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MARY MORELAND



MARIE VAN VORST

KD13515

United States of the United States  
The ... Campaign  
(A. L. A. -- A. B. C. -- J. C. D.)  
To the ... Marine





**MARY MORELAND**









Mary Moreland rose. "About references, Mr. Romney?"  
FRONTISPIECE. See page 72.

# JERRY MORELAND

*A Novel*

MARIE VAN VORSE

A. B. OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY

C. H. TAYLOR



ROSCON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1915



# MARY MORELAND

*A Novel*

BY

MARIE VAN VORST

AUTHOR OF "BIG TREMAINE," ETC.

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY

C. H. TAFFS



BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1915

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**MY DEAR —**

I WANT to inscribe this book to you, thanks to whose inspiration and whose love I have written the best work of my life during the last few years. Your crossing my pathway marked a step in my life and my mind's development, and I want to signal it in this way.

Most of us who care and feel are afraid of ourselves and are afraid of others, and it is only when we love enough not to be afraid that great things are accomplished. My gratitude and my affection are so real that I feel I can never do enough or be enough to express all I want you to know.

I am going to close with a quotation from "Mary Moreland" as it expresses what I feel about you.

"There are certain bars of metal that when you start to cut into them you find are half alloy, but with you, my dear, it is gold clear through."



# MARY MORELAND

## CHAPTER I

MISS MORELAND estimated the moods of her employer by the way he took off his gloves when he came into the office in the morning.

If they were carelessly flung down on the table, she knew that Mr. Maughm was in a business humour and likely to begin dictating immediately. If he did not take off his gloves at all, but thrust his hands into his overcoat pockets and walked over to the window, to stand there, she knew the financier's humour to be meditative, and that something had gone wrong "up at the house," as she called the world in which her employer lived, moved, and had his social being. "Up at the house" he was lost to her.

If he slowly drew his gloves off, finger by finger, put them together and rolled them up into a ball, this indicated that something important was about to interest the office. There might be some big deal in the wind or a personal matter to be thought over. And when Mr. Maughm stood directly in front of his secretary, looking down upon her, Mary knew that, whatever it was, she was to hear all about it.

It was a habit of Thomas Maughm's, when he came down town, to go directly into his stenographer's room. "Up at the house" he had no habits. Where everything is uncongenial and one gets away as fast as possible, one doesn't have fixed customs, unless it be that of clearing out.



Miss Moreland's room, or cage, was sunny and overlooked miles of city, miles of bay. Arriving and departing ships were visible from her window. The white banners of the city's smoke rose in stainless columns against the hard blue skies. Maughm had made this room comfortable, for he spent a great deal of time here. He had cigars and cigarettes within reach, and when he wanted to do so, he could even mix himself a cocktail.

This morning, when he had slowly drawn off his grey suede gloves and made a little ball of them, which he dropped into his pocket, he began to dictate, and with the first words, lifted his hat and took off his coat.

Maughm was under forty, well-looking and vigorous; and Mary Moreland knew all of his business clothes by heart. He was so extremely fastidious about his dress that he had been, in a way, an education to her. If any one had chosen to send her out to buy cravats, she would probably have brought back something that a man of good taste could wear. She had become almost a connoisseur of well-cut, good-looking, masculine clothes, boots and gloves, and canes and hats. She had a keen eye and an appreciative taste, and she thought that Mr. Maughm was one of the best-dressed men in Wall Street. He probably was.

Their greetings were exchanged as follows. Maughm spoke first, glancing at her; and she looked up at this employer, who paid her a big salary and asked as little of her as was consistent with his business, and she gave in return what would pass anywhere for a radiant smile. In a sweet voice, from which impersonal relations kept absent weariness or staleness, she said: "Good morning, Mr. Maughm."

Maughm came into that room every morning to hear his name spoken like this and be greeted by this radiant smile. No matter what went on "up at the house," —

and things *did* go on, — his stenographer's attitude never altered. In the time that he spent there, nothing hurt his feelings; he was not bored, and he didn't want to get out. All of these things happened daily "up at the house."

Here, in this office room, the only obligations between the man and the woman were financial; the questions were business questions, and the woman who was paid for her duties was a combination of slave and free woman.

On this morning, she did not smile at her employer. The other part of her world was labelled in her mind "out home." "Out home" referred to a cottage in East Orange, where she supported a mother and a brother, and in an unbusinesslike way helped people she could not afford to help, as people who can't afford it usually do. Not very long ago, Mary had tasted the bitterness of lending money which you can't afford to lend to some one who has no intention of ever paying it back. She was short a hundred dollars. A hundred dollars is a little thing in the budget of many of us; in Miss Moreland's present financial state, the loss of it was a catastrophe.

She heard Mr. Maughm's familiar: "Will you kindly take this letter?" and opened her book. On the page before her, however, the following facts fell down, as though shaken from her mind into form:

"Amber Doane will never pay back that money. The rent is due. I ought to have twenty dollars for mother's doctor's bill. It's a new doctor — a specialist. He won't wait — I'd be ashamed to ask him, anyway. I haven't paid for my tailor suit — that's forty dollars."

Maughm began to dictate.

"Robert Ayms, Somerset Club, Boston.

"Dear old man, — If I don't write to some one, I shall go mad. I would like to come over to-day, but am tied

up with things people think important. Believe me, nothing is of importance but the sentimental part of life. Everything else hustles a man hither and thither, but it's only his damned emotions that can take him promptly either to heaven or hell."

Maughm's emotions compelled him to take out a cigar.

Miss Moreland had written his letters, private and business, for five years. If she had been an analyst, she would have said that he was uncontrolled regarding questions of the heart. As it was, she thought he was "perfectly splendid — too kind-hearted for anything." But, as she wrote, she remembered that the butcher's bill was uncomfortably large because of the beef juice her mother had been obliged to take. "It's too bad a cheaper animal doesn't give juice," she thought. The dictation went on:

"You know I am a close-mouthed chap. I have not said a word to you or any one all these years. I could say a lot, by gad! I shall probably regret this letter — perhaps I won't send it. Anyhow, it must be written. To make a long story short, I am going to leave my wife."

These words, in their frank importance, obliterated "butcher's bill." They were sufficiently out of the ordinary to blot out for a moment Miss Moreland's whole financial tragedy; but she gave no sign of this fact.

"You always told me that Daisy and I were absolutely unsuited. You shouldn't say we are unsuited; let's say *I* don't suit. I don't know if this is the experience of every man who marries his first love. I am not interested in other people's experiences. I married because I loved and thought of nothing else. I begin to think that an American business man should marry no one but an American business woman.

"My wife wants a companion to do with her the things *she* has time to do. *I* want a companion who will understand my struggle for existence. In order to live at the

pace I am living, I have to work like a dog. When I get home in the evening, I run into a party at bridge; usually a dinner is on afterwards, at which I am considered a bore. The women talk across me to each other, and I don't wonder; I have nothing to say, for half the time we have had some unpleasant discussion just before, and that knocks all the spirit out of me.

"I think that Daisy ceased to love me the first year of our marriage. At any rate, I count for nothing in the household except the moneybag. There is no companionship; it is a sort of unexpressed enmity. Daisy never wanted children."

Here Miss Moreland gave a little cough. It was a signal that her employer was going too fast for her speed, and he stopped; then continued:

"I love children! Daisy is vain, a coquette, extravagant. I don't believe she has any heart at all. When I left her this morning, I felt that I never wanted to see her again. To tell the truth, I am sick and tired of modern women; they haven't the slightest conception of a man's needs. They are neither wives, sweethearts, nor friends; and a fellow wants all these things in his wife."

Maughm was dictating so fast and excitedly that he had approached still nearer his secretary. She coughed again.

"Oh," he said, coming back to the fact that he had before him a human being; "I think perhaps I ought not to say quite all that." He spoke slowly, and as he was looking straight at her with his handsome, angry eyes, he evidently wanted some kind of a response. If he turned to her at this moment for human sympathy, she gave him none. He resumed the dictation:

"Don't give me any preaching or advice: I've had enough of it. A chap doesn't come to this decision lightly. My home is hell, and I am going to get out of it. I mean nothing to Daisy; she means nothing to me. We haven't

spoken to each other for three days. I will let her get a divorce, but I'm determined to be free."

Maughm wound up his letter. His cigar had burned down; he snuffed it out on the ash receiver.

Miss Moreland had finished her notes and sat waiting. In her close-fitting dark skirt, her immaculate white waist, her arms bare from the elbow down, she was one of the prettiest figures imaginable. The head bent over her book was gloriously furnished with reddish gold hair, beautifully kept and tastefully arranged. The lobe of her ear, the curve of her neck, her delicately modelled chin, the outline of her cheek, her long lashes hiding the eyes as she sat with pencil poised, made a picture which might have attracted a less lonely man.

She was young, yet he would have said that he'd known her a long time. Five years isn't a very long time, but it is long enough to grow accustomed and used to a thing if we like it, and to grow sick to death of it if we don't. As he looked at her, Maughm realised that he knew by heart every attractive detail before him, and that he had always thought Miss Moreland a very pretty girl.

He was beginning to realise why he came in here so regularly — why she had become a habit; and the memory of her smiles now began to warm his heart, just as though they had been a kind of goal toward which he was steadily approaching.

"Put up your book, Miss Moreland."

She did so, and he took a chair and sat down in front of her.

"Don't be frightened," he said gently.

She had no idea of being frightened, for he had never alarmed her in the least, and she looked at him trustfully.

"You've just taken the most important letter I've ever written."

She was silent.

"What I said there destroys my domestic happiness. Do you take that in?"

"I think you were just a little hard," she said quietly.

He looked at her in surprise, threw back his head and laughed.

"Then you don't think a woman owes a man anything? She's only supposed to wear the clothes he buys her and sit like a lump of ice in his house?"

Even as he spoke, he felt that the words were out of proportion and that he was a cad to speak like this to his secretary. He continued quickly:

"Never mind! I want you to give your attention to something else."

But before Mary could give him her attention, he had sprung up from his chair and gone back again to the window, where he had stood when he first came in. This time the girl could not judge of her employer's mood. It was a new one, and as she sat waiting for it to declare itself, or for business relations to go on, her own financial state of affairs "out home" slipped again into the foreground.

To Maughm, Mary Moreland had suddenly become an entity. He resumed his chair, and to her great surprise leaned over and took her hand.

"I'm in great trouble, little girl," he said. "I want you to do something for me. Will you?"

No woman knows what she feels toward a man until a combination of circumstances brings before her his special need, whatever that need may be. The girl's cheeks paled.

"I'm going to leave my wife," he said.

She made no reply.

"My man is bringing down my things to the club. I'm going to leave New York to-morrow. I don't want to leave alone. I want you to go with me."

If any of her girl friends had told her of a similar case, Mary would have said with dignity: "Heavens! I would

have struck him in the face!" Now, she did nothing of the kind.

Maughm, on his part, would have called the man a hound, if the situation had been presented to him. But he was swimming in a stormy sea of sentiment; he was drowning in it, and he caught at this human life-preserver as many a better man might have done. He went on, his plan shaping itself as he spoke:

"I want you to go home," he said, "and tell your people that I've given you a vacation. Tell them you're going to take a rest cure at some place we can arrange for, where their letters can go to you. Then I want you to meet me at the Grand Central Station and go with me to Chicago. . . . I don't make any protestations to you. You see the state of mind I'm in. But you've seen me pretty constantly for five years, and I don't think you've ever heard of my doing a thing you'd call mean. . . . I'm going to give you a thousand dollars. You can put it in the bank to your credit. I know you will have plenty of uses for it."

The face of the girl before him had alternately flushed and paled. It was so full of colour now that he did not know whether his last remark had heightened it or not.

"Now," he said, with a very attractive assumption of authority, "don't take offence at the money. You don't want to let other people suffer in that way through you."

He watched the changes of expression on her face, and he did not understand even remotely what they indicated. From the moment that he had seated himself beside her, lowered his voice and begun to speak to her — not as an employer to his stenographer, but as a man to a woman — something new and strange had come to life in Mary.

She knew him well — this warm-hearted, big-natured man, invariably kind and considerate to her. She had seen him daily for five years. She had thought that she

liked Mr. Maughm very much, that she would not have worked so gladly for any other employer as she did for him. His frank, kindly manner, his generous gifts had made many rough places smooth in her hard little life. But all this was not sufficient to explain what happened in her heart now, as this man made to her this sudden proposition. As Maughm stopped speaking Mary discovered what until then she had ignored. Mary had never had time to think of herself at all; she had been too busy always in thinking of others. Now the biggest question in life was to be put to her. She was called upon to think, to act, to feel, in short to be. She was ready for it. As Maughm put this before Mary the girl, in one sudden illumining of her heart to herself knew that she loved him. Her face was charming to behold as she lifted it to this man. There was a look upon it of decision and at once a look of appeal.

Maughm was holding her hand in his; this had never happened before. He followed his impulse and kissed her. His touch completed the work. It seemed to her that it didn't matter at all whether the big buildings in New York fell to ruin — if the seas of the harbour were to sweep up and engulf the city. Nothing mattered.

Looking at her intensely Maughm asked: "You will come?"

And in a voice which sounded to herself very far away indeed she answered: "Yes."

At her side the telephone bell rang insistently. Maughm himself answered it, and the business of the day began.



## CHAPTER II

MARY did not see Maughm again until he came into her office at noon, as she was putting on her hat to go out to luncheon, and shutting the door behind him, held its handle in one hand and extended to her the other, into which she put both hers.

"Little girl," he said, "for God's sake don't go back on me! I've thought of nothing but you since I left you. You must make me forget my troubles. Don't go back on me!"

In a low tone, he gave her a series of instructions, and she knew so little of men that she was not surprised that he did not kiss her. He opened the door for her and let her pass through to go to the restaurant where she lunched on a piece of pie and a glass of milk. She didn't consider him selfish, or think about his part of it at all, because for the first time in her life her own feelings were aroused. She was a practical business woman, and yet she did not wonder what he was going to do with her. As she sat and mused in the train, on her way home that afternoon, she realised that she had been fond of Mr. Maughm for a long time. She said to herself: "I guess I must have cared for him a long while."

She had supposed that she had principles. She was a church member, though too tired on Sundays to go to church; but her life had been so absorbed in the fulfilment of her duties as a bread-winner that she had never formulated any philosophy, and her principles were part of an upright and unselfish character. In some natures, the development of the heart requires a lifetime; in others,

the *grande passion* lifts a human being in a moment to a sublime height.

Mary wanted to cry, but she knew it was not possible in the train, and she thrust Thomas Maughm out of her mind vigorously and turned her thoughts to the practical question of how she was going to leave home. In her bag was the money he had placed there in spite of her protests. Rather than make a scene in the office, she had accepted it. In her mind, need and struggle ran in grooves. For Mary, love was too new to wipe out the sordidness of life.

When the train stopped at East Orange, she got out and took the familiar road home. She had left it that morning an anxious little bread-winner. She was going back to it now a woman confronted by the most perplexing problem of her life.

She had not taken off her hat when her mother commenced the daily story of physical ills. She heard the clatter of dishes, she smelled the all-pervading fumes of cooking. The shrill voices of boisterous children playing under the window irritated her sensitive nerves, and she had a headache. She went directly to her bedroom and spent an hour in going over her slender wardrobe. She got out a suitcase which she kept in the bottom of her closet and with burning cheeks packed it for the great adventure. Articles which had been of little significance before became singularly important now. They were not good enough — nothing she had was fit to be seen by — But she did not dare to let her thoughts wander. They terrified her.

The hundred-dollar bills in her purse troubled her tremendously — more than her debts had ever done. She put the money first in her bureau drawer, then on a shelf in the closet, and finally stowed it away under her clothes in the suitcase. She could not use it or bring herself even to think of it, no matter what should happen.

She passed a sleepless night, and in the morning was back on the train bound for New York, her suitcase in her hand. She took it to the Grand Central Station, checked it at the parcel-room, and went down to the office as she had been directed to do, in order to take the mail and the telegrams that might be waiting for her employer. The office boy told her that Mr. Maughm had not been in. She had not expected him and received the news tranquilly; but on her pile of letters was one for her in her employer's handwriting.

"My dear girl," it ran, "Mr. Aymys is desperately ill. They've telegraphed for me, and I'm going on. Will you come to me in Boston? Take the train at five o'clock this afternoon. I'll be at the South Station. Remember I count on you — you don't know how much. T. M."

The letter was a momentary reprieve. She had expected to meet him at the Grand Central Station at one. Instead, she would meet him in the evening in Boston. She folded up the letter very small and tucked it in the belt of her dress. It was Mary Moreland's first love letter. She gathered up the rest of the mail, answered letters that needed immediate attention, and put away in her little handbag those she considered it necessary to take to Mr. Maughm.

The office boy came in with a white box, and Mary read her name on the florist's label. In selecting the flowers, Maughm had thought of spring, and he had chosen lilies-of-the-valley and mignonette. As Mary opened the box, the appealing perfume filled the room and made her think suddenly of a little invalid sister whom she had lost a few years before. She had loved the child, and all that was maternal in her had gone out to the little ailing thing. At the funeral — the expensive funeral that it had taken months to pay for — there had been quantities of lilies-of-the-valley, and Mary associated these flowers with

death. It was strange that they should have come to her now with a spiritual message in their pale pure bells and their frail green leaves. As she bent above them, there came to her the odour of the ground, as it had smelt that rainy day in the cemetery, over the small grave. She covered the box.

