frothingham's eighth day at Lake-in-the-wood—only Wallingford and the tireless Catherine appeared for the early ride. "It's cold," said Wallingford. "Shall we canter?" And they swept through the gates and on over the frost-spangled meadows for several miles before they drew their horses in to a walk. Catherine's cheeks were glowing, and her eyes were not dreamy and soulful, but bright with vigorous, wide-awake life.

"I haven't seen you looking so well in years, Kitty." Wallingford was examining her with the slightly mocking, indifferent eyes that had piqued not a few women into trying to make him like them. "You look positively human. And it's becoming—most becoming."

Catherine began to scramble into her pose. She did not like to be caught lapsing from her ideals.

"Why *do* you do it?" Wallingford dropped his

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mockery for an instant. "Your own individuality, no matter how poor you may think it, is far better than any you could possibly invent—or borrow."

Catherine looked hurt. "Why do you charge deception against everyone who lives above your level?" she asked. "I hope you're not going to be nasty this morning, Joe. I'm blue."

"What's the matter? Something real, or——"

"Don't tease. This is real."

"What is it? I see you wish to be encouraged to tell me."

"No—I couldn't tell anyone." Catherine's eyes were tragic. "It's one of those things that can't be told, but must be——"

"Go on. What is it?" Wallingford refused to be impressed by tragedy. "I see you're dying to tell me. Why not get it over with?"

"You are so sympathetic, Joe. You pretend not to understand me, but I feel that you always do."

"You mean that I refuse to be misled by your charming little pretences. But how could I? Why, don't I remember the day, the very hour, you went in for the 'soulful'? I must say, I never could see why

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you took that up as your fad.—Being natural is much harder to win out at—few people are interesting, or even endurable, when they're natural."

"Joe," she said absently, as if she had not heard him, "I'm afraid I'm making a—a dreadful—mistake."

"Well?" he asked almost gruffly, after a short pause.

"About—about—Lord Frothingham," she confessed, lowering her eyelids until her long lashes shadowed her cheeks.

"Oh, I think you'll land him all right," said Wallingford encouragingly. "He's a bit gone on you; and then, too, he needs the cash."

"Please don't speak of him in that way, Joe. He's not a vulgar fortune-hunter, but a high, sensitive, noble man."

"Who said he was a vulgar fortune-hunter? On the contrary, he's an honest British merchant, taking his title to market. And he's been lucky enough to find a good customer."

Catherine ignored this description of her knight and her romance. "You know I'm engaged to him?" she asked.

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“Ever since the first time I saw your mother look at him.”

“Yes—she approves it.”

“I should say she would,” said Wallingford judicially. “She’s got the best part of it. She’ll have all the glory of having an earl in the family, and she won’t have to live with him.”

“I’m—afraid—I don’t love him as I ought,” said Catherine, with a sigh.

Wallingford laughed. “Now, of what use is it to talk this over, Kitty, if you won’t be frank? It can’t be a question of loving him that’s troubling you. Of course you don’t love him. You love his title, and that would prevent you from loving him for himself, no matter how attractive he was. But why bother about love? He’s giving you what you really want.”

“What *do* I want?” She looked at Wallingford with sincere appeal, slightly humourous, but earnest.

“I once thought that you wanted to be a real woman. But ever since your mother took you abroad to fill her own and your head with foreign notions I’ve been losing faith. What do you want now? Why, the trash you’re buying.”

“Joe, how can you think I’d sell myself?”

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“Why not? It’s generally regarded as a reputable transaction—unless one is vulgar enough to sell out for the mere necessities of life. Oh, I’m not criticising you, Kitty. Perhaps I’d sell myself if I could get any sort of price. Never having been tempted, I can’t say what I’d do.”

“Please don’t talk in that way, even in jest. It isn’t true. I know it isn’t true. And it’s knowing that that makes me——” She hesitated, then went on—  
“despise myself! It’s of no use to lie to *you*, Joe. I’m glad there’s somebody I can’t lie to, somebody that sees into me and forces me to look at myself as I am. And sometimes I *hate* you for it. Yes, I hate you for it *now*!” She was sitting very erect upon her horse, her head thrown back, tears of anger in her eyes.

“Hate?” He shook his head teasingly at her. “I envy you. I’ve tried every other emotion, and I’d like to try that. But I can’t. I can’t hate even Frothingham. On the contrary, I like him. If you must have a title, you’ve got to take a husband with it. And I must say, I think you’ll be able to harness Frothingham down to a fairly reliable family horse.”

“How can you jest so coarsely about such a serious matter?” she exclaimed indignantly.

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“ But is it? What does it matter whom you marry, so long as you have no purpose in life other than to make a show and to induce shallow people to admire you and envy you for the things you’ve got that can be bought and sold? It’s better, on the whole, isn’t it, my friend, that you should carry out these purposes through a foreigner, and in a foreign country, than that you should spoil some promising American and be a bad influence here? ”

“ You are cruel, Joe. And I thought you’d sympathise with me, and help me! ”

There was a pause, then he demanded abruptly: “ What does your father say? ”

She flushed—partly at the memory of the interview with her father, partly through shame in recollecting that she had led Frothingham to believe she had not told him. “ He said—but why should I tell you? ”

“ I don’t know, I’m sure, unless because you wish to.”

“ Well—I *will* tell you. He said ” (she imitated his nasal drawl): “ ‘ If your ma and you want to make the deal I’ll sign the papers. I reckon you know what you’re about. And all our money’s for is to make us happy. Buy what you please—I’ll settle for it.’ ”

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“ Was that all? ”

Catherine lowered her eyes. “ Yes, that was all he *said*. But he looked—Joe, it was his look that upset me.”

“ I understand.” Wallingford’s voice was gentle and sympathetic now. “ And what answer are you going to make to that look? ”

“ I’d rather not say,” she replied, giving him a brilliant smile. “ Let’s canter again. We must get home.”

As soon as she reached the house she went to her mother’s rooms. Mrs. Hollister was finishing her morning’s work with her secretary. Catherine waited, impatiently playing with her riding whip. When the secretary left she said: “ Mother, I’m going to throw him over.”

Mrs. Hollister paused for an instant in putting away some of her especially private papers, then went on. Presently she said tranquilly: “ You will do nothing of the sort.”

Catherine quailed before that tone—she had been ruled by her mother all her life, had never been interfered with in any matter which her mother regarded as unimportant, had never been permitted to decide any



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matter which her mother regarded as important. And her mother's rule was the most formidable of all tyrannies—the tyranny of kindness.

“But, mother, I should be wretched with him.”

“Why?”

On the basis of their method of thought and speech each with the other, it was impossible for her to erect “Because I don't love him” into a plausible objection. So she said: “We have nothing in common. His laziness and cynicism irritate me. He makes me nervous. He bores me.”

“All men are objectionable in one way or another,” replied her mother. “If you married the ordinary man you would have nothing after you had grown tired. But marrying him, you'll have, first, last, and all the time, the solid advantages of your position and your title. And you'll like him better when you're used to him—he has admirable qualities for a husband.”

“I can't marry him,” said Catherine doggedly. She knew it was useless to argue with her mother.

“You can't refuse to marry him. It would be dishonourable. Your word is pledged. It would be im-

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possible for a child of mine to be guilty of a dishonourable action."

"When I tell him how I feel he will release me."

"You mean he would refuse to marry a woman who, after treating a man as you have treated him, would show herself so light and so lacking in honour. No, my daughter will not disgrace herself and her family." Mrs. Hollister seated herself beside Catherine and put an arm round her. "She has had her every whim gratified, and that has made her careless of responsibilities. But she will not show herself in serious matters light and untrustworthy."

Catherine stiffened herself against the gentle yet masterful force that seemed to be stealing in upon her from her mother's embrace and tone.

"You've come to one of those rough places in life," Mrs. Hollister went on, "where young people need the help of some older, more experienced person. And some day soon you'll be glad I was here to see you safely over it."

"I can't marry him, mother."

Mrs. Hollister frowned for a second, then her face cleared, and she said quietly: "Your father and I have put you in a position to establish yourself well in life.

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You have engaged yourself to an honourable man, who has something to offer you, who can assure you a position that will be a satisfaction to you all your life and to your children after you. I know I have not brought you up so badly that you would throw away your career, would disregard the interests of those you may bring into the world, all for a mere whim."

Catherine was silent.

"Even if you cared for someone else——"

"But I do," interrupted Catherine impetuously.

Mrs. Hollister winced and reflected before she went on: "It cannot be a serious attachment, Catherine, or I should have noticed it. Is it Joseph Wallingford?"

Catherine did not answer.

"Even if you had been attracted for a moment by a man who had something to offer besides a little sentiment, that would be gone a few brief months after marriage, still it would be your duty to yourself and to your family to make the sensible marriage. You are not a foolish girl. You are not a child. You know what the substantial things in life are."

"I can't marry him," repeated Catherine stubbornly.

"Has Wallingford been making love to you?"

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The anger was close to the surface in Mrs. Hollister's voice.

Catherine smiled bitterly. "No," she answered, "he has not. He cares nothing for me. But I can't marry Lord Frothingham—and I won't."

"You must not say that, Catherine," said her mother sternly. "It is a great shock to me to find that you cannot be trusted. If you refused to marry the man you have voluntarily engaged yourself to, I should never forgive you."

Catherine's eyes sank before her mother's. "The engagement must be announced at once," her mother went on. "You will change your mind when you have thought it over, and when you realise what my feelings are."

"I can't——" began Catherine monotonously.

"I wish to hear no more about it, child," interrupted her mother, her eyes glittering a forewarning of the hate she would have for a daughter who disobeyed her. "To-morrow we will talk of it again."

Catherine and her mother arose, and each faced the other for a moment—two inflexible wills. For Mrs. Hollister had made one error, and that fatal, in train-

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ing her daughter. She had not broken her will in childhood, when the stiffest inherited will can be made to yield; she had only subdued it, driven it to cover. She had left her her individuality. But she did not know this; so, she saw her daughter's looks, saw her daughter leave the room with resolution in every curve of her figure, and was not in the least disturbed as to the event. The idea that she, Maria Hollister, could be defied by anyone in her family—or out of it—could not form in her mind. “It is fortunate,” she said to herself, “that Wallingford is leaving early in the morning. I’ll announce the engagement at dinner to-night.”

Catherine went to change her dress, and then searched for Frothingham. He was alone in the billiard room, half asleep, on one of the wall lounges. At sight of him—she saw him before he saw her—her courage wavered. Yes, he was a decent sort of chap; and she was treating him badly, despicably—had bargained fairly with him, had used the contract publicly to aggrandise herself at his expense, was about to break her contract and humiliate him, injure him, through no fault of his. He had been fair with her, she had been false with him, was about to be base.

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"I can't," she said to herself. "At least, not in cold blood."

He saw her, and his face lighted up. She smiled, nodded, hurried through the billiard room, and disappeared into the hall beyond. As she turned its angle her knees became shaky and her face white. Then Wallingford suddenly appeared at the conservatory door. He came toward her as if he were going to pass without stopping. But he halted.

"Well?" he said.

She leaned against the wall. Her throat was dry and her eyelids were trembling.

"What is it?" he asked gently.

She hung her head.

"Don't be afraid to say it to *me*," he urged.

"There isn't anything you couldn't say to me."

"Do you—do you—do you care for me?" she said, in a queer little choked, squeaky voice.

He laughed slightly, and came close to her and looked down at her. "You're the only thing in all this world I do care for," he said. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing—don't follow me," and she darted back toward the billiard room.

Frothingham was still there, seated now at the open



*"Just my rotten luck," he muttered*





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fire. "Ah—you! I'm glad you've come back," he drawled.

"I want you to release me from my engagement," she said.

His jaw dropped, and he stared stupidly at her. He could hardly believe that this impetuous, energetic creature was the languorous, affected, dreamy Catherine.

"I mean it," she sped on. "I've no excuse to make for myself. But I can't marry you. And you ought to be glad you're rid of me."

Her tone instantly convinced him that he was done for. He turned a sickly yellow, and put his head between his hands and stared into the fire. His brain was in a whirl. "Just my rotten luck," he muttered.

"I don't hope that you'll forgive me," she was saying. "You couldn't have any respect for me. I'm only saving a few little shreds of self-respect. I'm——"

"You mustn't do it, Catherine. You mustn't, you——" he interrupted, rising and facing her.

"I must be free. I care for someone else. Don't discuss it, please. Just say you let me go."

"It ain't right." Cupidity and vanity were lashing

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his anger into a storm. "You can't go back—you've gone too far. Why, we're as good as married."

"Don't make me any more ashamed than I am," she pleaded humbly.

"No, I can't release you," he said with cold fury. "I can't permit myself to be trifled with." He knew that he was taking the wrong tack, that he ought to play the wounded lover. But his feeling for her was so small, and his anger so great, that he could not.

She was almost hysterical. She felt as though she were struggling desperately against some awful force that was imprisoning her. "Let me go. Please, let me go," she gasped.

"No!" he said, arrogance in his voice—the arrogance of a man used to women who let men rule them.

Her eyes flashed. "Then I release myself!" she exclaimed haughtily, with a change of front so swift that it startled him. "And don't you dare ever speak of it to me again!"

She slowly left the room, her head high. But her haughtiness subsided as rapidly as it had risen, and by the time she reached her own apartment she was ready to fling herself down for a miserable cry—and she did. "If I could *only* get him out of the house," she wailed.

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Frothingham debated his situation. "The thing to do," he concluded, "is to go straight off to her father." He had not yet become convinced that in America man occupies a position in the family radically different from his position in England. He found Hollister writing in his study.

"Mr. Hollister," he began.

Hollister raised his head until it was tilted so far back that he could see Frothingham through the glasses that were pinching in the extreme end of his long nose. "Oh—Lord Frothingham—yes!" He laid down his pen. "What can I do for you?"

Frothingham seated himself in a solemn dignity that hid his nervousness. "For several weeks your daughter and I have been engaged. We—we——"

Hollister smiled good-humouredly. "Before you go any further, my boy," he interrupted kindly, "I warn you that you're barking up the wrong tree."

"I beg your pardon," said Frothingham stiffly.

"The person you want to see is the girl's mother. She attends to all that end of the business. I've got enough trouble to look after at my own end."

"What I have to say can be said properly only to her father as the head of the family."

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“But I’m *not* the head of the family. I’m not sure that I know who is. Sometimes I think it’s my wife, again I suspect Catherine.”

“Your daughter now refuses to abide by her engagement,” said Frothingham, in desperation at this untimely levity.

Hollister took off his glasses and examined them on both sides with great care. “Well,” he said at last, “I suppose that settles it.”

Frothingham stared. “I beg pardon, but it does not settle it.”

Hollister gave him a look of fatherly sympathy. “I guess it does. You can’t marry her if she won’t have you. And if she won’t have you—why, she won’t.”

“You treat the matter lightly.” Frothingham had a bright red spot in either cheek. “You do not seem to be conscious of the painful position in which she places you.”

“Good Heavens, Frothingham! What have I got to do with it? You ain’t engaged to *me*. She’s got the right to say what she’ll do with herself.”

Frothingham rose. “I was under the impression,

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sir, that I was dealing with a gentleman who would appreciate the due of a gentleman."

Hollister's eyebrows came down, and a cruel line suddenly appeared at each corner of his mouth. Just then Mrs. Hollister entered. Intuitively she leaped to the right conclusion. "The idiot!" she said to herself. "Why didn't he come to me?" Then she said smoothly, almost playfully, to "the idiot": "Has Catherine been troubling you with her mood this morning?"

Frothingham's face brightened—her mood! Then there was hope.

"You ought not to pay any attention to her moods," Mrs. Hollister went on with a smile. "She's very nervous at times. But it passes."

"She told me flat that our engagement was off," said Frothingham. "I came to her father, naturally. She seemed to be in earnest."

Mrs. Hollister continued to smile. "Don't concern yourself about the matter, Lord Frothingham," she replied in her kindest voice. "Catherine will be all right again to-morrow at the latest. She has been doing too much lately for a young girl under the excitement of an engagement."

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Hollister, who had been looking hesitatingly from his wife to Frothingham, went to the wall and pressed an electric button. When the servant appeared he said: "Please ask Miss Catherine to come here."

Mrs. Hollister turned on him, her eyes flashing. "Catherine is in no state to bear——"

Hollister returned her look calmly, then repeated his order. The servant looked uneasily from the husband to the wife, saw that Mrs. Hollister was not going to speak, made a deprecating bow, and withdrew. In a few minutes—it seemed a long time to the three, waiting in silence—Catherine appeared. Her eyes were swollen slightly, but that was the only sign of perturbation. Mrs. Hollister said to Frothingham: "I think it would be best that her father and I talk with her alone first."

Frothingham instantly rose. With eyes pleadingly upon Catherine he was nearing the door when Hollister spoke—it was in a voice neither Frothingham nor even Catherine had heard from him or suspected him of having at his command. "Please be seated, Lord Frothingham. The best way to settle this business is to settle it."

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Frothingham could not have disobeyed that voice, and he saw with a sinking heart that at the sound of it Mrs. Hollister looked helpless despair.

“Catherine,” said her father, “do you, or do you not, wish to marry Lord Frothingham?”

“I won’t marry him,” replied Catherine. She gave Frothingham a contemptuous look. “I told him so a while ago.”

Mrs. Hollister’s eyes blazed. “Have you forgotten what I said to you?” she demanded of her daughter, her voice shrill with fury.

“No, mother,” Catherine answered slowly; “but—I cannot change my mind. I cannot marry Lord Frothingham.”

An oppressive silence fell. After a moment Frothingham bowed coldly, and left the room. Mrs. Hollister started up to follow him. “One word, Maria,” said her husband. “I wish you to understand that this matter is settled. Nothing more is to be said about it either to Catherine or to that young man—not another word.”

Mrs. Hollister was white to the lips. “I understand,” she replied, with a blasting look at her daughter. And she followed Frothingham to try to pacify

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him—she knew her husband too well not to know that her dream of a titled son-in-law was over.

When she was gone Catherine sank limp into a chair. “She’ll never forgive me,” she exclaimed despondently.

Hollister nodded in silent assent. After a few minutes he said: “It’s been fifteen years since she made me cross her in a matter I sha’n’t speak of. And she remembers it against me to-day as if it had happened an hour ago. The sooner you find your man, Katie, and marry him, the better off you’ll be—that’s *my* advice.” He smiled with grim humour as he added, “And I ought to know.” Then he patted her encouragingly on the shoulder with a hand that looked as if it could hold the helm steady through any tempest.



## VII

**F**ROTHINGHAM had gone direct to his apartment. "Get my traps together at once," he said to his man—Hutt, whose father had been his father's man. He threw himself into a chair in his sitting-room, and tried to think, to plan. But he was still dazed from the long fall and the sudden stop. Presently Hutt touched him.

"Well—well—what is it?" he asked, looking stupidly up at the round, stupid face.

"Beg pardon, my lord," replied the servant, "but Hi've spoke to you twice. Mrs. Hollister wishes to know hif you'll kindly come to 'er in 'er sitting-room."

Frothingham found Mrs. Hollister's maid waiting for him in the hall. He followed her to the heavily perfumed surroundings of pale blue silk, both plain and brocaded, in which Mrs. Hollister lived. He listened to her without hearing what she said—thinking of it afterward he decided that she had been incoherent and not very tactful, and that her chief anxiety had

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been lest he might do something to cause scandal. He remembered that when he had said he would go at once she had tried to persuade him to stay—as if leaving were not the only possible course. He gradually recovered his self-command, and through weakness, through good nature, through contempt of his hosts, and through policy, he acted upon the first principle of the code for fortune-hunters of every degree and kind: “Be near-sighted to insults, and far-sighted to apologies.”

Surveying the wreck from his original lodgings at the Waldorf, he found three mitigations—first, that the engagement had not been announced; second, that he had not written Evelyn anything about it; third, that it was impossible for “middle-class people” such as the Hollisters to insult him—“if I wallow with that sort, I can’t expect anything else, can I?” To cheer himself he had several drinks and took an account of stock. He found he was ninety-three pounds richer than when he landed—he played “bridge” well, and had been in several heavy games at Lake-in-the-Wood, and had been adroit in noting the stupid players, and so arranging partners that he could benefit by them; also he had been lucky in a small way at

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picking the numbers at Canfield's the few times he had trusted himself to go there. "Not so bad," he said. "It's a long game, and that was only the first hand." He hesitated at the indicator, then instead of ordering another drink went to the telephone and called up Longview's house. It gave him courage, and a sense that he was not altogether friendless and forlorn, to hear Honoria's voice again. "Shall you be in late this afternoon?" he asked.

"Why! I didn't know you were in town—or are you calling me from Catherine's?"

"Yes—I'm in town," he replied, and he felt that she must notice the strain in his voice.

"Oh!"

"I'm up to stay," he went on, his voice improving.

"Oh—yes—come at half-past five."

"Thank you—good-by." He held the receiver to his ear until he heard her ring off. "Good girl, Honoria," he muttered. "Not like those beastly cads." He went to the club, lunched with Browne, whom he found there, was beaten by him at billiards, losing ten dollars, and returned to the hotel to dress.

At a quarter-past five he started up the avenue afoot—a striking figure in clothes made in the

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extreme of the English fashion; but he would have been striking in almost any sort of dress, so distinguished was its pale, rather supercilious face, with one of his keen eyes ambushed behind that eyeglass, expressive in its expressionlessness. The occupants of every fifth or sixth carriage in the fashionable parade bowed to him with a friendliness that gave him an internal self-possession as calm as the external immobility which his control of his features enabled him always to present to the world.

He told Honoria his story in outline—"the surest way to win a woman's friendship is to show her that you trust her," he reflected. She was sympathetic in a way that soothed, not hurt, his vanity; but she sided with Catherine. "I half suspected her of being in love with Joe," she said, "but I thought he was a confirmed bachelor. He played all round you—that's the truth. I'm going to say something rather disagreeable—but I think it's necessary."

"I want—I need your advice," he replied.

"You've been relying entirely too much on your title. You've let yourself be misled by what the newspapers say about that sort of thing. You don't understand—I didn't understand until I'd been here a

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while, and had got my point of view straight. They're not so excited about titles now as they used to be when they had no fashionable society of their own, and had to look abroad to gratify their instinct for social position. If you'd come five years ago——"

"Just my rotten luck," he muttered.

"Your title is a good thing—properly worked. It will catch a woman, especially if she's not well forward 'in the push,' as they say. But it won't hold her. She's likely to use you to strengthen her social position, and then to drop you, unless she has lived in England, and has had her head turned, and has become—like your middle classes."

"But my family is away better than Surrey's."

"Your family counts for nothing here. New York knows nothing and cares nothing about birth. Englishmen count by title only."

"Then they ran after Surrey because he was a Duke?"

"Perhaps to a certain extent," replied Honoria. "But I fancy the principal reason was that they wished to see what it was Helen had paid such a tall price for. If he had come here quietly to marry a poor girl there'd have been no stir."

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“Money—money—nothing but money—always money,” sneered Frothingham. He saw the twinkle in Honoria’s eyes. “But, I say,” he protested, “you know that we over there do care for other things, too.”

“So do they here, but what do they care for, first and most, in both countries?”

He smiled.

“It’s money first—there and here, and the world over,” she went on with bitterness under her raillery. “And among our kind of people everything else—sentiment, art, good taste even—is far behind it. How could it be otherwise? We’ve got to have money—lots of money—or we can’t have the things we most crave—luxury, deference, show. But—where are you dining to-night?”

“Probably at the club.”

“Excuse me a minute. I’ll just see if Mrs. Galloway will let me bring you. We’re going to the opera afterward.” She looked at him quizzically. “I think I’ll arrange to ship you off to Boston. A little vacation just now will do you no harm. And—Boston might interest you.”

When she returned from the telephone it was with

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a cordial invitation for him from Mrs. Galloway. He said: "I've a letter to a Mrs. Saalfeld in Boston. Do you know her?"

"Yes—she's here now, I think. But you would better keep away from her. She wouldn't do you the least good."

"Is she out of 'the push'?"

"Oh, no—she leads it there, I believe. But she wouldn't let you look at a girl or a widow, or any woman but herself. She's about forty years old—it used to be the woman of thirty, but it's the woman of forty now. Everywhere she goes she trails a train of young men. They're afraid to look away from her. They watch her like a pack of hungry collies, and she watches them like a hen-hawk."

There was more than the spirit of friendly helpfulness in Honoria's plan to send him away to Boston. The bottom fact—hidden even from herself—was that she was tired of him. He seemed to her helpless and incapable, worse in that respect than any but the very poorest specimens of men she had met in New York. She felt that he was looking to her to see him through an adventure of which she disapproved rather than approved. She had no intention of accepting such a

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burden, yet she was too good-natured and liked him too well to turn him abruptly adrift.

Mrs. Galloway took him in to dinner, and it was not until the second act of the opera that he had a chance to talk with the Boston woman in the party—Mrs. Staunton. Then he slipped into the chair behind her; but she would not talk while the curtain was up. Grand opera bored him, so he passed the time in gazing round the grand-tier boxes—the Galloway box was to the left of the centre. The twilight was not dark enough to hide the part of the show that interested him. He knew New York fashionable society well now, and as he looked he noted each woman and recalled how many millions she represented. “Gad, how rich they are—these beggars,” he thought enviously. And he was seized by a mild attack of what an eminent New York lawyer describes as “the fury of the parasite”—that hate which succeeds contempt in the parasite as its intended victim eludes it.

When the curtain went down on the last of seven uproarious calls—the opera was “Carmen,” and Calvé was singing it—Mrs. Staunton’s disdainful expression gave him the courage to say: “Ghastly row they make, eh?”



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Mrs. Staunton was perhaps fifty years old, long and thin, with a severe profile and a sweet and intelligent, if somewhat too complacent, front face. "Calvé sings rather well—in spots," she said. "But I doubt if Boston would have given her seven calls."

The mirthful shine of Frothingham's right eye might have been a reflection from his glass; again, it might have been really in his eye where it seemed to be—Mrs. Staunton was so seated that she could not see him as he talked over her shoulder into her ear. "Really," was all he said.

"You've not been at Boston?" asked Mrs. Staunton.

"Not yet. I thought it would be well to get acclimated, as it were, before I ventured away from New York."

"You will have it to do over again," said Mrs. Staunton. "We are very different. Here money is king and god, and——" Mrs. Staunton cast a supercilious glance round the brilliant and beautiful, and even dazzling, grand tier. "You see the result. Really, New York is becoming intolerably vulgar. I come here rarely, and leave as soon as I decently can. But one can't stay here even for a few days without

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being corrupted. The very language is corrupt here, and among those who call themselves the best people."

"Really! Really, now!" said Frothingham.

"Indeed, yes. In Boston even the lower classes speak English."

"You don't say." Frothingham's drawl was calm; he put upon his eyeglass the burden of looking astonished interest.

"It must fret your nerves to listen to the speech here," continued Mrs. Staunton. "It's a dialect as harsh and vulgar—as most of the voices."

"It will be a great pleasure to hear the language spoken as it is at home—though I can't say that I mind it here. Yes—I shall be glad to see Boston."

Mrs. Staunton lifted her eyebrows and looked politely amused. "But *we* don't speak as you speak in England. I didn't say *that*."

"Oh—I thought you were by way of saying they spoke English at Boston."

"So I did. I meant that we speak correctly. You English speak very incorrectly. Your upper class is even more slovenly in that respect than your middle class."

Frothingham looked interest and inquiry. "Ah—

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yes—quite so,” he said. “I believe we do let our middle class look after all that sort of thing. It saves us a lot of bother.”

“I’m glad you admit the truth.” Mrs. Staunton looked gracious and triumphant. “Last winter we had the president of one of the colleges at Oxford with us—a very narrow man.”

“Frightful persons, all that sort, *I* think,” said Frothingham.

“I’m not astonished that you think so,” replied Mrs. Staunton. “He—it was Mr. Stebbins—scoffed at the idea that Boston spoke English. He insisted that whatever your upper class speaks is English, that they have the right to determine the language.”

That was Frothingham’s own notion, but he gave no sign. “Stebbins is a hideous old jabberwock,” he said, glad that the orchestra was beginning.

He had accidentally, but naturally, stumbled into the road to Mrs. Staunton’s good graces. She wanted acquiescent listeners only; he disliked talking and abhorred argument. She was living at the Waldorf also, and this gave him his opportunity. She found him most agreeable. He had the great advantage of

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being free all day, while her New York men friends were at work then—and she did not like women. She insisted it was only the New York woman—“so trivial, so childish in her tastes for show and for farcical amusements”—that she did not like; but the fact was that she did not like any women anywhere. Nominally, she was in New York to visit her sister, Mrs. Findlay, but she rarely saw her. “I can’t endure staying in Henrietta’s house,” she explained to Frothingham. “She has fallen from grace. If anything, she out-Herods the New York women—always the way with renegades. And she lets her housekeeper and her butler run her household—dust everywhere, things going to ruin, the servants often drunk. If I were in the house I could not be silent; so I stay at a hotel when I make my annual visit to her.”

She invited Frothingham to come to her at Boston in the second week in January—and he accepted. She had said never a word to him about her niece, Cecilia Allerton, and for that very reason he knew that she was revolving some plan for bringing them together. He also knew that Cecilia Allerton’s father, head of the great Boston banking house of Allerton Brothers & Monson, was rich enough to give his daughter the

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dower necessary to admission into the Gordon-Beauvais family.