“If Mamie had been alive,” she said to herself, “I would not have done this.”

But Mary herself was very much alive — in love, apparently loved. She dried her eyes, sighed, adjusted her hair before her glass. She was glad to see that it was soft and pretty, and that her hands were white as she touched it. She could not but approve of her figure — goodness knows, she had been told often enough that she was pretty!

The telephone rang at her side. She took up the receiver to reply.

“Is that Mr. Thomas Maughm’s office?”

“Yes. Who is it?” Miss Moreland asked.

And the voice answered: “This is Mrs. Thomas Maughm speaking.”

### CHAPTER III

**THERE** was a moment's pause; then Mary, after years of habit, fell into the rut.

"Mr. Maughm has not been in to-day — I will see if he left any word."

"Stop a moment," Mrs. Maughm answered. "That is not necessary. Don't bother about it, Miss Moreland — I really wanted to speak to *you*. My secretary is ill. Will you come up for an hour?"

Under ordinary circumstances, there would have been no reason in the world why the stenographer should refuse to go to the wife of her employer. The hesitation was brief, the pause between the two voices infinitesimal; and although Miss Moreland's heart was beating wildly, she answered cheerfully: "Yes, Mrs. Maughm, I will be right up."

The few times that Miss Moreland had been sent for by Mrs. Maughm stood out in her memory as she climbed the steps of the big house. Once she had revised the lady's visiting list, spending hours transcribing names into an address book. Once she had taken a few perfunctory letters. Another time she had written some cheques.

Mrs. Maughm was sitting before the open fire in her boudoir, her elbows on her knees, her head in her hands — an attitude inconsistent with the stenographer's idea of the popular Mrs. Maughm.

"That's you, Miss Moreland, isn't it? I am so glad. Come in, won't you? And sit down."

Miss Moreland felt a sudden certainty that her employer's wife knew something — had heard something. She hesitated before coming over to the chair indicated.

"Sit down, Miss Moreland," repeated Mrs. Maughm. "I sent for you — I haven't any work for you to do. It's not that."

The stenographer saw that Mrs. Maughm had been crying, and that she did not seem ashamed to reveal the fact to her husband's stenographer.

"You don't want me to do any work?" Miss Moreland began.

"No," said the lady; "but I do want very much to see you — very much indeed."

Mary waited and Mrs. Maughm considered her, as a woman does, with one comprehensive glance. In her plain, tailored skirt, her neatly fitting shirt-waist, her spotless collar, her tidy jacket, her becoming small hat, and her fresh, nicely-adjusted veil, the stenographer was an attractive figure. But there was about her something better than beauty, there was repose. She had an eminently peaceful presence.

"Miss Moreland," and Mrs. Maughm's voice still bore a trace of tears, "I don't know what you'll think of me, sending for you like this. I can't understand how I came to do so. But don't you know," she half appealed, "that we all of us do extraordinary things now and then, in spite of ourselves — things we never, never could imagine ourselves capable of doing and which in another we would censure? Do you know what I mean?"

Mary did know what she meant.

"I really think," said Mrs. Maughm, "that we women cannot judge each other too harshly — or ourselves, for that matter. We are so dreadfully impulsive. Don't you think so?" She did not wait for the other woman to reply. "We are almost irresponsible, aren't we, sometimes? Such different things influence us. We feel so safe and so secure, and all of a sudden something happens to change everything, and we find ourselves acting in an

utterly irresponsible manner. Do you understand?" and she looked at the stenographer.

"I guess we are all rather nervous," Mary answered quietly; "but I don't know but that we can be counted upon in a crisis quite as well as men can be."

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Maughm, "how wonderful of you to think that! But of course you would."

Miss Moreland did not have time to reply.

"I have always thought," said Mrs. Maughm, "that we were far superior to men in everything, until perhaps" — she hesitated — "this last week. I haven't sent for you on any business matter. I had no right to send for you at all, but I did, because — you are a woman."

Miss Moreland stiffened. She was on guard instantly, and reflected that Mrs. Maughm must have known — judging from the address-book — quite a number of people for whom she could have sent "because they were women."

Mrs. Maughm went on :

"Now and then I have thought of you, working down there as you do — as you have — day after day, for five years, by my husband's side — I mean to say, near him. I have been glad to think he had such a splendid woman — such a fine woman — in his employ. And I feel that you must know Tom awfully well. Of course you do know him, in a way that perhaps I don't; have seen him in a way I haven't seen him; have grown near to him in a way that I haven't been able to."

Mrs. Maughm was holding her handkerchief tightly. She threw back her head, as though she defied the emotion that was evidently struggling to express itself, and looking into the glowing coals, said :

"I can't help it. I just had to send for you. I am terribly unhappy," she finished; "terribly, terribly unhappy."

If Mary had spoken as frankly, she would have said: "I am terribly, terribly happy, for I am going away to-night with the man I love." She remembered the letter she had written to Robert Aym's the day before — and the things that Mr. Maughm had uttered about his wife, and her thoughts sprang to his defence as she looked at the woman before her. She thought: "Well, you are not the only one that's terribly, terribly unhappy."

Mrs. Maughm continued, "I don't know where my husband is. He went away from here yesterday. I know he went down to the office; but he did not come home, and I haven't any idea where he has gone. I wouldn't take any means to find out — that is, no means but this. I thought perhaps you knew."

The colour came slowly into Mary's cheeks, but her business training enabled her to say tranquilly:

"If Mr. Maughm went away without telling you where he was going, I guess he must have wanted to be alone."

"Then you do know where my husband is?"

"He didn't leave any word at the office."

"I don't ask you to tell me where he is unless you care to, Miss Moreland. I could have him followed. It isn't that. I don't want to spy on Tom. But as I told you, I am terribly unhappy. I think he is going to leave me."

Mrs. Maughm paused after this statement — not as though she wished to have it refuted or commented upon, but as though she wished to follow out its tragic suggestion. She bit her lip; tears overflowed and rolled down her cheeks; she stared straight before her; and the stenographer believed she now saw the reverse of the picture presented to her the day before.

She began to feel like a robber entertained as a guest in the house that was to be plundered. She was dazed. In the buttonhole of her jacket she had put a spray of the lily-of-the-valley. It recalled the smell of the earth.



Mrs. Maughm went on :

"Things have been rather bad here, for some time. If my husband has seemed nervous, it's because he hasn't been happy at home. New York is perfectly awful for married people, especially if you are not poor."

She stopped a moment, while Mary digested the idea that things could be worse if one were rich.

"We haven't made common cause," continued Mrs. Maughm. "I have been restless, carried away by outside interests, and" — she leaned forward and put her hand on the secretary's knee, looking her full in the eyes — "I've nearly lost my husband."

Mary did not shrink. Her eyes were as beautiful as Mrs. Maughm's. But she had grown quite pale, in the interval, and here and there on her flawless skin was a little brown freckle; these golden points stood out, making her complexion more transparent than ever.

The other woman went on: "I don't want to lose him; I don't intend to lose him, if I can help it. I don't need to tell you, do I, after this, that I love him very much indeed?"

Mrs. Maughm's hands closed upon those of the stenographer; and for a moment the two women sat thus in perfect silence; then the wife released her grasp and sank back in her chair. Mary vaguely wondered: "What does she know — what does she think? Does she suspect anything? Is she trying to find out?"

Mrs. Maughm had apparently regained her self-possession. "I wanted to ask you several questions quite frankly," she was saying. "Somehow, I don't feel like asking them now. It doesn't make so much difference where my husband has gone. I believe he will come back; and if you knew, you would feel yourself in honour bound — I know how discreet you are — not to tell me. As I said before, I am not trying to spy on my husband through

you. So that's one of the questions I don't ask. I thought somewhat of asking you what I had better do. But how could you tell me? No one can tell me that. Perhaps, when he comes back, I shall know what to do. I must take my chance. I wanted to ask you if there was anything you could say, knowing some of the circumstances, as I think you do — was there anything you could suggest, anything . . . ?” Mrs. Maughm paused.

Mary's voice was thin now when she spoke.

“When you called me on the telephone I thought you wanted me to take some letters.”

“Of course you did, but you see how much more serious it was.”

“Yes,” said the stenographer, and she put on her grey gloves and got up from the chair, wondering if her legs would give way before she could get out of the room and down-stairs and out of the house.

“You said,” she managed to get out, “a minute ago, could I suggest anything?”

“Yes,” said Mrs. Maughm eagerly.

“I think,” she said in her strained little voice, “that a man likes a woman to be there when he comes home — where he expects her to be.” She paused. The beautiful rich colour that the years of confining occupation had not quenched rose to her cheeks, filled her face now. Mrs. Maughm thought with a tightening of her heart: “She is lovely, after all.”

“I think,” Mary finished, “that Mr. Maughm is fond of children.”

Thomas Maughm walked back and forth before the gates in the South Station, waiting for the arrival of the train from New York. His hands were behind his back, his head was bent. He was a *soi-disant* lover, awaiting the arrival of a pretty woman who, at his suggestion, was to

throw over respectability for him. His mind scarcely touched the object of his waiting. He had passed through one of the saddest days of his life. The man to whose deathbed he had been summoned was his oldest and dearest friend. Maughm had arrived too late, and he had spent the afternoon at the Somerset Club, talking with men who had, with him, loved and admired Robert Aym's. He had not been able to put his friend for long out of his mind, and whenever he did so, his own affairs were so complicated and so painful that to return to his grief was a relief. When the thought of his secretary crossed his mind, it came to him with a sudden shock that made his nerves quiver and his heart contract.

There had been time for reflection since he left New York, and he criticized himself in his self-examination. He began instinctively to put himself right with his environment. Walking to and fro on the platform he continued his musings.

No doubt he had been very selfish, as far as his wife was concerned. He was too much a business man and too little of a lover. He had been too wrapped up in the Street to have leisure for her. At all events, there was such a thing as two sides to a story, and with the American man's chivalry he began to take himself to task — to court the blame.

Then there came back to him, in spite of himself, scenes with his wife — scenes of disturbance, ruptures that could only be healed by love, by caresses, by assurances of devotion, and by tenderness. It was long, long since he could remember any touch of endearment. He wanted to remember them; but they refused to come at his call.

"What's the use? She doesn't love me. She hasn't loved me for a long time. I'm a sentimental fool! I'm only doing what any other chap in my place would do — has done."

The train came in ; the passengers filed out through the gates and Maughm took up his position to wait for Mary Moreland who was in one of the last cars. He had thought of her so little during the day that her appearance was a surprise, and as he looked at her, she gave him the feeling that she always did in the office — one of refreshment and helpfulness. His heart went out to her in gratitude that she had not failed him. She was coming quietly toward him now, in her trim dress, her pretty hat and veil, and they went out through the gate together.

## CHAPTER IV

MARY and Maughm came out through the gate with the last of the passengers from the New York express. As they came up to the news-stand, she gently disengaged her hand from Maughm's arm and stopped, saying in the quiet, business-like voice he knew so well :

"I didn't bring my bag. There is a midnight train out, and I'm going back on it."

In the vast shed, peopled by an unclassed crowd, these two human beings faced each other. Thomas Maughm looked into the woman's eyes; they were grey and steady. His own brow contracted, as he echoed: "Going back — what do you mean?" and he put his hand forcibly on her slender arm. "You are not going back on the midnight; you are coming with me."

Her face was colourless, but she had never looked so lovely. It was the big moment in a little career.

"I am going back on the midnight," she repeated quietly.

Maughm could not help smiling. She was so dignified, so equal to the situation, so up to the mark — perfect with long training. He had ordered her to come, and she had obeyed the summons, but now he began to realise that she had plans of her own.

Words were not Mary's long suit, but she knew that now she would have to find some that would fit the situation.

"When I went to the office to-day," she said, "Mrs. Maughm rang me up."

"What!"

"I went up to the house, but she did not want me professionally."

"You saw my wife?" said the man, stepping back.

"Yes," the stenographer answered. "I was with her a long time. She is very unhappy. She's very much worried about you." She was watching his face. "She didn't say a great deal, but she made me feel that her heart was breaking."

Maughm looked at her in silence.

"I think she's fonder of you than you realise."

The big clock pointed to twenty minutes after ten.

"I have my return ticket to New York."

What she said was a shock to him, but he yielded to her authority with a sense of relief. He was beginning to realise that Miss Moreland was sane, and that he was on the verge of a great folly — a folly whose like in the lives of other men he had been quick to condemn. He realised that he had been blinded by excitement, anger, and, in the case of this girl, a little passion. He was grateful to her.

"There is no earthly reason why we shouldn't go back to New York on the same train," he murmured.

She shook her head.

He continued to regard her fixedly, and as he did so she altered, in a way, before his eyes. The day before she had meant for him the possibility of forgetfulness and passion — the consolation that he needed; and here, in a second, in this nondescript, impersonal place, she had become once more the cool-headed business woman. A hundred times before this he had felt a sense of obligation to her; for years he had relied on her.

She was saying: "Oh, that wouldn't be wise," and he hurriedly added: "Moreover, I couldn't go back to-night. You see, Ayms' funeral is to-morrow. I shall stay for that. But I don't like the idea of your going alone."

She answered tranquilly: "Oh, I'm used to going alone, you know."

Something in him rebelled against her determination to do so.

She continued :

"I didn't have time for lunch to-day. I think I will go across to the buffet and get something to eat. No, thank you — no, thank you! Honestly, Mr. Maughm, I want to be alone; please, *please*."

Mechanically he compared his watch with the big time-piece. He felt that she was taking everything into her own hands, as she was capable of doing.

"You must have a section," he said, "if you are going back on the midnight. There is a buffet over there" — he indicated it — "and if you will go and order yourself some dinner, I will get your section and join you later."

He left her, and she made her way to the restaurant, glad to be free. In reality she was faint — not hungry — and though she ordered herself a club sandwich and a strong cup of tea, when the food came, she could not touch a morsel of it, and was able only to swallow a little of the tea. She had finished when Maughm came back with her Pullman ticket. As she put it in her purse, he observed her deftness, her sure, poised movements and her ungloved hands, with their well-kept, pretty nails.

He was about to say to her: "Let me take you to some quiet place where we can talk," when she put out her hand.

"Good-by," she said.

He understood that she wanted him to go — that he was just then for her not an easy equation. He took her hand.

"God bless you."

She thought he was going to kiss her, and the hot blood leaped into her face; but he only pressed her hand strongly, dropped it, and turned and left her.

It was what she wanted him to do, of course, and yet as he went, her heart sank within her like lead, and a sob rose in her throat. The tide of life had left her stranded. She

walked slowly back through the station to find a place where she might sit down to wait for her train. Along at the left was the waiting-room, and she made her way toward it.

She came to a stop before the news-stand. She wanted something to keep her attention from herself. Hitherto she had been part of a commercial and professional monotony, a woman whose life is ordered by the strictest method, and all of a sudden everything had changed with her! She had become an adventurer. She had pushed out from the quiet harbour of commonplace and now found herself alone at sea.

As she turned the pages of a magazine, she became conscious of a woman standing near by. There was no reason why Mary should try to escape recognition, and she looked up frankly and recognised her fellow-townswoman, Amber Doane. She was astonished and blushed, but it immediately flashed through her mind: "Amber owes me a hundred dollars," and with the remembrance came the wonder: "Is she ever going to pay me back?"

Amber turned, and Mary, extending her hand, said: "Why, Amber, I didn't know you ever came to Boston."

The other girl's surprise was apparent and combined with a sort of fear, which made it evident that she did not wish to be spoken to. She murmured something that sounded like: "Come on to see my cousins."

Mary smiled. "Don't look so frightened, Amber," she said. "You don't think I'm going to hold you up here in the station, do you?"

Amber Doane was evidently mystified. "Hold me up?" she faltered.

"Why, yes," returned Mary pleasantly; "you don't suppose I'm as mean as that, do you? I know that you will do the best you can about the money," — which didn't indicate that she felt the best would ever imply repaying the hundred dollars.



"I was afraid you were not going to speak to me, Mary."

A second before, Mary would have said that she did not want to see a single person in the world. Now the presence of this acquaintance was a relief.

"You don't know me very well, or you wouldn't think I could cut a friend because she owed me money, Amber," she said.

Miss Doane, regaining her composure, replied: "Well, you never can tell how people are going to act when you're 'up against it.'"

"I suppose you're right," said Mary absentmindedly.

Side by side the two started for the waiting-room, Mary directing the way. They were a striking contrast; Amber was a dark and sombre beauty, somewhat over-dressed, but in clothes that were tasteful.

"I am going back to New York to-night," Mary found herself saying. "I came over on business. Let's go into the waiting-room and sit down. There's lots of time."

Amber had never been a close friend of Mary Moreland's. Mary had loaned her the money because it was easier to do so than to refuse, and if Mary had been critical and severe in her judgment, she would have ignored the request of a girl who spent on her clothes everything she made and ran into debt besides. It was one of Mary's ways: when there were two sides to a question, she looked at the better.

She heard Amber say, as she laid her hand on Mary's arm: "Then you don't mind being seen with me here?" and Mary responded cordially: "Well, I should think not! I'm awfully glad I met you."

They went into the waiting-room and sat down.

## CHAPTER V

AT nine o'clock the following morning, Miss Moreland walked into the office of Maughm & Company. She had decided to give up her position. Number 40 Wall Street was to be a closed book. That past was over. Everything stood in its accustomed order on her desk. Twenty-four hours previous, with very different feelings, she had taken a farewell of this room.