In the two weeks between Mrs. Staunton's departure and his engagement to follow her he did not neglect his business. But his assiduity was wasted. He saw chances to marry, and marry well—but no dowers worth his while. Many mothers beamed on him, and their daughters brightened at his approach; but not one of the families that might have had him for the faintest hinting showed any matrimonial interest in him. One mother, Mrs. Brandon, actually snubbed him as if he were a mere vulgar, poor, and untitled fortune-hunter—and the snub was unprovoked, as he was only courteous to Miss Brandon. When Frothingham laughed over this incident to Honoria she said: "Mrs. Brandon purposes to marry Estelle to Walter Summit."

"That chuckle-head? Why, I found him in the cloak-room at the Merivale dance the other night sitting with his big damp hands in his lap, and his mouth hanging open. And he wasn't screwed, either."

"But Estelle isn't marrying *him*. She's marrying his forty millions. With what she'll inherit from her father and her uncle that will make her the third rich-

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est woman in New York. The fact that Walter is slightly imbecile is rather in his favour—she'll have a free hand, and that's everything where a woman's ambitious. If you Englishmen hadn't the reputation of being masterful in your own households you'd have less difficulty in marrying here. It was a bad day for English marriages when the American woman learned that England is a man's country. A girl brought up as are the girls here nowadays hates to abdicate—and she don't have to if she marries an American."

"I've heard that all women like a master," suggested Frothingham.

"So do men. Everyone likes to bow to real superiority and serve it, when he or she finds it. But the difficulty comes in trying to convince a man or a woman that he or she has met a superior."

"Well, then—perhaps women are more easily convinced than men."

Honorina smiled satirically. "They *seem* to be," she replied, "because they are prudent. But if some husbands only knew what their wives really thought, they might be less easy in their vanity than they are."

"That ain't true of our English women," said Frothingham.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

“No—and why? Because, milord, they don’t think.”

“Well—*my* wife can do as she jolly well pleases if she’ll only let me alone.”

“If she’s an American you may be sure she *will* do as she jolly well pleases—and you may also be sure that it won’t please you to be jolly as she does it.”

Just then a servant came in to say that Catherine was at the door in her carriage, and wished to know whether Honoria was at home. Honoria looked at Frothingham inquiringly.

“As you please,” said Frothingham, settling his eyeglass firmly, and clearing his face of expression.

Honoria left him in the large drawing room, and waited for Catherine in the adjoining smaller room. “Lord Frothingham is here,” she said in an undertone, after they had kissed each the other.

Catherine paled and her eyes shifted. “Does he know I’m here?” she asked.

“Yes,” replied Honoria, “but you needn’t see him if you don’t wish.”

Catherine reflected. “I’m certain to meet him again some time, ain’t I, dear?” she said. “And it might be more awkward than this.”

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She advanced boldly with Honoria and put out her hand to him, her face flushing, and a delightful pleading look in her eyes. "I'm so glad to see you again, Lord Frothingham," she said.

"Ah—thank you—a great pleasure to me also, I'm sure," he answered in his most expressionless tone.

"Are you staying in town?"

"We came up yesterday—to stay. Won't you come to see us? Are you at the Waldorf? I do hope we can get you for a dinner mamma's arranging for the latter part of next week."

"Very good of you. But I'm just off to Boston."

He shook hands with her, then with Honoria. At the door he turned, and a faint smile showed in his eyeglass and at the corners of his mouth. "Oh, I almost forgot—give my regards to Wallingford—when you see him—won't you?"

Catherine looked gratefully at him. "Thank you—thank you," she said. "I know he'll be glad of a friendly message from you. He's very fond of you."

"Really?" drawled Frothingham. "That's charming!" He smiled with good-natured raillery. "He had such a quaint way of showing it that I wasn't *quite* certain."



## CHAPTER SEVEN

When he had bowed and dropped the heavy portière behind him Catherine went to the window. She stood there until she had seen him enter his hansom and drive away.

“How beautifully he dresses,” she said absently to Honoria. “And what distinguished manners he has—as if he’d been used to being a gentleman for ages and ages.”

She seated herself near the fire—the tea-table was between her and Honoria. “You didn’t know that we were engaged, did you?” she went on, looking dreamily into the fire.

“Were you?” said Honoria—she never betrayed confidences.

“Yes. But I broke it off.”

“Why?”

“I think,” Catherine answered slowly, “I think perhaps it was because I didn’t feel at home with him—and I do with—Joe. He knows how to manage me.”

“Joe? Why, you used to act as if you disliked him.”

“So did I—think so.” Catherine sighed. “I wish,” she said after a moment, “that Joe had Beauvais House and—the title.”

## VIII

**A**T half-past four o'clock in a raw January afternoon Frothingham descended from a Pullman fiery furnace to adventure upon Boston. As he drove to Mrs. Staunton's the rain sifted through the cracks round the windows and doors of the musty cab, and was deposited upon his face in a greasy coating by currents of the iciest air he had felt since he was last in Scotland. It was air that seemed to mangle as it bit, that sent the chilled blood cowering to the depths of the body instead of bringing it to the surface in healthful reaction.

"Loathsome!" he muttered as he looked out on either side. "Looks something like London—no, Liverpool. The people look English, too." A big, dingy street car with bell wildly clanging darted from a narrow side street into the narrow main street which the cab was following. There was a bare escape from a disastrous collision. "It's America, right enough," he said.

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The rain was whirling in the savage wind, umbrellas were tossing and twisting, impeding without in the least sheltering the sullen throngs on the sidewalks. Everything looked wet, and sticky, and chilly, and forbidding. "They certainly are English," he said as he noted the passing faces; and he did not like it. In New York he had been amused by the variety—specimens of all nationalities, often several nationalities struggling for expression in the same face. Here the sameness was tiresome to him, and he missed the alert look of New Yorkers of all kinds.

He began to feel somewhat better, however, when he reached the wide front hall of Mrs. Staunton's big, old-fashioned, comfortable house on the water side of Beacon Street. And he felt still better when the butler showed him to the room he was to occupy—the furniture and hangings, the woodwork and wall paper, sombre yet homelike in the light and warmth of an open fire. At half-past five he entered the drawing room in fairly good humour now that he and Hutt were established and safe from the weather. He joined Mrs. Staunton and her daughter-in-law at the fire, where they were cosily ensconced with a tea-table between them.

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"You must have a cheerful impression of Boston," said young Mrs. Staunton, called Mrs. Ridgie—her husband's name was Ridgeway.

"That wind *was* a bit nasty," admitted Frothingham. "But I've forgiven and forgotten it. I always spill my troubles as soon as ever I can."

"You'll detest Boston after New York," continued Mrs. Ridgie. "I've lived here ten years. It's—it's a hole."

Her mother-in-law's expression was not pleasant, and Frothingham saw at a glance that they disliked each the other. "Virginia is from New York," she said to him apologetically. "She determined in advance not to like us, and she does not change her mind easily."

"Us." Virginia smiled mockingly. "Mother here," she said to Frothingham, "was born at a place a few miles away—Salem, where they burned witches——"

"Hanged witches—none was burned," interrupted Mrs. Staunton.

"Thank you, dear—hanged witches. At any rate she was born at Salem. And her people removed to this very house more than forty years ago. The other

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day I was talking to old Judge Arkwright, and spoke of my mother-in-law as a Bostonian. ‘But,’ said he, ‘she’s not a Bostonian. She’s of Salem town.’ Think of it, Lord Frothingham! She’s lived here nearly half a century, and she married a man whose family has lived here two hundred years. And they still speak and think of her as a stranger. That’s Boston.”

“It reminds me of home,” said Frothingham. “Very different from New York, isn’t it? I asked the woman I took in to dinner the other night where her parents came from. ‘Good Lord, don’t ask *me!*’ she said. ‘All I know about it is that they came in a hurry and never went back.’”

“How sensible!” said Mrs. Ridgie, the more enthusiastically for her mother-in-law’s look of disgust. “You’ll notice that people on this side never talk of their ancestors unless there’s something wrong somewhere with themselves.”

Mrs. Staunton restrained herself. “You’ll give Lord Frothingham a very false idea of this country, Virgie,” she said with softness in her voice and irritation in her eyes.

“Oh, he’s certain to get that anyhow. He’ll only see one kind of people while he’s here, and though they

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think they're the whole show they don't amount to *that*." At "that" she snapped her fingers so loudly and suddenly that both Mrs. Staunton and Frothingham started. "If you came really to know this country," she went on, "you'd find out that just as soon as people here begin to pose as 'our best people,' 'our best society,' and all that rot, they begin to amount to nothing. They're has-beens, or on the way to it. We don't stand still here—not even in Boston. We're always going up or coming down."

After a silence Mrs. Staunton ventured to say, "I think you'll find, Lord Frothingham, that the tone of Boston is, as I told you, far higher than New York's."

"Really!" Frothingham looked slightly alarmed. "That's bad news," he said. "I don't go in for a very high tone, you know. I'm keyed rather low, I should say."

"You needn't be frightened," said Mrs. Ridgie. "They beat the air a good deal here. But, if you'll be patient and not encourage 'em, they'll soon get down to the good old business of ravelling reputations. At that they're far superior to New York."

Mrs. Staunton looked vigorous dissent, but said nothing. They listened for a few minutes to the

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drowsy crackling of the wood fire, and to the futile beat of the storm against the windows. Then Mrs. Ridgie rose. "I'll see you at dinner," she said to Frothingham. "I'll forgive you for being so cross to me, belle-mère," she said to Mrs. Staunton, patting her on the cheek. Then her pretty little figure and pretty, pert face vanished. Mrs. Staunton frowned at the place where she had been—she disliked Virgie's hoydenish movements almost as much as her demonstrativeness; in her opinion, "no thoroughly respectable woman laughs loudly, uses slang, or indulges in public kissing and embracing."

They were ten at dinner that night, and Frothingham, seated between Mrs. Staunton and a middle-aged, stiff, and homely Mrs. Sullivan, fought off depression by drinking the champagne steadily—"vile stuff," he said to himself, "and bad cooking, and a dull old woman on either side. And what's this rot they're talking?"

The conversation was of a Buddhist priest who was making converts among "the very best people." Mrs. Sullivan was contending that he was a fraud, and that his teachings were immoral. Mrs. Staunton was defending him, assisted by a sallow, black-whiskered,

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long-haired young man on the opposite side of the table—a Mr. Gilson.

Frothingham would not even pretend to listen. His look and his thoughts wandered down the table to Cecilia Allerton.

Her slender paleness was foiled by two stout red and brown men—Ridgeway Staunton and Frank Mortimer. They were eating steadily, with the slow, lingering movements of the jaw which proclaim the man or the beast that wishes to get food into the mouth rather than into the stomach. Between forkfuls they drank champagne, holding it in the mouth and swallowing deliberately. Cecilia was evidently oblivious of them and of the rest of her surroundings. “She looks sickly,” thought Frothingham, “and an iceberg.”

She had a small head, a high, narrow forehead, a long, narrow face—pale, almost gaunt. The expression of her mouth was prim to severity. But her eyes, large and brilliant brown, and full of imagination, contradicted the coldness of the rest of her face, and gave her a look that was certainly distinction, if not beauty. “I wonder what she’s thinking about?” said Frothingham to himself. “Buddhism, I wager. How English she looks. But they all do, for that matter,



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except this long-haired beast opposite. He looks a Spaniard, or something else Southern and dirty."

"Did you find that the New York women swore much, Lord Frothingham?"

He started. It was the Puritanic-looking Mrs. Sullivan. "I beg pardon," he said, turning his head so that his entrenched eye was trained upon her.

"The New York women," replied Mrs. Sullivan. "Were they very profane?"

"Ah—well—that is—— Now, what would you call profane?" asked Frothingham in his driest drawl.

"Damn, and devil, and that sort?"

"I should call them profane in a woman, and worse. I should call them vulgar."

"Really!"

"Shouldn't you?"

"Ah, I don't know. I don't call things. What's the use?"

"But you must have opinions."

"Lots of 'em—lots of 'em—a new set every day. It's a good idea to look at everything from all sorts of directions, don't you think?"

"If one has no sense of responsibility. But I know you have. One of the characteristics I particularly ad-

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mire in the English upper class is their sense of responsibility. I think it splendid, the way they support the Church, and so set an example to the lower classes."

"I don't go in for that yet—I stop in bed. It's not expected of one until he's head of a family. When I am, of course I'll tuck my book under my arm and toddle away on Sunday morning to do my duty. I think it's rather funny, don't you? We do as we jolly please all week and then on Sunday, when there's nothing naughty going on, anyhow, we do our duty. Cleverest thing in the British Constitution, that!"

"But you believe in your—your church, don't you?"

"Believe? To be sure. Everyone does, except ghastly middle-class cranks. Some of 'em go crazy and are pious every day. Others go crazy and chuck it all. They run to extremes—that's bad form. I don't like extremes."

Mrs. Sullivan looked at Frothingham suspiciously. His face was always serious, but the eyeglass and the drawl and the shadow of a hint of irony in his tone raised a doubt. She returned to her original question: "They tell me that the women—the fashionable women

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—swear a great deal in New York now—that it's the latest fad."

"I can't say that they ever swore at me—much," replied Frothingham. "But then, you know, I'm rather meek. It's possible they might if I'd baited 'em."

"A few of our women here—those that hang round horses and stables all the time—have taken up swearing. It is said that they contracted the habit in New York and Newport. But I doubted it."

"Perhaps it's the horses that make 'em swear," suggested Frothingham. "Horses are such stupid brutes."

"And they smoke—but that's an old story. All the women smoke in New York, don't they?"

"I'm not observant. You see, I don't see well unless I look sharp."

Mrs. Sullivan smiled amiably. "You're very discreet, Lord Frothingham. You don't gossip—I detest it myself."

She talked to the man at her left, but soon turned to him with: "Doesn't it shock you, the way divorce is growing nowadays? It's almost as bad in England, I understand, as it is with us. We're taking up all the

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habits of the common sort of people. Really, I try to be broad-minded, but I can't keep up with the rising generation. A young married woman called on me this afternoon—she and her husband are of our best families. She told me she was engaged to a young married man in New York. 'But,' said I, 'you're both married.' 'We're going to get our divorces in the spring,' she said. She asked me not to say anything about her engagement—'for,' said she, 'we haven't announced it. I've not told my husband yet that I'm going to get a divorce, and my fiancé hasn't told his wife.' What do you think of that, Lord Frothingham?"

"Devilish enterprising, isn't it, now? That's what we call a Yankee notion. Do you think it'll be a go?"

"I've no doubt of it. She's extremely energetic—and conscienceless—I'd say brazen, if she weren't a lady."

When the women went into the drawing room Ridgeway Staunton brought to Frothingham a tall, ascetic-looking man, with the bald, smooth, bulging temples and the sourly curled lips of habitual bad temper. "Lord Frothingham, Mr. Allerton." They bowed stiffly, and looked each at the other uncertainly.

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“I’ve heard much of you from my sister-in-law, Mrs. Staunton,” said Allerton.

“She’s been very good to me,” replied Frothingham cordially.

“She’s an admirable woman,” said Allerton. “She has been a mother—more than a mother—to my little girl for years.”

“Your daughter was most fortunate,” replied Frothingham, in a tone that was for him enthusiastic.

Allerton began to talk English politics; and Frothingham, who, like Englishmen of all classes, knew his country’s politics thoroughly, was astonished at the minuteness and accuracy of the American’s knowledge. But he was amazed to find that Allerton, though an aristocrat and a Tory in the politics of his own country, with narrow and bitter class views, was in English politics a Liberal of the radical type—a “little Englander” and a “Home Ruler.” And he presently discovered that there were other inconsistencies equally strange. For example, Allerton was savage in his hatred of all social innovations, was fanatical against the morals and manners of the younger people in the limited Boston set which he evidently regarded as the pinnacle and pattern of the whole world, yet was al-

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most a sensualist in literature, art, and music. He sneered at superstition, yet believed in ghosts and in dreams. Intolerant with the acidity of a bad digestion and a poor circulation, he would cheerfully have jailed and hanged all who were intolerant of those things of which he was tolerant—and he thought himself tolerant to the verge of laxness. Finally, he was a theoretical democrat, yet had a reverence for his own ancestry, and for the title and ancestry of Frothingham, that even to Frothingham seemed amusing and contemptible.

At first Frothingham feared lest he should express some opinion that would rouse the cold and tenacious dislike of Allerton. But he soon saw that, because of his title and descent, he was regarded by the banker as privileged and exempt from criticism. Just as Mrs. Staunton and Mrs. Sullivan thought Frothingham's slang even when it trenched on profanity not only tolerable but proper in him, so Allerton smiled with frosty indulgence upon his light, and not very reverent, criticisms in politics, religion, morals, and art.

“What do you think of him?” Mrs. Staunton asked her brother-in-law, when the men rejoined the women.

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“A fine type of English gentleman,” replied Allerton; “manly and dignified, and his mind is keen. I like him.”

“I’m going to take him to Cecilia,” said she.

“I’m sure Cecilia will like him. I don’t think she’s looking well, Martha.”

“Poor child! You can’t expect a girl of her depth of feeling, her spirituality, to recover soon. You must remember, it’s been only a year and three months. This is the first time she’s been out, isn’t it?”

“I should not have believed she could be so disobedient as she has been in the past year,” said Allerton sourly. “The night of the opening of the gallery I ordered her to come down and help me receive. I shall never forget that she locked herself in her room. It shows how the poison of the example of the young people nowadays permeates.”

“But that was nearly a year ago, Edward. Be careful not to be harsh to her. She inherits—your imperiousness.” Mrs. Staunton hesitated after “inherits,” because the look in her brother-in-law’s eyes reminded her that his wife—her sister—after enduring for eight years the penitentiary he made of his home, fled from him and refused to return, and

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lived by herself in a cottage at Brookline until her death.

After talking to several of her guests, so that her action might not seem pointed, Mrs. Staunton took Frothingham where Cecilia was listening to Gilson's animated exposition of the true, or Gilson, theory of portrait painting. A moment after Frothingham was introduced Mrs. Staunton took the reluctant Gilson away.

Cecilia looked after him, a quizzical expression in her eyes. "Do you know Mr. Gilson?" she asked.

"No; I've only just met him."

"What do you think of him?"

"I can't say. I've barely seen him."

"But isn't Schopenhauer right where he says, 'Look well at a human being the first time you see him, for you will never see *him* again?'"

"I should say Gilson was—not very clean, then. Who is he?"

"He came here four years ago from we don't know where, and exhibited a lot of his own paintings, most of them portraits of himself in all sorts of strange attitudes and clothes. Everybody ran after him—we have a new craze here each year, you know. That year





*"Then you're not a Buddhist or a Spiritualist?"*



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it was Gilson. A girl, a Miss Manners, married him. If it hadn't been for that, he'd have been forgotten, and would have disappeared. As it is, we still have him with us. That's his wife on the sofa in the corner."

Frothingham looked toward the enormously fat woman disposed there, and gazing round vaguely, with a sleepy, comfortable, complacent smile. "How do you know it's a sofa she's sitting on?" he asked.

"Because I saw it before she sat down," replied Cecilia. "Her fad is a diet of raw wheat. If she'd been where you could see her at the table, you'd have noticed that she ate only raw wheat. She's served specially everywhere since she got the idea last autumn. She brings her wheat with her."

"And what is your fad?—you say everyone has a fad."

"Everyone except me." She smiled pensively. "I'm too serious for fads, I fear."

"Then you're not a Buddhist or a Spiritualist?" he said, with a feeling of relief.

The colour flared into her face. "Spiritualism!" Her lips compressed, and seemed even thinner. Her expression vividly suggested her father. "But *that*

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is not a fad! Only the thoughtless and the ignorant call it a fad."

Frothingham's face became blank. "This is a time to sit tight," he said to himself. "She's looking at me as if I were a witch and she were about to burn—no, hang—me."

"It would be a dreary world, it seems to me," she went on, her voice low, and a queer light in her softening eyes, "if it were not for the friendship and guidance of those in the world beyond."

"Really!" His tone might have meant almost anything except the wonder and amusement it concealed.

Her father came to take her home. "We should be glad to see you, Lord Frothingham, at our house," he said graciously. "I hope you will let Mrs. Staunton bring you."

"Thank you—I'll ask her to."

As he watched Cecilia leave he said to himself, "She's mad as a hatter—or is it just Boston?"

## IX

**A**BOUT a week after he met Lord Frothingham at Mrs. Staunton's, Edward Allerton left his bank an hour before luncheon time and went to the Public Library. His look as he entered was undoubtedly furtive; and as he drifted aimlessly round the reading-room, declining the offers of assistance from the polite and willing attendants, his manner was such that had he been a stranger he would have been watched as a suspicious character. He took several reference books from the cases, finally and most carelessly of all, a Burke's Peerage. Half concealing it with his overcoat, he bore it to a table and seated himself. He turned the pages to where "Frothingham" appeared in large letters. There he stopped and read—at first nervously, soon with an attention that shut out his surroundings:

Frothingham—George Arthur Granby Delafere Gordon-Beauvais, seventh earl of Frothingham, Baron de Beauvais, b. at Beauvais House, Surrey, March 9, 1865, s. of Herbert Delafere Gordon-Beauvais, sixth earl of F., and Maria Barstow, 2nd dau. of the

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Marquess of Radbourne. Succeeded on the death of his father, Aug. 4, 1890.

Allerton studied the coat of arms, which originated, in part, in the tenth century, so Burke said. He read on and on through the description of the secondary titles and other honours of his sister-in-law's guest, into the two columns of small type which set forth the history of the Gordon-Beauvais family—its far origin, Godfrey de Beauvais, a great lord in the time of Charlemagne, so Burke declared; its many and curious vicissitudes of fortune, its calamities in old France through the encroachments of the Dukes of Burgundy, which finally drove it, in poverty, but with undiminished pride and unabated resolution to live only by the sword and the tax-gatherer, to England in the wake of William the Conqueror; its restoration there, and long and glorious lordship, so glorious that it scorned the titles a mere Tudor, or Stuart, or German nobody could give until 1761, when it condescended to receive from George III the Earldom of Frothingham. There were places in the narrative so weak that even the adroit and sympathetic Burke could not wholly cover them. But the Milk Street banker saw them not. No child ever swallowed a tale

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of gnomes and fairies and magic vanishings and apparitions with a mind more set upon being fooled. He read slowly to prolong the pleasing tale. And when he came to the end he read it through again, and found it all too short.

He started from his trance, glanced at his watch, noted that no attendants were in sight, and stole hastily away from the scene of his orgie. But in his agitation he was guilty of the stupidity of the novice—he left the book on the reading-desk; he left it open at the second page of “Frothingham.” An attendant was watching afar off; as soon as Allerton had slipped away he swooped, full of idle yet energetic curiosity.

When he saw that the book was a Burke’s Peerage he was puzzled; then he turned back a page, and his eye caught the name “Frothingham.” Like all Boston, he knew that the Earl was in town, was staying at *the* Mrs. Staunton’s, “on the water side of Beacon Street.” And like all Boston, he had heard the rumour that the Earl was trying to marry “Celia” Allerton, the second heiress of Boston. Thus, the sight of that name caused a smile of delight to irradiate his fat, pasty face with its drapery of soft, scant

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grey whiskers. He looked round for someone to enable him to enjoy his discovery of a great man's weakness by tattling it. He saw Gilson, industriously "loading up" for a lecture on "colour in Greek sculpture and architecture."

He hastened to him and touched him on the shoulder. "Come with me," he whispered.

Gilson, a natural gossip, had not lived four years in Boston without becoming adept in the local sign language of his species. He rose and followed to the table whereon was spread the damning proof of Allerton's guilt.

"Look at this," whispered the attendant, pointing to the name "Frothingham."

Gilson looked, first at the page, then at the attendant. His expression was disappointment—he cared not a rap about Frothingham or about Burke's genealogical romances.

"But who do you think was sitting here?" whispered the attendant, his eyes sparkling. "Sitting here, reading away at this for more than an hour?"

"Frothingham?" said Gilson, in the reading-room undertone. "Those adventurers are always crazy about themselves."



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“No—it was—Edward—*Allerton!*” As he hesitated on the name the attendant shot his big head forward; at the climax he jerked it back, regarding the artist with delighted eyes.

“You don’t *say* so!” exclaimed Gilson, and then they had a fit of silent laughter.

“Don’t give *me* away,” cautioned the attendant.

By nine o’clock the next night there was not a member of the Beacon Street set, whether living in Boston or in Brookline and the other fashionable suburbs, who had not heard the news; and the mails were carrying it to those at a distance. And wherever it was repeated there was the same result—derision, pretended contempt of such vulgar snobbishness, expressions of wonder that an Allerton had descended to such low trafficking. Of course none dared tell the Stauntons and the Allertons or Frothingham. But Frothingham, who saw everything through that monocle of his, noted the covert smiles that now peeped at him, the grins and nudgings and cranings when he and Cecilia Allerton appeared in public together.

One of the many rules which Mr. Allerton had ordained for the guidance of his household in the lines he regarded as befitting the establishment of a gentle-

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man of family and tradition was that Cecilia must be at the half-past seven o'clock breakfast with her father. Usually he did not speak after his brief, formal salutation—a "Good-morning, Cecilia," and a touch of his dry, thin lips to her forehead. But he might wish to speak, and it would be a grave matter if he should wish to speak and no one were there for him to speak to. Besides, he always gave his orders at breakfast—his comments on the shortcomings in the servants, or in Cecilia's housekeeping; his criticisms of her conduct. These "breakfasts of justice" were not held often, because Cecilia made few mistakes, and the maids—Allerton kept no men servants but a coachman—had been long in the family service, and had therefore been long cowed and trimmed and squeezed to the Edward Allerton mould for menials. But when a "breakfast of justice" was held it was memorable.

Toward the end of the second week of Frothingham's Boston sojourn Mr. Allerton laid aside his paper at breakfast and looked at Cecilia. Agnes, the second waitress, who always attended at breakfast, understood the signal, and at once left the room, closing the door behind her. Cecilia gave a nervous little sigh,

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dropped her eyes, and put on the pale, calm expression behind which she hid herself from her father.

“ You were at Dr. Yarrow’s lecture yesterday afternoon, I believe? ” Allerton began.

Cecilia’s nerves visibly relaxed as she noted that his voice was not the dreaded voice of justice. “ Yes, sir,” she replied.

“ It was on the evidences of communication with the spirit world, was it not? ”

“ Yes, sir—the fourth in the series.”

“ Who accompanied you? ”

“ Aunt Martha and Lord Frothingham.”

There was a pause, then Mr. Allerton coughed slightly and said: “ How do you like the young Englishman, Cecilia? ”

Cecilia lifted her eyes in a frightened glance that dropped instantly before her father’s solemn, rigid gaze. “ He’s—well-mannered and agreeable,” she replied. “ I like him as much as one can like a foreigner.”

“ I’m surprised at your speaking of him as a foreigner. He—in fact, he seems to me quite like one of our own young men, except that he lives upon a higher plane, and shows none of the degeneration, the vul-

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garisation, I may say, with which our young men have become infected through the overindulgence of their parents and contact with New York."

Another long pause, and when Allerton spoke there was a suggestion of combating opposition in his voice. "I have been much impressed with the young man. Titles are very deceptive. As you know, I have no regard for them, or for the system which produces and maintains them. But, his title aside, the young man comes of a family that has the right sort of blood. You must have noticed the evidences of it in his face, and in his manners and character?"

As the statement was put interrogatively, Cecilia knew her duty too well not to reply. "He has a strongly featured face," she said. "But it seemed to me to indicate rather a race that had been great, but was now—small."

Allerton frowned. "I am sure that, properly established, he would have a distinguished career." He paused, then went on in a tone Cecilia understood and paled before: "It would be most satisfactory to me to have my daughter married to him. I should regard it as satisfactory in every way. You would be estab-

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lished in an honourable and dignified position. You would exert in society and the wider world the influence to which your birth and breeding entitle you. **You** would maintain the traditions of your family and strengthen his."

Cecilia shivered several times as he was speaking; but when she spoke her low voice was firm. "But, father, you know my heart is with Stanley."

Her father looked steadily at her—the look she felt like a withering flame. "I requested you more than two years ago—months before he died—never to mention his name to me, and never to think of him seriously again. I repeat, it would be gratifying to me if you were to marry Lord Frothingham. When is he leaving your Aunt Martha's?"

"Next Monday, I believe. He goes down to Brookline—to Mrs. Ridgie."

"You are invited for the same time?"

"Yes."

"I shall expect you to go." Mr. Allerton rose. "I trust, in thinking the matter over, you will appreciate that I am more capable to judge what is best for you than you are, with your limited experience and the narrow views of life and duty not unnatural in

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youth." He left the room, severe and serene, master of himself and of his household.

The Allertons were traditionally Chinese in their beliefs in the sacredness of the duty of obedience from children to parents, and the duty of despotic control by parents over children.