An assistant stenographer came in and asked her a dozen questions to the minute — pointed out batches of letters — spoke of Mr. Maughm — spoke to her of telephones from Mrs. Maughm. But in these facts she had no longer any interest — she must have no interest in them.

She had done nothing to be ashamed of. This she had said to herself a hundred times. She had begun saying it when she met Amber Doane in the Boston station. She had said it to herself on the way home in the train. But she was out of employment, with debts and problems to face, and she knew how difficult it would be to find another good position.

If she had been cautious, she would not have written to Maughm, but caution had never been necessary in her business relations with him. She wrote:

“Dear Mr. Maughm: — You will understand that I can't take the thousand dollars, and of course you will not expect me to retain my position here.”

And she added: “I hope you are going to be very, very happy.” Then she changed it to: “I am *sure* you are going to be very, very happy.”

She paused after adding this line, then let it stand, and putting the ten one-hundred-dollar bills with the letter in

the envelope, addressed it by hand and left it with the rest of his mail. Then she gathered together certain personal things, made a parcel of them, and without bidding good-by to any one, slipped out of the office.

The next few hours she spent in consultation with the employment bureau of a typewriter company and in trying to see a lawyer whose name was given to her as one who needed a stenographer. It was late afternoon when she took the train to Orange. The mile walk from the station to her home she had taken for years and she knew it well but on this day it seemed unusual.

After having repeated to herself countless times that she had nothing to be ashamed of, the refrain changed into: "I have done something to be proud of." She was not conceited — she was just; and the consciousness of her own self-control and the fact that she had put things on a proper basis gave her a feeling of self-congratulation.

As she approached the little Episcopal church, into which she seldom had time to go, the bells were ringing for even-song. To-night she felt a personal call in the summons. Service had not begun, and Mary, taking a seat near the door, let her eyes wander about the dim interior. They finally rested on the stained-glass window at her side.

The design was one in which the mysticism and appeal of the Galilean had been admirably and reverently portrayed by the artist. Underneath the figure in white robes, with head crowned by a halo and hand outstretched toward a woman crouching upon the ground, Mary read: "Neither do I condemn thee; go in peace." The sweetness of the face, the benediction expressed in the attitude, impressed her profoundly. Her pulse for the first time was quickened with the poetry and beauty of an æsthetic religion.

The hymn was "In the Hour of Trial." When she had had time to think about hymns, this had been one of her favourites. She did not bow her head or join in the re-

sponses; but quietly sat and mused in her corner during the service.

She had done what she should have done; there wasn't any doubt about that! From the moment that Mrs. Maughm had made Mary feel that she loved her husband, the girl had been determined to give him up. But she hadn't known then that she cared so much. In Boston, standing by his side in the station, she had realised what the sacrifice meant to her.

When she said to him: "I am not going with you; I am going back to New York," everything in her had rebelled. She wanted to go with him then; and she resented the fact that there was any Mrs. Maughm with a prior right. But sitting there under the window with its white figure, she was glad of her renunciation.

She surely had a right to hold up her head with the rest of the congregation — she had nothing to be ashamed of. She had not disgraced herself, but could take her place anywhere; there was nothing against her, and no one knew how close she had come to shame.

After a little she rose and sang with the others: —

"When Thou seest me waver  
With a look recall,  
Nor for fear or favour  
Suffer me to fall."

When she reached home, her mother was standing in the doorway and greeted Mary in a dry, emotionless fashion. There had been no romance to Mrs. Moreland in her daughter's absence, and she had a vague idea that Mary had been to Plainfield on a visit.

"Well?" she said, following her daughter into the sitting-room.

The ugly little room, with its familiarly uninteresting things, brought Mary forcibly down to earth.

Mrs. Moreland had extravagant tastes, and couldn't understand why she should not have money just as well as the rest of the world. She spent much of her time in planning how to spend a fortune, should it be "left to her." She rebelled against their poverty, and her mental attitude was largely comprised in the phrase "I don't see why."

"Did you have a good time?" she asked, but did not wait for Mary's answer. "I suppose you've heard about Amber Doane?"

Mary was opening her suit-case.

"Heard what?"

"Then you don't know?"

Mary looked up at her mother, who went on unctuously: "The first time I ever saw her, I said: 'That girl has a bad face.' I don't need to look at a person more than twice to know what kind they are; I always go back to my first impressions! I haven't seen hard times the way I've seen them for twenty years not to be a judge of human nature."

"What about Amber?"

"You remember when she went to night-school?" Mrs. Moreland asked in a sepulchral voice.

"Well," said Mary, "what of that?"

"They dismissed the French teacher a couple of months ago. It seems that —"

"I don't believe it, mother."

She took out the articles of clothing from the suit-case — her best black silk stockings and the other apparel so carefully selected, and shook them out.

"They have been meeting over in New York," said Mrs. Moreland, ignoring her daughter's remark. "I understand now, however, he has left her and gone back to France."

"I would have to have more proof of a story like that than just 'town talk.'"

"The Doanes will never be able to hold up their heads again," said the mother.

## CHAPTER VI

AFTER he left Mary at the station in Boston, Thomas Maughm went back to the Somerset Club, sat down before an open fire, ordered a whisky and soda, and gave himself up to a cigar and to his thoughts. He had experienced some powerful emotions during the past forty-eight hours. Aym's death had been a great shock to him. Aym's was his best friend; he loved him, and he couldn't bear to let him go. Yet he didn't want to sentimentalize over morbid facts that nothing could change. He thought of his meeting with Mary Moreland and the change of plans which she had forced upon him. Then there came into his mind the possibility that Daisy loved him, that there might be a chance of patching up their differences, and his desire to go back to his wife revived. But as he thought of "patching up" his existence, he changed the idea to "beginning a new life"; "patching up" is dreary — he could not think of it.

He had come to a point of his own development when he must have a new life, a new deal; he demanded it — everything in him demanded it, and he did not know how much he craved it or how imperative it was.

He wondered, as he sat smoking, what had happened between Miss Moreland and his wife. What could Daisy have said? Why had she sent for Miss Moreland? No sooner did he think of Mary, than there came to him that sense of security. Oh! whatever she did was sure to be all right. A man could trust her. What a woman she was, what a fine creature! Right down to the ground, the girl could be counted upon — Gad! you could not say that of most women. He thought how for years she had been

there in her place — punctual, efficient, gentle. But there was nothing soft about her, although she suggested womanliness with every turn of her hand. He was just beginning to learn what her strength was. She had handled this affair with him like a diplomat. Maughm, smoking, smiled faintly. She was a clever woman, and as he mused, he gave her for the first time a title; she was a “lady” through and through.

He could think of different combinations of colour and different styles of dress that would be becoming to Miss Moreland, and realised now that he had been tempted to consider her in other frocks before this, notwithstanding that her tailored suits and her shirt-waists became her well. How finely she carried herself!

He turned his cigar between his fingers and forcibly transferred his meditations to his wife. Miss Moreland had told him his wife loved him. How could she know that? What could Daisy have shown to this girl that looked like love? She hadn't shown *him* any so far, God knows! What could this girl have seen in his indifferent, self-absorbed, egotistical wife? She was all this. He ought to be ashamed of himself to think it, but she had made him think it. It was not his fault — women get what they give — they inspire what their natures lead them to inspire. But perhaps he had misjudged her; the kinder thought followed. He had been thinking this before Mary Moreland came through the gates. Daisy had not shown him her best side; he had not shown her his. Well, they would begin again: he was going home for that. He put his head back and shut his eyes.

Arriving in New York thirty-six hours later, Maughm went directly home from the train and learned that Mrs. Maughm had been at her mother's for the night and would not return till after dinner. He bathed and dressed and

went to breakfast at his club. When he came in, towards nine o'clock that night, he was told that his wife waited to see him in her boudoir.

Daisy Maughm sat at her desk, writing. Maughm closed the door behind him and crossed the floor toward her, looking for an affectionate greeting, for some change of circumstances that would make everything different. She put down her pen, resting her hands on the table, and waited for him to speak.

"I came in from Boston this morning and found that you were not at home."

He stood on the other side of the table, looking down at her. This was not the first time that he had gone away without telling her why or where.

"You went to your mother's last night?"

"Yes."

"How is she? Pretty well?"

"Yes."

Her replies, though short, were not unpleasant, but, realising that the overtures must come from him, he put out his hand.

"I am glad to get back," he said, and paused a moment. "I am glad to see you, Daisy."

He waited a second for a response from Mrs. Maughm. She made none, and he went round to her side, and stooping, kissed her. She did not respond, but still he was not surprised. Though he thought she withdrew a little, she did not change her position or look at him.

"You came from Boston?" she asked.

"Yes. I went up day before yesterday."

"On business?"

She was not in the habit of asking him questions, and he wondered a little.

"I was going on business," he said, and stood back and put his hands in his pockets, "but poor Aym's — you saw it



in the paper, Daisy, I daresay — Bob Ayms, you know —”

She turned and slightly lifted her head. “Bob Ayms?”

“Yes,” said her husband, “he died of pneumonia.”

Feeling that it was his part to do what he could, he said warmly: “He was fond of us both, you know. It took me back to old times, Daisy, when Bob was usher for us. It made me think of lots of things.”

Bending over and putting one of his hands over his wife’s as it lay on the table, Maughm continued:

“I have been thinking it all over on the way home. Let’s start afresh, Daisy. I dare say it’s more my fault than yours.”

For a moment, his wife let his hand rest on hers, then she withdrew her own and pushing her chair back, stood up facing her husband and leaning on her hands.

“How dreadful to use Bob Ayms’ death for an excuse!” she said measuredly. “I never *heard* of anything so shocking. Why, any excuse would be better than that! It is worse than shocking. It is bad taste.”

“What do you mean?” asked her husband.

“Mean? Do you need to ask, Tom?”

“Yes, I do need to ask.”

She gave a little laugh. “You went to Boston with a woman.”

Maughm stared at her; his face grew set.

“What you say is untrue,” he said.

She continued: “To think that she should have stood here, in this very room, so quietly and so hypocritically, and dared — dared —”

“Stop!” said Maughm; “not another word!”

Mrs. Maughm did stop — not because he told her to, but because she wanted to hear what he had to say.

“I cannot pretend that I don’t grasp your meaning,” he said. “Miss Moreland — evidently your insinuations are intended for her — is above any such implication.”

Mrs. Maughm bore this more quietly than might have been expected. She turned to the table and took up an envelope.

"When I sent for her — for I did send for her —" continued Thomas Maughm's wife, "I believed the worst, and I wanted to see right here under my own eyes the woman who has entangled my husband."

Surprised as he was, the word struck him as incongruous, and he repeated with a sharp laugh: "Entangled! Mary Moreland entangling a man! Stop just where you are, Daisy; don't be ridiculous and theatrical; show a little common sense, if you can." And he repeated the word. "Entangled! Mary Moreland! You don't know what you are talking about! The girl is as straight and honourable" — he looked her in the face — "as you are," he went on — "*as your mother.*"

"Heavens!" his wife exclaimed, "how unbearable! You are insulting."

He stepped back a little and said gravely: "I didn't mean to be. I am speaking of one good woman to another."

The blood was beating in his temples; he was angry, and he felt springing up in him a tremendous loyalty to the woman he was now trying to protect, but had tried to ruin. That was the illogical part of it. Where did this loyalty come from? If Mary Moreland was a good woman, it was not to his credit: it was her innate sense of decency that had kept her clean.

Mrs. Maughm was now trembling with anger and excitement. She sat down again in the chair, and holding its arm with both her hands, looked at her husband.

"I happen to know all about it, Tom. You went to Boston with Miss Moreland. You stayed there with her the night before last."

"I did not go to Boston with Miss Moreland," said Maughm. "I have no reason to suppose that she

stayed in Boston that night, or any other night. What she does or where she goes is absolutely nothing to me." He added: "I've had enough of this."

"If that is true, why did you give her a thousand dollars?"

Here she did surprise him so completely that he was thrown off his guard. "What!" he exclaimed.

She added coolly: "You give yourself away."

He had returned expecting to find his wife in love with him, at least affectionate. Instead, here was a suspicious, jealous woman, and she knew of the escapade, so close to a scandal. He walked across the room, his hands in his pockets. Then he came back and faced her.

"The day before yesterday, Daisy, I planned to leave for Chicago. I wanted to get away from home. But Aym's death changed my plans, and I went to Boston. I went alone, and I returned alone. Now," he said with a shrug, "you can make out of it anything you choose to. You can think anything you like. The important part of it all is that the reasons for my leaving New York remain the same as they were then."

He looked her steadfastly in the eyes. "I am nothing to you," he said, "nothing at all."

There was not a quiver of her eyelids as she returned his gaze. "And I," she said, "am nothing to you."

"When I came back into this room, everything was in your hands."

She smiled slightly. "That is like a man — putting it up to the woman to accept, to forgive —"

He interrupted her. "You have not much to forgive in this case, Daisy — nothing, really."

"You deny then, that Miss Moreland is anything to you?"

"Emphatically."

"Then why did you give her the thousand dollars?"

She waited, and so did he. There was absolutely no reply for him to make to this. To ask her how she knew

it was to give his wife the advantage. Then, thinking of Mary, and that he must in justice to her, whatever his wife knew, make some explanation, he said: "She has worked for me for five years; she was in trouble, she owed money."

Mrs. Maughm turned and took from her portfolio ten one-hundred-dollar bills, which she pushed over toward her husband.

"There is the money," she said.

He looked at the bills without speaking: he could only surmise that Mary had given them to his wife, and he would not ask. He stood for a moment longer, then said shortly: "You may make what you please out of it and do as you like. You can communicate with me at the Metropolitan Club, for I shall go there now," and turning, he walked out of the room.

## CHAPTER VII

DURING the next fortnight, Amber Doane and her delinquencies were forgotten by Mary in the problem of her future. Mary had given up her position, she was in debt, and her mother was having one of her periodical attacks of nerves. Around her were the commonplace, dreary things of life, and back of her mind was what might have been. She got up at five o'clock in the morning to prepare breakfast; then made her mother comfortable for the day, leaving her in charge of a woman who came in to work. At half-past eight she was on the train for New York to take up again her search for a situation.

She had heard that the position of stenographer was vacant with Maughm & Company's lawyers. She hesitated some time before making the application. It seemed too close to the old associations, but necessity was making her desperate. She had not realized at first how hard it was going to be to enter into a new business life.

Memories of the quiet orderly habits in the old place, under the friendly direction of a man to whom she was attached, swept over her. There she was somebody — "Miss Moreland, private secretary." In any other place she would be an impersonal creature, as mechanical as the machine she operated.

As she was ushered into the private office, the man at the desk looked at her keenly. She was more conscious of his scrutiny than she would have been two weeks ago — far more. He took her in with one sweeping glance.

Mary this morning added to her usual attraction the delicate charm that sometimes comes with fatigue — the

darkening of the lines under her eyes, a certain pallor. She wore a grey suit that fitted perfectly, grey shoes like her dress, and grey stockings. On her shining hair was a small grey hat with a grey bow. There was not a trace of colour in her dress. Her eyes were grey, and one needed to look into them deeply to discover their full beauty.

"I advertised for an expert stenographer, a woman of experience," said the lawyer.

He rose and placed a chair for her. "Won't you sit down?"

"I was five years with Mr. Maughm, 40 Wall Street."

The man contracted his eyebrows. "You have just left Mr. Maughm?"

"Yes."

"I see." He was looking at her steadily. "Why did you leave?" he asked.

He saw the colour rush into the girl's face, which had been so attractively pale, and the colour was no less charming than her pallor — that fine, delicate crimson that seems to lie close to the surface of the skin. Almost nothing had been said, the merest commonplaces, but as she rose from the chair, she trembled and knew that he was suspicious. "I felt I wanted a change."

"I am afraid," he said, "the position here —"

She found herself once more in the elevator, unconscious of how she had left the lawyer's office.

After two or three unsatisfactory calls, she went home.

The story of Amber's love affair spread like wildfire through the community. Under no circumstances would Mary have spoken to her mother of the matter, but Mrs. Moreland had none of the delicacy that her daughter showed regarding the subject. She knew the Doanes better than Mary did, and to her Mrs. Doane poured out her heart.

Mrs. Moreland sat opposite Mary at the supper table

one night. Her face wore the habitual look of disapproval; she disapproved of everything within range.

"I should not be surprised if it killed Mrs. Doane," said Mrs. Moreland.

"People don't often die on account of other people," Mary remarked impersonally.

Mrs. Moreland continued: "She told me all about it this afternoon."

Mary listened. She could not see now why a woman should not be strong enough to face any temptation. She had secured a position in New York — not what she wanted, but something that would do for the time being. But her mind was not on her work; she could not keep it there. Her thoughts wandered about most distractingly, and in order to free them from sentiment, she had turned — as many a woman does — to religion. She went to early church before going to town, and she let the soothing words slip into her soul, which she felt beginning to grow, and welcomed the self-approbation that came to her in a consoling degree. She felt a certain resentment against Amber, the woman who had boldly "gone wrong."

"Mrs. Doane says that he was quite a handsome man," said her mother. "He used to come up on Sunday to supper at their house — she never thought any harm of him."

Looking directly at her daughter, she said severely: "She nursed him like a serpent at the fireside."

Then she added: "I expect that when Amber borrowed that hundred dollars of you, she wanted to buy clothes to charm him with."