Theirs was one of the old houses in Mount Vernon Street—a traditional New England home for a substantial citizen. There was no ostentation about them—the carriage in which they drove forth was deliberately ancient in style and in appointments, looked modest even among the very modest or, if you choose, "badly turned out," equipages of the Boston "aristocracy." Mr. Allerton's public expenditures—on an art gallery, in partial support of an orchestra and a hospital, in subscriptions to colleges, lectures, charities—were greater by thirty thousand a year than his private expenditures. Cecilia had few clothes, and, while they were of the very best, and were in good taste and style, they modestly asserted that in the Allerton conception of dress for a lady conspicuousness for inconspicuousness was the prime requirement. Mrs. Ridgie, who often complained that she "hated to live in a town where the best people didn't wear

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their best clothes every day," called Cecilia a "dowd"; but that was unjust, because Cecilia was most careful in her dress, and adapted it admirably to her peculiar charms.

If Honoria had not forewarned Frothingham he would have been deceived by the modesty and frugality of the Allerton establishment. After New York, it seemed to him most un-American for people of great wealth to live thus obscurely. But, having been pointed by Honoria, he soon discovered that Allerton was indeed enormously rich. And he also discovered that he was favourably inclined to a titled son-in-law. But Cecilia——

"There's some mystery about her," he reflected. "She acts as if she were walking in her sleep. But if I could get her, I'd do even better than if I'd taken a wife from among those nervous New Yorkers. She's meek and a stay-at-home. She'd not bother me a bit, and she and Evelyn would hit it off like twins. She's not exactly stupid, but she's something just as good. It doesn't matter whether one's wife is stupid or absent-minded—the effect's the same."

But he walked round and round the fence between her personality and the world in vain. He found no

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low place, no place where he could slip under, no knot-hole or crack even. They went down to Brookline together—he was more puzzled than ever by her attitude toward him that morning. She was less friendly, but also less forbidding. She seemed to him to be awaiting something—he suspected what. He tried to muster courage to put his destiny to the touch when a chance naturally offered; but he could not—her expression was too strongly suggestive of a statue.

Instead, he said: "What do you think about—away off there—wherever it is?"

"Think?" She smiled peculiarly. "I don't think—I feel."

"Feel what?"

She looked mocking. "Ah—that's my secret. You would stay where I do if you could go there and it made you as happy as it makes me."

"You're mysterious," he drawled. "I'm a block-head at riddles and all that."

But she did not assist him.

Mrs. Ridgie herself was waiting for them in a two-seated trap with a pair of exceedingly restless thoroughbreds. Halfway to the house they shied at an automobile and started to run. She got them



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under control after a struggle, and glanced round at Frothingham for approval—he looked calm and seemed unconscious that anything disturbing had happened. “Ridgie told me not to take this pair out,” she said. “But I make it a rule never to obey an order from him. In that way we get on beautifully. He loves to give orders—and I never object. I love to disobey orders—and he never objects.”

The Ridgie Stauntons lived in what seemed to Frothingham little more than an exalted farmhouse, though it was regarded in that neighbourhood as a sinful flaunting of luxury, the worst of Mrs. Ridgie’s many sins of ostentation and extravagance. These were endured because she was married to a Staunton, and because she was from New York, and therefore could not be expected to know what was vulgar and what well bred. But Frothingham was more comfortable than he had been since the day before he left Lake-in-the-Wood. Mrs. Ridgie would live in free-and-easy fashion—one could smoke through all the house; there were drinks and plenty of good cigars and cigarettes available at all times; and the talk was the unpretentious gossip and slang of fast sets everywhere—intelligent people intelligently frivolous.

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Frothingham thought Ridgie Staunton "a harmless sort, a bit loud and noisy," but well-meaning, and good enough except when he had his occasional brief spasmodic fits of remembering his early training, and feeling that his mode of life was all wrong. He was, in his wife's opinion, a perfect husband, except that he hung about so much.

"What do your English women do with their husbands, Lord Frothingham?" she said. "It's a horrible nuisance, having a man—a husband—round all day long with nothing to do. I try to drive Ridgie out to work. But he's a lazy dog. He goes a few steps and then comes slinking back. I'm opposed to a leisure class—of men."

"And you said only yesterday," complained Ridgie, "that Englishmen make better lovers than Americans because they have leisure and the sense of leisure, while Americans are forever looking at watches and clocks."

"Did I? But that was yesterday," retorted his wife. "Besides, I said lovers—not husbands. Give me an English lover, but a hard-working, stay-away-from-home American husband."

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“Do you wonder that I watch a wife who talks like that?” said Ridgie cheerfully.

Frothingham and Cecilia rode the next morning. Getting away from the staid old house in Mount Vernon Street seemed to have revived and cheered her. There was colour in her cheeks, life in her eyes, and she showed by laughing and talking a great deal that she was interested in the earth for a moment at least. Ridgie had given Frothingham a difficult horse, but as he rode well he succeeded in carrying on a reasonably consecutive conversation with Cecilia. She asked him many questions about country life in England, and drew him on to tell her much of his own mode of living. And he ended with, “Altogether, I’d be quite cheerful and happy if I were properly established.”

Cecilia became instantly silent and cold—and again he had the feeling that she was expecting something to happen.

“What the place needs,” he went on boldly, “what I need, is—a woman—such a woman as you.”

His horse reared, leaped in the air, tried to bolt. It was full a minute before he got it under control. “Nasty brute,” he said, resettling his eyeglass, and turning his face toward her again. He thrilled with

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hope. "Is there a chance for me?" he asked. "I have not spoken to your father—that isn't the American way, is it? And I sha'n't trouble you with a lot of—of the usual sort of talk—until I know whether it's welcome. You're not the sort of girl a man ventures far with unless he's jolly sure he knows where he's going."

"Thank you," she said simply. "I shall be frank with you. My father wishes me to marry you. If his will were not stronger than mine I shouldn't think of it. It is only fair to tell you why." She was looking at him tranquilly. "I loved a man—loved him well enough to have, where he was concerned, a stronger will than my father. But he died. I love him still. I shall always love him. When my father told me that he wished me to marry you, I asked my lover—and he—said that I ought to obey. He has been urging me to marry—except occasionally—ever since he died."

Frothingham stared at her in utter amazement. "Do you mind——" he began, but again his horse tried to throw him. When he got it under control he saw that she was much amused—apparently at him. She rode up close beside him, laid her hand on his horse's neck and said, "Please, Stanley, don't!" in a

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curiously tender tone. The horse instantly became quiet.

“You were saying?” she asked.

“Do you mind if I admit that—— Really, I’m not sure that I heard you aright a few minutes ago.”

“You mean when I spoke of talking to Stanley after he was dead?”

“Stanley——” Frothingham regarded her quizzically. “Is this horse named after—him?”

“No—I don’t know what the horse’s name is. The reason it was so restless was that Stanley was teasing him to make him a little troublesome for you.”

Frothingham paled and glanced round.

“The second night after he died,” she went on, a far-away look in her eyes, “he came to me in a dream. He assured me that he was happy, and that I must be so, too, and that he would always be with me, nearer, in more perfect communion, than if he had remained alive. It was just when Dr. Yarrow was beginning his experiments to establish communication with the other world. Stanley and I had been most interested. And when he appeared to me after his death he explained that he had been able, through the in-

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tensity of his love for me, to pierce the barrier and bring his soul and my soul face to face."

Frothingham showed that he was profoundly moved. "When I was a little chap," he said in a low voice, "I ran bang into the ghost of an ancestor of mine—old Hoel de Beauvais. He has paced a hall in the east wing of Beauvais House the night before the head of the family dies, for hundreds of years. They laughed me out of it, but, by gad, I knew I saw him—and my grandfather was thrown from his horse and killed the next day. I pretend not to believe in that sort of thing, but I do—all we English do."

"Nothing could be more certain," said Cecilia, radiant at this prompt acceptance of what she expected him to try to laugh her out of. "I have told no one—I shouldn't have told you if it hadn't seemed the only course I could honestly take."

"Can you see him now?" asked Frothingham in an awe-stricken voice.

"No—I *see* him only in dreams—and sometimes when I go to Mrs. Ramsay. But we talk together at any time. You noticed how he stopped teasing the horse?"

The horse was, indeed, perfectly quiet. Frothing-

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ham nodded. His habitual look of vacancy and satire had given place to earnestness and intense interest. "And does he wish you to marry?" he asked.

"Yes—he has said it, and he has written it—in one of the first letters he sent me through Mrs. Ramsay. I've only asked him verbally about you, and he consents and approves. I'll take you to Mrs. Ramsay, and we'll get his written permission."

"But why does he consent?" asked Frothingham. "Is there no—no jealousy—*there?*"

"Jealousy? Impossible! Don't you see, he can look into my soul—he knows that I am his. And all the interest he has in this gross mortal life of mine is that it shall be honourable and that I shall do my duty as a daughter and as a woman."

Frothingham said no more. He was overwhelmed with a sense of the imminence of an unseen world—that world which had been made real to him by his nurses, bred in the legends and superstitions of England, and by his similarly trained companions at school, at the university, and ever since. It was a shock, but nothing incredible to him, this revelation of a daily and hourly commerce with that other world of which, he was certain from his own childhood experience,

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everyone had glimpses now and then. From time to time he looked at Cecilia, now returned to her wonted expression of abstraction. She seemed the very person to have such an experience. He was filled with awe of her ; he was fascinated by her ; he began to feel the first faint, vague stirrings of jealousy which he dared not express, even to himself, lest the spirit eyes of Cecilia's lover should peer into his soul, and see, and punish.



## X

**A**T dinner that night Willie Kennefick, who was staying in the house, began to tell his experiences in New York—he had just come from a little visit there. “The woman I took in to dinner,” said he, “gave me a solar plexus while I was busy with the oysters. She said to me, ‘I went to see such a wonderful man to-day. He told me the most astonishing things about my past and future, and he sold me a little wax image that I’m going to burn for my gout.’ ‘What!’ said I. ‘For my gout,’ said she. ‘I have to burn it slowly, and when it’s consumed my gout will be gone. I got it *so* cheap! Only twenty-five dollars.’”

“And what did you say, Willie?” asked Mrs. Thayer.

“I said ‘Cheap? It was a shame to cheat the poor devil in that fashion.’ And she said, ‘Wasn’t it a bargain? He wanted a hundred, but I brought him down.’”

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"You must have been keeping queer company in New York," said Henrietta Gillett.

"Not at all. It was at Mrs. Baudeleigh's house, and the woman—well, her husband's one of the biggest lawyers in New York. But, then, that's no worse than the astrology some of us here have gone daft over."

"Oh—astrology—that's a different matter," objected Mrs. Thayer. "You evidently haven't looked into it. That is a science—not at all the same as palmistry and spiritualism, and those frauds."

Cecilia smiled—the amused, pitying smile of wisdom in the presence of ludicrous ignorance—and looked at Frothingham. He returned her look—pleased to have a secret, and such an intimate secret, in common with her. "But don't you think you're a bit rash, Mrs. Thayer?" he drawled. "You certainly believe in ghosts, now, don't you?"

Miss Gillett's handsome, high-bred face expressed astonishment. "Do *you*?" she asked, before Mrs. Thayer could answer him.

"We can't doubt it over on our side. We've too much evidence of it. And—I was listening to an old chap from Cambridge—your Cambridge—very clever

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old fellow, *I* thought—Yarrow, wasn't it? Yes, Yarrow."

"Yarrow!" Miss Gillett's eyes flashed scorn. "He's a disgrace to New England. We pride ourselves on having the culture of Emerson and the other great men of our past. What would they think of us if they could look in on us with our Yarrows and our Gonga Sahds and our Mrs. Ramsays. All the sensible people in the country must be laughing at us. Pardon me, Lord Frothingham—I'm very indignant at what I regard as superstitions and impostors. It's only my view."

"Not at all, not at all," said Frothingham with an uneasy glance at Cecilia's angry face. "I'm not one of those who wish all to believe alike. What the devil should we do if we hadn't each other's opinions to laugh at?"

"You're such an ardent disciple," continued Miss Gillett, "you ought to go to Yarrow's Mrs. Ramsay. She'll put you in communication with spirits, as many as you like, or rather as many as you care to pay for. I think she gets ten a ghost—twenty for letters."

The discussion was raging hotly round the table, all but two of the men, and all but four of the women

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deriding astrology, palmistry, Buddhism, spiritualism; and the respective devotees of these cults deriding each the others. "Cut it out," said Mrs. Ridgie finally. "We'll have 'rough house' here the first thing you know."

Everyone laughed. They liked slang, and Mrs. Ridgie's was the boldest and quaintest. When the men and women were separated, "metaphysics" was again attempted by both. But the men who did not believe summarily laughed it down in the smoking room. "Those fads are all well enough for the women," said Kennefick. "They've got to do something to pass the time, and they won't do anything serious, or, if they do, they make a joke of it. But our men, Lord Frothingham"—he was addressing himself to the Earl, whose spiritualistic views he had not heard and did not suspect—"are too busy for such nonsense."

"That's a libel on the woman," said Thayer—his fad was a militant socialism that had a kindly eye for a red flag. "It's only women of the so-called fashionable class who go in for such silliness. The great mass of American women have something better to do."

"That's a libel on the women of the better class,"

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retorted Kennefick. "Precious few of them are so silly."

"If it isn't that it's something else equally idle," said Thayer. Except Frothingham he was the best-dressed man in the room. "I've no time for idlers."

"Why don't you give your money away and shoulder a pick?" asked Kennefick teasingly.

"I'm not fit even to wield a pick"—Thayer was one of the ablest lawyers in Massachusetts—"and I'd give my money away if I could without doing more harm than good. There are two kinds of parasites—the plutocrats and the paupers. I'm 'agin' 'em both. And, as for spiritualism, I will admit that I don't think we know enough about mind or the relations of mind and matter to dogmatise as you fellows have been doing."

Kennefick winked at Frothingham as if saying: "Another proof that Thayer's a crank."

When Frothingham was beside Cecilia in the drawing room she said: "Would you like to go to Mrs. Ramsay?"

"Yes—will you take me?" he replied.

"I'll write to-night making an appointment for Wednesday."

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He was liking her immensely now, and, while he believed—not nearly so vividly as at first—in her connections with the other world, he felt growing confidence that they would rapidly fade before reawakening interest in this world. Meanwhile, he reasoned, his cue was to ingratiate himself by sympathising with her and encouraging her to closer and closer confidence. “It’s only a step from best friend to lover,” he said to himself. And he made admirable use of the two days between her tentative acceptance of him and their visit to Mrs. Ramsay. He was justly proud of his manner toward her—a little of the brother, a great deal of the best friend, the tenderness and sympathy of the lover, yet nothing that could alarm her.

Mrs. Ramsay lived in an old brick cottage in a quiet street near Louisburg Square. In the two days Frothingham had become somewhat better acquainted with Henrietta Gillett and had got a strong respect for her intelligence. As he and Cecilia entered the dark little parlour he remembered what Henrietta had said about Mrs. Ramsay, and was on guard. The first impression he received was of a perfume, unmistakably of the heaviest, most suspicious Oriental kind. “Gad!” he said to himself, “that scent don’t sug-

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gest spirits. It smells tremendously of the world, the flesh, and the devil, especially the devil."

As his eyes became accustomed to the faint light he discovered the radiating centre of this odour—a small blackish woman of forty or thereabouts, with keen shifty black eyes and a long face as hard and fleshless from the cheekbones down as from the cheekbones up. The mouth was wide and cold and cruel. She was dressed in a loose black woollen wrapper, tight at the wrists, and her scanty black hair was in a careless oily coil low on the back of her head. Her eyelids lifted languidly and she gave Cecilia her hand—a pretty hand, slender and sensitive.

"Good-morning, my dear," she said. "This is the Earl of Frothingham, is it not?"

At this both Cecilia and Frothingham started—Cecilia because it was another and impressive evidence of Mrs. Ramsay's power; Frothingham because he knew that voice so well. His knees weakened and he looked at Mrs. Ramsay again.

But she was not looking at him. She was saying to Cecilia: "Dr. Yarrow was here for two hours—he left not twenty minutes ago. I am so exhausted!"

"Perhaps we would better come to-morrow," said

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Cecilia, appeal, apology, and disappointment in her voice.

“No—no,” replied Mrs. Ramsay wearily. “Dr. Yarrow tells me he has never known me to be so thoroughly under control as to-day. And”—she smiled faintly at Cecilia—“you know I would do anything for *you*.”

“You *have* done everything for me,” said Cecilia, and her tone of humble, even deferential, gratitude filled Frothingham with pity and disgust. He was staring stolidly at Mrs. Ramsay, but if the room had been lighter his changed colour and white lips might have been noted. Cecilia seated herself, and Frothingham gladly sat also, where he could see Mrs. Ramsay’s face without her seeing him unless she turned her head uncomfortably.

She rang a small silver bell on the table at her elbow. A girl answered. “The light, please,” said Mrs. Ramsay.

The girl went away and returned in a moment with a lamp whose strong flame was completely and curiously shielded by a metal sphere except at one point underneath. When it was set upon the table it threw a powerful light in a flood upon a part of the surface



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of the table about six inches in diameter. The girl went to the windows and drew the heavy curtains across them. It was now impossible to see anything in the room except that small disc of intense light. In it presently appeared the slender, sensitive right hand of Mrs. Ramsay—it seemed to end at the wrist in nothingness. It laid upon the brightness a pad of white scribbling paper and a thick pencil with the heavy lead slightly rounded at the end; then it vanished. There was a long silence—Frothingham was sure he could hear Cecilia's faint breathing. His own breath hardly came at all and his heart was beating crazily. He stared at those inanimate objects in the circle of dazzling light until his brain whirled.

A long sigh, apparently from Mrs. Ramsay, as if she were sinking into a deathlike sleep; a quick catching of the breath from the direction of Cecilia. He heard her move her chair to the light and then in it appeared her hand—long and narrow, looking waxen white, its nails, beautifully rounded, the most delicate blush of pink. It took the pencil and moved across the paper. Frothingham bent forward—she had written large, and he could easily read:

Dearest!

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Her hand disappeared, and again there was in that unearthly light, only the pad, the pencil, and the heart-call into the infinite—"Dearest!"

A long pause, then the weird, severed hand—Frothingham could not associate it with Mrs. Ramsay—crawled haltingly into the light, hovered over the pencil, took it, began to make its blunt point scrawl along the paper—a loose, shaky handwriting. With the hair on the back of his head trembling to rise, Frothingham read:

My wife—I am glad you have come, though you bring another with you to profane our holy secret.

In the darkness a sharp exclamation from Cecilia, then a sound like a sob. The hand ceased to write, dropped the pencil, vanished instantly. In the light appeared Cecilia's hand, trembling, its veins standing up, blue and pulsing—Frothingham was amazed that a hand by itself could express so much; it was as perfect a mirror of her feelings as her face would have been. She wrote eagerly:

But, dearest, you told me only this morning that he might, should, see all.

Her hand lifted the sheet, now filled with writing, laid it beside the pad, then disappeared. Again there

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was a long silence, and again the mysterious hand crawled out of the darkness, loosely held the pencil, and wrote slowly, staggeringly, faintly:

No, I have not spoken to you, seen you, since he came into your life—It has been hard for me to push my way through to-day—There is a barrier between us—You have been deceived—Can it be that you—but no, I trust my wife—

The hand paused. “Oh ! oh !” sobbed Cecilia. The hand was moving again:

My friends here tell me that you are going away across the sea with an English fortune hunter—with him. You have been cruel enough to bring him here to our bridal chamber—Oh, Cecilia—

The end of the sheet had been reached, but the hand wrote on for a few seconds, making vague markings in space, then vanished, dropping the pencil with a noise that in the strained silence sounded like a crash and made both Cecilia and Frothingham leap in their chairs. After a moment Cecilia’s trembling, eager, pathetic hands lifted off the filled sheet and withdrew. But the hand did not return. After a long wait her right hand—it seemed bloodless now—appeared once more upon the paper and wrote:

I have been deceived. I love only you. I thought I was obeying you. Speak to me, dearest. You see into my heart. Speak to me. Do not leave me alone.

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Her hand laid the sheet upon the other filled sheets and withdrew from that neutral ground of dazzling light between the two great mystery lands. Immediately the other hand darted into the light, caught the pencil, and scrawled in great, tottering letters:

Yes, yes—but I cannot until he has gone far from you—Then come again—Good-b——

The hand vanished and there was a moan from the darkness that enveloped the medium—a moan that ended in a suppressed shriek. Frothingham saw Cecilia's hands hastily snatch the written sheets from under the light. Then he heard a voice in his ear—he hardly knew it as hers: “Come—come quickly!”

He rose, and with his hand touching her arm followed her. The door opened—the dim hallway seemed brightly lighted, so great was the contrast. The maid was seated there. She at once rose, entered the medium's room, and closed the door behind her. Cecilia and Frothingham went into the quiet little street—the enormous sunshine, the white snow over everything, in the distance the rumble of the city. He gave a huge sigh of relief, and wiped the sweat from his face—his very hair was wet and his collar was wilted. He was sickly pale.



*"Forgive me—it was all my fault—yet not mine—  
good-bye—"*



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"She always wishes to be left that way," said Cecilia, as if she did not know what she was saying.

They walked to the corner together. "I am not well," she said. He ventured to look at her; she was wan and old, and her eyes were deep circled in blue-black and she was blue-black at the corners of her mouth, at the edges of her nostrils. "I must go home—they will telephone Mrs. Ridgie. Don't say where I was taken ill. Forgive me—it was all my fault—yet not mine—good-bye——" She did not put out her hand to him, but stood off from him with fear and anguish in her eyes.

"The woman's a fraud—a——" he began.

She turned upon him with a fury of which he would not have believed her capable. "Go! go!" she exclaimed, as if she were driving away a dog. "Already you may have lost me my love. Go!"

He shrank from her. She walked rapidly away, and he saw her hail a cab, enter it, saw the cab drive away. With his head down he went in the opposite direction. "I think I must be mad," he muttered. He thrust his hands deep into the outside pockets of his ulster. He drew out his right hand—in it was her purse, which she had given him to carry because it did

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not fit comfortably into her muff. "No," he said, "she *was* with me."

He put the purse in the pocket and strode back the way he had come. He turned into the quiet little street, went to Mrs. Ramsay's door, lifted and dropped the knocker several times. The maid opened the door a few inches and showed a frowning face.

Frothingham widened the space by thrusting himself into it. "Tell Mrs. Ramsay that Lord Frothingham wishes to speak to her," he said in a tone that made her servant his servant.

She went into the ghost-chamber and soon reappeared. "Mrs. Ramsay is too exhausted to see anyone to-day."

"Bah!" exclaimed Frothingham, and stalked past the maid and into the ghost-chamber.

The curtains were back and the slats of the shutters were open. Mrs. Ramsay, in her great chair by the table, was using a bottle of salts. She did not look in Frothingham's direction as he closed the door sharply behind him.

He went to her and scowled down at her. "What the devil did you do that for, Lillian?"



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Mrs. Ramsay did not change expression and did not answer.

“No one ever treated you decenter than I did. *You——*”

“No names, please, Slobsy,” said Mrs. Ramsay, shaking her bottle and sniffing it again.

At “Slobsy” he shivered—he was not a lunatic on the subject of his dignity, but he did not fancy this nickname of his Oxford days, thus inopportunately flung at him. He felt that at one stroke she had cut the ground from under his feet.

“I was sorry to do it,” she continued. “But I couldn’t have you poaching on my preserves, could I now, Slobsy? It cut me to do it”—she looked at him with friendly sympathy—“but you could better afford to lose her than I could. You forgive me, don’t you? You always were sensible.”

“I’ll expose you,” he said—he was once more imperturbable, and was looking at her calmly through his eyeglass and was speaking in his faintly satirical drawl.

“Expose—what?” asked Mrs. Ramsay, sniffing at her salts.

He reflected. Suppose he denounced her, put him-

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self in a position where he could, probably would, be forced to tell all he knew about her, roused her anger and her vindictiveness—whom would he expose? Clearly, no one but himself to Cecilia, or Cecilia to the public. He knew nothing about Mrs. Ramsay that would prove her a fraud—in fifteen years she might have become the properest person in the world, might have developed into a medium. He turned and left the room and the house. Halfway to the corner he paused; a faint, dreary smile drifted over his face.

“It’s really a new sensation—to settle a bill,” he said to himself. “An outlawed bill, too. What luck—just my rotten luck!”

## XI

**A**T Mrs. Ridgie's they guessed that Frothingham had proposed to Cecilia and that she had been unnerved by the shock to her widowed heart. He stayed on until the following Monday, neither amused nor amusing, then returned to Mrs. Staunton's for two days. He found her intensely curious as to the trouble between Cecilia and him—she brought up the subject again and again, and with expert ingenuity at prying tried to trap him into telling her; she all but asked him point-blank. But he looked vague or vacant, pretended not to understand what she wanted, expressed lively interest in Cecilia's progress toward health, professed keen regret that he must leave before she would be well enough to receive him.

As he was about to go Mrs. Staunton became desperate. "Allerton is a stern man," she said, with an air that forbade the idea that mere vulgar curiosity was moving her. "He has the notion that Cecilia

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was not polite to you—you know, she gives way to strange moods. And he is so irritated against her that he is treating her harshly.”

Frothingham looked astonished. “Really!” he said. “How extraordinary. I can’t conceive how he happened to wander off into that. Nothing could be farther from the truth.”

“I confess,” Mrs. Staunton went on, “I’m much disappointed. I’ve taken a fancy to you. I had rather hoped that you and Cecilia would like each other—you understand.”

Frothingham reflected. It was possible, yes, probable, that Cecilia’s father could drive her into marrying him, would do it if he should hint to Mrs. Staunton that he did fancy Cecilia and was “horribly cut up” because she didn’t fancy him. “What the devil do her feelings matter to me?” he demanded of himself. “A month after we were married she’d forget all this ghost nonsense and would be thanking me for pulling her out of it.”

“And,” Mrs. Staunton was saying, “I know her father would have liked it as well as I.”

But Frothingham didn’t follow his impulse and her unconscious leading. “What am I thinking of?”

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he said to himself in the sharp struggle that was going on behind his impassive exterior. "I'm not that sort of blackguard—at least, not yet." Then he drawled his answer to Mrs. Staunton: "I'm tremendously flattered, but really, I fear the young lady and I would never hit it off. I've no great fancy for marrying—never had. I've always thought it a poor business—one of the sort of things that are good for the women and children, you know, but not for the men."

Mrs. Staunton looked mild and humourous disapproval. "What is the world coming to? A man asked me the other day why all the nice women were married and all the nice men single. I hadn't thought of it until he spoke. But I must say it's true of my acquaintances."

"I hope you'll let Mr. Allerton know he's wrong," said Frothingham. "I hate it that the poor girl's had the screws put on her on my account."

"Certainly—I'll tell him. But I'm sorry it's not to be as we hoped." She was studying him with a puzzled expression. She had heard from what she regarded as a thoroughly trustworthy source that he had come over especially to get him a rich wife. If that wasn't his object, why was he wandering about

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here? Titled foreigners didn't come to America except for the one thing of interest to them which America has—money. She could not understand his unbusiness-like conduct.

He couldn't understand it himself. "I always was an ass," he thought. "Here am I, sinking straight to the bottom—or, what's worse, the bottomless. Yet I'm squeamish about the kind of line that pulls me ashore. Yes—I'm an ass. Even Lillian, well as I knew her at Oxford, took me in a bit with her trumpery tricks to make a living. She completely foozled me—that is——" Did she "foozle" him? He couldn't banish the doubt. And there was the incident of the horse—Lillian had nothing to do with that, yet it fitted in with her professions as to the spirit world. But hadn't she as good as owned up by apologising for breaking it off between him and Cecilia? Perhaps she hadn't meant that; perhaps she had meant she was sorry to be the medium for such a letter. "There was a lot of truth in that letter. And there must be something in witches and ghosts and all that, or the whole world wouldn't believe in 'em. But what ghastly luck that Lillian should turn up after fifteen years—no, seventeen, by Jove! Gad, how she has

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gone off since she was bar-maid at the Golden Cross and the prettiest girl that walked the High Street."

He paused in New York a few hours, long enough to get a disagreeable mail from the other side—a dismal letter from old Bagley, a suspiciously cheerful note from Evelyn, a few lines from Surrey with a post-script about Gwen—"I've shipped her off to Mentone. She's a bit seedy this winter, poor girl." Frothingham quarrelled at Hutt, drank himself into a state of glassy-eyed gloom and took the three-o'clock express for Washington. As he sat in the smoking car a man dropped into the next chair with a "How d'ye do, Frothingham?" Frothingham's features slowly collected into an expression of recognition, of restrained pleasure. "Glad to see you, Wallingford. Going to Washington?"

"Yes—I'm in Congress, you know."

"No, I didn't know." And it struck him as uncommonly modest in Wallingford never to have spoken of so distinguished an honour.

"My father put me in last year."

"Oh, you've a seat in your family." Frothingham nodded understandingly. "That's very nice. They've almost abolished that sort of luxury with us.

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Nowadays, to get into Parliament a fellow has to put up a good many thousand pounds. Even then he must take his chances of winning a lot of noisy brutes. They often shout for him and vote for the other fellow."

Wallingford's face had flushed when Frothingham said "a seat in your family," and the flush had deepened as he went on. "You haven't got it quite straight, Frothingham—about us, I mean. No one can have a Congressional seat in his family in America. My father has some influence with the party in New York City. He always puts up a lot of money for campaigns. And they give him the chance to name a Congressman—if he's willing to pay for it. That's between us, you understand. It's a bad system. But it applies only to a few districts in New York and perhaps one or two other cities."