Mary listened vaguely, critically; she could see herself there in the Boston station with Amber Doane. She felt indignant that the girl had not been frank with her. She forgot her own escape, and that but for her guardian angel's vigilance, she might have gone as far as Amber Doane. She forgot all that. Amber should have told her.

"Mrs. Doane," continued her mother, "says she does not see how a girl could make a fool of herself with a man who spoke broken English, and Amber had not gone very far in French; although," she continued, "I daresay if a person wants to go wrong, they can do it as well in one language as another."

She waited a few moments and then rose stiffly and began to gather together the supper dishes.

Mary sat idly listening, meditating, dreaming, judging.

"I did what I could to comfort her," said Mrs. Moreland gloomily; "I told her that if she had been my daughter, she should never have crossed my threshold again."

A slow flush of colour crept up into Mary's delicate cheeks, for the gossip was becoming distinctly personal. This was her house; she made the money to run it; and every cent they had came from her.

Mrs. Moreland stood with a pile of dishes in her hand, between the kitchen and the dining room. She was taller than Mary and had none of the younger woman's lovely lines, but she had a certain air of distinction.

"Mrs. Doane," said her mother, "is deficient in moral courage. I fully believe that if Amber came back, she would take her in."

"I thought you said," her daughter remarked, "that it was going to kill her, anyway."

"But I don't think," Mrs. Moreland continued, "that she would be such a fool as to return to East Orange. Why should she return?"

Mary sat immovable, leaning one elbow on the table, with her head on her hand. Her mother came back from the kitchen and stood looking down upon her.

"There's the rent," she said, "due to-morrow, and the butcher says he cannot wait any longer." She made this statement quietly to the worker who had never failed to supply the needs. She regarded Mary as one regards a



perfectly good bank account, as one might regard a gilt-edged security. "And Ritchie," she said, "ought to go to the dentist, if you care anything about his back teeth."

Mrs. Moreland moved over to the window, through which she could see her son playing ball in the street.

"I hope," she said, "that you will never loan another hundred dollars. I can find plenty of uses for it right here in the house."

Mary had not spoken. Her mind was far away. Every now and then she saw herself standing in the familiar office with Thomas Maughm beside her. . . .

"There's a man coming up the steps," Mrs. Moreland announced, and her daughter started violently. "He has a box."

"Is this Moreland's?" the man asked, and Mary saw her mother take the box reluctantly through the open window. It was a florist's box, and the man was a private messenger from New York.

Mary got up, came over and took the box from her mother, while Mrs. Moreland looked at her keenly. The tag was unmistakable, written by the sender of the flowers:

"Miss Mary Moreland,  
Park Avenue,  
East Orange."

Mary knew that her mother's eyes were upon her like steel gimlets; her heart was beating violently. She said to the man, who had started down the steps, in a voice that choked as she spoke: "Just wait a minute," and she handed back the box through the window. "This must be a mistake; just take it back where it came from, please."

Then she turned to her mother. "Isn't that the telephone? I think I hear it," and went out to answer it.

Mrs. Moreland watched the messenger go. Before he turned the corner, she leaned a little out of the window and

called him back, beckoning to him. In a few moments more, the long box was in her hands again. She fingered the tag, knowing it to be in Thomas Maughm's handwriting. To her he was an important figure. He represented, in her imagination, a vast fortune. Through him the family lived and moved and had its being. She stood very much in awe of him and was proud to have her daughter the secretary of — as she always referred to him — a brilliant man of affairs. Why had Mary hysterically sent back these flowers? She had received gifts before from her employer.

Mrs. Moreland took the scissors, snipped the cord of the box, and lifted the lid. There before her, half covered by their pale green leaves, were masses of lilies-of-the-valley, and on the top was a sealed letter in a thick white envelope, addressed "Miss Mary Moreland."

Her daughter came in from the telephone, and Mrs. Moreland handed her the letter. The sight of the letter and the fact that it was there in the house gave her such an unexpected emotion that she could not reproach her mother with quite the anger that she intended to express. Nevertheless, she said :

"Mother, why did you call the man back? I think I have the right to refuse to accept presents as I like."

Mrs. Moreland said easily: "You have accepted plenty of Christmas presents from Mr. Maughm. Why should you refuse his flowers now? Open his letter — why don't you — and see what he has to say?"

It was not Mary's desire to read this letter before her mother, but she could not refuse to do it now. As she broke the envelope and read the contents, her mother was saying: "You would be likely to offend a man like Mr. Maughm by sending back his flowers like that. You cannot afford to offend your employer, Mary."

Mrs. Moreland was trying to keep her curiosity under control, and Mary was using every particle of strength

left in her body to suppress her excitement and an impulse to cry. She slowly folded the letter and put it in its envelope, then turned and started toward the door. There she paused and said: "I am going to New York to-night. Don't wait up for me."

"To New York on Saturday night, Mary?"

Her daughter made no response. Her one desire was to get away from her mother's scrutiny.

"Aren't you going to take your flowers?"

The girl hesitated. "Yes," she said, "give them to me."

Her mother put the box in her daughter's hands, and Mary took them from the room and up the stairs.

Mrs. Moreland had always been curious about Mary. She had never understood her. The girl's coldness and reserve were foreign to her and unsympathetic. She was indebted to her daughter, afraid of her, and now, for the first time, she was suspicious.

## CHAPTER VIII

ON the night that Thomas Maughm left his wife after his return from Boston, he was more angry than he had ever been in his life. In going from his own house to the club, however, he had cooled down sufficiently to see something of the justice of the case. Although a man of forceful passions, at the same time he was fair. It was not now his wife's attitude that roused his anger. Jealousy he could have forgiven. He could not blame her for resenting that he had gone to Boston to meet a woman to whom he had given a thousand dollars! But how had she learned this fact? How had she come into possession of the money he had given Mary?

His wife would probably divorce him. In that case Miss Moreland, an honourable woman, who had worked faithfully in his office for years, would be corespondent in divorce proceedings!

When he had dictated his letter to Aym's, he had meant every word he said. Daisy was impossible. To live with her was intolerable. He was a fool to think they could begin again, and now they were back just where they had been before. He would make no defence. If she wanted a divorce, he wanted it too. He wanted to be free, and once free he would not tie himself up again in a hurry.

At the Metropolitan Club he took the room he had occupied as a bachelor. Through the open window came the noises of the street and the fresh air from Central Park. He began now to think of Mary Moreland as he should have thought of her before. Unless Daisy could be persuaded

to ignore the Boston incident in her proceedings, it would mean disgrace to the girl. Maughm said to himself: "I have been a hound."

As he paced back and forth in his room, a card was brought to him: "Mr. Aleck Wainwright."

"I will see him in the library immediately," he said, and the messenger went down-stairs.

"My dear Maughm," Wainwright said, "I wanted to catch you before you went out. I have been spending the night here myself."

"Sit down, Wainwright."

The two men took opposite chairs.

"Will you smoke?"

Wainwright shook his head.

"Anything to drink?"

"Too early."

"Well," said Maughm tentatively, "you got my note?"

"Yes," the lawyer replied, "and when they told me you were stopping here, I thought I might see you before you went to the office."

Wainwright knew Thomas Maughm as one man knows another in Wall Street. He had watched his career with interest and considered him a strong man of clean reputation, with an excellent financial record.

"From your letter to me," Wainwright continued, "from the fact that you are living here at the club —"

They had gone over to the window and seated themselves in the almost deserted room, and they spoke in undertones.

Maughm interrupted. "I have left my home. I have heard nothing from my wife since. I don't know her attitude of mind, Wainwright; I am waiting to hear. As far as my own choice is concerned, I want to be free."

Wainwright indulgently regarded the clean-shaven man before him. He was a widely-known divorce lawyer who had made a fortune in divorce cases. He said now, smiling:

"Strange, isn't it, Maughm, I never come face to face with these problems, by which I make my living, without regret? I am like a surgeon, you know. I operate if necessary. But when you bring your grievances to me — well, I try to settle them. Once and for all, before we begin, I ask you sincerely to seek some other way out."

"I have tried, Wainwright."

"Try again."

"I have."

The lawyer shrugged.

"I have been married ten years," said Maughm. "I was desperately in love when I married. I honestly believe that I am an easy man to make happy. I have been wretched for years — wretched! Is there any sense in prolonging such an existence? Is there any use in it for either of us?"

"What is Mrs. Maughm's attitude?"

"I am waiting to hear."

Wainwright rose.

"Come down town later on, then, and we will talk things over." Then he added: "By the way, Maughm, a girl has been to my office to apply for a position as stenographer. She told me she had been with you several years."

They were at the door, and Maughm stopped and looked at Wainwright.

"She did?"

"Yes," resumed Wainwright indifferently; "I didn't take her."

They walked out of the club together.

"I had an idea that if, after years in your office, you would let her go, there must have been some good reason."

He smiled at Maughm agreeably and saw a change of expression come over his companion's face.

"Take my advice," he said; "get a little fresh air and think it over."

Maughm did not go out for a constitutional as his lawyer suggested. Whether his wife divorced him or not, he had decided that he must see Mary. He wanted to find out what she had been doing since she left his office. Now Wainwright's bit of information made him all the more eager. Her good looks and the fact that the Maughms' domestic affairs were under public discussion would make it difficult for her to get other work. The lawyer's words left no doubt of it. He must see her. He was unfeignedly glad that she had said what she did to him in Boston. He had had enough of women! Nevertheless, his remembrances of Mary Moreland were most insistent.

He was walking toward Fifty-ninth Street, and the flowers in a florist's shop attracted his attention. In a green jar was a superb bunch of lilies-of-the-valley, and the sight of them brought back forcibly to him the memory of the day on which he had sent a bunch of them to his stenographer in Wall Street. There had been an excitement then in his purchase of the flowers for the woman who, he had believed, was about to give him everything. Now he went into the shop in a very different frame of mind, wrote a little note to Miss Moreland in East Orange, and placed it in the box. He directed that the flowers be sent that afternoon.

When he had asked Mary Moreland to go away with him and enter upon an illegitimate life, he had thought of no one but himself, his own problems, his own misery. To-day, he thought something of her problems.

And this was the letter that Mary read under her mother's keen scrutiny :

"My dear Miss Moreland,

"I must have a talk with you. I am going out to East Orange this evening. I am sure you will be kind and not refuse to see me.

"Sincerely,

"Thomas Maughm."

The idea of Maughm's coming out to East Orange; the idea of meeting him under her own roof, with her mother (if not at the keyhole) within easy range; the idea of seeing him at all, was too much for Mary. She shirked the ordeal — she ran away. In the train, she said to herself:

"I don't care if he does go out there; I don't care if he does see mother. I don't care what he tells her or what she says to him!"

This was very brave and courageous, but at the same time absolutely untrue! In her inner mind she knew that she cared; the plain fact was that she couldn't cope with the situation.

Mary was intensely practical; and even in this hasty flight she had another and ample justification for going to New York at this hour. She had seen an advertisement for a private secretary, "Wanted by an English man of letters," and though disturbed in mind, it tempted her. "Apply at the St. Regis Hotel any evening at seven." She would go now.

Why did Mr. Maughm want to see her? What could he possibly want to speak to her about? If it were true, as the papers said, that the Maughms were going to be divorced, then he would be free. He must still think of her as he did before anything happened, or he would not have sent the flowers — she had left them in water in her room. Sometimes she was very angry with him as she thought of how he had shaken the foundations of her life; but she couldn't be angry with him for long.

She went to the St. Regis, and her name was telephoned up from the office. As she stood at the desk waiting for the response, she watched the coming and going of the gay throng. She knew almost nothing of the world. Beyond East Orange and the Wall Street office and the summer boarding-houses where her vacations were passed, she had no horizon, and yet everything interested her. She was a



keen observer and absorbed impressions quickly; she loved orderly things and pretty clothes, and enjoyed watching the well-dressed women who passed her. "Up-town" represented the sphere in which Mr. Maughm moved, in which his wife moved, and in which she had lost him when he used to leave the office.

"Mr. Romney is ill. If Miss Moreland will call again on Tuesday afternoon at six, he will receive her."

The English man servant who brought her this message looked Mary over discreetly and she looked him over in return, remarking his broad accent.

During the few minutes that she had waited in the lobby of the hotel, she had felt herself in an atmosphere quite different from any she had hitherto known; the contrast with the dreary home she had but just left was exhilarating. In the distance she could hear the orchestra. A beautifully dressed woman passed, a jewelled bag on her arm. Mary noted the vague indication of fragrance she left.

Miss Moreland started down-town to eat a light dinner in the restaurant where she lunched every noon. She didn't want to go home too early. If she had known any girl friend who lived in town with whom she could stay, she would have remained away all night. She didn't want to go back to East Orange and hear about Mr. Maughm's visit.

It was after ten o'clock when she reached home and let herself in with her latch key. Up-stairs her mother called to her as Mary went through the hall:

"Mary."

"Yes, mother."

"Amber Doane has come back — her mother has taken her in: I knew she would! I shall never go to the Doanes' again, and I don't want you to go. Amber Doane is a disgrace to the neighbourhood."

Mary waited.

“Did you bolt the door down-stairs, Mary?”

“Yes.”

Mary and her mother often parted without saying good-by. They usually separated for the night without any salutation. Between natures as opposite as theirs, good-by and good night and good morning were almost as personal an interchange as an embrace.

Mary waited a second longer. Mrs. Moreland, after her information regarding Amber Doane and her command, settled down to rest, and Mary went to her own room.

## CHAPTER IX

THE following day was Sunday, and on her way to church, Mary met Amber Doane in Main Street and "cut her dead." As she hurried by, her cheeks burned hotly. She didn't know whether it was because of Amber's misdoings or a consciousness of her own heartlessness. As she joined in the service later, she found that she couldn't fix her attention upon it.

"Ye judge after the flesh. I judge no man," were the words of the text.

But her mind wandered to a realisation of her mother's sternness, her uncompromising puritanism. It was not, however, Mrs. Moreland's example that made her daughter judge Amber Doane. Mary's whole nature now revolted at all wrong-doing. She had been saved while others went down. Well, Amber Doane might have saved herself too — why hadn't she? As Mary sat and thought, as she bowed her head and knelt, she began a self-examination. Who was she to assume such an attitude of righteousness?

Through the window at her side came the softening light, and she read again the words; "Neither do I condemn thee."

The following day, on her way home from business, she went up the piazza steps of the Doane house. It had taken her some time to make up her mind to do this, for she knew that she was acting in opposition to her mother's wishes, and although she was the mainstay of the family, she had been trained to obedience from childhood. It was, perhaps, one of the reasons for her strength of character.

To the little, ineffectual woman who opened the door

Mary said: "Is Amber home?" and saw the start of surprise and the appeal on the face of the mother.

"Why, yes, she's in her room at the head of the stairs. Go right up."

The little room was half dark. Amber Doane lay upon the bed, her hands thrown above her head. The girl whom all East Orange had "cut dead" sat up and stared at her visitor.

"You were too good to speak to me in the street, weren't you, Mary?"

"It wasn't that."

Amber threw back her head in a defiant way. "Oh, yes it was. You would have done the same thing in Boston, if you had heard."

Mary sat down on the edge of the bed. Her heart beat fast. In her mind was a growing conviction that, after all, there was but little to choose between Amber Doane and herself, and terror possessed her. She heard Amber ask: "What did you come for, Mary?" followed by: "Why did you cut me in the street?"

Mary hadn't analysed her impulse toward Amber. Only then she realised that gratitude for her own deliverance had impelled her toward this girl in sympathy and tenderness, as one who knows and understands.

"Look here," said Amber, leaning forward with her hands around her knees; "Mary Moreland, what do you know about life?"

Mary did not answer.

"Don't think that going up and down to New York every day, and working, and even knocking up against people as you have done, makes you know life, Mary; it doesn't." Then she added: "Anyway, you are here. The others have cut me all right and turned me down, but none of them has come, and you have — why?"

"I hadn't any right to cut you, Amber."

"No," said the other fiercely, "you hadn't. No girl has a right to be down on another unless she has been right up against the same problem."

Between them, as yet, there had been no confidences. Mary had never known Amber intimately; she had never been up in her room before. Amber Doane broke the silence.

"You and I are above the kind of men who would marry us — you know that; and the kind of men we would like to marry wouldn't look at us, Mary."

Mary Moreland turned her eyes away, and Amber continued: "I have always had a good deal of attention. I don't know why; I just seemed to win it somehow. Lots of men have been crazy about me. I guess any good looking girl can tell the same story. But I kept them all off. Education and learning seemed good to me, and I wanted to improve myself, and out here in Orange — you know, I went to the French class —"

The recital finally proceeded. "He seemed awfully fond of me, Mary — I was awfully fond of him — I found out he could never marry me — he had a wife in France — that's all," she said, and after a second added: "Now I'm back here."

Mary turned her head slowly and met Amber's eyes searching hers, as though to say: "You came, you have heard; which is it — judgment or pity?"

Her hand stole towards Mary's lying in her lap and touched it timidly. "I was fond of him, I was fond of him," she said. "That's why it's so awful."

Mary's hands clasped those of the other girl.

"I don't know what to do," said Amber passionately. "When you've been with some one you care an awful lot for and then find yourself alone like this, for the rest of your life! If it wasn't for mother —!" She threw up her head again and looked out beyond Mary — her features hardened

and her mouth stiffened — and Mary knew what she meant. Not a tear had been shed. Now Mary saw her breast heaving.

“Don’t,” she said gently; “don’t!”

“I can’t stay in East Orange.”

“No,” said Mary. She had given no word of sympathy — what could she say? But her hand-clasp was strong, capable, and friendly. It was the human touch, better often than the spoken word.

Mary rose to go. “Thank you for telling me,” she said. “I will come again.”

When Mary returned to her home, her mother was standing before the table in the dining-room, dressed in her best clothes, and she was pulling off — this was what Mary noticed — brand-new kid gloves. On the table were half a dozen sizable packages from a New York department store. Mary stood still at the door.

Around Mrs. Moreland’s neck hung an elaborate gold chain. As Mary saw this, she remembered hearing her mother often say: “I have wished on every hay cart for the last two summers for one of those fine gold chains such as —” and many other wishes for articles of jewelry, even up to a solitaire diamond ring! She looked again at her mother’s hands with misgivings.

“For heaven’s sake, mother,” she began, and stopped. She was under a great nervous strain; she had just viewed a miserable tragedy. “For heaven’s sake, mother,” she said, “have you bought all these things?”

On her part, Mrs. Moreland was as demoralized as her daughter. She had been soaring in the heaven dearest to her, that of extravagance. She was a *grande dame* as she said to her daughter: “It is a very strange thing, Mary, that a woman of my age and experience cannot go on a shopping expedition without —”

Her daughter interrupted her peremptorily with the au-

thority of a bread-winner. "It is not a question of experience or age; it is purely a question of money. We haven't any; we are in debt."

"Speak for yourself," said Mrs. Moreland superbly; "I have money!"

Her daughter drew back in fear, with the thought: "Mother has lost her mind."

As if she read this opinion in her daughter's eyes, Mrs. Moreland said: "You don't seem to give me credit for any intelligence. You needn't think that everything is in your hands. I have money. I had these things charged."

"Charged! But we haven't an account anywhere."

"It is not difficult to open an account in a respectable shop, when you are respectable yourself and can give references."

"What references, mother?"

"I gave Mr. Maughm's office."

"Mr. Maughm!"

"Haven't you given your life's blood to him for years?" asked Mrs. Moreland hotly. "It's a pity if he can't—"

The girl sprang from her seat. The blood was beating in her cheeks, but her darkening eyes alone revealed her anger.

She said quietly: "I am sorry you should do such a thing as that. It will be misunderstood in the office. Please never use Mr. Maughm's name again."

Her mother glanced down at the parcels on the table. She was beginning to regret having yielded to temptation.

Mary lifted her eyes. Mrs. Moreland, playing with her watch chain, was looking out of the window. The time had come for Mary to tell the truth.

"I have left Mr. Maughm's office for good," she said. "I am no longer in his employ. I cannot tell you anything more just now. I have been to see Amber Doane," she

continued, hoping to divert her mother's attention from Maughm.

Her mother gazed at her in surprise.

"You went to see Amber Doane?"

"Yes," said Mary.

"Well," said Mrs. Moreland aggressively, "I thought I forbade you to speak to that common thing."

"I couldn't help it."

Mrs. Moreland had been at the point of confessing to Mary. But at this sudden turn of affairs and smarting from the reprimand of her daughter, she decided to reassert herself as the head of the household. There was no diamond ring on her finger, but she vowed at that moment to get one and to do so at once. Yes — she would keep her own counsel. Next to squandering money, Mrs. Moreland dearly loved a mystery.



## CHAPTER X

“WOULDN'T it strike you as undignified to go to a tango tea?” Mrs. Maughm asked the little woman who, half reclining in the corner of the sofa, was smoking a cigarette.

“I don't think you could be undignified if you tried, Daisy.”

“The jealous woman is likely to be.”

“Are you jealous?”

Mrs. Torrance had arrived from Europe on the previous day, announcing her coming by wireless, and had descended on Mrs. Maughm with a maid, a man servant, and a fascinating wicker cage containing a parrot and a monkey. The monkey now perched on the lady's shoulder, its amusing little head close to its mistress's.

“My dear Daisy,” she said, “I'm a citizen of the world. I have lived in London, Vienna, Paris, St. Petersburg, not to mention being born in Kalamazoo; and I have yet to find a woman who will admit that she is jealous, or a man that he is selfish.” Mrs. Torrance laughed softly, displaying dazzling white teeth.

Her pet had taken the tip of her ear gently between his teeth.

“Be good, Toto,” she said, tapping him with her finger. “We have come to a country where ladies have no time for either monkeys or husbands. Now we are going to find out what they have time for! Daisy is going to tell us!” She continued more seriously: “I want you to tell me everything, Daisy, and then I will advise you whether, under the circumstances, it will affect your dignity to go to a *thé dansant*.”

"My dear Cicely, you don't expect me to tell the story of my life to a woman who is talking to a monkey, do you?"

"She might be talking to a much less discreet person, my dear Daisy."

Mrs. Torrance, on her arrival at the Maughms', had asked for the master of the house and had been met with an evasive response. That night on her dressing-table she had found a copy of a society newspaper, opened at a certain paragraph. It was Mrs. Maughm's individual way of giving her guest information. Mrs. Torrance was accustomed to Continental life, where, whatever the domestic upheavals may be, separation is the last thing thought of. She had lived with her friends through domestic cataclysms and had seen everything but the dismemberment of the families.

"I have mastered the facts of the case as far as I can, Daisy. If you mean that you do not think it good form for you to be seen in a public place because you are being talked about in the newspapers, I can only say that there wouldn't be many people out in society if they all stayed at home for that reason."

"I am jealous," said Mrs. Maughm.

"Toto," said Mrs. Torrance to the marmoset, "here at last is the jealous woman! No doubt Tom Maughm is the selfish man! We have made our discoveries; perhaps our travels are at an end, and we can go back to Kalamazoo."

She put her cigarette down in the ash tray, gathered the monkey from his resting-place, tucked him under her arm, climbed down from her corner of the sofa — for she was a tiny creature — and came over in front of Mrs. Maughm. "I am not as light-minded as I seem," she said. "Is it really serious?"

"Yes."

"But Tom is such a dear." At the sight of Mrs. Maughm's contracted brows she added: "Of whom are you jealous?"

"Of a girl in his office."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Torrance. She deposited her pet upon Mrs. Maughm's writing-table. "You see, there are things less discreet and more bothering than marmosets! Are you sure?"

"Absolutely."

"Dear me," repeated Mrs. Torrance slowly. "I am sorry. I always thought Tom an unusually decent sort of chap." She added, pulling the monkey's ears: "I am a fool about men, Daisy. I had such a perfectly glorious husband" — and she waited a moment. "So you are going to get a divorce?"

"No," said Mrs. Maughm.

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Torrance eagerly, "there you are right, Daisy! I am with you there. Bear what you can, forgive all you can, patch it up, stick it out. I daresay it will come out all right."

"Men," said Mrs. Maughm, "are all selfish, Cicely!"

"Selfishness has no sex," returned her friend coolly, lighting another cigarette. "But tell me something about the other woman."

"She is an uneducated, commonplace, business woman," said Mrs. Maughm coldly, although as she spoke a slow colour mounted into her face. "I have been suspicious for years —"

"For years?" interrupted Mrs. Torrance, with the first genuine interest she had shown.

"I don't know how long it has been going on," said her companion, "I shall never know. I think she has laid one of the cleverest sieges ever known to steal my husband."

"But," said Mrs. Torrance animatedly, "you had every-

thing in your own hands so completely, Daisy! You've everything to keep a man, and Tom did adore you."

Mrs. Maughm shrugged. "It has been a long series of misunderstandings — trifles that led to discussions and quarrels. We made them up, but they broke out again. Several times of late Tom has gone off on little business trips —"

"They do that," murmured Cicely.

"Three weeks ago he went away without telling me a word about it, and I sent for the woman."

"That was bold of you —"

"I had her here under my eyes," said Mrs. Maughm, speaking as though Mary had been a specimen under a microscope, "and she gave the thing away."

"She confessed to you!"

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Maughm easily, "there was no question of confession, her emotion and excitement were unmistakable. And think of it" — she leaned forward toward her friend, and her voice trembled — "she went from this very house to meet Tom to go with him to Boston!"

Mrs. Torrance smoked meditatively; and it must be confessed that what she said was not the thing her hearer expected. "She must be a very unusual woman."

Mrs. Maughm's voice was harsh. "Unusual — how do you mean?"

"Why, to win a man like Tom from you." Mrs. Torrance's eyes met those of her friend frankly. "We always wonder what these women do," she said. "It is odd that we don't take the trouble to find out and do it first!"

Mrs. Maughm leaned forward. "Why, you seem to be blaming me!"

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Torrance mildly, "certainly not. I don't know enough to question or blame. I would have to know a great deal more, my dear Daisy. But I stand with you on the divorce question every time!"

"Why, you don't think," said Mrs. Maughm, looking up quickly, "that I am fool enough to step out and give up Tom to a stenographer!"

"Oh!" said Mrs. Torrance leisurely, "it isn't that you give up Tom; it is what you yourself would lose! Get your things on. Why deny yourself the pleasure of a tango because your husband took his stenographer on a business trip to Boston — no doubt because he was so over-worked that he wanted to dictate letters in the train. We will go to the St. Regis. Be a sport," she said gaily.

## CHAPTER XI

ON his return to the club, Maughm found a letter from his wife, asking him to come and see her on Tuesday. As he went up the steps on the appointed day, he did not feel a stranger in his own house: he was rich, and he had married a penniless woman. In case of divorce, he would give Daisy the house and a generous alimony; but it was his house still, and he was the master.

This time his wife did not receive him in her boudoir. He found her down-stairs in the drawing-room, dressed for the street, drawing on her gloves.

“You are just going out, Daisy?”

He spoke as though they parted casually a short while before.

“With Cicely Torrance; she is stopping with me.”

“You sent for me?”

Mrs. Maughm put out her hand in its delicate glove and gave her husband the third cousin to the smile he had hoped to receive on his return from Boston. “Tom,” she said, with the condescension of a princess, “I am going to forgive you.”

It was on the tip of his tongue to say: “The deuce you are!”

His impulse was to put his hands in his pockets, to step back and to look her up and down as if she had been a stranger. The clothes she wore accounted for the enormous bills he had received. She was an object of luxury, as far as he was concerned. She kept his house, and he lived in it — that was all.

Maughm’s was a big and generous nature, and his im-

pulses were all for peace and order. The only impulsive things he had ever done were within the month; the flight to Boston and the leaving his own house on his return.

"I have been expecting every day to see your lawyer, Daisy," he said. "Your letter was a great surprise."

Mrs. Maughm made a tremendous concession as she said: "Let's begin over again, Tom."

"I came home from Boston with that intention, Daisy."

She made a little gesture with her head, as though to say: "Let's dismiss all ridiculous reminiscences of the past."

Maughm continued: "But it is too big a proposition to be discussed just as you are going out."

"My dear Tom," she replied, laying her hand upon his arm, "that is one of the things you must learn — to go at things lightly. The fact that I have sent for you proves that I am serious, doesn't it? Cicely is here," she broke off abruptly; "won't you be glad to see her?"

"No," said her husband, "I don't want to see her now. After you come back, perhaps —"

"I am going out for a little," said Mrs. Maughm, "with Cicely in the motor, and we are winding up with a tango tea at the St. Regis. Come and join us there."

He smiled faintly. "Well, no, Daisy; I don't think I care to go to a tango tea."

Her invitation offended his taste. She threw her husband off and dragged him back as though he were a puppet.

She said now, more seriously: "Well, come for us then, Tom. It will be a good thing to do — stop a lot of talk. Do stop for us around seven."

On her way to the door she turned back to ask: "Don't I look smart?"

Her husband glanced her over, from the aigrette in her hat to the flashing buckles on her shoes.

"Very smart."

This woman, who had been so debonair, so careless, came quickly across the floor to where Maughm was standing and said in a low voice :

“You don’t know what I went through that night, Tom. I have never been jealous before — that is, I have never had any real cause, I suppose; but when I did, I found out what a fiend I could be, and — perhaps — I found out too what you really meant to me.”

She spoke rapidly, in a low voice, and seemed genuine.

“You had no cause for jealousy, Daisy.”

Mrs. Maughm’s voice and brow cleared, and she asked him eagerly: “Tom, can you assure me that that woman is absolutely nothing to you?”

“I can assure you that positively.”

“Oh!” she said, catching her breath, “I am so glad. You are so honest. I have never known you to lie.”

When she had left him, he stood for a few moments, his head bowed and his hands behind his back, and the one thought clear in his mind was: “Thank God Mary Moreland is out of it! She won’t be dragged into the scandal of a divorce.”

A little after six, Maughm went to the St. Regis to fetch his wife and her guest. The tango tea was still in full swing, and as he was disinclined to go into the crowded room, he stood in the lobby, waiting.

As he glanced around, he saw in one of the red chairs a woman listening to the music, her face turned from him toward the dining-room. She sat gracefully, in a relaxed attitude of attention, her hands folded over her shopping-bag. In her dark, plain suit, she was a distinct contrast to the fashionably dressed women who passed her. The sight of her there was so unexpected that Maughm stared in amazement. What was Mary Moreland doing at the St. Regis?



A page came up to Miss Moreland at that moment and handed her a message. She rose from her chair, and as she did so she saw Maughm. The start she gave might have flattered a less susceptible man.

He had no opportunity to decide whether or not it would be wise to speak to her here, for Mary herself came directly toward him. He remembered afterwards that her hand had not gone out to him in the usual fashion of salutation, and that while she talked to him, she had held tightly her little shopping-bag. In thinking over afterwards this short, vivid interview, Maughm saw how characteristic it was of the woman — direct, fearless.

“I am here on business, Mr. Maughm,” she said, looking him directly and squarely in the eyes. She seemed to eliminate any remembrance of a too sentimental past; she wiped it out by her quiet address. The man might have been embarrassed as to how to meet this girl whom he had placed in an equivocal position, but Mary took things into her own hands.

“I am going up-stairs to answer an advertisement for a private secretary. Can I say a few words to you?”

His eyes had not for one second left the face of his former stenographer. The first sight of him had made her pale; she was now charmingly flushed. Her words did not betray her excitement, but her quickened breath did. If she had asked him to walk in to the tango tea with her, Maughm would have acquiesced.

“I am mighty glad to see you,” he said heartily. “You know how I’ve tried to get in touch with you. But I am afraid we can’t talk here,” and he urged her a little to the left, farther away from the dining-room.

But she was saying to him quickly: “Oh, yes, Mr. Maughm, I can talk right here,” and she stood where she was, her chin lifted, and her eyes on his. “You must never, never give my mother any money — never.”

"Give your mother money!"

"When I heard you were going to Orange, I came to New York."

"I didn't go to Orange, as you know."

"No, I didn't know, Mr. Maughm, and didn't even ask. I didn't want to know. But I found out about the money."

"My dear girl, what money?"

She had hardly ever spoken to him more than a few syllables at a time in her life. It was hard for her to speak now. She certainly felt a great deal, but words were not usual with her.

"You don't want to make it impossible for me to stay in my own home, Mr. Maughm? If my mother has taken any money from you, I can never stay out in East Orange."

"My dear girl, I don't know what you're talking about!"

She ignored his denial. "I am going up-stairs to try for a position. I shall have to give references."

She had talked to this man, once her employer and so nearly her lover, in a way of which she would not have believed herself capable.

Maughm put his hand over hers on the shopping-bag impulsively. She drew back from him.

"I have never given your mother a penny of money in my life. You know I wouldn't lie to you: I don't know what you mean. Listen, I must see you somewhere where I can talk to you."

She shook her head. "You mustn't try to see me."

She raised her chin a little higher, as she had raised it in the Boston station, and met his glance fearlessly. She was steady, she was repelling.

This was a new Miss Moreland to Maughm — not his secretary, not the yielding, lovely woman who had said: "I will go with you anywhere."

"I intend to see you, I *will* see you," he said between his teeth. "When I send for you, you will come." He

looked her full in the eyes and again put his hand on hers.

As Mrs. Torrance and Mrs. Maughm came out from among the dancers, Mrs. Torrance felt her arm seized by her friend.

“Cicely!”

“My dear,” said Mrs. Torrance, “don’t pinch me so!”

“Look,” said Mrs. Maughm, “back of the bay tree! It is Tom with the woman from his office!”

## CHAPTER XII

BASIL ROMNEY, with the impatience of a spoilt invalid, sat waiting for the person who had answered his advertisement. A glass of milk and a syphon of Vichy had been placed at his side, and before him stood a low table covered with interesting-looking manuscript. Over his knees a sable rug was thrown, and his long, sensitive fingers twined and intertwined in the nervous tension of his waiting. Romney was a spoilt, rich young man. From his childhood, everything had come to him that he wanted, excepting health; and in pursuit of this he flew from country to country.

One of the many annoyances that a man of his sensitive temperament had to meet was the fact that he could not pursue his literary interests alone. He must have a secretary; and they got on his nerves. They were personal. They were either physically unattractive and repulsed him, or else — and it had been the case several times — they fell in love with him and bored him. He dreamed of a machine — of a well-oiled, smoothly running machine — a woman with no nerves, good to look at, and of unlimited endurance. He was not inhumane: he was generous and of exquisite feeling. That was what was the matter. He didn't want to consider the person who was helping him to give to the world what even his severest critics called immortal verse.

He rang a small bell at his side and to the English servant who came in he said: "Fenton, don't let the young person come up-stairs."

"Very good, sir."