"It sounds like our system," said Frothingham. "A devilish good system, I call it. If it weren't for that the lower classes would be chucking us all out and putting their own kind in."

"Well, we think it bad. I feel something like a fellow who knows he wouldn't have won the race if he hadn't bribed the other fellow's jockey."



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“That’s your queer American way of looking at things. You are always pretending that birth and rank and wealth aren’t entitled to consideration. But that’s all on the surface—all ‘bluff,’ as you say. They get just as much consideration here as among us.”

“You’re judging the whole country by the people in one small class—and not by any means all of them.”

“Human nature is human nature,” replied Frothingham, with a cynical gleam in his eyeglass.

“If you go out West——”

“I’ll find what I’ve found in the East, no doubt—perhaps in a little different form. I’m visiting Western people at Washington—after I’ve stopped at the Embassy a few days—some people I’m meeting through an American acquaintance of ours in England—Charles Sidney.”

“Sidney!” Wallingford laughed. “He’s my second cousin. Ain’t he a shouting cad?”

“Oh, I think he’s a well-meaning chap—most obliging.”

“I should say so—to anybody he crawls before. And who are these Westerners he’s sending you to?”

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“The Ballantynes. I think Mr. Ballantyne’s a Senator, is he not?”

Wallingford laughed again. “That’s one on me,” he said. “Yes, they’re from the West. But for everything that isn’t American they lay it over anybody you’ve seen in New York. Ballantyne! I sha’n’t say any more. It’s of no use to tell you you’re going round and round in a circle that’s in America but not really of it.”

“Do you know the Ballantynes?”

“I’ve met Mrs. Ballantyne—and the daughter that’s married to a Spaniard—the Duke of Almansa. They were at Monte Carlo three years ago when I was there. A handsome woman—amusing, too. She spent most of her time in the gambling rooms—used to come in always dressed in something new and loud—and what tremendous hats she did wear! She’d throw on the table a big gold purse blazing with diamonds. Then she’d seat herself and open the purse, and it would be stuffed with thousand-franc notes. She’d plunge like a Russian. Every once in a while she’d go out on the balcony and walk up and down smoking a cigarette. She forbade her husband the Casino unless she was with him; even then he wasn’t

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allowed to stake a single louis. He'd slip away and play in one of those more private rooms upstairs."

Frothingham smiled reminiscently.

"You know, the play's higher there," continued Wallingford. "But the crowd of spectators was too small and indifferent for Her Grace of Almansa. When she found out what he was up to she made a scene right before everybody—'How dare you squander *my* money?' she said, "and she led him off like a spaniel on its way to a whipping."

"Charming person," said Frothingham. "Must have been amusing."

"Indeed she was. They'd talk of her all day without growing tired—and always a new freak. You'll be amused by her."

"Ah—she's here?"

"Yes—left the Duke two years ago—paid him off and came home to her father. She's quite quiet now, they say—educating her children."

Frothingham's three days at the British Embassy were to him days upon an oasis in the desert. It was literally as well as legally part of the British domain—Britain indeed, as soon as the outside door were passed. The servants at most of the houses at which he had

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been entertained were direct and recent importations from England, yet they had already lost an essential something—even his faithful Hutt was not the docile, humble creature he had been. But here in the Embassy the servants, like the attachés, like the Ambassador's family, like the Ambassador himself, were as English in look, in manner, in thought, as if they had never been off the island. The very furniture and the arrangement of it, the way the beds were made and the towels were hung in the bathrooms, represented the English people as thoroughly as did the Ambassador.

From this miniature Britain Frothingham on the third day was transferred to the international chaos beneath the turrets and battlements of the Ballantyne castle. When the house was finished, twelve years before Frothingham saw it, the various suites were furnished each on a definite scheme—French or English or Italian of different periods, classical, Oriental, Colonial American. But the Ballantynes had the true American weariness of things that are completed. They were not long interested in their house after it was done. They felt like strangers in it, lived in it only for the sake of show, were positively uncomfort-

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able. More through carelessness and indifference than through ignorance, the movable objects in the suites had become changed about—a gradual process, imperceptible to the inhabitants. There were now specimens of every style and every period in each suite; and Frothingham, who knew about interiors, seeing this interior for the first time, thought it the work of an eccentric verging on lunacy.

“Awful, isn’t it?” said Madame Almansa, as she was called. She had noted Frothingham’s glance roaming the concourse of nations and periods that thronged the walls and floor space of the vast parlour—the Ballantynes used the American term instead of the British “drawing room.”

Frothingham looked at her inquiringly. “What?” he said, pretending not to understand.

“Do you wonder I refuse to live here?” she went on, as if he had not spoken. “There’s some excuse for the great houses on the other side. At least the present tenants didn’t build them and can put the responsibility upon their ignorant semi-barbaric ancestors.”

“That *has* struck me as a bit queer,” replied Frothingham. “Over on our side we’re cursing our ances-

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tors for having burdened us with huge masses of brick and stone—beastly uncomfortable, aren't they?"

"Worse—unhealthful," she answered. "And as dwelling places for human beings, ridiculous."

"Yes—and it takes an army to keep 'em clean, and then it isn't half done. And it does cost such a lot to keep 'em up. And there's no way of heating them. We don't build 'em any more—except new people that must show off."

"That's the trouble here," said Madame Almansa. "The new people who know nothing of the art of living build palaces as soon as ever they can afford it. It's supposed to be the badge of superiority. Instead, it's the badge of ignorance and vulgarity. I refuse to permit my children to live in the midst of such nonsense. You must come to see us, Lord Frothingham, in our little house just through this square."

Her sister, Isabella, who called herself Ysobel because she fancied it more aristocratic, laughed queerly—almost a sneer, though good-natured. And when Frothingham went away to her father's sitting room, she laughed again. "It's all very well for you, Susanna——"

"Susan," interrupted Madame Almansa.

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“Well, Susan, then—though I hate to pronounce such a common word in addressing anyone above the rank of servant. It’s all very well for you to talk in that fashion. You’ve established yourself. You can afford to affect simplicity, and to insist on being called Susan, and on dropping your title, and on living in a plain little house, and on bringing up your children as if they were tradesmen’s sons instead of the sons of one of the proudest nobles in——”

“You know Almansa,” interrupted ‘Susan.’ “How *can* you speak of him as proud or a noble?”

“He *is* a weazened, oily creature,” admitted Ysobel, delighted to make her sister wince by agreeing with her and “going her one better.” “And I jumped for joy when you shook him, because I shouldn’t have to let him kiss me any more. But, all the same, he’s a great noble. And you know perfectly well, Madame Almansa, that if you had it to do all over again you’d marry him—yes, if he were ten times worse——”

“Don’t, Bella—please!” exclaimed “Susan” in a large, tragic way. “Mon Dieu!” She clasped her hands and in heroic agitation swept magnificently up and down the small, clear space. “When I think of

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the heritage of my boys—my Emilio and my Alfonso——”

“My Prince Rio Blanco and my Marquis Calamar,” mocked Ysobel. “Cut it out, Sue. I loathe—*cant!*”

“Instead of filling your head with these false notions of nobility,” said “Sue,” sarcastically, “you would better look to your English, at least. But the vulgar speech you and your girl friends use nowadays is in keeping with your vulgar ideas of aristocracy.”

“Yes, Madame la Duchesse,” said Ysobel, her good nature unruffled. “And when I’ve married a title and then shaken the man I’ll talk in the same top-lofty way that you do.”

Madame Almansa raised and lowered her superb shoulders and changed the subject to dress—she affected an extreme of simplicity, and that required a great deal more time and thought than her former easily gratified craze for the startling. Presently her father came with Frothingham. “You’re going to Senator Pope’s to dinner, aren’t you?” he said absently. Frothingham thought he looked like the pictures of “Brother Jonathan,” except that his white chin whiskers were rooted in a somewhat larger chin space.



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“Not I,” replied Madame Almansa. “You know, father, I’m to stay here and do the honours at your dinner.”

“Yes, yes, Susie—I remember.” Senator Ballantyne seemed pleased, but uneasy. “But you must be careful—very careful. Your grand airs will frighten ’em.”

Ysobel laughed. “Mamma and I are going to Mrs. Pope,” she said, “and Lord Frothingham, too. And then we all go to the White House dance afterward.”

“No, the White House dance is to-morrow night,” said Madame Almansa. “I am going.”

“Well, well—no matter,” interposed Senator Ballantyne. “All I want is to be sure that you get out of the way before my constituents come. Your mother ought to be ashamed of herself to desert me. But I suppose they won’t mind it so long as Sue is here.”

“What time’s your dinner, pa?” asked Ysobel.

“Half-past six,” replied the Senator, and he turned to Frothingham: “At home they have dinner—no, they call it supper—at five o’clock.”

“That’s ’way, ’way out West, Lord Frothingham,”

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explained Ysobel, "where papa and mamma come from."

"And you, too, young lady," said her father teasingly. "You were born there."

"Yes, but I was caught young and taken to France," retorted Ysobel. "I spoke French before I spoke English."

Senator Ballantyne frowned, became abstracted, was presently sighing. His eldest daughter heard it and gave a theatrical sigh of sympathy. Ballantyne seemed not to hear, but *something* had irritated him, for he frowned heavily.

Mrs. Ballantyne came in from her drive. She was a fine-looking woman, had all the outward appearance of the *grande dame*, and acted the part so well that not even herself had caught her in a slip for many years—a notable triumph in the art of pose when it is considered that she was a country-school teacher until she was twenty-four and had never seen a city or been east of the Alleghenies until she was past thirty. Frothingham helped her relieve herself of a great sable-lined cloak which he handed to a servant. The servant bent double in a bow—Mrs. Ballantyne paid well for obsequiousness. "When do those people of

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yours begin to come, Samuel?" she asked, framing her sentence and her manner to impress Frothingham.

Ballantyne looked annoyed, and, with a furtive glance at him, said: "Lord Frothingham will carry away a strange notion of democratic institutions as represented by Senators, mother."

Mrs. Ballantyne permitted him to call her mother because it was the only word of address that did not rasp her aristocratic nature. Her name was Jane—that she could not endure even before the days of her grandeur. She had made him call her Mrs. Ballantyne before people until she discovered that it was "shocking bad form." She decided upon mother because the old Austrian Ambassador, whose title was of the oldest and whose blood was of the thin and pale bluest, said to her one day, "I like your American fashion of husbands and wives calling each other mother and father. It has a grand old patriarchal ring. My wife and I have adopted it."

"You must get out of the way by six o'clock," continued Ballantyne, addressing himself to "mother." "Several of them said they'd come round early for half an hour's chat before supper."

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"I'm sorry we're to be driven out," said Frothingham. "I fancy I'd like to see your constituents."

"Oh, no, you wouldn't, Lord Frothingham," Mrs. Ballantyne answered him—for his benefit she was "laying it on with a trowel," as Ysobel would have said. "They're—but you know how it is in politics. I wish Samuel would leave public life."

"What!" exclaimed Ballantyne, in mock horror. "And have all our poor relations that I've got nicely placed at the public crib bounced in a body, and come grunting and squealing to me to be supported! One of the objects in getting public office in this country, Lord Frothingham, is to relieve one's self of the support of one's poor relations and friends. The late President Arthur said to me when he was at the White House: 'The degradation of it! That I should have to lower myself for six hours every day to keeping an employment agency!'"

"But we can't dress and drive round the streets from six o'clock until eight," said Ysobel.

"They'll be in the reception-room by eight," replied her mother, "or else they won't be through dinner. We can get out unseen."

Frothingham maintained his look of blank indiffer-

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ence, but underneath he was vastly amused—"And they're quite unconscious what cads they are," he thought. As if in answer to this, Senator Ballantyne said to him, in a tone of humorous apology: "Our constituents are plain people, Lord Frothingham—honest, simple. They lead quiet, old-fashioned lives. I always send my family away or make them 'come off their perch' when I have to receive anyone from home—that is, any but my regular political lieutenants. To tell you the gospel truth, I'm ashamed to have my old friends see how absurd we've become."

At six o'clock Frothingham was idling in a small smoking room in the rear of the great parlour—it was on the second floor. Senator Ballantyne came in and grew red in the cheeks. "Oh, I didn't expect to see you," he said, with an embarrassed laugh.

Frothingham pretended not to notice, but he instantly saw the embarrassment, and the cause of it as well. The Senator was not in evening dress, nor even in his uniform of "statesman's frock." To combat the unfavourable impression his great castle would make upon the excursionists from his distant State he had got himself up in an old blue sack suit with torn pocket and ragged cuff, in trousers bagging at

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the knees and springing fantastically where they covered his boot-legs.

He seated himself and talked absently until there was a ring of the front doorbell. He started up. "I must go," he said. "That's the first ones." And he hurried away.

Frothingham waited a few seconds, then went into the hall and leaned carelessly on the banister where it commanded a view of the front door. He chuckled. Not the pompous and liveried butler was opening it, but Senator Ballantyne himself in his impressive livery of the "plain people." And Frothingham grinned as his great hearty voice—how different, how much more natural, than his usual voice—rolled out a "Why, hello, boys! Hello, Jim! Hello, Rankin. How d'ye do, Mrs. Fisher. Glad to see you, Miss Branigan. The maid wasn't about, so I thought I wouldn't keep you waitin'. Come right in and take off your things. Ladies, I'm sorry to say my wife's run off and left me—had to go to a dinner where the President and his wife are to be. You know, we ain't allowed to decline. But we won't miss her. My oldest girl Sue's in the parlour. You remember Sue?"

They all went into the "parlour"—that is, the

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little first-floor reception room, which had been partly refurnished, or rather, dismantled, for the occasion. The bell rang. Frothingham chuckled again, as he saw, not butler nor manservant nor Senator, but a neatly dressed upstairs girl, without a cap, hasten to open the door. As he heard the rustle of skirts on the stairway leading to the sleeping rooms, he prudently strolled into the smoking room.

When he went up to dress Hutt said to him: "Beg pardon, my lord, but my, it's queer, the dinner party they're 'avin hin the little back room."

Frothingham went on shaving. Hutt took silence as permission to gossip.

"They've sent hoff hall the servants, hexceptin' the maids, my lord. They've got heverythink on the table at once and they're waitin' on themselves."

"Last night," said Frothingham, "you gave me a shirt with a spot on the collar. You're getting careless and impudent, Hutt."

When he reached the parlour Mrs. Ballantyne and Ysobel were waiting—Mrs. Ballantyne ablaze with rubies and diamonds, Ysobel slim and white and golden in an expensively plain white dress with golden spangles. Mrs. Ballantyne rang for a servant.

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“ See that the doors leading into the hall downstairs are closed,” she said.

The servant returned and announced that the way was clear. The three descended the grand stairway rapidly, entered the carriage, and drove away—“ with two on the box.”

Presently Ysobel laughed. “ You should have seen Susan, Lord Frothingham,” she said. “ She was rigged up in a black alpaca made with a basque.”

“ Alpaca? ” asked Frothingham. “ What’s that? And what’s a basque? ”

“ Alpaca is—well, it’s a stuff they wear out West in the country when they dress up. I suppose they wear it because the country is so dusty, and black alpaca catches and shows every bit of dust. And when you touch it it makes your teeth ache and the gooseflesh rise all over you. A basque—it’s a sort of waist, only it’s little and tight and short on the hips and low in the collar, and it pulls under the arms—I can’t describe a basque. It has to be seen. My idea of future punishment is to dress for a thousand years in black alpaca made with a basque, and to have to rub your hands over it every five minutes.”



## XII

**P**OPE, as Mrs. Ballantyne explained to Frothingham, was an Eastern Senator—a multimillionaire, sent to the Senate because he practically supported, that is, “financed,” the machine of his party in his State, besides making large contributions to its national machine. “So the ‘Boss,’ as they call the leader of the party in that State,” she said, “sold Mr. Pope one of the Senatorships, keeping the other for himself. Mr. Ballantyne is the leader, the master, of his party in *his* State and, while he’s too modest to tell it, is one of the masters of the party in the nation. He could be President if it weren’t for the disgusting prejudice among the people against all who happen to have a little something”—“a little something” being Mrs. Ballantyne’s modest way of speaking of their millions. “But,” she went on, “old Mr. Pope is a nonentity. He sits in his seat and votes the way they tell him to and is nice to everybody. Mr. Ballantyne suspects he’s getting ready to buy the Vice-Presidency.”

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“How much does that cost?” asked Frothingham.

“It ’ll cost him half a million if the chances of our party’s carrying the election are good; if they’re not so good, perhaps he can get it for a quarter of a million. But they may not dare nominate him. They may have to take some popular poor man. The ‘many-headed monster,’ as Shakespeare calls it, has been grumbling of late. We have a hard task in our country, Lord Frothingham, to keep the people with property in control.”

“It’s the same all over the world nowadays, I fancy,” said Frothingham. “One has to apologise for being well born or for living in decent style. The trouble with the lower classes at home is that they don’t have to work hard enough. They used to be too busy to look about and make themselves and everybody uncomfortable by doing what they call thinking.”

“That’s the trouble with our lower classes, too,” answered Mrs. Ballantyne, in her grandest manner. “We educate too much.”

The carriage rushed into the brilliantly lighted entrance of Senator Pope’s house. Frothingham saw Ysobel’s face, saw that she was having a violent attack

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of silent laughter. And he understood why. "The young 'un has a sense of humour," he said to himself. "It's ridiculous for these beggars to pose and strut before they've had time to brush the dirt off their knees and hands."

As they entered the drawing room Frothingham's attention riveted upon two gilt armchairs ensconced in a semicircle of palms and ferns. "For the President and his wife," said Ysobel. "They're dining here to-night, you know. This is the first President in a long time who has accepted invitations below the Cabinet circle. He comes to Senator Pope's because they're old friends. It's quite an innovation and has caused a great deal of scandal. But I don't blame him. Where's the use in being President if you can't do as you please?"

Mrs. Pope, stout and red and obviously "flustered," came bustling up. After she had greeted them she said: "Lord Frothingham, you're to take my daughter Elsie in to dinner." Then to Mrs. Ballantyne: "Oh, my dear, why didn't you warn me of the quarrel between the Cabinet women and the Speaker's family. Whatever *shall* I do? Mrs. Secretary Mandon's here, and so are the Speaker and his wife."

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"I'd send Grace Mandon in ahead of the Speaker's wife, if I were you," replied Mrs. Ballantyne. "I've no patience with the pretensions of the House. It's distinctly the commonest branch of the Government, while the Cabinet is next to the President."

"But," objected Mrs. Pope plaintively, "the Speaker is *so* influential and really fierce about precedence, and his wife has *such* a tongue and *such* a temper, and neither he nor she *ever* forgives."

"Do as you like, of course," said Mrs. Ballantyne stiffly. Being of the Senate it exasperated her that the House should be placed ahead of it.

Just then a murmur ran around the room—"The President! The President!" Those who were seated rose, conversation stopped, and the orchestra began to play. "Bless my soul," muttered Frothingham, "they're playing 'God Save the King'!" And then he remembered that the Americans had, as he put it, "stolen our tune and set a lot of rot about themselves to it." The President and his wife entered, he frowning and red and intent upon the two gilt chairs. Mrs. Pope curtsied, her husband contracted his stiff old figure in a comical half-salaam. All bent

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their heads and a few of the young people, among them Ysobel, curtsied.

“ See him looking at those chairs? ” said she to Frothingham.

Frothingham nodded.

“ He’s awfully sour at the etiquette here,” she went on. “ I suppose he’s afraid the country ’ll find out about it and cut up rough. He’s smashing right and left, and everyone’s wondering when he’ll throw out the gilt chairs.”

But his courage apparently failed him, for he and his wife advanced to the “ thrones ” and seated themselves. No one else sat, the men moving about to get the partners indicated on the little gilt-edged crested cards they had found in envelopes addressed to them and laid upon the tables in the coat-rooms. Frothingham examined Elsie Pope and saw that she was small and slight, square in the shoulders, thin in the neck, her hair of an uncertain shade of brown, her eyes commonplace, her features irregular. “ She looks a good-tempered soul,” he said to himself, searching resolutely for merits. And then he noted that her hands were red, and that she had flat, rather wide wrists. “ A good, plain soul,” he added. He sat

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silent, waiting for her to begin to entertain him—he hadn't got used to the American custom of the men entertaining the women; and the New York and Boston women, acquainted with the British way, had humoured him. But he waited in vain. At last he stole a glance at her, and noted a gleam in the corner of her eye, the flutter of a humour-curve at the corner of her mouth. "A shrewd little thing, I suspect," he thought. And he said to her, "No—really, I don't bite."

Her eyes twinkled. "I was beginning to be afraid you didn't bark, either," she said.

His expression retired behind his eyeglass. "Nor do I, unless I'm bid."

"I like to be talked to—I'd so much rather criticise than be criticised."

"What do you like to hear about?" he asked.

"About the man who's talking. It's the only subject he'll really put his heart into, isn't it?"

Frothingham smiled faintly, as if greeting an old and not especially admired acquaintance.

"I'm so disappointed," she said presently. "All winter I've had the same man take me in everywhere—you know, we follow precedence very closely here in

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Washington. And, when I found I was to have a new man, I had *such* hopes. The other man and I had got bored to death with each other. And now—you're threatening to be a failure!"

Frothingham did not like this—it was pert for a woman to speak thus to him; he resented it as a man and he resented it as Lord Frothingham. "That's a jest, ain't it?" he drawled. "We English, you know, have a horribly defective sense of American humour."

"No, it wasn't a jest," she replied. "It was a rudeness, and I beg your pardon. I thought to say something smart, and—I missed. Let's change the subject. Do you see that intellectual-looking man with the beard on the other side of the table—next to Ysobel Ballantyne?"

"The surly chap?"

"Yes—and he's surly because mamma has made a dreadful mistake. She's put him two below the place his rank entitles him to. He'll act like a savage all evening."

"Fancy! What a small matter to fly into a rage over."

"A small matter for a large man, but a large mat-

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ter for a small man. Sometimes I think all men are small. They're much vainer than women!"

"Why do you say that?"

"Because of what I've seen in Washington. They say the women started this craze for precedence. I don't know whether that's so or not. But I do know that in the three years I've been out I've found the men worse than the women. And those things look so much pettier in a man, too."

"But I thought there wasn't any rank in this country."

"So I thought—I was educated in France. I believe in rank and all that—it seems to me absurd to talk about equality. But I despise this silly squabble over little places that last only a few years at most. As Mr. Boughton was saying—you know Mr. Boughton?"

"You mean the Second Secretary at our Embassy?"

"Yes. He said to me only last night: 'America has an aristocracy just as we have, but gets from it all the evils and none of the good, all the pettiness, none of the dignity and sense of responsibility.'"

"But they tell me it's different—out West."



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“I don’t know. I can only speak of the East—especially of Washington. There isn’t a capital in Europe or Asia, the diplomats say, with so elaborate a system of rank and precedence as we have. Why, do you know, it’s so bad that the fifteen-hundred-dollar-a-year clerks and their families have a society of their own between the circles of those who get eighteen hundred and those who get twelve hundred. And they’d rather die than mix with those who get less than they do.”

“Really! Really, now!”

“And anything like a good time is almost impossible. It’s precedence, precedence everywhere, always. You can’t entertain informally.”

“It must be as if one were laced in a straight jacket.”

“I’m going abroad next year and am never coming back, if I can help it. I’m going where at least there’s real rank to get excited about. I’ll go with Ysobel and her mother—unless Ysobel decides to marry on this side.”

Frothingham was internally agitated, but gave no sign of it.

“She’s marrying either Mr. Boughton or that

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handsome Italian sitting next to Mrs. Ballantyne—the Prince di Rontivogli.”

“ Ah,” said Frothingham. And to himself, “ Just my rotten luck ! ”

“ She makes no secret of it,” continued Miss Pope, “ so I’m not violating her confidence. She says she’s determined to marry higher than her sister did. She likes Mr. Boughton better, though I should think she’d prefer the Prince—his face is ideal, and such manners ! But, while Mr. Boughton is his granduncle’s heir and his granduncle is old and a widower—still—well, the dukedom might slip away from him. For instance, he might die before his granduncle.”

“ That would be ghastly for her, wouldn’t it, now ? ” said Frothingham.

“ It would kill poor Ysobel. She’s so proud and ambitious ! And that’s why she has an eye for the Prince—he’s of a frightfully old family, you know. One of his ancestors tried to poison Cesare Borgia and did succeed in getting himself poisoned or smothered or something thrilling. And they were an old, old family then. Oh, Ysobel is flying high. If her father would give her mother and her a free hand, I think she’d land a prince of some royal family.”



*Cosimo, Prince di Rontivogli*



## CHAPTER TWELVE

Behind his mask Frothingham was hastily reforming his line of battle. The Ballantyne fortune was apparently inaccessible to an attack from a mere Earl; but he could keep it under surveillance while employing his main force against the Pope citadel, which seemed to be inviting attack. He did not fancy Miss Pope—she was too patently conscious of her cleverness and it was of a kind that did not attract him, was not what he regarded as feminine; nor was she physically up to his standard for his Countess-to-be. But—she had the essential; and he had been in America nearly five months and had had two, practically three, failures.

For the rest of his two weeks at the Ballantynes' he spent as much time as he courteously could with Miss Pope. And when he joined Joe Wallingford at the New Willard, sharing his suite—and paying less than a third of the expenses—he was with her a large part of each day, driving with her, riding with her, lunching where she lunched, dining where she dined, dancing with her, walking with her, sending her flowers. In Boston and New York he had been somewhat hindered by the chaperon system, careless though it was. Here chaperoning was the flimsiest of farces, and he

## GOLDEN FLEECE

and Elsie were together almost as freely as if she were a man.

In his fourth week in Washington he called one afternoon to keep an engagement to walk with her at half-past four. She had not returned from a girl's luncheon to which she had gone. At ten minutes past five she came, full of apology for her delay—"I really couldn't leave. The lunch was over before three o'clock, but the Secretary of State's daughter was enjoying herself and, though we were all furious with her, as we had other engagements, she wouldn't leave; and, of course, none of us could leave until she left. When she did finally take herself away the Secretary of the Treasury's daughter had given up her engagement and had settled herself for the rest of the afternoon. She didn't leave until ten minutes ago. So there we were, penned in and forced to stay."

"Precedence again?" said Frothingham.

"Precedence. It's outrageous that those two girls should show so little consideration."

"I've known the same sort of thing to happen at home," Frothingham assured her. "Once when I'd gone to a house only for dinner I had to stay until half-past four in the morning. The Prince of Wales

## CHAPTER TWELVE

was there, and he was just then mad about 'bridge.' He insisted on playing and playing. Several of us were asleep in the next room—the hostess was nodding over her cards.”

“But he must have seen,” said Elsie. “Why didn’t he take the hint?”

“Well, you see, the poor chap led such a deadly dull life in those days. When he found himself having a bit of fun he didn’t care a rap what it cost anyone else. It’s a mistake to bother with other people’s feelings, don’t you think?”

“It only makes them supersensitive and hard to get on with,” replied Elsie. “I used to be considerate. Now I’m considerate only when it’s positively rude not to be. Besides, I must expect to buy my way through the world. I never had any friends—though I used to think I had, when I was a fool and didn’t know that just the sight of wealth makes human beings tie up their good instincts and turn loose the worst there is in them. Even when rich people are friendly with each other it’s usually in the hope of getting some sordid advantage.”

“Do you apply that to yourself or only to others?”

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"It applies to me—it has applied to me ever since I found what sort of a world I was living in."

"I don't believe it, my dear girl," drawled Frothingham, the more convincingly for the lack of energy in his tone. And he gave her a quick, queer look through his eyeglass and was stolid again.

She coloured just a little. "Oh, I suppose I'd be as big a goose as ever if I should fall in love again."

"Again?"

She laughed. "I've been in love four times in the last four years, and almost in love three times more. That's a poor record for a Washington girl—there are so many temptations, with all these fascinating foreigners streaming through. But I'm not counting the times I've been made love to in half a dozen modern languages—I and my father's money."

"Possibly you were unjust to some of the men who've said they admired you. They may not have attached so much importance to your father's money as—you do."

The thrust tickled her vanity—nature had given her an over-measure of vanity to compensate for her under-measure of charm. She looked pleased, though she said: "I don't deceive myself as to myself."



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“A man might have been attracted to you because you had money,” continued Frothingham dispassionately, “and might have stayed on for your own sake.”

Elsie lifted her eyebrows. “Perhaps,” she said. “I’ll admit it’s possible.”

“And, honestly now, do you pretend that you’d marry a man who had nothing but love to offer you? What has attracted you in the men you thought well of? You say there have been four—or, rather, four and three halves. Has any one of ’em been a poor devil of a nobody?”

Elsie hesitated; in the twilight he saw from the corner of his eye that her upper lip was trembling. They were walking near the tall, white, glistening monument, in the quiet street that skirts the grounds of the White House. “One,” she said, at last, in a low voice. “I didn’t care especially for him. But sometimes I think he really did care for me—he was a wild, sensitive creature.” She looked at Frothingham and smiled. “And when I get in my black moods I’m half sorry I sent him away.”