The man started toward the door and there stopped, saying in his pleasant voice: "There's another cable from Chatto and Windus, sir. I didn't trouble you —"

"Ah, yes," said Romney. "The new edition. There's not going to be any new edition, Fenton. I shall never write again."

"Very good, sir," said the man, and waited.

"You saw her down-stairs on Saturday, Fenton?"

"Yes, Mr. Basil."

"You said she had an agreeable personality?"

"Quite so, sir."

Romney sighed. He tapped his fingers on the table before him. Pictures once seated in his mind were difficult to obliterate. He saw again before his eyes his last secretary, in Donegan Castle, where she had stood before him, the tears pouring down her cheeks, when he had given her a month's salary and sent her gently but firmly home. Pudgy, spectacled, and in love! And he had written nothing — nothing! To-day his mind was full of ideas. They were crowding upon him, but he was nervous and physically weak. He could not write a line without some one to help him. Heavens!

"Let her come up," he said shortly to Fenton. "Let her come up!"

There was a knock at the door. Fenton opened it, and Mary Moreland came in.

Romney, from his chair, saw her come in and thought that she had mistaken the room. He was not used to the dress of the American working-woman, nor was he yet used to the type that Mary Moreland was. She stood quietly before the closed door, the man servant waiting.

Romney saw a tall woman, slender, with the lovely slenderness that suggests curves and sweetness of contour. She wore a summer dress of sprigged muslin, made simply, but in the latest style. Around her small waist was a

crimson belt. Her collar was open, according to the fashion of the times, and the neck it displayed was as pure and white as a pearl. These details he took in, in a flash, keen and observing. But it was the quiet personality of the waiting woman that immediately, as he looked up at her, soothed him as nothing had soothed him in many weeks. This was not what he had expected to see.

"Give the lady a chair," he said to the man, "and you can leave us. . . . You came to answer my advertisement?"

"Yes," said Miss Moreland.

"You came as well last week, I believe?"

"I came at seven on Saturday."

"I am sorry to have made you two journeys. I was ill on Saturday. I'm not very dependable."

Miss Moreland took the chair which had been placed for her at the other side of the table.

"I'm an invalid," said the Englishman, "and a writer of verses."

Propped up by his cushions, Romney appeared to Mary helpless; but his eyes, brilliant with intelligence, took away from him the impression of illness. She thought she had never seen so interesting a face. Indeed, she had never seen any one like him, and he impressed her very much indeed.

"I've advertised for a secretary, but I admit that I did not state just what I wanted in the papers. I used the term 'secretary' in hopes that some one in pity would answer it. I'm afraid that I really want a slave."

Romney saw that the girl, though not ill at ease or nervous, breathed a trifle rapidly. He tapped on the table at his side again with the tips of his fingers.

"Out of a week, I sometimes work forty hours. Then again, a fortnight passes without a line being accomplished. It depends upon how I feel. But," and he accompanied

his selfish words with a smile so charming that Mary only thought of the smile and not of what he said: "it never depends on how my secretary feels. I am a brute. Perhaps the mood to write may possess me to begin work at five in the morning or at midnight. And then, again, I might send you home without working five minutes." He looked at her and waited.

Mary said in her quiet voice: "Mr. Maughm, for whom I was private secretary a number of years, was rather irregular in his methods."

"I have no methods."

"It was different sort of work," she began.

"Or you wouldn't have stayed with him for many years," continued the Englishman. "And then again, if any one by chance should stay with me for many weeks, I might become heartily sick and tired of them; and the other person, on his part, would more than likely be 'fed up' with me, as we say in London."

Romney picked up her card, lying on the table.

"Miss Moreland?"

"Mary Moreland."

"It's a soothing name. I can't tell you yet what it suggests. Names suggest things to me always. This name," he continued, lifting the card and looking at it, "is rather better than I hoped," and his frank, amusing glance at her told her that she was better than he had dared to hope — far, far better. As indeed she was, sitting there reposefully, tranquilly, as though she had not left down-stairs a sentimental problem that made her pulses quicken every time she thought of Maughm.

"Will you speak to my man, Fenton," said Romney, "about your salary? He relieves me of all business details."

Mary Moreland rose. "About references, Mr. Romney?"

"I know nothing of America," said the Englishman.

"I have no friends here. Names would be indifferent to me." And he asked with almost boylike eagerness: "You would care to try?"

A very faint smile touched Mary's lips. "Would you?"

Romney held out his hand toward her, and Mary took it in her strong clasp.

"To-morrow at noon, Miss Moreland?"

"Yes, Mr. Romney."



## CHAPTER XIII

MRS. MAUGHM turned from the window of her boudoir and approached her friend, Mrs. Torrance. Her self-control was giving way.

"Such effrontery, Cicely!" she said. "Just think of it. Arranging a meeting with that woman at the hour he planned to fetch me home, there in the same hotel! It's incredible, it's disgusting! Tom used to be a man of taste. He has gotten to be as common as the people in his office."

The door opened and a servant brought in the marmoset. Mrs. Torrance took the little creature in her arms and looking into its face, said in her bland drawl:

"Toto will tell you, Daisy, that no matter how common other people may become, we are likely to elevate those with whom we come in contact."

Mrs. Maughm laughed. "Don't be silly," she said carelessly. "What would you do if your husband was in the habit of meeting stenographers under your very eyes?"

Mrs. Torrance put the monkey on her shoulder, folded her hands, and raised her eyes with an innocent expression.

"You see, Daisy, I was playing 'follow the leader' this afternoon. If I had been the neglected wife in that little episode, I would have waited for Tom to come and take me home, as you planned he should."

"Waited, with that woman there?"

"She was his private secretary."

"One might call her something else, I fancy," said Daisy Maughm.

"Well," said Mrs. Torrance easily, "perhaps she came to tell him where he had hidden his will."

"Nonsense!"

"Or to ask him to recommend her for a new position."

"He has looked after that, you may be sure," sneered Mrs. Maughm.

"You don't want our advice, Daisy?"

"Our advice?" repeated Mrs. Maughm.

"Toto's and mine."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Maughm petulantly, "how can you be so vapid and so unfeeling? This is a tragedy!"

"I shall not be," said Mrs. Torrance quietly, "if you can prove to me that it is a tragedy."

"Then what do you call it?"

Mrs. Torrance, still chaffing her friend, though always gracious, said shortly: "A domestic tragedy presupposes some dishonourable affair, an incurable disease, or," nodding her head sagely — "debt."

"And," continued Mrs. Maughm, with a theatrical gesture of despair, "unfaithfulness —"

"Tut, tut," interrupted Mrs. Torrance, still loyal to the absent husband, "you have no proof of that, Daisy. It is better not to assume that unpleasant things are actual—"

"Your code," said Mrs. Maughm, "is positively immoral. It would wreck society."

"Then," said Mrs. Torrance amiably, "you don't want our advice?"

Mrs. Maughm ignored the remark. "Tom will be here in a moment with a plausible story."

"Did you ever know him to lie, Daisy? Don't take that attitude until he really deserves it."

Mrs. Maughm bit her lip.

"When I first got Toto, he had the most shocking ways. He once tore a favourite scarf of mine into bits."

"You compare my husband to a monkey!"

"They tell us we are all related to the primates, you know," and she added: "Come now, ignore it. Tom will be here in a moment. Forget it!"

"You mean that I shall say nothing?"

"Not a word. This is his first night here in a month. If you have any intention of living under the same roof with him, for heaven's sake, play a new game. Be a strategist."

Before Mrs. Maughm could respond, Thomas Maughm opened the door. He greeted his wife cordially, hesitated a moment, and then leaning forward, kissed her. Turning to Mrs. Torrance, Maughm extended both hands.

"By Jove, Cicely, you're the best thing I've seen in years!"

The marmoset gave a little cry. Mrs. Torrance took him up and thrust him into Maughm's arms.

"Toto, here's the nicest man in America!"

Maughm laughed heartily.

"This is the darndest little thing; it's just like you to keep one of these little beasts. Last time it was a white rat. I remember you came into the Waldorf in a red evening gown with the little devil running all over you — Do you remember, Daisy? — and the women jumped up on the chairs and howled. I had to get a private room."

Mrs. Torrance took her pet from Maughm, tucked him under her arm, and held out her hand.

"I'm going to dress, Tom; I will see you at dinner."

"At dinner," he said; "it's too good to be true."

Husband and wife were alone together. Maughm had come directly from the vivid interview with Mary Moreland. He had felt her revolt and her determination to hold him at a distance, and it had only served to make him angry and further determined. He lit a cigarette. He was good to look at — strong, vigorous, and demanding of life the good fellowship of his kind and the love of woman.

In spite of her jealous anger, Daisy Maughm made the first advance. She went up to her husband and put her

hand on his sleeve. It was the first indication of friendliness towards him she had given in months.

"Cicely's charming, isn't she?" she said.

"Ripping!" Then he added: "I missed you at the St. Regis."

"Yes, when we started to come home, you were not in sight."

Maughm looked down at his wife and was conscious of her effort to be agreeable, of her murmur, as she stood by his side.

"Are you glad to come back, Tom?"

"Of course, Daisy."

"Why don't you kiss me?" she said softly.

"Daisy," he said suddenly, "I want to ask you something. I wonder if you will tell me honestly? I would be grateful if you would."

Mrs. Maughm stepped back.

"How did you come into possession of the thousand dollars you gave me the other night?"

He couldn't have chosen a more inopportune moment for the question. He had blundered. If Daisy Maughm told the truth, she must confess that she had been prying among his letters. She bit her lip, and too late Maughm realised his error.

"Since," said his wife, controlling herself, "you ask me the question, I will ask you one in return." She threw back her head. "Why did you meet Miss Moreland in the St. Regis to-day?"

"By the purest accident."

Mrs. Maughm laughed. It was the old laugh — the one her husband hated — the cause of many turbulent scenes between them. It enraged him now.

"Funny, isn't it?" said Mrs. Maughm; "I came into possession of the money in the same way — pure accident."

## CHAPTER XIV

MARY knew that Maughm was strictly truthful; it was the trait she most admired in him. She was glad that he had not given money to her mother. His positive denial cleared away a sickening doubt, and she could now think of him more easily. How well he looked. She believed he was happy; that was what she wanted.

Then there came to her a vivid remembrance of his appealing eyes when he said: "I shall send for you, and you will come!"

Of course, she would never go to him; he knew that, and she knew it. Nevertheless, the thought made her blush. She looked in the mirror, fastened back a loose curl, smoothed the folds of her frock, and went into the front room, where her mother sat sewing.

"I might just as well not have a daughter," Mrs. Moreland said, as the girl made her appearance. "Do you think you could sit down here for five minutes and give me a little of your valuable time?"

The window was open, and Mary went over to it and sat down on the sill.

"I began to think that my time wasn't very valuable," she replied; "that perhaps I should never get back to work again."

"Well," said her mother, looking at her, "I suppose that is your way of telling me you have found a new position."

"Yes."

"If you care to, tell me about it. When I was a girl," continued Mrs. Moreland, "I always told my mother

everything; there was none of the secrecy that marks this generation. I can remember sitting by my mother's bedside every night and talking with her until two o'clock, opening my heart to her."

"If I sat up until two o'clock in the morning, opening my heart, I wouldn't be able to go to work next day," said Mary.

Her clear profile was outlined against the evening sky. She was tracing one of the roses on her dress with her finger, and her long lashes almost touched her cheek.

"If I had your looks and your figure," said her mother, "I would have made a brilliant marriage; but your poor father —"

"Girls in my position don't often make brilliant marriages, mother."

Mrs. Moreland sewed persistently for a few minutes, then gathered up courage to say: "You don't want to tell me why you left Mr. Maughm?"

"Five years is too long to stay in one place."

"Maybe you think I don't read the papers," said her mother.

"If there had been anything to tell you —" her daughter began.

"Men as generous as Mr. Maughm are not to be found every day," said Mrs. Moreland. "Last New Year's —"

"You needn't recall his presents," said her daughter sharply; "or the holidays, or anything."

Mrs. Moreland sighed. "Natures like yours," she said regretfully, "are capable of throwing away their whole future for some foolish idea. Your father —"

Mary got up. "I am like him in some things," she said softly, as she crossed the room.

"You haven't told me anything yet," said her mother.

"I have a position with an English author as his secretary."

Mrs. Moreland put down her work and looked up with interest. "Good salary?"

"I don't know."

"You don't mean to say you engaged yourself without knowing how much he is going to pay you?"

"I guess it will be all right."

"You must be crazy," said her mother; "you are growing more and more indifferent to money every day."

Mary's hand was on the knob of the door. "Oh," she said casually, "I got the bills for those things you bought the other day."

"I will pay them myself," said Mrs. Moreland magnificently, "by cheque to-morrow." She folded up her sewing. "If you had not been so rude and reproached me as though I were a kleptomaniac, I would have told you my news."

Mary looked at her mother, her hand still on the door knob.

"They have settled up your Uncle David's affairs, and your Aunt Elizabeth is going to let me have a hundred dollars a month as long as I live."

"A hundred dollars a month!"

"It means," continued Mrs. Moreland, "that I am now independent."

During the next three weeks Mary worked at a new "job." It was a complicated one. She was studying a new human being, a man of a different type to any she had ever seen; her work was different to anything she had ever done or thought of. She was in a new atmosphere, strange at first, but growing more and more interesting, and she was developing in it.

Romney's rooms at the back of the St. Regis, flooded with sunlight, so warm as to suggest a hothouse in the early hours of the day, became the conservatory in which the flower and bud of Mary Moreland's mind was destined to develop.

"What do you think of Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*, Miss Moreland?"

"I have never read it."

"Delightful! I was afraid you might have; it would have spoiled for me the pleasure of introducing it to you."

Romney had a fashion of flinging a question at her, stopping her short in the middle of a paragraph, midway down a page, to quote Pope to her, or Webster, and at the end of the quotation, seriously, charmingly asked her opinion, waited until she found one, made her give one, repeated until he had awakened appreciation.

"You will buy, on your way down town, Miss Moreland, — before you open the peel of the Orange and step in and are lost to me — Buckle's *History of Civilisation in England*, and when I cannot think of anything to say — an occurrence which you will observe is rather common — you will read to me."

When she entered the apartment at noon, it was always into an empty room, where Romney's chair would be prepared for him in its usual place by the window, where the shades were closely drawn by the table where the papers lay as he had left them; and Mary's own chair and table would be waiting for her. Fenton made the first appearance and saw that everything was in the required order before he escorted in his master.

At first Mary thought that her employer was laughing at her all the time, but this did not last long; she was too keen not to understand that it was only his fashion, and that he was like that even with Fenton.

The first day that he started to dictate to his secretary he said to her seriously: "I am writing something which after I am dead will be called a classic." Then he asked, raising his fine eyebrows and looking at her piercingly: "You will think I am presumptuous?"

"I could not tell until I heard it," said Miss Moreland.



“Good,” said Romney; “you shall give me your opinion.”

Later he said to her: “I shall probably die before my book is finished, and it will be a great loss to English letters. After we have worked together for a little while, I shall schedule a complete detail of what I intend to do, and if I die you will finish it for me.”

It was one of the times that he had stopped her in the middle of a page. The afternoon sunlight fell slantingly across the room, under the green shade, which Fenton had drawn nearly down. Mary Moreland paused with her pencil raised.

“I think you are making fun of me, Mr. Romney.”

“I am not a humorist,” he said; “I am a poet. Poets are astonishingly lacking in a sense of humour. Otherwise, certain of their poems would be unwritten to-day.”

He leaned forward with his thin elbows on his knees and sank his chin in his palms. In this way his frail fingers framed his delicate, sensitive face. He had the smile of a faun. One would almost have fancied that his ears under his hair (which he wore rather long) were pointed.

“I am sick of all unliving work, Miss Moreland — of pencils and paper, and pens and ink, and note-books and publishers and the public, that I am so much of an epicure as to despise. I want living work.” He waited, looking at her.

It was impossible for her to consider him for a moment without a feeling of intense pity. He had appealed to her the first moment that she saw him; he touched her sympathies. Her nature was so sensitive and delicate that she felt the extremes in another with peculiar appreciation.

She was not quite at ease with him yet; yet she was not afraid of him. He seemed lonely to her as “a pelican in the wilderness.” If she had been personal, she would have asked him if he hadn’t a family; but she only waited, her pencil poised, giving him just what he wanted — her soft-eyed attention.

"I had one or two dogs," he said, "and they died. I have had birds, but they make too much noise. A woman would adopt a child."

"They turn out badly sometimes," she said.

"Exactly. I would rather adopt something that has turned out well and put some finishing touches to it."

He was smiling at her. His mouth was quite beautiful, the lips finely outlined and red, and he had what might be called a flashing smile. His wardrobe was startling to Mary. He wore embroidered waistcoats and flaring soft ties of the most beautiful and æsthetic colours. His smoking jackets were of black velvet, and his linen a woman might have envied.

"I would like to civilise you!"

And when he had finished, he watched with the eyes of a connoisseur the colour mount her cheek.

"I am afraid I shall have to go home a little early this afternoon, Mr. Romney," she said, as she closed her note-book and rose.

Romney changed his position and leaned back languidly in his big chair, watching her. On this afternoon Mary had chosen to wear into New York the wash dress with the sprigs of roses through it. Her white silk gloves lay on the table by her note-book, and she picked them up. On her head was a small straw hat with a single red rose at the side.

"You must let me civilise you," he said practically; "you must be big about it and grateful; look upon it as a charity to a sick man."

"Have you never thought that you would like to learn a great deal about a great many things, Miss Moreland?"

"Yes."

"We will begin with Buckle's *Civilisation* and see where it leads us."

It flashed through her mind, as he spoke, of Amber Doane, who had yearned to learn French and where it

had led her. The change that passed over her face was subtle, but it was remarked by Romney.

“What are you thinking, Miss Moreland?”

And she answered quite simply: “Of a friend of mine. She took French in a night school; she wanted —” a very slight smile touched the corners of Mary’s mouth — “to be civilised.”

Romney was delighted. He had awakened in her the first human, responsive note, and her answer showed that her mind ran alongside of his.

He exclaimed eagerly: “You have friends — you have a home and a life — you move in the world, whilst I am so completely out of it. To-morrow,” he said, “you must tell me about the girl who learned French and how civilised she became; and don’t forget to bring ‘Buckle’ under your arm.”

## CHAPTER XV

SINCE the evening that she had gone up to Amber Doane's bedroom and talked with her there, Mary had seen her several times. She had walked with her in the evenings after supper and had persuaded her mother to invite Amber to the house for Sunday dinner. The girl had refused to go to church. No one in East Orange had talked with her save Mary, and on Sunday after dinner Mrs. Moreland, although the conversation had been impersonal, had preached at Amber, discoursed to her, and in a covert way had drawn lessons and parables from the life of every fallen woman in history, religious and otherwise; and Amber Doane, sitting in the rocking-chair, had been obliged to listen.

This was the only house open to her, and she could not afford to take offence. Then, Mrs. Moreland's harangue was like a minister's from the pulpit, and the girl could not take it too personally; but she had suffered under it, Mary had suffered under it, and after Amber had left that afternoon, Mary said to her mother: "I don't believe she will ever come here again."

"I can bear it if she doesn't," said Mrs. Moreland. "My house is not a home for fallen women."

When Mary had been with Romney ten days, she received a note from Amber Doane asking her to find some way to see her that night, and Mary went directly to the Doane house from the train. Both mother and daughter were in the sitting-room. Amber was dressed for the street and stood by the window with her hands in the

pockets of her jacket. She greeted Mary silently. It was the mother who spoke.

"Mary, it was I who made Amber write to you. Sit down here." Mrs. Doane was a meagre, ineffectual woman with pathetic, appealing eyes. "Mr. Doane's coming home to-night."

Mary glanced at Amber. Mrs. Moreland, with the rest of East Orange, had speculated considerably about Mr. Doane. As an employee in a fruit-importing house, Doane had been sent to Sicily, and he had been absent a year.

Mrs. Doane, looking at Mary, said: "Her father doesn't know."

Mary would have preferred anything rather than a scene.

"I thought I'd go down to the station and meet father," murmured Amber.

"I wouldn't let her," said Mrs. Doane; "it seemed best she should see him right here."

"Mother thought somebody might have told father down at the office."

"Or even coming out on the train," continued Mrs. Doane. "You never can tell who's going to take the trouble to talk."

The girl by the window did not move.

"I told Amber," said the mother, "that we would wait right here for her father, and we'd get Mary Moreland to come over and sort of—" she hesitated, her lips trembled, and she clasped her hands together—"why, just sort of *be here*."

Mary walked over to the window and stood opposite Amber. The distant whistle of a locomotive came at that moment like a warning, and Mrs. Doane sprang to her feet.

"There! That's his train; he always takes it. Hasn't missed it once in the twenty years he's been going to and fro, except when he was in Sicily." She walked to the

door and out on the porch, where she stood waiting, regardless of her untidy appearance. Mrs. Doane loved her husband, but she knew his adamantine prejudices and unalterable opinions.

Mary and Amber in the window saw Mr. Doane coming up the street. His derby hat was set back on his head, and he was walking fast. As he turned into the gate, Mrs. Doane ran to meet him.

“Henry!”

But there was no word in return from him until the girls heard him say: “Where’s Amber?”

The next moment he was in the room, Mrs. Doane following, still calling his name: “Henry, Henry!”

Mr. Doane dropped his suit-case on the floor and looked first at his daughter, then toward the mother, and without any preamble of greeting said:

“I heard something down in the office to-day when I came in — I hadn’t been off the boat two hours — and I struck the man that said it. I hit him so hard that he can have me up for assault and battery.”

“How do you do, Miss Moreland?” he nodded, seeing Mary for the first time. “You can hear it, too. It’s a lesson for all girls. You can’t be too careful. I haven’t thought of anything else since the words came out of his dirty mouth. I couldn’t get here quick enough.”

His wife took off his hat and stood there holding it, terrified, unable to speak. The father came forward, his face tense.

“Now I am here, I feel better. But it was dreadful; I came home like a crazy man. I can’t tell you what the fellow told me — I really can’t.”

He looked again at his wife; her face was like death. Then he looked at Amber. He stood for a moment with his mouth open.

“My God!”

Mrs. Doane ran to him and hung on his arm as though she feared he would strike.

"You don't say anything," Mr. Doane paused after each word, "and *you* don't say anything," jerking his head toward his wife, but with his eyes still blazing at Amber. "Do you mean to tell me that what the man said in the office — what I struck him for, what I would have killed him for — is *true*?" He waited, then gave a short laugh. "Why, no," he said; "I must be drunk. It can't be true!" He turned from his daughter to Mary Moreland. "These women don't seem able to speak. Will you tell me if there is any truth in what I heard about her?"

For answer, Mary went across to where Amber stood.

"Father," Mrs. Doane managed to articulate; "father," she whimpered, as though the word might touch him.

"This is what I have come home to — this," he said, "to this! Don't hold my arm, Emily," disengaging himself. "Don't think I am going to strike her, as I struck an honest man for her to-day."

Amber had not spoken since he entered the house. Mrs. Doane burst into tears. She dropped his hat and went up to her husband and tried to put her arms round him, but he shook her off. He had never been brutal to her in his life, but now he shook her off, definitely.

"Father!"

"Emily," said her husband, "stand where you are. You were my wife before you were her mother, but if you want to go with her, why, you've got your choice."

"Do you know what it means, Mr. Doane, to send a girl out into the streets?" Mary Moreland's voice came from far away, it seemed to her.

Doane made no response.

"Mary," said Amber, speaking for the first time and seizing her arm convulsively, "if he feels like that, I want

to go." And as her father held open the door, she passed out, followed by Mary.

Mrs. Moreland had made a practice of closing each day by reading a chapter of the Bible, and when she was alone she read it aloud. She had a fine, well-trained voice, and liked to hear it at all times, whether in conversation, exhortation, or elocution. This evening she closed her cheque book, wiped her pen and put it away, and sat down with her open Bible, and began to read aloud. Just then, Mary mounted the steps with Amber Doane. Mrs. Moreland closed her Bible as they entered the living-room.

"Well," said Mrs. Moreland as her daughter entered, "you come home later and later all the time. I had a piece of apple-pie and some cheese and a glass of milk at six o'clock, and I left a little lunch for you in the dining-room. Have you brought Amber for supper?"

Mary came over to her mother, and the other girl stood behind her, her face averted.

"Mother," and there was such emotion in the girl's voice, as Mrs. Moreland had never heard there before since Mary was a child. "I have brought her here to stay."

"You have brought her here *to stay!*"

Mary was a strong woman, and she used her strength when necessary. With her resolute eyes fixed on Mrs. Moreland, she said:

"Her father has turned her out into the street; she hasn't any home or any place to go, and I am going to keep her with me for the present, anyway, and I want you to tell her that she is welcome."

Mrs. Moreland put her Bible on the desk. Amber stood as she was, her face averted.

"I am not at all surprised at Mr. Doane," said Mrs. Moreland. "If you had asked me to foresee this, I would have told you just this outcome. I told you that Mrs.



Doane would take her daughter back, and I could have told you that her father would take this stand."

"Mother," said Mary, "don't speak of her as though she were not in the room; speak *to* her."

"Do you mean to tell me," Mrs. Moreland enunciated, her sharp, dark eyes fixed on Amber, "that without consulting or conferring with me —"

"There was no time to consult you, mother; people don't stop to call up on telephones when a girl is being turned out of doors."

Amber said "Mary!" but her tone was ineffectual; neither could she get out of the door, for Mary put her arm across it, and there was about the figure of Mary Moreland, as she stood between her mother and the girl, something so efficient and so strong, that Amber leaned against it, and Mary broke the force of Mrs. Moreland's cruelty.

"You must be insane," said Mrs. Moreland, "to think of bringing into a God-fearing household a woman whom her own people have turned into the street. Why, you don't know what you are doing. I should think the example of your mother's life, the honour of your family name, the thought of your brother up at the military academy, your own position — you don't know what you are doing!"

"Amber," said Mary, "I am sorry," — and there was in her voice a tenderness that neither woman had ever heard, a tenderness that nothing hitherto in her hard life had called forth.

"It is you who should be sorry," said Mrs. Moreland directly to Amber; "we are all of us free agents. When a woman chooses to desecrate her body, 'which is the temple of the Holy Ghost,' she ought not to expect that people of high minds and pure morals are going to open their homes to her."

Amber, by the door, seemed to wilt. The spirit had gone out of her; it had not died in her here; it had left her up in the little sitting-room of her own home, when her father, whom she loved, had opened the door and thrust her out. Something had died in her then that would never live again. This was not her home; Mrs. Moreland was nothing to her. It was terrible, but she hardly heard it. It wouldn't be a great matter to her now whether Mrs. Moreland took her in or not. Her own people had cast her out. That was the horror that struck and wilted her, and she hung by the door like a broken lily on its stalk.

Mary left her there; she crossed the room quickly and picked up from the maplewood desk Mrs. Moreland's Bible.

"This," she said to her mother, "is what you were reading when Amber and I came in. I heard you read. Is that what it teaches you? Where do you find the words that make you speak like this to a girl in trouble?"

Mary's words were not an attack, nor was her voice shaken, though it rang.

"My Bible," said Mrs. Moreland measuredly, "teaches me that the unpardonable sin is the defilement of the temple of the body."

From the door, Amber murmured: "Mary, let me go."

"What if it had been your daughter, mother?"

"I can't imagine a Moreland committing the unpardonable sin," said her mother. She put out her hand. "Will you give me my Bible, Mary?" Mary's handling of it seemed disrespectful to her.

Mary looked at her mother in her new dress, in the gold chain, at her mother's face, where life's history — not of big temptations conquered, but of small vanities and petty caprices indulged — had been written. She was not judging; she was beginning to feel — to feel as she never had before.

"If you come to me for advice," said Mrs. Moreland, her eyes on the drooping girl, whose very physical loveliness was an affront to her; "if you come to me for advice, I should suggest going to a respectable home and putting yourself under the influence of charitable and good women."

Mary went back to Amber. With a gesture touching in its protection, she put one of her arms around the girl. The tears sprang to her eyes, and they were so rare, so wonderful, they softened her so, that Amber, looking up at her, thought her face divine.

"Don't feel so dreadfully," she said gently. "I thought this was a home, Amber. I thought it was respectable. My mother speaks of good and charitable women. Well, I would have thought they were here. You see, I was mistaken." With her other hand, Mary opened the door.

"What are you going to do?"

Mrs. Moreland spoke sharply, knowing her daughter well and fearing her as a weak nature fears a strong one. She knew Mary to be so little theatrical and acting so little for effect, that she understood quite well that Mary was capable of walking out of that door never to reënter it, should she think best.

"This is your house," Mrs. Moreland said magnificently; "up till the present you have kept the roof over it for many years."

Amber Doane had covered her face with both hands; she pressed her face, hidden like this, against Mary's breast. Slowly through her body began to shake those long, convulsive sobs that are the precursors of a complete breakdown.

Mary put both her arms round her and over her head said to her mother: "Please go out through the dining-room and leave her with me."

Mrs. Moreland hesitated, then went slowly toward the dining-room, and the door closed behind her.

## CHAPTER XVI

MAUGHM stood at his stenographer's desk with both hands thrust into the pockets of his coat. Above his head an electric fan kept the air reasonably fresh, although the thermometer, even at the early hour of nine, was climbing into the eighties.

"Take this letter, please, Miss Rensselaer," he said.

Mary Moreland would have known at once from his attitude and tone of voice that something had gone wrong "up at the house," but Miss Lizzie Rensselaer had all she could do to keep her position, without concerning herself with the temperamental phases of her employer's character.

Maughm began to dictate :

"The Upjohn Mining Company,

"Portland, Oregon.

"Gentlemen,

"I am sending you a wire in code to-day in acceptance of your terms as to the Western Tract known as the Salvador Mine. In closing this deal with you, it is mutually understood between us that the terms of the sale and the name of the purchaser are to be kept a matter of absolute secrecy."

Then followed further business details.

"Send that letter, please, and when Mr. Wainwright comes, bring him to my office and kindly see that we are not disturbed."

The house up-town was practically closed for the summer. Mrs. Maughm was in Newport. Several violent scenes had occurred between the husband and wife before her depar-

ture and, following the last, Mrs. Torrance had packed up and left in dismay.

"I prefer animals," she had said to Mrs. Maughm. "If they fight, you can throw water on them or shoot them."

Maughm smiled grimly as he remembered the remark, when he greeted Wainwright.

"Glad to see you, Wainwright. Come in. I didn't suppose any one as smart as you are would be in New York in August."

"How about yourself, old man?"

"Well, you wouldn't call me much of a society feature, Wainwright."

"I see your name everywhere."

"My wife," said the other sharply, "goes everywhere. They talk about a man's endurance — gad! If a man fussed about as women do, danced all night, shopped and fuddled his brains with their silly affairs, he would be senile at forty!"

Wainwright laughed. "My dear Maughm, you must have indigestion."

Maughm glared at him. "My wife is in Newport and I have been in town without budging for a fortnight, working day and night; keeping these people down here until all unholy hours. My life, Wainwright, is just short of hell."

"I understood," returned the other, "that you and Mrs. Maughm had made it up."

"You can't make hell up, can you?" Maughm blurted out.

"I am sorry about this, Maughm."

"Don't get married."

"I am too busy unmarrying," smiled the divorce lawyer; and added: "What do you want me to do for you?"

"Why," said Maughm, "nothing. There is nothing you can do — nothing anybody can do, I presume."

"Your wife does not wish a divorce?"

The other man looked him in the eyes.

"She says she loves me," he said. "That's the devil of it! But when I went back to her this spring, she had contracted debts that I have not yet cleared up. She let me in for a house at Newport, and you know how she is entertaining there."

"Well," said Wainwright, "you are not a fool, Maughm; can't you stop it?"

"My business keeps me chained here in New York. One has to be on the spot to handle such a problem. She pays no attention to letters."

"From what I hear, Maughm, about the Oregon mines, we will be making a great deal of money."

"When I let you in on 'Upjohn'," Maughm said, "I believed I was doing you a good turn."

"And you don't think so now?"

"On the contrary, if I were you, I would double my holdings."

"Do you seriously advise that, Maughm?"

"So seriously that it is one of the reasons I sent for you to come over this morning."

"Indeed?" said Wainwright. "Well, I have a thousand shares."

"Double it."

Wainwright looked at him intently. "I have great confidence in your judgment, Maughm. How much do you hold? Oh, I beg pardon; I oughtn't to have asked that, I suppose?"

"More than I care to lose," said Maughm succinctly.

Miss Rensselaer was called in, and an order was given her by Wainwright for his broker to purchase a thousand shares of "Upjohn" at the market price.

When she had gone, Wainwright said, speaking in his composed, measured fashion: "When I see a man like you, Maughm, who manages big affairs — a man about

whom the public is talking — it is hard to believe that his domestic life is as warped as you describe it. I suppose Mrs. Maughm has an impossible temper.”

“We are antagonistic at every point,” said Maughm, walking to and fro in the little room. “We haven’t a thing in common; and yet, for some strange reason, she acts as though she were in love with me.”

“And you don’t reciprocate?”

“Gad!” said Maughm, “I could take the next train, the next boat, and get out, go anywhere.” He added forcibly: “*There must be a separation.*”

“I see.”

“Otherwise I shall lose my mind. I have already had two telephone messages and two telegrams from her to-day, imploring me to come to Newport at once.”

“Mrs. Maughm,” said the lawyer musingly, “is a very attractive woman. I dare say there are lots of chaps —”

“She tries in many ways to please me,” said Maughm slowly. “You would think it appealing. It comes near to touching me sometimes; then all of a sudden up comes some controversy which knocks every impulse of affection into a cocked hat. I have tried, Wainwright; I have honestly tried to live with her amicably. There is nothing,” he went on, “about which we fundamentally agree. We must go our separate ways.”

“What,” said the lawyer, accustomed to probing cases, “do you find the hardest things to reconcile?”

“She is jealous of everything,” said Maughm emphatically. “Of my business interests, of my enforced hours of work, of her best friend who has been staying under the same roof with us.”

Wainwright met his eyes.

“Of your former stenographer, Maughm?”

“We never speak of that,” said Maughm. “Only the other day, Daisy came down here on some futile pretext,

before she went to Newport, to see who had replaced Miss Moreland;" and he added, with a ghost of a smile, "she went away satisfied."

"Well," said Wainwright slowly, "a great deal may be forgiven a jealous woman who loves her husband, and," he asked, raising his eyebrows, "what else?"

Maughm hesitated, then said passionately:

"She gambles — you know that. She is a mad bridge player, and she plays for stakes that she cannot afford; all of her allowance and a great deal more goes that way."