“But you did send him away, didn’t you?” Frothingham’s expression and tone were satirical, yet

## GOLDEN FLEECE

sympathetic, too. "And you complain of men for being precisely as you are!"

"I hadn't thought of that," she admitted.

"I take it for granted the girl who consents to marry me will consent because she wishes to be a Countess." He drew closer to her—she looked her best in twilight hours, and he succeeded in putting as much tenderness into his voice as was necessary to enable so drawling and indifferent a person to create an impression of sentiment. "If I were walking here with the girl I wished to win, I'd say nothing of sentiment. I'd simply trust to the only thing I have that could possibly induce her to listen to me."

She glanced shyly up at him—he thought her almost pretty.

"Do you think that would win her?" he asked in a low tone.

"I—don't—know," she replied slowly. Her commonplace voice had also been touched with the magic that had transformed her face.

"Won't you think of it?"

"If you wish," she murmured.

They went on in silence a few minutes, then she spoke in an attempt at her usual voice: "But we

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must turn back. I'll have just time to dress for dinner."

And he decided that he would say no more on the principal subject for several days. He thought he understood how to deal with American girls rather better now. "I'll give her a chance to walk round the trap," he thought. And then he reminded himself that it was hardly a trap—wasn't she getting the better of the bargain? "She's indulging in a luxury, while I'm after a desperate necessary. And, by Jove, it won't be easy not to make a face, if I get it—with her."

### XIII

SO confident was he—and so out of conceit with his impending success—that he took a day's vacation, going up to New York with Wallingford to attend a ball for which Longview had hired half of Sherry's, and otherwise to amuse himself. The revisiting of the scene of his early failure depressed him; he lost nearly a thousand dollars at Canfield's; he borrowed a thousand from Wallingford; he returned to Washington in the depths of the blues. And he found the posture of his affairs completely changed.

On the very day he gave Elsie the chance to become a Countess, Prince Rontivogli had discovered that Ysobel Ballantyne had decided that she was sufficiently in love with Boughton to take the risk of his not succeeding to the title. Rontivogli was not the man to waste time on impossibilities—indeed, he had no time to waste. He turned away from the beautiful Miss Ballantyne instantly, and with all the ardour of

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his fiery Southern nature laid siege to Elsie Pope. And, while Elsie was somewhat reserved in her welcome, he found an ally in her father, who thought it would sound extremely well to be able to say, "My daughter, the Princess."

Rontivogli was tall, had a clear, pallid skin, eloquent black eyes, the brow and nose and chin of an Italian patrician, the manners and speech of chivalrous adoration for women which disguise profound contempt for their intelligence.

When Frothingham, just returned from New York, and still enshrouded in surly gloom, drove up to Pope's door, he saw Rontivogli's cabriolet standing a few yards down the drive. Rontivogli was conducting himself in Washington as if he were rich, so plausibly that only the foreign element was without doubts as to the object of his visit to America. At sight of this trap Frothingham scowled. "What's that Italian doing here?" he said to himself, and his fear answered the question. When they came face to face in the parlour Elsie greatly enjoyed it. The Italian was smooth and urbane; Frothingham, careless of the feelings of a man he despised and thoroughly English in his indifference to the demands of courtesy to Elsie,

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was almost uncivil. He and Elsie talked for a few minutes, then she drew Rontivogli into the conversation. The Prince answered in French, and French became the language. Frothingham spoke it far worse than Rontivogli spoke English, so he was practically excluded. He sat dumb and stolid, wondering why "the brute hasn't the decency to take himself off when I came last."

But "the brute" drew Elsie into a lively discussion on a book he had sent her and, because there was no break in the argument, was seemingly not impolite in lingering. It was almost an hour before he rose, kissed her hand, gave her an adoring look, said "*À bientôt*," and departed. But, although he was physically gone, he was actually still there—if anything Frothingham was more acutely conscious of him.

"I don't believe Miss Ballantyne could stand that fellow," he said, aware of his tactlessness, but too angry to care. "I think all those Latins unendurable. They're a snaky lot and their manners suggest waiters and valets."

Elsie flushed and slightly drew in the corners of her mouth, a sure sign that her temper had been roused in the worst way—through wounded vanity. "Oh, you

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British are so insular," she replied, "and so self-satisfied. Here in Washington we learn to appreciate all kinds of foreigners and to make allowances even for Englishmen"—that last with a mere veneer of good nature. "I think Rontivogli charming. He's so intelligent, and has so much temperament."

Frothingham recovered his self-control in presence of obvious danger. He looked calmly at her through his eyeglass. "Dare say you're right," he drawled. "Rontivogli's a decent enough chap, so far as I know, and for an Italian devilish clean-looking."

Elsie had no intention of driving him off; in spite of the Italian's superiority in title and "temperament," she preferred the Englishman—she knew him better and in a more candid way. She became conciliatory, and they were soon amicable again. But Frothingham saw that his vacation had been perilously costly, that he must work to reinstate himself, that it was not a wise moment for reopening the matter of the engagement which only four days ago seemed all but settled. He found that Elsie was dining at the Italian Embassy, to go afterwards to a ball at the Vice-President's to which he was invited. He arranged to see her there and left.

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Boughton and he dined together at the Metropolitan Club. While they were having a before-dinner cocktail Boughton told him, in confidence, that he was engaged to Ysobel Ballantyne. "So that's why I find Rontivogli poaching," thought Frothingham. And he said presently: "What do you know about that chap Rontivogli? He *looks* a queer 'un."

"Not a thing," replied Boughton. "I had all our fellows writing over to the other side, following him up. The answers thus far show nothing downright shady. He's down to a box of a house and a few acres just north of Milan. And that's swamped in mortgages. No one knows how he raised the wind for this trip. He seems to have a good bit of cash, doesn't he?"

"I'm particularly interested in knowing about him," continued Frothingham. "He's developed an astonishing interest in a girl friend of mine. I'd hate to see her taken in by a scamp. And I'm sure he's that."

"Oh," said Boughton. "Miss Pope?"

"Yes," replied Frothingham. "And she thinks well of him."



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“ I’ll be glad to help you, old man. I sha’n’t drop my inquiry as I’d intended.”

“ Thanks,” said Frothingham. And they talked of other matters.

When he looked Elsie up at the Vice-President’s that night for the first of the dances she had promised him, he found her on a rustic bench in the garden, almost screened from observation, Rontivogli beside her. The Italian’s classic face was aglow, and Frothingham saw that he had checked a torrent of enamoured eloquence. He saw, also, that Elsie was not pleased by the interruption. However, she left Rontivogli and went with him. As they entered the ball-room he said: “ I don’t care for this music, do you? Let’s sit it out. Only ”—he gave her a look of quiet raillery—“ you must engage not to go back to your volcano until *my* dance is over.”

“ Volcano? ” A smile of pleased vanity strayed into her eyes and out again.

“ Yes—your Vesuvius, whose eruption I was brute enough to interrupt. Beastly of me, wasn’t it? ”

“ Rontivogli seems to annoy you a great deal.”

“ He? Not in the least.” And his tranquil eyeglass affirmed his falsehood. “ But I assure you he’ll

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spout all the fiercer for the interruption. I know those Southern chaps. I don't wonder we stand no show against 'em. I tossed the sponge as soon as I saw what he was about."

They were sitting on the stairs now and could talk without being overheard. "Possibly you may remember," he went on, "I said something that was rather important to me—last Thursday, down near the monument—at half-past six precisely, to be exact—I heard a clock strike as I finished. Do you recall it?"

Elsie was puzzled by his light, satirical tone. "Yes," she said. "I do vaguely recall that you said something vague."

"I didn't mean to be vague. But that doesn't matter now. I see there's no chance for me—at present. And I wished to say to you that at least I shan't give up our delightful friendship. No matter what you do with your Italian, you'll feel that I'm your friend, won't you?" Frothingham said it as if he meant it; and to a considerable extent he did mean it—chagrined though he was, he fancied her so little in the rôle he had invited her to play that his prospective defeat found him not utterly despondent. He had reasoned out his course carefully and had come

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to the conclusion that his chance lay in posing as her disinterested friend. Perhaps she would confide in him, would give him the opportunity to advise and criticise—an admirable position from which to undermine and destroy his rival.

As Elsie had not fully made up her mind to Rontivogli, and as she saw nothing but advantage to her in keeping Frothingham “on the string,” she responded to his frank and manly appeal. And she believed what he said, as she believed pretty much everything men told her; and she liked him better than ever. “If he were only a prince,” she said to herself regretfully, “and had temperament.”

That same night she accepted Rontivogli; when Frothingham came to lunch the next day she told him. “Well,” he drawled, “I can’t say I’m shouting glad. But I can honestly congratulate *him*. And—I hope you won’t regret.”

“We’re not announcing the engagement for several days,” she said.

“That’s good. You don’t mind my saying—you know we’ve agreed to be friends—but I think you—your father ought to make careful inquiry about him. I’m sure everything’s all right, but—it’s prudent.”

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Elsie smiled. "Oh, we have made inquiries," she said. "Besides, anyone can see what sort of man he is—anyone but a prejudiced Englishman."

"I don't deny prejudice. Is it surprising?" And he gave her a long look that might have meant anything or nothing. "But—one can't be too careful about foreigners."

"Foreigners!" Elsie laughed with good-humoured mockery. "And what are *you*?"

"Why, an Englishman. We don't count as foreigners here."

"No—but as—as"—Elsie had "poor relations" on the tip of her tactless tongue, but she caught it and changed it to "step-brothers." And she went on, "Which is much more suspicious."

Frothingham found encouragement in her willingness to discuss her fiancé with him—it showed plainly how foreign she felt to Rontivogli, how friendly to him. A few afternoons later—it was the day after the dinner at which her engagement was formally announced—she went with Frothingham to call on "Madame Almansa" in her surroundings of Spartan simplicity. They found Ysobel and Boughton there also, and when Ysobel took Frothingham and Boughton

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ton into the small library adjoining the smaller drawing room to look at some old prints "Sue" had brought with her from Spain, Elsie talked with "Sue" of the engagement.

Madame Almansa was chary of congratulations, full of cautionings and doubts. "I don't wish to cast a shadow on your happiness, dear—for you *are* happy, aren't you?"

"Indeed I am," replied Elsie convincingly—Rontovogli was an ideal lover; he could even sing his mad passion in a voice that was well-trained and thrilling.

"But—you know my sad experience." Madame Almansa sighed like Medea thinking on the treachery of Jason. Her glance fell upon the engagement ring. She took Elsie's hand. "How beautiful!" she exclaimed. "I love emeralds and that is a magnificent one. And only a tiny flaw."

Elsie coloured with annoyance. "I think you are mistaken," she said. "It's a perfect stone."

"Certainly it is perfect, dear," replied Madame Almansa in her superior, informative tone. "Perfect for an emerald. But, you know, there are no emeralds of size anywhere in the world that haven't flaws. At

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least, I never heard of one. Emeralds are valuable in spite of their flaws."

Elsie coloured again, this time with annoyance at having exposed her ignorance.

"A superb setting," continued Madame Almansa. "It must be very, very old. I love that kind of setting—beautifully engraved, dull gold. The only objection is that it's the best kind for deceiving one as to genuineness, isn't it? One could not tell whether that stone was genuine or imitation. You know, they make such wonderful imitations. When I was going out in the world I had all my best jewels reproduced in imitation stuff, and usually I wore the imitation. One felt so much safer."

Elsie drew her hand away, smiling sweetly. She was inwardly raging—"The cat!" she said to herself. "Clawing me viciously, and purring as if she hadn't a claw."

She left in a few minutes, Rontivogli calling for her. To relieve her feelings, and also because she was in the habit of saying nearly everything that came into her head, she told him what Madame Almansa had said, making vigorous comments as she related.

Rontivogli, half turned toward her as they sat side

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by side in her victoria, regarded her with his luminous smile. "That is the way of the world, *ma belle et bonne*," he said in his gentlest manner. "It is difficult to harden one's self to such wickedness. But there is also much that is beautiful and fine. And we—you and I—will shut everything else out of our lives, will we not?"

He made her feel unworthy, almost "common," when he talked in that fashion—she realised painfully that she was sadly lacking in "temperament," and she dreaded that he might find her out.

"The ring," he went on, "has been in the family for eight hundred years—perhaps longer. It is unchanged. No question of its genuineness has ever been raised, so far as I know. We are not so suspicious as some of you Americans."

"She didn't question it's genuineness," replied Elsie. "She simply wished to make me uncomfortable with a malicious insinuation. Or, maybe, she was just talking. It was silly of me to tell you."

He protested that he was not disturbed. But he seemed unable long to keep off the subject, returning to it as the cleverest habitual liar will fatuously return to his unquestioned lie to weaken it by trying further

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to bolster it up. So persistent was he that he at last made her uneasy—not that she suspected him, or was conscious of having been disturbed by his unnecessary reassurances. The next morning she went down to a jeweller's in Pennsylvania Avenue—she had other business there and thought it her sole object in going, forgetting that she had intended to send her mother. She discussed several proposed purchases with the manager, whom she knew well. As she talked she had her elbows on a show case, and her ungloved hands clasped so that the ring was in full view—curiously, it was not on the engagement finger. He noted it, thought she wished him to speak of it, because as she exhibited it she often glanced at it.

“Would you mind letting me look at that beautiful ring?” he asked.

“Certainly.” She drew it off with some nervousness, gave it to him, and, as he looked, watched him and it alternately with vague anxiety.

“A very old, a very quaint setting,” he said, “and a fine——”

He paused; her mouth was dry and her skin hot.

“A fine stone—a beautiful stone,” he continued.  
“One of the finest I ever saw. The flaw is slight.”



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Elsie drew a long breath—she felt an unaccountable sense of relief. The manager took his glass, went to the window, and studied the stone and the setting. “I’m glad to hear you say the stone’s genuine,” said she, now admitting to herself that Madame Alman-sa’s poison had been lurking far down in her mind. “Someone doubted it, and as it was important to me to know, I intended to ask you.”

“In that case,” said the manager, “I feel it’s my duty to tell you the stone’s an imitation.”

Elsie grew rigid and cold from amazement and rising horror.

“A good imitation,” continued the manager, intent upon the stone, “but unquestionably not genuine. The setting makes it additionally deceptive.”

“How much is the ring worth?” she asked, gathering herself together heroically.

“Well—the stone, of course, is worthless—a few dollars. But the setting is old and quite beautiful. It might bring a hundred or so from a collector if it hit his fancy and had an authentic history. If the stone were genuine, the ring would be worth about—five thousand, I should say, as a rough guess.”

“Fortunately, I haven’t bought it yet,” she said

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carelessly. And she took it from him and put it—in her pocketbook. “The stone seems to have been undisturbed in that setting for a long time,” she added, as she closed the pocketbook.

“Oh, there’s no telling as to that. It was manufactured by the newest process. It has been only two or three years, I believe, since they learned to put in the flaws so cleverly. They make them very well in New York now.”

“Thank you so much, Mr. Macready,” said Elsie. “You won’t say anything about it, will you?”

“You needn’t have asked that, Miss Pope,” answered Macready with a reproachful smile.

“Thank you again,” she said. It was not until she was driving away, that her cheeks began to burn fiercely and the hot tears of shame and anger to scald her eyes.

## XIV

SHE went straight to her father with the whole story. He listened sitting at his desk, balancing a broad ivory paper-cutter on his forefinger. She felt much better when she had finished; her anger seemed to have been carried off in her words.

After a long silence her father said: "What do you wish to do?"

She looked foolish. "I don't know, papa," she said feebly. "What do you think we ought to do?"

"He may have been honestly deceived."

"But Mr. Macready said——"

"That was merely his offhand opinion," he interrupted. "They've been making imitation jewels of all kinds for years. I know the Italians have long been clever at it."

Elsie was silent. She could not help remembering Rontivogli's stupid, over-crafty reiterations. She knew that he knew.

"And," continued her father, examining the paper-

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cutter critically, "there isn't the slightest doubt as to the genuineness of Prince Rontivogli himself."

Another long silence during which neither father nor daughter showed the slightest curiosity as to what thoughts the other's face might be revealing.

"Even if he did wilfully deceive in this—not vitally important—matter," continued the aspirant for a princess-daughter, "I can imagine many extenuating circumstances. It isn't the young man's fault that he's poor. It isn't unnatural that he shouldn't wish to expose his poverty—especially if he"—the Senator's face took on a smile of fatherly benevolence—"happened to care for the young lady. 'All's fair in love and war,' you know. And we must not judge harshly those who have less than we have. Still——"

Rontivogli's "temperament" was vigorously reinforcing his title in repairing the havoc the false jewel had played with him in Elsie's mind. He had been a convincing lover; Elsie had too much vanity and too much desire to be loved madly not to be a credulous young woman. "I don't know what to do, papa," she said in the tone that proclaims a decision reached and a wish for support in it.

"Perhaps," replied the Senator slowly, the person-



*"I can imagine many extenuating circumstances"*



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ification of forgiving charity, "it might be best to let the matter drop."

"But I simply can't *wear* the ring! I'd feel such a fraud, and I'd soon be disliking him, though this may not be at all his fault. Besides, someone might——"

"That could be easily arranged." Her father's eyes twinkled—he was preparing to treat the discovered deception as a little private joke on the prince between his daughter and himself. "We can get Tiffany to set an emerald in the ring. No one will know. And some day you can tease him about it. If he is innocent it would mortify him to learn the truth now, wouldn't it?"

Elsie smiled somewhat cheerfully. She was trying hard to make herself doubt the prince's guilty knowledge. "It must be done right away," she said.

She wore her gloves that afternoon. But Rontivogli, with nerves like a sensitive plant's leaves, felt a change in her, hard though she tried to seem unchanged. In the clear light of hind-sight he had been cursing himself for saying so much to her of Madame Almansa's insinuations; and at first he feared that by his blundering he had roused suspicion in her.

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But she showed that she was still in the mood to marry him, and the negotiations for settlements went smoothly on between Senator Pope's lawyer and the attorney to the Italian Embassy, whom he had engaged to represent him. He dismissed his fear as a wild imagining of guilt and set himself to remove the coolness just under Elsie's surface of warmth by lavishing his "temperament" upon her. And he was rewarded with swift success. A flaw in such a lover was as inconsequential as a flaw in an emerald—and was it not as much a matter of course?

Toward the end of the week she went with her father to New York, and in two days Tiffany changed the setting for a consideration of four thousand eight hundred dollars. She returned fully restored—but she kept the false stone, hid it far back in the bottom of her jewel-safe.

The shock and its after-effects were soon over. She was a little astonished that she, so used to the quaint ways of foreigners, should have attached importance to the quaintness of this foreigner—a lover who was fiery and infatuated, a lover who sang, a lover who was a Prince of a "house" that ruled and plotted and patronised the arts when Europe beyond the Alps was



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a savage wilderness. Rontivogli had not been studying women for twenty years—or ever since he was eighteen—aided by a classic face, a classic figure, a classic name, and classic recklessness, without learning thoroughly the business he was now following.

Frothingham had ceased to hope, and, for lack of any other opening, was arranging to go to Chicago, there to visit his steamer friend Barney, whom he had not permitted to forget him—Barney had a marriageable daughter and was rated at eleven millions; also, Chicago was reputed to be a promising field for titled foreigners. He felt that he was neglecting business in lingering at Washington. He saw no signs, heard no news, of available rich girls or rich men's daughters. Half a dozen questions about any girl and he would get an answer that would force him to strike her from his list—the father was opposed to large settlements; the family was opposed to international marriages; the family's social ambitions were of the new cis-Atlantic kind; the daughter was already engaged; the mother's aim was for princely or ducal rank. And he was kept in low spirits by the spectacle of the triumphant Rontivogli and was exasperated by

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Elsie's treating him as an object of pity, a rejected and inconsolable lover.

As he sat alone in a corner of the club, staring with grim satire into the ugly face of his affairs, upon him intruded a man whom he had often described as the most viciously tiresome person he had ever met—Count Eitel zu Blickenstern. He disliked Blickenstern because he was a German; he avoided him because he was dull, because he was a chronic and ingenious borrower of small sums of money, and because every remark that seemed to him to have been intended humourously was hailed by him with a loud, mirthless laugh—the laugh of those who have no notion of wit or humour and fear their deformity will be discovered.

Frothingham had first met Blickenstern in the Riviera, where he was living on the last lees of tolerance. He would have cut him when he ran across him in New York had he not found him in high favour with the women who dominated fashionable society. They admitted Blickenstern as they admitted almost any of the few available men with no occupation but idleness. They needed escorts, attendants, fetch-and-carry men; Blickenstern was idle and willing, was big and always well dressed, was useful to do the hard

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work of arranging an entertainment once it had been planned. And his noisy convulsions flattered those unaccustomed to having their jokes appreciated.

Frothingham's cold stare did not disturb Blickenstern, born insensible to mental temperatures. He posed for a moment to give Frothingham a chance to admire his fashionable array of new light grey frock suit, white spats, orchid in buttonhole, and dark red tie; then he dropped upon the lounge with the good-natured, slightly condescending greeting he gave men when he had money in his pockets. He explained that he had come the night before in a private car with a party of distinguished New Yorkers who had to testify before a Senate committee. "And, do you know," said he—his English was idiomatic American and almost without accent, "the first person I ran into was that Italian scalawag, Rontivogli."

Frothingham's eyeglass glistened; otherwise he did not change expression. "D' you know 'im?" he asked languidly. "What 'll you drink?"

"Brandy and soda," replied Blickenstern. "Know 'im? Rather! I'm responsible for him in this country. He landed without a friend and the people he had letters to shut the door in his face—they don't

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fancy Italians in New York. I introduced him round and got him in everywhere. And, by gad, he not only refused to pay a note he gave me, but when I met him here last night he stared at me as if he'd never seen me before."

"Rough, wasn't it?"

Blickenstern laughed cheerfully, without a trace of irritation. Insults did not disturb him; he had killed one man and had wounded several in duels, but he fought only because it was the "proper thing for a gentleman"—and respect-inspiring in certain countries and in certain circumstances. "I'm off for home next week," he said, "never to return to this bounderland. I think, just before I go, I'll get the face value of that note and interest—and not in money, either."

Blickenstern had several drinks "on" Frothingham—half a dozen in as rapid succession as Frothingham could induce. But he refused to disclose his proposed revenge, only chuckled, "I'll bet the dago 'll leave on the first steamer after I sail."

Frothingham got Boughton to attempt Blickenstern, and Boughton not only tried it himself, but also put at work a friend of his in the German Embassy. Blickenstern, however, would not go beyond



*"I'll give the guinea one more chance"*



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wagging his big blond head and saying, "Wait! I don't want to spoil the fun." The military attaché at the German Embassy was with him when he met Rontivogli again. "I'll give the guinea one more chance," said he, overflowing with good-nature as always when he had drunk to excess. It was the office of the Shoreham, and Rontivogli was on his way out; Blickenstern bore down upon him, caught him by the lapel.

"I'm giving you your last chance, Cosimo," he said. "You'd better pay up."

"If you don't take your hands off me," exclaimed Rontivogli in French, "I'll have you put into the street." The look in his black eyes suggested the glitter of a stiletto.

Blickenstern shook him gently. "If you don't pay that note," he replied with unruffled good nature, "I'll publish it and the contract also. I'm leaving the country, and don't care what they think of me here. But you—I hear you're about to marry?"

Rontivogli grew yellow under the bronze of his clear, pale skin. "I tell you, I can't pay the note. You know it. You drove me out of New York with your dogging and dunning me. In a few weeks I can pay, and will."

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“Yes—when you’re married.” Blickenstern laughed loudly and not hollowly—here was a joke he could see. “What do you think I am—an imbecile? Don’t I know that as soon as you’re married you can snap your fingers—and will?”

Rontivogli disengaged himself and readjusted his close-fitting coat. “I’m certain you will not lay yourself liable to arrest for blackmail,” he said with calm contempt, and went on to his carriage.

Blickenstern looked after him, nodding and laughing. “Just wait!” he said, addressing his fellow-German, and including the curious loungers in the office.

Frothingham searched for Blickenstern—he had a vague idea of taking him to call at the Popes’. But he could not find him. He did see Rontivogli, however—one glance was enough to tell him that Blickenstern’s threats had devoured his high spirits and were eating into his courage. He waited impatiently for the explosion—a five-days’ wait, for it did not come until the following Tuesday. That morning, as Hutt went out of his bedroom after fixing his bath, Joe Wallingford called from their common sitting room:



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"You're awake, aren't you?"

"Almost," answered Frothingham.

"Then just read that." He flung a newspaper through the crack in Frothingham's door onto his bed.

Frothingham took the paper and instantly caught the names of Rontivogli and Blickenstern in the largest headlines. He began eagerly upon a three-column article, the most of it under a New York date line.

"Ain't that cruel?" called Wallingford. "Ain't it a soaker?"

"Um," replied Frothingham, too busy to pause.

It was an account of a suit brought by Blickenstern against Rontivogli to collect a note for twenty-five hundred dollars. The "sensation" lay in a document which Blickenstern had attached to the note and had filed with the papers in the suit—a contract, reading:

I, Cosimo di Rontivogli, hereby agree to pay Count Eitel zu Blickenstern twenty-five hundred dollars as soon as he has introduced me to the persons whose names are written upon the back of this contract in my handwriting. And I further agree to pay him an additional twenty-five hundred dollars within one month after I become engaged to an American lady, whether or not I am introduced to her by him. And I further agree to pay him an additional ten thousand dollars within three months after my

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marriage with an American lady, whether or not he introduced me to her.

(Signed) COSIMO DI RONTIVOGLI.

This contract, the newspaper said, was in Rontivogli's autograph, and was witnessed by two clerks at the Holland House; on the back of the contract, and also in Rontivogli's autograph, were the names of fifteen fashionable and rich New York women. Frothingham glanced at the names—he knew the bearers of most of them—and hastened on into Blickenstern's interview. "In Europe," he had said to the reporter, "I should call the fellow out and kill him. Here, where the duel does not exist, I must take the only redress open to me for his betrayal of my friendship. I asked him to pay only the note. In fact he owes me five thousand, as he is now engaged to a Washington heiress. He is a black rascal. If you will send to Milan you can get a fine tale of how he happened to come to your country. I owe all my American friends an apology for introducing him. I confess with shame that but for me he would have known no one."

The article went on with an account of Rontivogli's engagement to "Miss Elsie Pope, one of the best known young women in Washington, Philadelphia,

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and New York society, the only daughter of Senator John C. Pope, reputed to be the third richest man in the Millionaires' Club, as the Senate is called." Then followed Rontivogli's sweeping denial, and his denunciation of the Prussian as a "blackmailer," a "notorious card-sharp," a "thorough scoundrel."

When Frothingham finished he said, "Gad, what a facer for Miss Pope!"

"Isn't it, though?" replied Wallingford. "And for her father. I always blame the fathers."

"But I thought it was the mothers who hankered after European marriages," said Frothingham.

"That's what is usually said," Wallingford answered, "because only the mothers appear in the public part of the business. But who gives up the money for the settlements? The women ain't a nose ahead of the men in the race of snobbishness. Poor little Elsie Pope! This ought to be a lesson to our girls against——"

He paused abruptly and reddened, though Frothingham could not see him. "I almost forgot that Frothingham's one of 'em," he said to himself.

Frothingham was grinning in the seclusion of his bedroom. "I should say so!" he exclaimed in his

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drawling, satirical voice. "Wonder what the Milan yarn is?"

He learned in a few hours, for the Washington afternoon papers had a long Associated Press despatch from Milan. Rontivogli, heavily in debt and ruined, had been backed by a syndicate of his creditors for an American tour in search of an heiress. They had risked in the venture forty thousand lire and, within a month, an additional twenty thousand. They regarded it as a by no means desperate investment for the recovery of the very large sum which Rontivogli had got out of them before they discovered his financial plight—certainly with such a title and so much personal beauty and charm he could win the daughter of one of the multitude of rich men among those title-crazy American vulgarians. The Milan despatch set forth that the correspondent had had no difficulty in getting the facts, as "everyone here knows the story. The formation of such syndicates is said to be common in England, France, Germany, Austria, and Italy, and many of them have been successful."

"Poor Frothingham!" Wallingford thought as he read. "This is bad for his business. I fancy it'll be many a day before I see my thousand again." And

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then he delicately gave Frothingham a hint that if he needed another thousand he could have it. But Frothingham didn't need it just then—and, it should be set down to his credit, he would have hesitated long before taking it, had he needed it. Wallingford was not wrong in thinking there had been since he met Frothingham a marked decline in his "honour as a gentleman," and a marked rise in his "honour as a man."

Rontivogli went to the Popes' at eleven o'clock that morning. The look of the flunky who opened the door foreshadowed to him his fate. He was shown not into the drawing room, but into a reception room—a small alcove to the left of the door, intended for wraps rather than for callers. The servant returned with a package on his tray. "Miss Pope is not at 'ome," he said haughtily, omitting the customary "Your 'Ighness," and not even substituting so much as a "Sir" for it, "and she left this to be given to you."

Rontivogli ignored the impudences of omitting his title and of addressing him as "you," and took the package. The servant held aside the portière with the broadest possible hint in his face and manner.

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“Tell Senator Pope that the Prince di Rontivogli wishes to see him,” said Rontivogli in a tone which at once reduced the servant, in spite of himself, from a human being to a mechanical device for the transmission of messages.

When he hesitatingly withdrew Rontivogli opened the package—his ring with the stone unset and loose in the box. He solved the puzzle almost as soon as it was presented to him. He scowled, then gave a short, sneering laugh, put the lid on the box, and thrust it into the tail pocket of his frock coat.

Senator Pope received him in his study, rising and bowing without advancing or extending his hand. He was serious, but bland—he did not know how to be brusque, or even unkind in manner; he did know how to be diplomatic.

“I have come, sir, to repel the lies of that infamous Prussian,” began Rontivogli with suppressed passion.

“You will, I trust, not distress me with the painful subject,” said Pope slowly and gently. “We know that the Count has maligned you. But you, as a gentleman, must appreciate how terrible the notoriety is to us all. I assume that you have come to relieve the young lady of the embarrassment of the situation.”

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Rontivogli lost control of himself, raved, paced the floor, pleaded, denounced, threatened even. But Pope, sympathetic and in the proper places tenderly sorrowful, pressed in upon the Prince his and Elsie's unchangeable determination. At last Rontivogli gave up the useless battle and drew the box from his pocket. "Your daughter," he said, "sent me by a servant this broken ring. The stone has been removed and to my astonishment I find that a false emerald has been substituted." His voice and manner were apologetic, deprecatory, as if Senator Pope owed him an explanation which he was loath to demand.

He opened the box and exhibited its contents to Pope, who looked with polite interest. "The stone has become detached," was all he said.

"But why was it not returned to me?" asked Rontivogli. "Why this false emerald in its place?"

"It is the same stone," said Pope. His tone was absent, as if he were thinking of something else.

"It is not!" Rontivogli's voice was bold and hard, a covert threat in it.

They looked each the other straight in the eyes—Pope inquiringly, the Prince defiantly. Then Pope said: "Ah! Excuse me one moment."

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He left the room, muttering as he reached the hall, "The miserable swindler! He knows we won't have any further scandal, no matter what it costs." When he returned he had in his hand the emerald he and Elsie had bought at Tiffany's. He laid it on the corner of the desk nearest the nobleman.

"This is *a* genuine emerald," he said, his voice neither hot nor cold. "You may take *it*—if you like."

"I thank you," replied the nobleman with a slight bow of acknowledgment, as if a wrong to him had been righted.

He put the emerald and the ring in his waistcoat pocket; he put the box, with the false emerald in it, on the corner of the desk exactly where Senator Pope had laid the genuine stone. Then he went on, in a way that was the perfection of courtesy: "May I presume further on your kindness? This German cur has placed me in a distressing position. I wish to leave America at once, to return where a gentleman cannot be thus attacked without defence. Unfortunately——" He hesitated with a fine affectation of delicacy.

Senator Pope's eyes were more disagreeable to look



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at than any human being had ever before seen them. "I shall be glad to give you any *reasonable* assistance," he said with resolute self-control.

"You are most kind!" Rontivogli was almost effusive. "I shall return any advance you may make as soon as I am at home."

"How much?" asked Pope with a trace of impatience.

"I have many obligations which must be settled before I leave. I had just cabled for a remittance, but I wish to go before it can arrive. Might I trouble you for an advance of, perhaps, five thousand—I think that will be enough."

Senator Pope unlocked and opened a drawer, took out a flat package of bills. "Here is a thousand dollars," he said. "I cannot advance you more. And I trust you will sail the day after to-morrow." He looked hard at the Prince. "That will spare me the necessity of making a *private* appeal to the Italian Embassy through our State Department."

"You are most kind, *mon cher* Senator," replied Rontivogli.

He put the package of bills in the inside pocket of his coat. He reflected a few seconds, then took his top

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hat. "Will you do me the honour of presenting my compliments and regrets to Madame Pope—and to Mademoiselle?" he said with steady eyes and elaborate politeness. "I thank you again. I regret that we part in circumstances so unhappy. I shall send your little advance within the month."

He bowed profoundly, and Senator Pope inclined his head. He went to the door, turned there, bowed again. "*Au revoir*, my dear Senator," he said cordially, and was gone—a fascinating patrician figure of handsome ease and dignity.

## XV

**F**ROTHINGHAM let three days pass, and on the fourth called at Senator Pope's. Elsie was in Philadelphia—was visiting an aunt. It had not occurred to him that she would run away and hide herself, so little did he think of the matter in any other light than that of a game between himself and Rontivogli. He was much upset, and did not know what move to make next. Fate helped him the evening of the same day—the mail brought a note from Elsie:

MY DEAR FRIEND:

I can't help writing to thank you. You warned me, and you were good and kind about it, and I was very disagreeable. I should like to say so to you, but I don't suppose you'll be in Philadelphia, will you? And it will be many a day before I see Washington. Indeed, I hope I shall never see it again. I didn't deserve your friendship.

E. W. P.

Frothingham had not reflected on this letter long before he was telling Hutt to get his belongings together. The next afternoon found him at the Bellevue in Philadelphia, and a few hours later he was din-

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ing at the Hopkins' with Elsie and her uncle and aunt. He liked the Hopkinses—stiff and shy, but kindly. He liked the dark furniture, and walls and woodwork, suggesting old English; liked the faces in the family portraits—English faces; liked surroundings where there was nothing new or new-fashioned except his own and Elsie's dress, where there was so much that was fine as well as old. And he had never liked Elsie so well as now that she was chastened into an appealing gentleness and humility.

He saw that he had been right in thinking her note an apology, and an attempt to recall him. And when the Hopkinses left them alone in the parlour after dinner he soon said: "I've come for an answer to that question I asked you—down by the monument."

She hung her head and flushed deeply. "Oh, I wish to get away from all this," she said in a low voice. "I'll be glad to go far away—far as—as you care to take me."

He sat beside her and took her hand. But he made no effort to show "temperament." "I'll go back to Washington and see your father to-morrow—if you wish," he said, after a silence.

"Yes," she replied.

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She wrote a long letter to her father as soon as Frothingham was gone—her maid posted it at midnight. So it came to pass that Senator Pope was expecting him. He received him with the benign courtesy he gave to the humblest negro. He liked Frothingham—but, for that matter, it was impossible for him to dislike any member of the human race, even Rontivogli, or any well-disposed domestic animal; ever since he had “gathered his bunch,” his content and complacency had, with a few brief pauses, been bubbling over in words and acts of kindness. But when Frothingham said, “I’ve come to see you, sir, about something of which I and your daughter have been talking,” his face clouded with a look of apologetic distress—almost the same look as that with which he had received Rontivogli for the final interview.

Frothingham would not have attributed it to embarrassment had he known Senator Pope better. It was the look he wore whenever the exigencies of fate forced him to do anything unpleasant—whether to refuse a small favour, or to cut a rival’s throat, or to scuttle a financial or political ship. For, being a good man, and a lover of smoothness, it pained him exceed-

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ingly to cause his fellow-beings any other emotion than happiness. In the present instance the cause of his distress was the discovery that an alliance with nobility would destroy his chances for the Vice-Presidential nomination which he was plotting to get. He had not confided his ambition to his closest political lieutenant. But when Rontivogli was exposed and cast out, his colleague and boss had said to him: "I'm glad to hear you're not going to take a foreign nobleman into your family, Senator. Until the engagement was announced we were hoping you could be induced to make the race for the Vice-Presidency. While an Italian wouldn't have been as bad as an Englishman on account of the Irish vote, I don't think the party would have stood for even an Italian. The people don't like that sort of thing."

That settled Senator Pope's aristocratic ambitions.

"I've come, sir," Frothingham was saying, "to ask your consent to marrying your daughter."

Senator Pope's eyes swam, so strong was his emotion. "I am highly honoured, Lord Frothingham. But I cannot give you an answer in so important a matter at once. I must consult with her mother."

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Mrs. Pope was a shadowy nonentity, flitting nervously in the wake of father and daughter.

He detained Frothingham for a long talk on England and America, and sent him away in an almost jubilant mood—no applicant ever left him downcast. The next day Frothingham got a telegram from Elsie asking him to come to her as soon as he could. He assumed that her father had decided to convey his consent through her, and his spirits rose higher. But the first glimpse of her disturbed him—hers was not the face of a bearer of good news.

“I saw your father,” he began.

“Yes,” she interrupted. “He has written me.”

“Does he consent?”

“Yes and no.” She hesitated. “He asked me not to tell, but I know I can trust you. He has been planning to be nominated for Vice-President. And he has found that he can’t have the nomination if I marry a titled foreigner—especially an Englishman, because of the Irish. They say it would kill the ticket.”

Frothingham retreated behind a vacant look.

“He found it out only a few days ago.” She did not feel equal to telling him that her father had learned this fatal fact through the exposure of Ron-

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tivogli. "So," she ended, "we couldn't marry until after the election. For he says he's sure of the nomination."

"And when is this election?"

"A year from next fall."

Fortunately Frothingham had not the habit of letting his face speak for him. After a pause he said: "But surely you can persuade him."

"It's useless to try. You don't know him as I do. He seems yielding, and usually he is. But where he's set he's hard as granite."

"Nearly two years," he repeated. And to himself: "Impossible! I might weather six months, but two years—the creditors would laugh at me."

"And I wish to go away at once," she said with a long sigh, looking at him mournfully.

"I—we—can't wait two years," he replied.

"We needn't, need we? We might——" she began, then halted, blushing vividly.

He pretended not to understand—though he did, for he had already thought of that plan.

"You know—I'm of age," she went on, seeing that he was not going to help her out. "We—we needn't wait for his consent." He did not change expression,



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but he was saying to himself, "Here's a mess. She's so mad to get away that she's ready to do anything."

"I think he'd forgive us," she went on. "But even if he didn't, I'd never regret."

He knew that he must say something, must say it quickly, and that it must be appreciative but noncommittal. "I couldn't accept such a sacrifice," he said. "It wouldn't be decent to take advantage of you in that fashion. I know it sounds unromantic to say it, but, by Jove, I don't go in for the sort of romance that makes a fellow a blackguard." And he frankly told enough of his financial difficulties to make the situation clear to her. "I believe you can talk your father round," he ended. "He thinks the world of you."

Elsie smiled—melancholy and cynical. "Yes—so long as I don't interfere. But I know how he feels about the Vice-Presidency. And that—that other affair has made him——" She shook her head.

This chilled Frothingham. "He'd never forgive her if she ran off with me and lost him the office," he reflected. "Besides, I can't afford to go in without settlements arranged beforehand. I must chuck it—quick as ever I can."

He urged persuading her father, and she promised

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to try. He saw her the next day, and the next, both afternoons and evenings. On the third day he did not see her until late in the afternoon—her father had come from Washington, and had spent the morning with her. And while they were talking Frothingham was reading a letter from Honoria which had been languidly pursuing him for a week. Part of it was:

I think you met Cecilia Allerton in Boston. Had you heard of her bolting with Frank Mortimer?

“Frank Mortimer!” he exclaimed, sitting upright in bed in his astonishment. “That brute with the big teeth and the empty head!”

Her father was angry with her for something or other and treated her cruelly. Everyone was pitying her. Frank fell in love with her out of sympathy, and she was so miserable that, when her father wouldn't consent, she ran off with him. Mr. Allerton has changed his will, they say, leaving everything to colleges and charities. But Frank has an income and will have more when his uncle dies, and she has a rich aunt who loathes her father, and so may leave her something.

Cecilia's quite mad about Frank, now that they're married. Willie Kennefick was dining with us last night. He says she was in love with Stanley Huddiford, who died a year or so ago. He says she believes Stanley's soul has entered into Frank! She's a clever girl, they say, but a bit eccentric, like so many of them down Boston way——

Frothingham looked on this news as a direct, provi-

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dential warning to him. "I'll take no risks with Pope," he said. "It would be sheer madness."

And before he left his rooms he wrote to Barney, fixing the next day but one for his arrival at Chicago. He felt that there was no hope of winning Pope—at least not at present. "If she by chance succeeds after I'm gone—and I'll leave her in a good humour—I can easily return. But I know there's nothing in it."

Failure was mourning in her eyes when he called at five o'clock. They went for a walk, and in reluctant words she told him that her father was immovable, that their only choice was between disobeying him and breaking the engagement. She listened coldly while he explained his position again; when he had finished she sneered. "You are—unanswerable," she said bitterly.

"No doubt I do lack 'temperament,'" he drawled, an ironic gleam on his eyeglass.

She was humble at once. "Oh—I understand," she answered.

But she was too heartsick to talk; and he forgot that he was walking with her, could only feel ruin's arm linked firmly in his. It was dusk when they reached the house.

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In the doorway he took her hand and held it.

“ I shall see you when I return? ” he asked. “ Will you answer if I write now and then? ”

“ Yes,” she replied gratefully.

She sent away the servant who came at her ring. She detained Frothingham, hoping against reason and instinct that he would tear off that tranquil mask of his, would forget his responsibilities as the bearer of a proud and ancient name, would say: “ I care for only you. Come! ” Even after he had left her she lingered, holding the door ajar, listening for returning footsteps. At last she shut the door, and went forlornly and wearily to her great, lonely, sombre dressing room. She stood before the mirror of her dressing table, studying her plain, wistful, woeful little face. “ You aren’t pretty,” she said to it, with that candour which has its chance in those rare moments when vanity is quite downcast. “ And one can’t expect much when men think of nothing but looks in a woman.” She could no longer see herself for tears. “ And I believe he’d have been—at least kind to me.”

She rang for her maid, and began listlessly and mechanically to dress for dinner.

## XVI

**A**T Chicago Barney came down the platform to meet Frothingham. "Here you are!" he exclaimed. "Six months in the country, but not a bit changed. And if an American goes over to your side and stays a week he has to learn the language all over again when he gets back."

It was still daylight, and Barney told his coachman to drive home by way of "the store"—the great "Barney and Company Emporium—seventy stores and a bank, three restaurants, a nursery, and an emergency hospital, all under one roof." Frothingham watched the throngs pouring torrent-like through the cañons made by the towering buildings. "Don't it remind you of New York?" asked Barney.

"Yes—and no," he replied. It seemed to him in the comparison that New York was a titanic triumph, Chicago a titanic struggle; New York a finished or at least definite creation, Chicago a chaos in convulsion. There was in the look and the noise of it an indefinable

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menace which oppressed him, filled him with vague uneasiness. When Barney told him the site of it was a swamp a few years before, he thought of a fairy story his nurse had told him—of a magic city that used to rise from an enchanted morass at dusk, live a single night, and vanish with the dawn. And as the daylight waned, he wondered whether this inchoate, volcanic unreality of a city would not soon be again engulfed in the bosom of its mother, the swamp. But he began to note here and there traces of form, civilised form, peering from the chaos to indicate the trend of the convulsion—that it was upward, not downward.

“It is tremendous,” said Frothingham. “Is it bigger than New York?”

“No,” Barney reluctantly answered. Then he added with curious, defiant energy: “But it *will* be! And it’s American, which New York ain’t. It’s full of people that think for themselves, and do as they d——n please. We ain’t got many apes out here. We run more to humans.”

They were now driving past Barney and Company’s—a barrack-like structure, towering story on story from a huge base bounded by four streets, where

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surged a seemingly insane confusion of men, women, children, horses, vans, automobiles, articulate in the demoniac voices of boys shrieking extras and drivers bawling oaths. And the sky blackened suddenly, and from the direction of the lake came a storm, cruelly cold, bitter as hate, seizing the struggling, swearing, shouting mass of men and animals, lashing it with whips of icy rain, and pelting it with bullets of hail.

"That's my little place," said Barney, pride oozing through his offhand tone.

"It's tremendous," was all Frothingham could say. The "Emporium" and its surroundings dazed him. He muttered under his breath, "And it's Hell."

Barney told the story of creation as it read for him. He had been a drummer for a suspender house—eighteen hundred a year for touring the cities and towns of northern Indiana and Illinois; four thousand dollars put by after twelve years of toil; eyes ever alert for a chance to go into business on his own account. One of his towns was Terre Haute—he called it Terry Hut. In it was a dry-goods shop kept by a man named Meakim. Barney found that of all the retailers he visited, Meakim was by far the shrewdest, the most energetic, and, above all, that he had an

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amazing talent for “dressing” his show windows and show cases. He persuaded Meakim to sell out and adventure Chicago with him. They set up in a small way, and in an obscure corner. But both toiled; Barney was shrewd and almost sleepless, and Meakim “dressed” the windows and displayed the goods on and over the counters. They prospered, spread too rapidly for their capital, failed, gathered themselves together, prospered again. “I’ve built three stores in fourteen years,” said Barney. “This last one was finished only five years ago—the year Meakim died. And already it’s too small—we’re moving our wholesale department to another building.”

Presently they were in Michigan Avenue and at Barney’s house. It was a mass of Indiana limestone which he—with the assistance of a builder, audaciously “branched out” as an architect—had fashioned into a fantastic combination of German mediæval fortress and Italian renaissance villa. “Here’s where I live,” said Barney as the carriage stopped before the huge doors studded with enormous bronze nails. “And don’t you dare back up Nelly when she jeers about it. She says she can’t look at it without laughing, or come into it without blushing. I suppose it *is* no good, in



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the way of art. But it keeps out the rain, and that's the main point in a house, ain't it?"

As he was getting out his keys the door was opened by a maid in a black dress, a white apron and cap. "Jessie," said he, in a tone which suggested that she might be his daughter, "this is the Earl of Frothingham, and I want you to take good care of him, and of the young man who's coming with his trunks."

Frothingham took off his hat and bowed vaguely to the maid, who smiled cordially. "I'll show you your room," she said.

"Never mind, Jessie," interrupted Barney. "You needn't bother. I'll take him up myself. But I know everything's all right—Nelly looked after that."

Frothingham was impressed by the astonishing difference between the exterior and the interior of the house. He felt at home at once in this interior—handsome, cheerful, the absurd splendours of the architect-builder's devising softened into comfort and good taste. "We thought you'd like your young man near you," explained Barney, "so we put a bed in the dressing room."

"Thank you," replied Frothingham. "This is charming."

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"Nelly knows her business." Barney's good-natured face, with its many dignifying scars from his wars with destiny, beamed paternal enthusiasm. "You needn't dress for dinner unless you want to," he went on. "I never do unless we have company or I go out somewhere to something swell and formal. Wickham sometimes does and sometimes don't."

"I think I'll dress, if you don't mind," said Frothingham diplomatically.

"Suit yourself. This is Liberty Hall. We ain't got any rules." He looked at his watch. "That clock on the mantel there is four minutes fast. It's seven minutes to seven by the right time. We're having dinner at half-past seven, but you can come down just as soon as you feel like it."

Frothingham descended at five minutes before the dinner hour and found Nelly alone in the front parlour. Superficially she was like the women he had met in the Eastern cities. Like them she was dressed in a gown obviously imported from Paris; like them she wore it as only American and French women wear their clothes. He saw instantly that she was a well-bred girl of a most attractive American type. She was tall and long of limb—her arms were almost too long.



*Found Nelly alone in the front parlour*



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She had a great deal of dark brown hair shading fascinatingly into black here and there. She had dark eyes—not brown, as he at first glance thought, but dark grey—a humour-loving mouth, a serious brow, a clear, delicate, olive skin. As she and Frothingham were shaking hands, her father and her brother entered—the brother, Wickham, a huge fellow, topping his father by several inches and having his father's keen, good-natured dark grey eyes and his father's features, except that the outline was more refined without being less strong.

Barney put his arm round his daughter and, with a foolish-fond expression, said: "Didn't I tell you, Frothingham? Wasn't I right?"

If Frothingham had been new to "the States" he would have thought this the strongest kind of a bid for him to enter the family. But he understood the American character in its obvious phases now. "The old chap's mad about her," was all Barney's speech suggested to him. "And," he admitted to himself, "I think he has reason to be. She's got the look I like." He noted the humorous comment on her father's flattery in Nelly's dark eyes, as he examined her through his eyeglass with ostentatiously critical

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minuteness. "Quite up to the mark, I should say," he replied with polite audacity, adding apologetically, "though I don't pretend to be an expert."

"You see, I did put on my dress suit, after all," said Barney, looking down at his old-fashioned, ill-fitting evening clothes. "The children would have it. I always feel like a stranded fish in these togs. You see, I never wore 'em in my life till I was past forty."

Wickham looked a little nervously at Frothingham; Nelly was smiling with frank amusement. Then Wickham looked ashamed of himself—but he carefully observed the peculiar stripes down the legs of Frothingham's trousers and the curious cut of his waistcoat and coat—"I must find out who's his tailor," he thought. "Poole don't send me over the real thing. I wish I dared wear a monocle. It's a whole outfit of brains and manners by itself. I don't believe he takes it out, even at night."

A maid announced dinner—not "Dinner is served," but "Dinner, Mr. Barney." And Barney jumped up with, "I'm glad to hear it. I'm hungry as a wolf." The dining room was done in old English fashion—and the dinner, too, though an American would have

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called it the American fashion. The feature of its four courses was a huge roast, set before Barney on a great platter, with a mighty carving knife like a cimetar and a fork like a two-pronged spit. Barney himself carved—an energetic performance, lacking in grace perhaps, but swift and sure. On the table between him and the platter was a pile of plates. He put a slice of the roast into the top plate and the waitress removed it, carried it to Nelly's place and set it down before her. This was repeated until all were served.

Frothingham watched Barney's movements attentively, surprised that any of the American upper classes condescended to eat in such simplicity. He was almost startled when a bottle of wine was brought, for he had not forgotten Barney's denunciation of drink and drinkers. He had seen so many concessions of real or reputed principle for his benefit since he had been moving about in American "high life" that he was somewhat cynical as to principle in America. But he had not expected to find this degree, or even kind, of weakness in Barney. "He told me he wouldn't permit the stuff to come into his house," he thought, laughing to himself. Then he noticed that

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none of the family drank it. One taste was enough for him—"No wonder he's opposed to wine," he said to himself. Then aloud: "If you don't mind, I'll just take whiskey—a little Scotch."

Barney showed amused embarrassment; Nelly and Wickham laughed. "We don't have anything to drink," she explained. "Father doesn't approve. But he told us you'd been brought up differently—that you must have wine. So we've got wine, but there isn't any whiskey."

Frothingham looked vague—he was relieved to find that his friend Barney was not quite so weak as he had feared. "It doesn't in the least matter," he replied. "I shall get on famously with this."

"I'll take you down to the club after a while," said Wickham, "and you can have all you want. And to-morrow—eh, father?"

"Yes—yes—of course," answered Barney. "I never do try to put on style that I don't get left."

He winked at one of the maids significantly, and when she drew near and bent her head whispered to her. She left the dining room; in about five minutes she reappeared with a decanter of Scotch whiskey, a



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tall glass, a bowl of ice, and a bottle of imported soda on her tray.

“Why, father!” exclaimed Nelly, “where did that come from?”

Barney beamed, triumphant. “We’ve got neighbours, haven’t we?”

“But what *will* they think of you?” she asked, pretending to be shocked.

“I don’t know—and I don’t care,” he answered. “I never did spend much time in worrying about what my neighbours thought of me. Probably that’s why we’re here, and not in the poorhouse.”

After dinner Frothingham stayed with Nelly in the parlour instead of going to the club with Wickham. He had found many girls in America who thought they were natural or who affected naturalness as a pose: but here was the first girl, it so happened, who was really natural, without thinking anything about it. She had all the charm of the girls of his own country for him—he liked ingenuousness; and in addition she had the charm of knowledge. She knew the world, but she looked at it with ingenuous eyes—and he would not have believed this a possible combination. “How do these Americans manage it?” he said to

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himself. "Her father comes from well down in the lower classes, yet he has all the assurance of an aristocrat. And as for the girl, she reminds me of Evelyn—and Gwen."

"Do you know," he said to her, "you don't suggest an American girl at all—that is, you do and you don't. You women over here are cleverer than ours, but a good many of 'em lack a certain something—a—I don't know just what to call it. It seems to me that—well, they are ladies, of course. But many of 'em—not all—but a great many of those I've chanced to meet—make me feel as if they were not exactly sure of themselves, as if they were trying to live up to something they'd read about or seen somewhere. I don't know that I make myself clear."

"Perfectly," replied Nelly. "You mean that they act as if they weren't satisfied with being the kind of lady they were born, and are trying to be some other kind—and don't succeed at it especially well."

"Exactly," said Frothingham. "I feel like saying to them, 'Oh, come now, chuck it, won't you, and let's see what you're really like.' But you—you remind me of our women, except that they're so ghastly dull—the most of 'em. Gad, they sit about in the

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country until they're feeble-minded. After a certain age, about all there is left of 'em is the match-making instinct. You'd understand if you'd been over there."

"I have been there," answered Nelly. "I spent more than a year in Europe—nearly half of it in your country. I liked it, but—well, one likes one's own country best, of course."

"I thought you American women preferred the other side."

"Oh, a few of us do—those who aren't happy unless they have somebody bowing and scraping to them or are bowing and scraping to somebody. You know, the poor we have always with us—the poor in spirit as well as the other kind of poor."

Before they had talked an hour Frothingham felt that the outlook for his campaign in the Barney house was not promising. Nelly was frank and friendly, and he saw that she liked him. But there was something in her atmosphere which made him know that she cared little for the things which were everything to him and which must be everything to the woman he might hope to win. He feared that she was not for him. "She ain't in my class—or perhaps I'd better say, I ain't in hers."

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When Wickham came, at half-past ten, she left them. After suppressing yawns for fifteen minutes he said: "I'm off to bed. I was at a dance last night and owe myself five hours sleep. You see, father and I get up at half-past six. We have to be at the store at eight."

At the store! At eight! "And he hasn't in the least the look of that sort of chap," thought Frothingham. As for rising at half-past six, one might do it to hunt or shoot. But to do it morning after morning "merely to set a lot of bounders to selling a lot of cloth"—preposterous!

## XVII

**A**FTER a few days of Chicago Frothingham felt utterly out of place. There were no idlers, no idling places. To idle meant to sit in lonely boredom.

Barney and his son were busy all day—they grudged the half-hour of that precious time of theirs which they spent at luncheon. Nelly, too, had her work—some sort of a school she was running, away off somewhere in the poorer part of the town. He was sensitive enough soon to discover, in spite of her courtesy, that he was interrupting her routine seriously and was in the way to becoming a burden. He saw as much of her as he dared—she had for him a charm that became the more difficult to resist as his hope of winning her decreased. He relieved her of himself during her busy hours so tactfully that she did not suspect him of penetrating what she honestly tried to conceal.

He betook himself to the club. It was usually deserted; if a man did enter, he raced through and away as if pursued by demons; at luncheon all ate as if

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struggling for a prize offered to him who should chew the least, swallow the fastest, and finish the soonest. He called on the women he met—they were out or just going out, or just coming in to busy themselves at home.

In New York, Boston, Washington he had thought the leisure class a lame imitation of the European class of industrious, experienced idlers, had found it small and peculiarly unsatisfactory because its men were inferior to its women in numbers and especially in brains. But here—there wasn't a pretence of a leisure class except the loungers in the parks; and they were threatening, so it was said, to organize and do all sorts of dreadful things if they weren't given something to do. "This is a howling wilderness," he said to himself. "I should be better off in a desert. These lunatics make my head swim."

Wherever he went, all seemed possessed of and pursued by fever-demons. If it was a dinner, the diners were eager to despatch it. The courses were served swiftly, the waiters snatching one's plate if he for a second ceased the machine-like lifting of food; the conversation was nervous and in the shrill tones of acute mental excitement. Words were cut short and

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slapped together almost incoherently. Sentences were left unfinished, the speaker leaping on to another sentence or submerged by the breaking of the flimsy speech-dam of the person he was addressing. Often all were talking at the same time. "Surely you can listen as you talk," said a woman to whom he complained. "Think how much time it saves!"

If it was a dance, the orchestra detonated the notes like cartridges from a Maxim gun; the dancers whirled or raced furiously. "Why this hurry?" he gasped to a handsome, powerful girl, who had dragged him round a ballroom twice, had flung him into a chair, and was dashing away with another man to finish the waltz.

"I've got to catch the train for the millennium," she screamed back over her shoulder and disappeared in the maelstrom.

Even at the play the audience shuffled uneasily while the players sped through their lines or the orchestra rattled off the between-the-acts music; and afterward all rushed from the theatre as if it were afire. The blank expression habitual to Frothingham's face was now less a disguise than a reflection of his internal state.

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"I must get out of this," he said to himself at the end of two weeks. "The disease may be catching. Now I understand that fellow who went from here to tear London up by the roots and put in his tuppenny tubes. A Chicagoan should be barred from a country like any other plague." And he wrote his sister that he was "beginning to twitch with the Chicago disease."

Evelyn had written him regularly—a letter by each Wednesday's steamer. She had put a brave face upon their affairs, had tried to make him picture life at Beauvais House as smooth, almost happy. But he had more than suspected that a far different story ran between the lines; and when she wrote that she had engaged herself to Charley Sidney he understood.

Seven months before he would have grumbled and cursed, and would have accepted the sacrifice. Now, it roused in him a fierce protest, a feeling of abhorrence of which he would not have been capable before he visited America—and the Barneys. "She sha'n't sell herself to that creeping cad," he said, and on impulse he cabled: "Sidney impossible and unnecessary. You must break it. Answer."



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The answer came a few hours later: "Shall do as you wish."

Instead of being relieved he repented his impulse, wondered where it had come from, fell into a profound depression. Seven months of stalking; nothing to show for it but three ridiculous, sickening misses. And here he was with an empty bag; and what little heart he once had for the game was gone; in its place a disgust for it and for himself. "How Nelly Barney would scorn me if she knew what a creature I am," he said. He was now thinking a great deal on the subject of Nelly Barney's standards for men and also on the subject of Nelly Barney as a standard for women. In neither direction did he find any encouragement. He knew her through being in the same house with her day after day, through seeing her at all hours and in all moods—and she never made the slightest attempt to conceal her real self. He felt that such a woman could not be attracted by his title, would not be likely to be attracted by himself; he felt that she was at the same time more worth the winning than any other woman he knew in America—"Yes, or in England," he confessed at last.

"What a pity, what a beastly, frightful shame,"

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he thought. "She's got everything that I must have, and everything that I want, too."

But he had only twelve hundred dollars left, including the thousand from Wallingford. "I must be gone clean mad," he exclaimed whenever he wasn't with her and was alone with his affairs. Finally he was able to goad himself into dashing feverishly about in Chicago society. He sought the set she avoided—it was to him an additional charm in her that she did avoid it, for he had at bottom the extra-prim ideas of women which have never lost their hold upon Englishmen. There was, however, no alternative to seeking this set. He thought it the only one in which he was likely to succeed—those among the fashionable young women of the rich families who carried the "free and easy" pose in speech and manner to the point where it looked far worse to a foreigner than it really was, who laughed and talked noisily in public, who wore very loud and very clinging dresses, very big hats and very tight shoes.

The newspapers gave him columns of free advertising and, with the Barneys vouching for him and "Wick" Barney pushing him, he immediately became a figure. Some of the young women of the "lively"

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set pursued him with an ardour which he would have mistaken when he first landed for evidence of serious attachment or intentions. But he had learned something of the ways of American flirts, married and single, and he had had experience of that American curiosity as to foreigners of rank which he had at first regarded as the frankest kind of title-worship.

Presently he found a girl he thought he could not be mistaken in fancying he could get—Jane or Jenny (Jeanne, she wrote it) Hooper, the daughter of that famous Amzi Hooper whose “Hooper’s High-class Hams” and “Hooper’s Excelsior Dressed Beef and Beef Extract” are trumpeted from newspaper, billboard, and blank wall throughout the land.

Her older sister had married a Papal duke under the impression that he was a noble of ancient and proud family. To her horror, to her family’s humiliation, and to her friends’ hilarity, it came out that the Duke of Valdonomia was the son of a Swiss hog-packer of as humble origin as Amzi Hooper and of less than one-fifth his wealth. The family longed to possess a genuine nobleman, and Jane, a devourer of the English novels which are written by the middle classes for the middle classes about the upper classes—

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seemed to be in sympathy with her father's and mother's ambition and keenly eager to become a "real lady." It was assumed by her set that Frothingham had come for her—the newspapers hinted as much several times each week.

But Frothingham, grown extraordinarily sensitive, shied at the amazing high heels on which she tottered like a cripple, at the skin-like fit of her clothes, at the suspicious brilliance of her cheeks and blackness of her brows and lashes. Whenever she spoke to him suddenly in her shrill dialect he felt as if a file had been drawn across his pneumogastric nerve. And she constantly used a slang expression which seemed to him—in her—the essence of vulgarity. She could not speak ten sentences without saying that she or somebody or everybody had nearly or quite "thrown a fit."

It struck him as a biting irony of fate that the woman whom of all he knew well in America he least approved should be the one who was frankly throwing herself at his head in his hour of desperation. When he learned that her father was an Englishman born and bred in the "lower middle class," he felt that he had solved the problem of the family's over-eager-

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ness to get him. "That's why the old beggar almost cringes as he talks to me," he said to himself. "D——n their impudence!" And the next time he met Hooper he treated him not as an American and an equal, but as an Englishman and an inferior. And Amzi at once fell into his "place," just as a car horse, though elevated to be a coach horse, will halt at one ring of a bell. "It's in the blood," thought Frothingham. "It can't be hid or got out." But—he didn't venture the experiment with the daughter.

The climax came one morning when he met her by chance in the Lake Park Drive. She was perched high on a red and black dog-cart in which she was driving a bay and a gray tandem. Her hat was the biggest he had seen her wear, and she was swathed in a silver-grey dust-coat with a red embroidered collar. She stopped and invited him to join her.

"I needed you to complete my turnout," she said, when they were under way. Her dazzling smile took part of the edge off her unconscious insolence—or was it conscious? He found her a puzzle, with her flashes of good taste and flashes of good sense, with her wit that seemed accidental and her folly that seemed her real self.

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He set his teeth and tried to think only of how much "I need her to complete *my* turnout," and of how pretty she was—for there was no denying her beauty, or her style for that matter, in spite of its efflorescence. He saw that everyone was looking at them, but he did not appreciate that his own striking costume and his eyeglass were as magnetic as were her hat, her bright skin, and her dust-coat with its gaudy collar. She was supremely happy. The most conspicuous girl in Chicago, driving with the most conspicuous man, in the most conspicuous trap and on the most conspicuous highway—what more could a young woman ask?

"Wonder why everyone stares so?" she said with deliberate intent to provide an opening for compliment. She wished to hear him say the flattering things she was thinking about herself.

"I fancy they're staring at what I can't take my eyes off of," he replied. "You *do* look swift this morning."

"Swift! I don't like that." She was frowning. "You Englishmen come over here and think you can say what you please."

"I can't see where's the harm in telling a girl

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she's pretty and well got up, and looks a stunner."

"That isn't what 'swift' means in Chicago."

"Really! You don't say! That's what it means in London."

"But you're not in London."

"No." His tone strongly suggested a wish that he were.

"Wouldn't it be jolly if this were Hyde Park!" she exclaimed.

He did not show enthusiasm at this—but then his face was made to suppress, not to express, emotion.

"I simply adore London," she went on.

"It ain't bad—for a while, now and then."

"There's so much atmosphere about London—I don't mean the fog and soot. Here, they're all crazy about making money and working and all those kind of things. Whereas, over there, everybody's for having a good time and—all those kind of things. Sometimes I think I'll throw a fit if I don't get away from here."

He looked gloom, then brightened—yes, she was tremendously pretty, and her mouth was like a red-ripe cherry; yes, she might be toned down into a fairly

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decent countess. "They're quick to adapt themselves, these American girls. The minute she sees Evelyn she'll begin to learn."

"I don't see how you stand it," she continued. "When are you going away? Not that I sha'n't be sorry—you've been awfully nice to me, and I like to see a really well-dressed man once in a while."

"Ah, I don't mind it here." He paused for fully a minute, then said: "And I'd like it, you know, if I could take you with me when I go." He followed this speech with a slow turning of the head until his eyeglass was full upon her. "By Jove, her colour's genuine," he said to himself.

She had been happy a few minutes before; now she was all thrills and palings and flushings of ecstasy. She glanced at her conquest with sparkling eyes and laughing lips. She made him forget what "bad form" he had been thinking her. "Is that a joke?" she asked, as if she were assuming that it was.

"We don't go in for joking about that sort of thing where I come from," he drawled.

"But you oughtn't to have said it here." She was radiant, but her hands were trembling—it seemed most romantic to her, quite like a chapter out of a



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novel. Nobility and titles and genuine aristocracy, that not only recognised itself, but also was recognised as aristocracy by everybody, seemed to her as dream-like as fairyland. "And he does so look the part!" she said to herself. "Anyone could see that he is the real thing."

"If you'll drive home I'll ask you again there," he continued.

And he did, and she accepted him; and he was half-way to Barney's before he came from the spell of her fresh young beauty and her frank admiration of him, and began to think of Nelly and to see Jeanne from Nelly's standpoint again. At that moment Jeanne was busily telephoning her engagement to her intimates, her head full of castles and coronets and crests and peeresses' robes. It seemed to her that she could not wait to begin her triumph—the congratulations of friends, the receptions, dinners, dances in honour of her and her fiancé, the flare of newspaper brasses, the big wedding, and the crescendo of her gorgeous entry into English society as Countess of Frothingham. Cinderella was no more enraptured when the prince lifted her from the ashes than was Jenny Hooper with her ill-fed and exuberant imagination, her ill-directed

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and energetic ambition, her ill-informed and earnest conception of "being somebody."

"And he's coming to see you to-morrow, pa," she said to Amzi Hooper, after delighting his ears with the great news. "He says your consent is necessary before the engagement's announced."

"I guess he and I won't quarrel over it, Jenny," replied her father. "If he suits you, I can stand him."

Frothingham came the next afternoon and made his formal request. Mr. Hooper shook hands with him cordially. "I guess my girl knows what she's about," said he. "I'm pleased to have you as a son."

"Thanks," replied Frothingham—he could not altogether banish from his manner the instinctive haughtiness of English upper class toward English lower class. "When could you receive my representative? Or shall I send him to someone who represents you?"

Mr. Hooper looked embarrassed and rubbed his jaw-bone vigorously with his thumb and forefinger. "Yes—yes—certainly—any time you say. I'll talk to him, myself. Can he come to-morrow? I don't think it 'll take him long to satisfy me you're all right."

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Frothingham stared, thinking "D——n his impudence!" He said only, "To-morrow, at eleven, then," shook hands as warmly as he thought wise, and went back to the parlour where Jeanne was waiting for him.

Frothingham's "representative" was Lawrence, attorney to the British Consulate at Chicago, a brother of Gerald Boughton's mother. He had come to America thirty years before because he could make a living here and could not make a living at home. He had renounced allegiance to the British throne because by doing so his income was doubled. But at heart he regarded himself as a British subject and, while he pretended to be an American, was so savagely critical of things American that everyone disliked him. He wore the long, slim side-whiskers which were the fashion when he left home; he talked with the lisp then affected as the "hall mark" of a gentleman. He disliked Americans; he despised Anglo-Americans of the Hooper type; Hooper himself he loathed as an intolerable upstart, successful where he, of the "upper class," was barely able to keep chin above water.

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When he came into Hooper's study at the hour fixed by Frothingham he was an accurate representation of the supercilious, frozen-faced "swell" of the Piccadilly district a quarter of a century before. Hooper knew that he was of the "upper class," but had not the faintest deference for him. Hooper had been Americanised to the extent of caring nothing for mere family. It took a title to stir his dormant instincts of servility; the untitled Lawrence was a man to be judged by American standards, as he understood them. Lawrence was not a millionaire and not on the way toward that goal of every rational ambition; Hooper, therefore, had no more respect for him than he had for any other "failure."

"You've come to explain about the Earl of Frothingham," began Hooper in the arrogant voice he used at business. "But it's not necessary. I'm well informed as to Lord Frothingham's family and am satisfied he's what he represents himself to be."

Lawrence combed his long lean "Dundrearys" with his slim white fingers. The joy of battle gleamed in his eyes. "I can't imagine," he replied—he had a broad accent and drawl, said "cawn't" and "fawncy"—"why you should fancy I came here to

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insult Lord Frothingham, whose representative I have the honour to be."

"Insult? What do you mean, Mr. Lawrence?" demanded Hooper, his voice courageous, but not his eyes.

Lawrence felt he had been right in thinking that no American would negotiate for the purchase of a title unless he were at bottom a "grovelling snob." "There could not be a question of Lord Frothingham's character," he said. "And as for his family, there's none more illustrious in England."

"Certainly, certainly. I admitted all that. I assumed that Lord Frothingham was sending you through over-anxiety—not unnatural when he's so far from home."

"My business with you, Mr. Hooper," continued Lawrence, "relates to settlements." Hooper's pretence—"the shallow device of a bargain-hunter"—disgusted him.

Hooper waved his hand—a broad, thick, stumpy-fingered hand. "Oh, I've no doubt Lord Frothingham will do the right thing by my daughter. And besides, I intend to do something for her—no one ever accused Amzi Hooper of stinginess."

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"That is gratifying," said Lawrence. "We shall no doubt have not the slightest difficulty in reaching an understanding. What, may I ask, is the—aw—extent of the settlement you purpose to make—upon your daughter and—and Lord Frothingham."

Hooper's face grew red. "You may *ask*, sir, but I'll not answer. I'm not in the habit of discussing my private affairs with *anybody*."

Lawrence was angry also—"the fellow's taking me for a fool," he thought. But he knew he must control himself, so he answered smoothly: "This is extraordinary—most extraordinary, Mr. Hooper. You've had some experience—aw—in foreign marriages——"

Hooper dropped sullenly before this poisoned shaft.

"And," continued Lawrence, "you must know that settlements are the matter of course."

"No, sir!" exclaimed Hooper, pounding the desk, "I know nothing of the sort. When my oldest daughter married they talked to me about settlements, but I refused to have anything to do with it."

Lawrence, in fact all Chicago, knew that Hooper, who was not nearly so rich then, had settled a quarter of a million upon the Papal nobleman and half a million on his daughter, and had engaged to settle a



*"You may ASK, sir, but I'll not answer"*





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quarter of a million more upon the first male child of the marriage. "We should, of course, not be satisfied with the settlements you made upon the Duke of Valdonomia," said he, ignoring Hooper's falsehood.

Hooper winced, looked bluster, thought better of it, said quietly: "You've been misinformed, Mr. Lawrence. I made no settlements. But I gave the young people enough to set them up comfortably."

"Lord Frothingham's position forbids him to consider any such arrangement as that, Mr. Hooper. You know how it is with the great families. They have station, rank, tradition to maintain. They——"

"I won't bribe any man to marry my daughter. That ain't the American way." This was said, not fiercely, but, on the contrary, in a conciliatory tone and manner.

Lawrence sneered—inwardly—at this "cheap clap-trap," and said: "That's sound—and eminently creditable to you, sir. But you will bear in mind that Lord Frothingham is an English nobleman, the head of a distinguished family, and that your daughter is about to become his Countess, an Englishwoman, the mother of a line of English noblemen. Do I make myself clear?"

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“Perfectly. Perfectly. And I’ve not the least objection to doing what’s right. I want to make it clear that I’m giving only out of generosity and affection, and a desire to see my girl properly established.”

“No one who knows you will doubt that,” said Lawrence so blandly that Hooper could find no fault, could not understand why he was irritated. “And now that we’re on common ground I hope you’ll give me some—aw—data—so that I may draw up the necessary papers.”

“Has Frothingham any debts?” asked Hooper abruptly, after a thoughtful pause.

“There are about fifteen thousand pounds of personal obligations,” replied Lawrence carelessly, “and a matter of perhaps a hundred thousand pounds as a charge on the entailed estate. I understand the entailed part is all that’s left; but the estates can be, should be, restored to what they were until a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago.”

“Um!” muttered Hooper.

“The debt represents, I believe,” continued Lawrence, “the wild oats and careless management of previous generations. The present Earl has been—remarkably steady, they tell me, considering his sta-

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tion and opportunities, and the example of his father and grandfather."

Hooper had read with an attention that made his memory leechlike every word of every sketch of Frothingham and the Gordon-Beauvais family in the Chicago papers. Lawrence's aristocratic allusions were, therefore, full of suggestion and moved him profoundly. "Well," said he, "I should say, in round numbers, that a million would straighten the young man out and set them housekeeping in good style."

There was a queer gleam in Lawrence's eyes as he replied: "Very handsome, Mr. Hooper. Most satisfactory. Your daughter can take the position in England to which the Earl's rank entitles her." He looked as if he were reflecting; then, as if thinking aloud: "Let me see—a million pounds—five million——"

Hooper sprang to his feet. "You misunderstood me, Mr. Lawrence," he protested angrily, but nervously. "My daughter will have that—perhaps more than that—ultimately. But I meant dollars, not pounds."

Lawrence put on a expression of amazement. "I

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beg your pardon, Mr. Hooper, but really—*really*—you can't mean that. Two hundred thousand pounds would barely fetch them even. They'd have nothing to live on."

"Oh, of course I don't mean that I'd not give 'em anything in addition. We were talking only of settlements."

"Certainly. And you must see, Mr. Hooper, that it would be impossible for us to accept any settlement so inadequate. Some misfortune might overtake you and—you would be unable to carry out your present generous intentions."

"A million dollars is a big sum of money. It looks even bigger in England than here."

"But you are making a great alliance. A million dollars is a small sum in the circumstances—I mean, in view of the necessity of enabling your daughter to take all that her position as Countess of Frothingham entitles her to."

"Permit me to ask," said Hooper with some sarcasm, but not enough to conceal his anxiety, "what did Lord Frothingham expect in the way of settlement?" The multi-millionaire had developed two powerful passions with age—avarice and social ambi-

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tion. These were now rending each the other and both were rending him.

“Lord Frothingham, of course, did not discuss the matter with me—a gentleman is, naturally, delicate in matters of money. He simply stated the posture of his affairs and left me in full charge. When I suggested to him that eight hundred thousand—*pounds*—would be adequate, he protested that that was too much. ‘I wish Mr. Hooper to appreciate that it is his daughter I want,’ said he. ‘Make the least possible conditions. I’d be glad to marry her without a penny if my position permitted. It’s hard to have to consider such things at this time,’ he said. ‘I’m sure we can pull through with seven hundred thousand.’ I did not and do not agree with him, but I assented because I knew that you would liberally supplement the settlements.”

Every sentence in that speech exasperated Mr. Hooper—perhaps Lawrence’s persistence in expressing himself in pounds instead of in dollars most of all. Pounds made the huge sum demanded seem small, made his resistance seem mean and vulgar. He reflected for several minutes. “I won’t do it!” he said in a sudden gust of temper. “Half that is my final

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figure. I'll settle the obligations—the five hundred and seventy thousand dollars—and I'll entail five hundred thousand and give Jenny five hundred thousand for her lifetime, it to go afterward to the younger children.”

Lawrence combed his whiskers with his fine fingers, shaking his head slowly as he did so. “But, Mr. Hooper——”

“That’s final,” interrupted Hooper. “It’s bad enough—it’s shameful—it’s un-American, sir, to make any settlement at all.”

At “un-American” Lawrence took advantage of the fact that Hooper was not looking at him to indulge in a glance of contemptuous amusement. “Nobody but an American,” he said to himself, “could have dragged ‘un-American’ into such a discussion as this. The cad is dickering over his daughter like an old-clothes dealer over a bag of rags.”

Hooper was talking again—talking loudly: “Not a cent more! Not a d——n cent more! If they need more after they’re married, let ’em come to me for it. They’ll get it. But I ain’t fool enough to make ’em independent of me. I ain’t going to give ’em a chance to forget the hand that feeds ’em. No, sir; I want my

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daughter to continue to love me and think of me."

There was no affectation in Lawrence's astonishment at this view of affection and the way to keep it. "Poor devil," he said to himself pityingly, "he's been so perverted by his wealth that he actually doesn't see he's taking the very course that 'll make his children hate him." But he ventured only, "I'm certain, sir, from what I know of your daughter and Lord Frothingham that money could have no influence with them one way or the other."

Hooper smiled cynically. "It's human nature," he said. "The hand that feeds is the hand that's licked. I'll give 'em all they need whenever they need it. Do you suppose I've no pride in my daughter, in seeing that she makes a good appearance over there? But a million and a half is my outside figure for settlements."

"Practically less than a hundred thousand over and above the debts," replied Lawrence, irritatingly reverting to pounds. "That is, about four thousand a year for them to live on."

"Forty to fifty thousand a year, including Jenny's income," corrected Hooper, standing up for dollars.

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“And while I don’t promise, still, if they behave, they can count on as much more from me.”

“Nine thousand a year,” said Lawrence, translating into pounds, “would hardly keep up Beauvais Hall in a pinched fashion. It would leave nothing for restoring the property; the Hall, for example, needs fifty thousand pounds at once to restore it.”

The reasonableness, the unanswerableness of this presentation of the case exasperated Hooper. “They’ll have to look to me afterward for that,” he said angrily. “I’ve said my last word.”

But Lawrence didn’t believe him. He saw that, though avarice was uppermost for the moment, the “cad’s craving” was a close second—then there was the daughter’s aid. She would have something to say to her father when she knew of the hitch in the negotiations. He rose. “There’s nothing further at present, Mr. Hooper. I shall be compelled strongly to advise Lord Frothingham against going on and engaging himself. I cannot do otherwise, consistently with my duty as the, as it were, guardian for the moment of his dignity and the dignity of his house. It may be that he will disregard my advice. But I don’t see how he can, careless in sordid things and impetu-



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ous though he is. The prospect for an unhappy marriage would be too clear. Good-morning, sir."

Hooper shook hands with him lingeringly. Avarice forbade him to speak. "The Earl will come to your terms," it and shrewdness assured him. "If he don't the deal is still open, anyhow." His parting words were, "Give my regards to the young man. Tell him we hope to see him as usual, no matter how this affair comes out."

"The coarse brute," muttered Lawrence, as he stood without the doors of the granite palace. "The soul of a ham-seller, of a pig-sticker." And he took out his handkerchief and affectedly wiped the hand which Hooper had shaken. "Always a nasty business, this, of American upstarts buying into our nobility. If they weren't a lot of callous traders and money-grabbers they couldn't do it. And they usually negotiate at first hand, so that they can drive a closer bargain. And their best society, too! Beastly country—no wonder the women want to be traded out of it into civilisation."

## XVIII

**T**HERE was a family council at the Hoopers' after luncheon that day—Mr. Hooper, his wife, and Jeanne. The two women followed Hooper from the dining room into his study, where he was pulling sullenly at his cigar and awaiting the attack. It was his wife who began: "Do you know why Lord Frothingham sent word he couldn't come to lunch, pa? Jenny here is worried about it."

Mr. Hooper grunted. Finally he said: "I'm willing to do anything in reason to please Jenny. I don't approve of this title business. It ain't American. But as long as the young fellow has turned her head I was not disposed to stand in the way." He frowned fiercely. "But I tell you flat, I won't be held up! And that fellow he sent here this morning was a plain highwayman."

Mrs. Hooper and Jeanne looked significantly each at the other—they had had many talks about his growing stinginess, and they suspected him at once. "What did he want?" inquired Mrs. Hooper.

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“I don’t propose to talk this thing over before Jenny. It’s disgraceful that she should have gone into such a business. It ain’t right that she should know about such things.”

Jeanne’s eyes filled with tears. “And I’ve told all the girls!” she exclaimed. “Everybody knows it. I can’t back out now. The whole town ’d be laughing at us. I’d be ashamed ever to show my face in the street again. You don’t want to break my heart, do you, pa?”

“You’ve made a sweet mess of it!” snarled her father. “You ought to have had better sense than to have told anybody till the business side of it was settled. I warned your ma about that—I knew what was coming. Now, here you two ’ve gone and given him the whip hand!”

“She got at the telephone before she told me,” said Mrs. Hooper.

Neither she nor her husband suspected that Jeanne had thought of just this emergency of a wrangle over settlements and had decided that the best way to overcome her father’s avarice was to put him in a position from which he could not recede. If Frothingham had not insisted on liberal settlements she would

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have prompted him to it. She was no more eager than was he to embark with small supplies in the hold when it was possible to lay in supplies a plenty. And as her father had acted all her life upon his principle of paternal affection—"The hand that feeds is the hand that's licked"—she saw no harm in guiding her conduct toward him by principles from the same practical code. As she was about to engage in business, wasn't it common sense to get as large a capital as she could? "We can't back out now," she repeated tearfully, watching him shrewdly through her tears.

"A pretty mess!" growled her father. But he was not really offended, partly because he was fond of his daughter and would have forgiven her almost anything, partly because he understood and sympathised with her eagerness to proclaim her triumph, chiefly because, now that he had thought it over, he was ready to accept Frothingham's terms. "The hope of getting more and the need of it will keep 'em tame," he reasoned. And he said, addressing the two women: "When that Lawrence fellow comes again to-morrow, as I'm dead sure he will, I'll close the matter. But you two keep your hands off!"

As soon as her father and mother were out of the



*As soon as her father and mother were out  
of the way*



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way Jennie went into the library and called up the Barneys. "Is Lord Frothingham there?" she asked.

"I'll put you on the switch to his room," was the reply. And presently a voice she recognised as Hutt's said: "Who wishes to speak to 'Is Lordship?"

"Say that Miss Hooper's at the telephone."

There was a pause, a murmur of voices—she was sure one of them was Frothingham's. Then Hutt answered: "'Is Lordship hain't 'ere just now, ma'am. Hany message, ma'am?"

She was trembling with alarm. "Just tell him that I called up, and that I'd like to speak to him when he comes in"—this in a rather shaky voice, for a great fear was gathering in around her, a fear that he had become offended at her father's stinginess and bartering and bargaining, and had decided to withdraw.

She wandered uneasily from room to room. She sat at the telephone several times—once she had the receiver off the hook before she changed her mind about trying to reach him. She ordered her victoria and got ready for the street, to drive about in the hope of accidentally meeting him. At the door she changed her mind again. As she was turning back a boy came by, shouting an extra—"All about the Earl of Frothing-

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ham! Big sensation!" She saw that the boy knew who she was, knew that she was supposed to be engaged to Frothingham, was clamouring in that neighbourhood because he thought sales would be brisker there. She fled into the house—but sent a servant out by the basement way to buy the paper.

The headlines were large and black. Frothingham, the story ran, had got into debt in England so deeply that his creditors found he could not pay more than a few pence in the pound; they had consulted as to ways and means of recovering, had organised themselves into a syndicate, had put up five thousand pounds to "finance" him for a hunt for a rich wife in America. "And," concluded the account, "this exposure comes barely in time to block his attempt to marry the beautiful daughter of one of the richest meat packers in Chicago, moving in our smartest smart set."

She did not know that this tale was a deliberately false diversion of the facts about a syndicated German prince who had visited Chicago several years before and had almost married there. The truth as to his enterprise had just come out on the other side through the collapse of the Rontivogli syndicate; and the news-



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paper, relying for immunity on Frothingham's aloneness, and on his well-understood mercenary designs, had substituted his name for the German's. She read and believed. She had known from the outset that his main motive was money. But she had succeeded in disguising this unsightly truth in the same flowers of her crudely romantic imagination in which she disguised the truth as to her craving for a coronet. Now it was as if the flowers had been torn away to the last concealing petal and had left exposed things more hideous than she thought were there.

She hid her face and cried a little—"I despise him. Besides, if I went on and married him, what would people say?"

It would have taken finer scales than those available for weighing human motives to decide which of the two reasons embodied in those two sentences was the heavier. She dried her eyes and sat with her elbow on the table and her chin in her hand.

"That's the best thing to do, every way I look at it," she said aloud slowly at the end of half an hour's thought.

She went to the telephone, called up the offices of the Great Western and Southern Railway, asked and got

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the General Manager. "Is that you, Mr. Burster? Is that you, Tom? Meet me in the parlours of the Auditorium right way." And she rang off and telephoned to the stable for her victoria.

Ten minutes later she was driving down the avenue in her largest, most beplumed black hat and a pale blue carriage-coat that produced the wonted effect of her public appearances—Burster once said to her: "Jeanne, you're the only thing on earth than can stop traffic in the streets of Chicago. You can do in two seconds more than a blizzard could do in a week."

She returned at half-past five. Her father and mother were in the front sitting room upstairs, gloomy as the lake in the dusk of a cloudy day. She entered, whistling and tilting her big hat first over her right eye, then over her left. "Don't look so cheerful," she said, patting her mother on the cheek and pulling her father's beard.

He tried to scowl, but it was a failure; and his voice was not in the least formidable as he said: "A pretty mess you got yourself into, miss, with your telephoning."

"What telephoning?" she asked with a start.

"Tattling your engagement."

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"Oh!" She threw herself into a chair and laughed.

"Your father telephoned to Mr. Lawrence after he left us——" began her mother.

"What did you do that for, pa?" she interrupted. "He'll think we haven't any pride."

"You ungrateful, thoughtless child! I did it for your sake."

"What did Mr. Lawrence say?"

Her father hesitated and his face showed how he hated to inflict upon his daughter the pain he thought his words would cause. "He said it was useless to continue our discussion, as Lord Frothingham had definitely and finally decided not to renew his proposal." The old man's voice almost broke as he went on: "Jenny, here's a note that came a few minutes ago—I think the address is in Frothingham's handwriting."

Neither he nor her mother dared to look at her as she was hearing these awful disclosures of the downfall of her hopes and the impending brutalities to her pride and vanity. She picked up the note, opened it slowly, read it—a few polite formal sentences, setting forth that he had "yielded to the insuperable obstacles interposed by your father."

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She dropped the sheet and pirouetted round the room in and out between the chairs occupied by her frightened parents—they thought her suddenly gone mad from the shock. “Who says I ain’t the luckiest girl on earth?” she exclaimed.

“What are you talking about, Jenny?” demanded her mother sharply.

“Why, I married Tom Burster half an hour ago. He’s putting the notices in all the papers for to-morrow morning. Everybody ’ll think I changed my mind and shook Frothingham. And I did, too!”

“Jenny!” exclaimed her father. “Tom Burster!”

“And he’s coming here to dinner, if you don’t object,” she continued. “If you do, why I’ll join him and we’ll go away and give you a chance to cool off.” She caught her father by the beard. “What do you say, daddy? Say yes, or I’ll pull.”

“Yes,” replied her father with a huge sigh of relief—his daughter was contented; her and their vanity would be spared; Tom Burster would not demand or want a dower; he was not only independent, but also one of the most forward young “self-made” rich men in Chicago. “You’ve got more sense than all the rest

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of the family put together," he exclaimed proudly, patting her on the head.

And in an absent, reflective tone she said: "I always felt I'd have some use for Tom sooner or later."

## XIX

**F**ROTHINGHAM'S abrupt change of tactics had been caused by a cablegram from Evelyn which reached him at the Barneys' even as his diplomatic agent was in the heat and toil of the negotiations with Amzi Hooper. It read:

Break off everything and return. Have written you New York. Best possible news. Gwen sends love.

"Why didn't she say what it was?" he wondered. And he decided that it must be news of too private a nature to be trusted to the telegraph station at Beauvais. Why had she written if he was to go at once? "I suppose," he concluded, "she was afraid I mightn't obey orders. 'Gwen sends love'—that must mean that the news is about me and Gwen."

But he had no uplifting of spirits—instead, he felt a sense of impending misfortune. He called up Lawrence's office and told one of the clerks that he wished Lawrence to call him as soon as he came in. In a few

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minutes Lawrence was relating over the wire the favourable progress of the negotiation.

"It's off," said Frothingham. "I want nothing more to do with it. I'm glad it's in good form for the break. I can drop it decently."

This so delighted Lawrence that he laughed aloud. "Hooper's certain to send for me," he said. "I'll give him the shock of his life."

Frothingham cautioned him against any transgression of the most courteous politeness, then went down to luncheon—with Nelly, alone. While she was talking and he listening and looking, all in a flash he understood why the "best possible news" from home depressed him, why "Gwen sends love" did not elate him. He asked Nelly to take him to her school.

"Oh, you wouldn't be interested," she said.

But he insisted, and they set out immediately after luncheon. As they went—in a street car—she explained her work:

When her mother lay dying she said to the man beside whom she had worked for thirty-six years, mostly cloud and rain: "Henry, I don't want a big, showy monument over me. If you should do something for me, build a school of some kind, a school

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where girls can be taught how to be useful wives and mothers, instead of spending their whole lives at learning." And Nelly's father had put by money, a large sum each year, until his daughter's education was finished. Then he had said to her, "I want you to help me carry out your ma's memorial." And he turned over to her a mass of plans and hints and schemes which he had been accumulating for seven years. "Get up a plan," he had said, "on the lines your ma would have liked. It's a woman's work—it's your natural work. I'll supply the money." And after two years' labour, one year of it abroad, she had perfected a scheme for a great school where several hundred girls could be instructed in all that a woman as a woman should know—housework, sewing, cooking, shopping, marketing, the elements of business and of art, the care of babies, the training and education of children. And she had so planned it that the girls could and should support themselves while they were learning.

Frothingham did not take his eyes from her face as she talked. She seemed to him the most wonderful, the noblest human being in the world. "A fine, a beautiful idea," he said. "But aren't you afraid of



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spoiling those girls for workingmen's wives? You're educating entirely too much in this country, I should say, as it is. You're making the lower classes restless and discontented. They'll pull everything down about your ears the first thing you know."

Nelly smiled—he saw that she was not seeing him at all, was looking far, far past him. "I'm not worrying about the consequences," she said. "If we did that we should never move. You must remember that we haven't any classes here, but are all of one class—we differ in degree, but not in kind. One can't look into the future. I only know it was intended for the light to shine on the whole human race, and that it's our duty to help all we can. And knowledge is light, and ignorance is darkness, isn't it? I'm not afraid of light, anywhere. Whether it's little or much, it's better than darkness."

He looked at her strangely. "I had never thought of that," he said in a low voice. Then, after a few minutes: "How good you are! I didn't know there was anybody in the world like you. How generous of you to give your life to these people."

"No—no!" she protested. They were walking now through a maze of homely streets lined with flat-

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houses large and small and odourous of strong-smelling cookery, of decaying food, of stale whiskey and beer—a typical tenement district. “When I first began on this scheme,” she went on, “I thought as you do. But I soon saw how false, how foolishly false, that was. And if I had continued to think as at first, if I had gone into the work to patronise and to feed my vanity, I should have injured myself and all whom I wished to help. I should have made a snob of myself and parasites of them.”

She paused and into her eyes came a look which he thought “glorious.” She went on: “But fortunately, I got the right sort of guidance from the very start. And I discovered that I had more to learn than these people. I was actually more ignorant than they.” She turned her face toward him. “Did you ever think,” she asked, “what would become of you if you had all the props taken from under you, and were cast upon the world and were forced to make the fight alone—without a penny or a friend or a relative or any outside help of any kind?”

“Thought of it? Well, rather!” he exclaimed. “And I know what would happen to me—jolly quick!”

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“That was my first discovery—about myself. I found that I was in the world without any fit equipment to live. I found that if the props were taken from under me I’d be no match for the working people, that I’d perish or else have to live on the charity of rich people by doing the sort of pottering work they give the poor of their own class. And I said to myself, ‘You are a fine human being, aren’t you—to pose as the superior of those who are independent and self-respecting? You call them ignorant, yet they are conforming to nature’s laws and to the conditions of life infinitely better than you, with your boasted intelligence and your fancied refinement.’ I saw that I was not a real woman, as my mother had been, but was only a parasite on the labour and the intelligence of others.”

“And what did you do?”

“I went to school with my girls. And——” Her face lighted up with enthusiasm—“oh, you don’t know what a—a magnificent—sensation it is to be conscious that one can swim alone on the sea of life without fear of drowning or of having to call for help. You spoke as if I were giving these people something. Why, I owe everything to them! It is they who gave

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and are giving. And I am and always shall be in their debt."

He tried to think of some satirical phrase with which to lessen the impression what she had said was making upon him. But he could only blink into the flooding light which seemed to him to surround her and to blaze upon his pettiness and worthlessness and the tawdriness of all upon which his life had been based. In his own country, in his surroundings of alternating dulness and dissipation, his naturally good mind had become a drowsy marsh with pale lights gleaming in it occasionally here and there. Unconsciously, he had been slowly rousing ever since he landed in New York.

The people he had met were like enough to those he had met at home, and also like enough to the people of the real America from which they were offshoots, to form for him a mental bridge on which he could pass from his England of narrow and bigoted caste to Nelly's America of alert and intelligent and self-respecting, level-eyed humanity. And he was now feeling in this restless Chicago the fierce impact of energies and aspirations of which he had had no conception, of which he could never have a clear concep-

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tion. Through the eyes of this earnest, unaffected girl with her lived ideal of self-forgetfulness he had been getting confused, dazzling glimpses of a new world.

But he did clearly see and feel that he loved her. And she now saw in his curiously changed face what was in his mind. She looked away instantly—her expression was uneasy, almost frightened. “Here we are—at the school,” she said nervously as they turned a corner and came in sight of three great buildings—plain yet attractive—which faced three sides of a broad lawn in the centre of which a large and artistic fountain was playing.

He never could give a clear account of that school. He remembered the manager—a Mr. Worthington, with a strong and serious, yet anything but solemn face, with rather homely features except a pair of extraordinary eyes. He remembered many classrooms where all sorts of feminine enterprises were going forward with energetic informality. He remembered many girls—uncommonly clean, bright, well-dressed girls with agreeable voices and manners. He remembered many smiles and other evidences of health and spirits. He remembered many babies—all in one big,

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sunny room, chirping and crowing and gurgling, balancing on uncertain little lumps of feet or crawling toilsomely. "Practice babies," Nelly called them, and he thought, "If this is the way her girls succeed with mere 'practice babies,' what won't they make of their own?" Finally, he remembered—Nelly. All his other memories were a hazy background for her tall, graceful figure and wonderful, luminous face. Her he never forgot in the smallest detail of look or gesture.

When they were once more in the street, walking toward the car, he began abruptly: "I came over here—to America—because I was ruined—because we were going to be sold up and chucked out in the autumn. I came—I'm ashamed to put it into words—I'd rather you'd imagine—you can, easy enough. It's often done and nothing's thought of it—at least on our side of the water. This morning—in fact, just before luncheon—I got a cable from my sister. Our luck has turned, and——"

"I'm very glad," she murmured as he paused.

"I don't wish to go back," he went on impetuously, his drawl gone. "I wish—it's you I want. And I ask you to give me a chance. I don't think I'm such

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

a frightfully bad sort, as men go. And while I ain't fit for you to walk on, where's the man that is? And perhaps if I were less fit I couldn't care for you—all the height from down where I am to up where you are."

The storm which had burst from deep down within him, deeper far than he thought his nature extended, was so sweeping and whirling him that he could not see her face distinctly.

When she spoke it was in a voice that took away hope, but gently, soothing the wound it made. "I'm sorry," she said, "and yet I'm not. No woman could help being pleased to hear what you've said to me, and hear it from such a man as you are. Oh, yes!"—this in answer to his expression—"for I've found out what sort of man lives behind your look of irony and indifference. A so much better man than he lets himself know—or show. And I understand how differently you've been brought up, how different your system is from ours. But——"

She hesitated, and somehow he felt that he must give her sympathy instead of asking it.

"You remember, I told you that when I began with the school I had the right sort of help?"

## GOLDEN FLEECE

He looked away from her and it was black before him for an instant. "That fairish chap with the eyes—Mr. Worthington?" he asked, cutting his words off sharp.

She nodded, her cheeks bright. "I simply couldn't help it," she said. "He *was* what I longed to be. And he didn't preach the things I believed in—he just lived them."

They were silent until they were in the car, then she went on: "I don't want you to misunderstand. He has never even looked—what I'd like him to look—and say. I don't know whether he cares—probably not. Sometimes I think he cares only for his work, and——"

"He does care—I saw it," interrupted Frothingham, and then he was astonished at himself for being so "ridiculously decent."

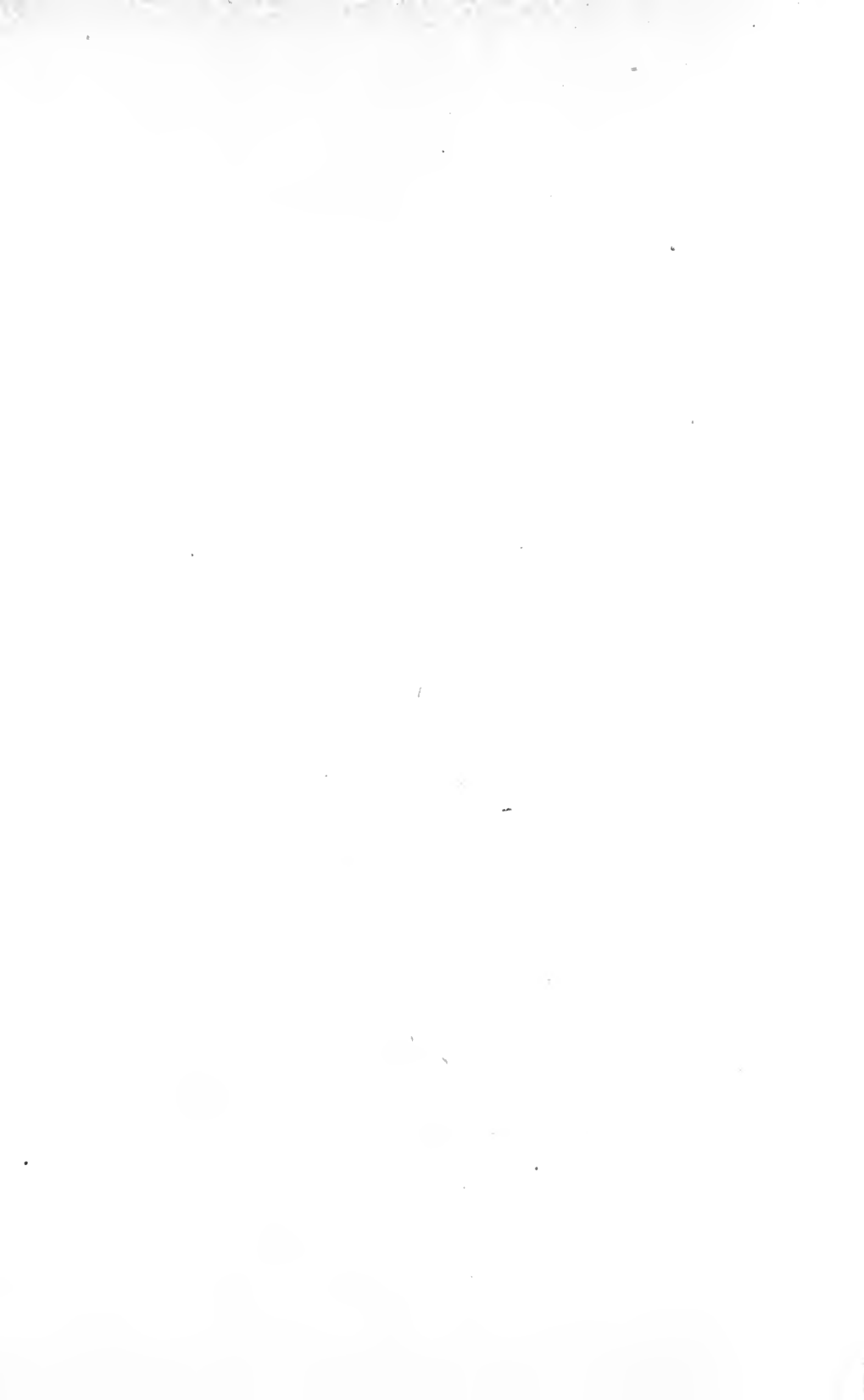
"I don't know," she said doubtfully. "Thank you for saying so." She looked at him shyly. "You'll think me queer for telling you about it when he has said nothing to me."

"I understand why you tell me," Frothingham answered. "It was—like you." He smiled faintly, his frequent, self-satirising smile. "Don't mind me."





*"I take to it like a duck to water"*



## CHAPTER NINETEEN

I'm used to bad luck. I take to it like a duck to water."

Nelly's instinct told her that she had said enough, and they rode in silence. When she spoke again it was of the dance to which they were going that night. An hour and a half later as they were separating for dinner he said earnestly: "Thank you for what you said. And thank you—even more—for what you didn't say."

## XX

ON the way to Mrs. Grafton's ball that night he sent Evelyn a cablegram asking her to cable him £175 he needed to help him to pay Wallingford and fixing the next day week for his sailing. He might have sailed three days earlier, but he wished to get her letter and so not carry an unsatisfied curiosity on a six-days' voyage.

At the ball everyone was talking of the Frothingham "exposure" and of Jenny Hooper's marriage. The "exposure" had appeared in but two editions of the "yellow" that invented it. "Wick" Barney had seen it and had lost not a moment in forcing its suppression and a denial and in warning the other papers. He said nothing to Frothingham, and Frothingham did not know of it then, or indeed until several years had passed. But even if it had not been suppressed and had been everywhere believed, Frothingham's social position would not have suffered. His title was genuine and his family and his position at

## CHAPTER TWENTY

home were of the best—more, American fashionable society never asks about upper class foreigners who come to it for no apparent, or, rather, no avowed purpose. It expects them to be somewhat “queer” in other respects. It assumes that they will be “queer” in money matters.

Frothingham did, however, hear of Jenny's marriage—heard of it from Jenny herself. At the Graf-ton's the dressing rooms are at opposite ends of the hall from which the grand stairway ascends to the drawing room and the ballroom. It chanced that Jenny and Frothingham came along this hall from the dressing rooms at the same time and, to the delight of the few guests and the many servants who witnessed, met at the foot of the stairway. As Frothingham's face habitually expressed nothing beyond a suggestion that he had nothing to express, he and his eyeglass withstood the shock admirably. Jenny had intended to “cut him dead” the next time she saw him. But as she tottered suddenly into his presence on her monstrous tall heels she was not prepared for a course so foreign to her nature as the cut direct. Before she knew what she was doing or saying she had smiled and nodded. She instantly shifted to a frown; but it was

## GOLDEN FLEECE

too late—Frothingham had spoken, had subdued her with that “perfectly splendid, so aristocratic” monocle of his. “What’s the use of throwing a fit over a thing that’s past and done?” she reflected. “He’s all right in his way. And won’t it give Tom and everybody a jolt if we enter the ballroom together?”

Frothingham had called her “Miss Hooper.” This gave her the opening. “Miss Hooper!” she said with her jauntiest air. “That’s ancient history. I ain’t been called that for ages and ages. Why, I’m an old married woman—for Chicago.”

“Really,” said he, thinking it “some stupid, silly sell or other.” He was hardly listening. He was more interested in the rope of pearls and diamonds that swung from her neck to far below her waist. The pearls were large and were once perfect; but each pearl had been mutilated by having a diamond set in it—a very nightmare of sacrifice of beauty and taste in an effort to make more expensive the most expensive.

“Yes, indeed—truly. I’m Mrs.——” She stopped short and gave him a look of horror.

“Dear me!” exclaimed Frothingham with satiric sympathy. “Have you forgotten his name, or did you forget to ask it?”

## CHAPTER TWENTY

“No—but I never *thought* of it before—thought how it sounds. My, but it’s awful! I’d never in the world have married him if I’d have pronounced it beforehand. Mrs. *Burster*! Ain’t that horrible?” Frothingham had lifted “ain’t” from the slough of doubtful grammar to the pinnacle of fashion in fashionable Chicago.

“Oh, I don’t know,” he drawled, still imagining she was jesting. “It might be worse, mightn’t it, now?”

At this seeming impertinence her eyes flashed. “Yes—it might. It might be Bursted—or ‘Busted’—mightn’t it?” Then, seeing that her “shot” at his financial condition as described in the newspaper she had read and believed apparently did not touch him, she relented and was in a good humour again. “I’ve been engaged to Tom for a year or so on and off,” she went on. “When I woke up this morning it came into my head to marry him. And I did it while your lawyer and papa were squabbling.” She said this so convincingly that she herself began to feel that it was “as good as true.”

The news that she and Frothingham were advancing together preceded them to the ballroom, but had not spread far enough from its doors to impair the

## GOLDEN FLEECE

sensation made by their entrance with every appearance of friendliness. And the much discussed mystery of that day's doings is here solved for the first time.

The next afternoon Frothingham and Wickham drove up to Barney's door as Nelly and Worthington were arriving on foot. One glance at their faces and he knew that they understood each the other now. "All I accomplished," he said to himself mournfully, "was to force the fellow to play his hand. What ripping luck I do bring—other people!" He paused only long enough to make his passing on seem natural. Presently she followed him to the library, where he was standing on the rug before the closed fireplace with a cigarette drooping dejectedly from the corner of his mouth. She moved restlessly about the room, evidently seeking a way to begin telling him something.

"I saw it in your face—at the door," he said, in answer to an appealing glance from her.

She put her hand on his arm and her eyes were wistful. "I know you did, and I hoped—I thought—I saw in your face that you were generous enough to be glad I'm happy."



## CHAPTER TWENTY

"No, I can't say that you did. The most I can do is to bear it—without the grin." He seated himself on the edge of the big table and smoked and looked at her reflectively. "I say," he began at last, "do you see how it's possible to be in love with two at the same time?"

She nodded, smiling a little. "Yes—I—I think—if I hadn't met someone first—I should have been in love with—someone else."

"That's something," he said in his satirical drawl. But he kept his eyes down and his eyelids were trembling. "Do you know," he went on after a pause full of cigarette smoke, "I've been thinking about—caring for two people and that sort of thing. I don't mind saying to you—you'll understand, I'm sure—there's a girl over on the other side——"

"I'm *so* glad!" she exclaimed—and then she wasn't.

"I care for her—in a different way, but it's quite a real way. And when I go back home, it may be—you know what I wish to say. I'm telling you because I don't wish you to think I'm disloyal to you"—his expression was half-satirical, half-mournful—"or to her either."

## GOLDEN FLEECE

“I appreciate your telling me,” she said. “But I’d have understood, if you hadn’t. I believe I recognise a *man* when I see him, and—you know that’s what I think you.”

He shrugged his shoulders. “I dare say I’m much like other people. I show everyone the side that matches the side they show me.”

After a moment he went to her and lifted her hand and kissed it. She stood and turned her face, sweet and friendly, up to him. “I’d rather you’d kiss *me*,” she said.

He winced and paled and let go her hand. “No, thanks,” he replied. “If you don’t mind, I’d rather not.”

With this Mr. Barney bustled into the room—no one had ever seen him make a slow movement of any kind. At sight of them standing thus suspiciously, he halted and, as they flushed and moved apart, he laughed in such a way that Nelly felt impelled to explain:

“I was talking to Lord Frothingham of my engagement, and he was congratulating me.”

“*Bless* my soul!” ejaculated Barney. “This is news!”

## CHAPTER TWENTY

"I haven't had a chance to tell you, father. It's Mr. Worthington."

Barney seemed depressed. "Well—I guess he's all right," he said slowly. "I've got nothing against him. But——"

"And," interrupted Nelly, afraid of her father's frankness, "he was telling me of his engagement."

Barney looked at Frothingham sharply. "American?" he asked, showing that he wouldn't like it if he got an affirmative answer.

"No—a neighbour of ours in England," replied Frothingham.

"Delighted to hear it. You ought to have been married and settled long ago. I still think you'd have done better to sell your farm over there and settle down here in Chicago." Barney would have scorned to apply such words as estate and plantation to a farm—though he did call his shop an "Emporium."

Wickham went to New York with Frothingham the next day but one; and on the day after they arrived they had Honoria, chaperoned by Mrs. Galloway, at dinner and at theatre, and, because Wickham insisted, at supper. It was almost two o'clock when they put

## GOLDEN FLEECE

the two women in their carriage at the Waldorf and went to bed—Frothingham refused to sit up listening to Wickham on Honoria. He was surprised that Wickham had invited her for luncheon the next, or, rather, the same day—was astonished when he found that she had accepted. His last three days in America were spent in studying—and encouraging—an infatuation.

The morning of his departure came, and the steamer which he assumed must be bringing Evelyn's letter, as it had not arrived on Friday, was just getting in. He decided that he would not put off his sailing to get the letter—"Why wait merely to satisfy my curiosity? Evelyn sent me over here. She knows what she's about in recalling me." He left Hutt at the hotel to stay until the last moment on the chance of the mail arriving; he and Wickham went down to the pier—Mrs. Galloway and Honoria and Joe Wallingford and his wife were already there. He had a few sentences aside with Honoria.

"I'm so glad you introduced Mr. Barney to me," she said. He trained his eyeglass upon her mockingly. "Really! How extraordinary! Precisely what *he* said on Wednesday."

## CHAPTER TWENTY

“Don’t be a silly ass,” protested Honoria in an unconvincing voice. “He’s only a big, nice boy. I’m four years older than he. Or, rather, he’s four years younger than I—I don’t fancy the word old.”

“That’s as it should be. If a young chap *will* marry, he should be several years the younger. She’ll keep him straight and bring him up properly. She’ll be patient with his ignorance and know how to handle the reins when he frets or frisks. Good business, this you’re planning, Honoria.”

“Do you think he likes me?”

“*Likes?* He’s positively drivelling. Look at ’im!”

Honoria’s glance met Wickham’s—he was at the rail, pretending to listen to Catherine. His “drivelling” expression as he came at the call in her eyes seemed to please Honoria mightily. With the last going-ashore gong Hutt came bringing Evelyn’s letter. Frothingham at once read enough of it to interpret her cablegram:

As you doubtless know, Georgie’s father-in-law died in New York a few weeks ago. He left them I don’t know how much—something huge. And George is giving Gwen a dot of three hundred thousand. She was just here with the news—she came to me the instant she heard it. As she was leaving she said: “Won’t you give Arthur my love when you write?” It’s the first time she’s spoken of you to me since you left. And when I

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said, "I'll *cab*le it to him," she blushed—you should have seen her, Arthur—and heard her say, "Oh, *thank* you, dear!"

"Good chap, George," murmured Frothingham. "The right sort clean through. He wouldn't let Gwen and me be cheated as he and Evelyn were. . . . Poor Evelyn! . . . Gwen and me!" He began a sigh that changed into his faint smile of self-mockery. "Just my beastly, rotten luck—not to be sure it's good luck when it finally does come."

He went to the rail and his glance sought out and rested upon the little group of his friends on the crowded pier across the widening gap between Nelly's land and him. Wickham took Honoria's blue chiffon parasol and waved it; Catherine fluttered her handkerchief. He lifted his hat and bowed. Long after they were lost to him in the merge of the crowd they could make out his loud light tweeds and scarlet bow, and once they caught the flash of a ray of sunlight on his eyeglass—like a characteristic farewell look.

It was five o'clock in a late September afternoon. As usual, on the low table on the porch viewing the Italian garden at Beauvais Hall was the big tea tray with its array of antique silver and old porcelain, the cake and the toast and the slices of bread and butter.

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Round it were Evelyn and Gwen and Frothingham—Gwen in a shirtwaist and riding skirt, Frothingham in the slovenly, baggy flannels of an English gentleman in the seclusion of his country-seat. No one was speaking and the quiet was profound. Presently Evelyn rose and went through the open French window into the drawing room. Gwen was watching Frothingham; he was watching the peacocks as they strutted with tails spread in splendour.

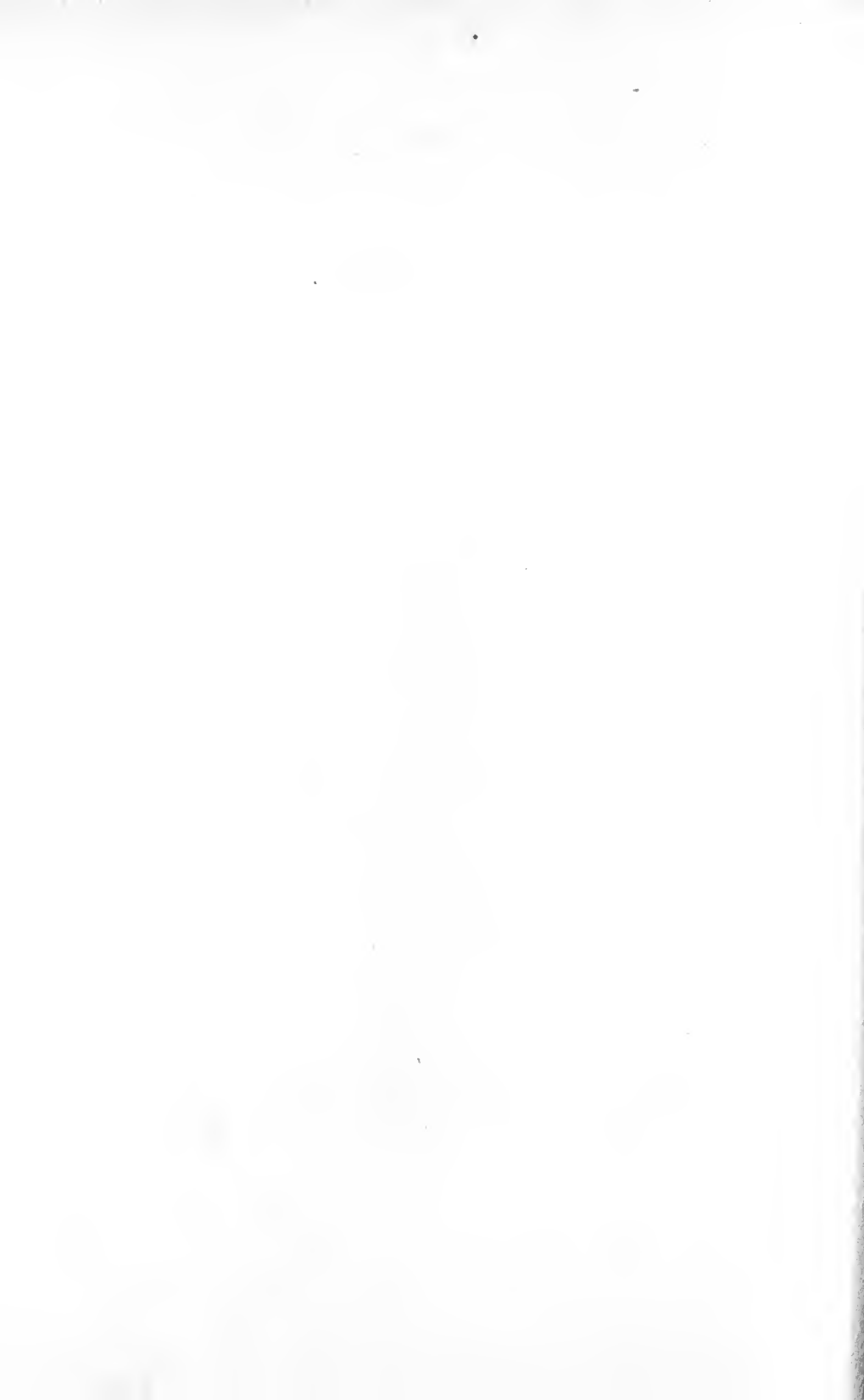
“I’m always wondering that one of those clever, handsome American women didn’t steal your heart—if you’ve got one,” said Gwen.

He slowly withdrew his gaze from the peacocks and fixed it upon her with his monocled expression that might mean everything or nothing. She chose to read everything into it and flushed with pleasure. And her left hand, moving nervously among the silver and porcelain, revealed on its third finger a narrow, gold band.

He drew a long, slow breath of lazy content and drawled:

“You’re so *d——n* comfortable, Gwen!”

THE END





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