He turned to the window, his back to Wainwright, and his troubled eyes followed the ships putting out to sea.

"Whatever her vices," said the lawyer, "they are not those that give you the help of the law."

"No," said the man at the window, "I am bound."

"Yet," pursued the lawyer, "a little while ago you left your home with the firm determination not to return."

"Yes," said Maughm, "I thought she would divorce me. She harasses me, makes me miserable; but she will not divorce me. I am her husband — she wants to keep me — there you are."

Wainwright rose from the table and took up his hat and stick.

"Thank you for the 'Upjohn' tip. I will see you in a day or so."

The door of the room was opened by the smiling office boy.

"Mr. Maughm, would you see Miss Moreland?"

Wainwright saw Maughm's features undergo a sudden transformation.

"See Miss Moreland!" he exclaimed. "Of course I will see her."

Wainwright went out, and Mary Moreland passed into the room with which she had been familiar for years. She put out her hand naturally in greeting, and Maughm seized it in both of his.



"I am glad to see you — you don't know how glad!"

"Mr. Maughm —"

"It is awfully good of you to come; I am mighty glad."

She withdrew her hand from his grasp, as she said: "Mr. Maughm, I must speak to you. I was obliged to see you somewhere, and I thought it was best to come here."

She had altered. There was a definite change in her appearance. She had on a tasteful hat and gown, perfectly suitable, but unmistakably more expensive than any Maughm had seen her wear. Always well poised, her manner was now even more assured.

"Of course you were right," he said. "I don't know what you've got to say to me, but whatever brought you here, I am glad to see you again — very glad indeed."

She shook her head.

"You won't be glad when you hear it; you will be very much annoyed."

Maughm leaned on the table with one hand, still looking at her.

"You must be doing well. You must have a very good position."

"My position, Mr. Maughm, has nothing whatever to do with the question. My mother is outside. I came directly to you, because I didn't want to write. Mrs. Maughm is having me followed by detectives. It is intolerable, Mr. Maughm, and I have come to ask you what I shall do to have it stopped."

"My wife having you followed by detectives!" his brows contracting. "Are you sure?" he said, gaining time to think. But he understood Mary Moreland well enough to know that she was sure.

"A man has followed me out to East Orange; he has been on the train with me; he has stood in front of our house; he comes to the St. Regis." Her cheeks grew hot;

her chin went up. She was very handsome. "You understand," she said, "that I cannot have it, Mr. Maughm."

"My God!" he exclaimed. "Have it! I should think not!"

The brightness which her unexpected return had lit in Maughm's face died down. Her news, bringing as it did a new complication and a fresh grievance against his wife, was enough to spoil the keen pleasure of seeing Mary.

He had given her orders for five years, and she had obeyed them. "Sit down," he said authoritatively, and pointed to her old chair.

"I just came in to tell you this," she demurred, but nevertheless she sat down. Maughm stood by her side.

"I have been on the point of going out to East Orange several times to see you; I have been on the point of writing —"

"I am glad that you didn't do either," she said simply. "There isn't anything for Mrs. Maughm to find out."

He ignored her remark.

"I haven't seen you since that day at the St. Regis, when you were so cold to me."

"You will take some means, Mr. Maughm, won't you, to stop this annoyance?"

"I want to know for whom you are working, what work you are doing. I see you have a good position; perhaps —" he half smiled — "you are married?"

The brilliant colour had a way of mounting slowly from the neck up to her brow, like a lovely sunrise over placid waters. She started to rise from the chair, but Maughm put his hand forcibly on her shoulder.

"I am married," he said, looking at her with great intentness, "bound and harnessed, and I am the most wretched man in New York."

"Let me get up, Mr. Maughm."

He removed his hand instantly. "Sit still, sit still." He thrust his hands into his pockets and walked over to the window quickly and then back to her.

"You needn't worry about this detective business. I will take care of that. You will never be annoyed again. I don't want to waste time talking about that now. Only answer my questions. What are you doing?"

"I am private secretary to an Englishman; he lives at the St. Regis. I have a very good position."

"I see that," said Maughm and added quickly: "Young, I suppose, handsome, rich?" Before she could answer, with a gesture of protest he said: "Don't tell me — I don't want to hear about him."

She did not speak, and he stood gazing at her, enjoying her presence, interested at the change he noted in her. He was thinking: "She is a thoroughbred; she is a lady."

She got up from the chair, quietly, serenely; her blush had paled.

"You are not going?" and he added hurriedly: "Do you remember what happened here in this room the last time we were together?"

She answered him slowly, in her agreeable voice. "I don't think that it happened to me," she said; "I try to think that it did not."

There was something about her so dignified, so tranquillizing to his turbulent state of mind, that his mounting passion paled before her cool eyes. He hesitated, then said slowly:

"Perhaps it didn't happen to you, but there was a woman who once stood by me in a moment of recklessness and I can never be sufficiently grateful to her." He raised his eyes and met her gaze fearlessly. Holding out his hand, he continued: "For five years here in this room, I depended on that woman; I looked to her for many

things, and I find that I lived my life better because of her. If she is gone —”

Mary put her hand in his. He felt it, supple, capable; it rested in Maughm's strong hand, quietly, reassuringly. If what he had said made any emotional impression on her, she gave no sign. Her voice was steady.

“If possible, Mr. Maughm, you will arrange this matter so that Mrs. Maughm doesn't know?”

She withdrew her hand and turned toward the door, but Maughm held it shut. His voice was hard to control.

“It seems as though I cannot let you go — go to some one who is free —”

Her hand was on the door-knob, and Maughm stood aside.

“You haven't read any of Mr. Romney's books, have you, Mr. Maughm?”

“Romney; who is Romney?”

“Mr. Basil Romney — he is an English author.”

“You mean the man for whom you are secretary?”

“Yes.”

“Never heard of him.”

She gave him one of those brilliant smiles with which for years she had greeted him each morning when he came into her office.

“He is a confirmed invalid; he sits all day in an invalid's chair.”

He opened the door wide. Without, in the office, over by the telephone switchboard, sat Mrs. Moreland waiting for her daughter. Maughm held the door back for his former secretary, and as she went out, the mother heard him say: “Mary!”

Out home in East Orange, Mrs. Moreland, consumed with curiosity, was, as the French say, “eating upon her-

self." She was dying to learn more about Mary's affairs, for that self-contained and discreet young woman mystified her. Mary simply would not talk. On several occasions her mother ventured tentative questions regarding Mary's salary, but Mary always changed the subject. That Mr. Romney was a wealthy man, Mrs. Moreland took for granted, but would he be liberal? Would he be as generous at Christmas time as Mr. Maughm had always been? She wondered.

But she wondered still more why Mary had left Mr. Maughm's employ. The interview in the private office that day filled her with acute curiosity. Why had Mary taken her with her, and why had she been left outside waiting? But above all else, the fact that Mr. Maughm had called her daughter "Mary" in a not-to-be-mistaken tone furnished Mrs. Moreland with the most acute curiosity of all. But Mrs. Moreland had to answer all her own questions. What was the relationship between her daughter and Mr. Maughm? On this subject her curiosity was almost too much to bear.

She was looking out of the front window as she turned these thoughts over in her mind. Across the way stood a man partly concealed by some shrubbery. Apparently he had nothing better to do than scrape the earth into little mounds with the toe of his shoe. Mrs. Moreland remembered having seen him there before, always at nightfall, about the time Mary came home from the train. She would make it her business to find out what he was up to, and leaning out she beckoned to him.

The man hesitated, looked up and down the street, and sauntered leisurely across.

"Look here," said Mrs. Moreland, "are you watching this house? What is the matter?"

The man indicated that he was taking a walk.

"Well," said Mrs. Moreland sharply, "just take your walks somewhere else."

"Isn't this a public thoroughfare?" returned the stranger impudently.

"Maybe it is, but what are you hanging around this neighbourhood for?"

"Let me ask you something, madam. It might be worth your while, and," he continued, "mine too."

"How do you mean?"

"You're Mrs. Moreland?"

"Yes."

"Does Mr. Thomas Maughm come out here often?"

"Why, what concern is that of yours?" replied Mrs. Moreland sharply. "Just wait a moment, my good man." She joined the detective at the gate.

The man approached her confidentially. "Does Miss Moreland do any work for Mr. Maughm out here, at the house — typewriting and the like?"

"Are you his private detective?" Mrs. Moreland asked, with a jump of the heart.

"There is nothing against you or your daughter," said the man half-soothingly.

"I should think not!"

"Mr. Maughm is mixed up in big deals in Wall Street, and they are sort of keeping tab on him."

"You needn't keep tab on Mr. Maughm in East Orange! Miss Moreland was in his office five years, but she is out of it now."

"Yes, lady, but no one knows why she left."

"Is Mrs. Maughm at the bottom of this?" asked Mrs. Moreland with great illumination.

"Well," said the man slowly, "if you want to find out anything, Mrs. Moreland, you will have to do so through headquarters."

"You are the one who is trying to find out things," said Mrs. Moreland.

"Well," said the man with a shrug, "there is nothing

in it for me. I only have to do as I have been told."

He turned his head and nodded up the road. "Here comes the crowd from the train."

He started to go, stopped, and said as though it was a last thought:

"If you thought it was worth while to spend a hundred dollars on the information, Mrs. Moreland, I might be able to clear up things for you. I'll look in again, and good-day."

## CHAPTER XVII

IN the receiving-room of the Nursing Hospital, Mary and Amber sat together for a half hour's conversation in Amber's free time.

"What shall I do, Mary?"

Amber asked this question of Mary a hundred times. It might be merely a question of thick or thin boots — should she buy low ones or high ones: it might be whether she should wear her hair after the pattern in the fashion magazine, or wear it low or plain. Now the question was more subtle.

"What shall I do?"

"About what, Amber?"

Amber was sitting under a steel engraving of the Divine Shepherd surrounded by lambs, one of which He carried in His arms.

"Why did you take hold of me, Mary?"

"Take hold of you, Amber?"

"Yes, why didn't you let me go that night out home?"

Amber shot the question out at Mary and did not wait for her to reply. "I have been on all night with a terribly hard case — a poor creature brought in from Tenth Avenue. She tried to kill herself with gas. Somehow there was something about my face that she seemed to like; she wouldn't let me leave her; there are the marks of her fingers on my arm, she clutched me so." She looked at Mary, and her face hardened. "Just another," she said, "just one more."

After an instant she repeated her question, looking at Mary: "What shall I do?"



"About the poor woman?" There was a vague sinking of Mary's heart. She was too practical to care to undertake the problem of the asphyxiated Magdalen.

Amber shook her head. "About everything."

"That is a big order, Amber."

"Well," said the nurse slowly, "when you come right up against it yourself, it has to be filled, hasn't it?"

"Why, yes," said Mary Moreland, "I suppose it has," and added, "I am sure you are filling it well, Amber."

The other woman shook her head. "No."

Mary was looking at her with a keenness that was not perceptible, her expression only softly affectionate. The girl who had learned French in the East Orange night-school, who was ready as intuitively and as instinctively as Mary to learn many things because of the great forces within her, was revealing herself now with ardour to the colder, more reserved woman, who had met her problems in such a different manner.

"No," Amber shook her head again, shaking the little dark curls under her white cap. The colour of her eyes was superb. The night watches had not in the least extinguished her exuberant freshness. Mary could see her standing by the bedside of the half-dying woman and understand how the fresh, vigorous human being must have seemed like salvation to one coming out of the fogs.

"How do you get along about life, Mary?"

Amber threw her this question abruptly — an unusual one to come from the lips of a trained nurse in a hospital receiving-room. There was nothing in Mary to make her expand or break her own reserve.

"I don't think about it," she said serenely.

"You would if you had lived," said Amber.

"I just go on from day to day," said Mary; "for me it is the best way."

"You don't understand!"

"I don't want to understand," said Mary, "any more than I do."

Amber threw back her head and lowered her voice, pulled her spotless cuffs down over her shapely hands, roughened by frequent washing in antiseptics.

"Don't expect too much of me, Mary," she said. "God knows you have pulled me up higher than I ever thought I could go, since —; but don't set your heart on me, I warn you."

"How do you mean?"

"You said you didn't want to understand."

"I didn't say I didn't want to understand you."

"You couldn't."

Mary waited a moment. Since she had known Amber, she had never given her a voluntary caress except on the night she had put her arms around her in her mother's living-room. She reached Amber by what she was, not by what she did. She now put her hand out quickly and touched Amber lightly.

"Try me!"

"I work like a dog here," said the nurse. "There's not a nurse here who can stand what I can; I can do extra jobs, and they let me all right, don't you fret." She looked at Mary steadily and then away out of the window, through which the late afternoon light was stealing in.

"Something is always calling me, Mary!"

"Have you heard from him, Amber?"

Amber shook her head violently. "You don't understand."

Mary touched her once again, with the same quick gesture. "Try me."

"You would think," said the girl with the rich Irish blood in her veins, "that the sickness and the operations and the horrible things and the death, as I have seen them here, Mary —, you would think it would put such thoughts out of your mind."

"What thoughts, Amber?"

Amber removed her eyes from Mary's; three other nurses came into the room, and Amber rose.

"My time is up," she said; "I've got to go on now."

But when she got to the door of the hospital, she still kept alongside of Mary; she walked out with her into the street as she was, in her uniform; she linked her arm in Mary's, and they walked along together toward Madison Avenue, where Mary was to take the car.

"Don't think," she said with a slight bitterness in her tone, "that you get away from it in a hospital, because there is death and sickness there. It is everywhere!"

Mary said nothing.

Amber seemed, as she spoke, to have gone beyond Mary, to have forgotten her, floated away into a little atmosphere that she made herself, that atmosphere that is vital and vivifying, formed and made of the very forces of life itself. She seized Mary's hand.

"Good night, good-by! Don't expect much of me, Mary."

"I do," said Mary.

"It is everywhere," said the girl, "in the wards, in the corridors, down-stairs at meals, up-stairs in my little room."

"What, Amber?"

"Don't you understand?" said the other fiercely. "That call of life!"

The two women faced each other; the calmer, reserved woman who was daily and hourly solving her own problems by her spirit, and the stormy, passionate, uncontrolled woman, who had given all for love, whose call was stronger than any other voice could be.

Mary, who was thrusting aside all the personal feelings that the girl's words touched, was filled with but one question: "What were Amber's temptations?"

"Is anybody bothering you, Amber?"

"One of the doctors is crazy about me."

"Do you like him?"

"Not much."

"Work hard, Amber, and talk to me. Come out to East Orange on Sunday and spend the day."

Amber laughed. "I guess I need something a little more interesting than a Sunday in East Orange," she said, and added quickly: "But I would like to be with you, Mary."

Mary wrung her companion's hand, and as she did so, in the way that things came to Mary (reaching completely certain heights to which she had been unconsciously climbing), the situation in a second broke upon her; yet with the understanding came as well to her the knowledge of the futility of outside forces in another's life. What had all the moralists and all the years of decent living done for her up to the time that Thomas Maughm had asked her to go away with him to Boston, and she had been so ready to go? Nothing! It wasn't advice any one needed; you couldn't go far on it. She believed that, and yet as she released Amber's hand, and the girl nodded to her good-by, a terror possessed her, as though she were losing a treasure before her very eyes in an encroaching sea. With her sweetest smile — and she gave them rarely — she said simply, looking at her friend: "*I have just set my heart on you, Amber!*"

Amber went back to the Nursing Hospital. She had been on a private case for some time, but her patient, a wealthy man-about-town, was convalescent and was to be discharged the next day. It was her resting-time, and she looked forward to the quiet of her own room.

As she passed the door of her patient's room, he stood there dressed to go out and beckoned her in. Before she could comprehend, he shut the door behind her, and in

another moment he had taken her in his arms. It was sudden, unexpected, and before she could make any resistance, he had covered her face with kisses. She freed herself and leaned against the table, trembling, unable to speak.

The man, as white as she, said under his breath: "I love you. You know I love you!"

Amber struggled for speech, and in her dark eyes the man saw two things — appeal and resentment.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "and you, a married man!"

He came again to her and seized her hand, but she tore it away.

"Yes, I am a married man, but I don't love my wife. I love you. I will take you away from here and give you everything — everything!"

Once again he came over to her and put his face down close to hers.

"Stop!" she said, as she pushed him away. "Why do you think that I — why should you think that you could do this to me?"

"Why," he repeated, "why? Because you draw me to you. It is the call of my mate — of the man to the woman."

"Let me go," she pled, "don't dare to keep me. You will have me driven away from here, where I want to be good."

She flew to the door and opened it. Down the corridor came two nurses. She didn't look back, but walked quickly away with eyes lowered; but in her ears sounded again Mary's voice: "I have set my heart on you!"

That night Mary came home late. Mrs. Moreland had cleared away the things after the evening meal and was sitting on the verandah waiting for her daughter, as Mary came up the steps.

"I wish to goodness you would 'phone, Mary, when you are late like this."

"It was the crowd at the subway."

"I didn't know but you would stay in town."

"I never stay in town, mother."

"Oh!" said Mrs. Moreland caustically, "that doesn't mean that you won't, if the fancy takes you. I don't know but what you will be running up to Newport to spend Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Maughm."

"Mother!"

"Well," said Mrs. Moreland, rocking serenely, "why you should have an interview with him in his private office that I couldn't hear, I am sure I don't know."

"I went to see Mr. Maughm on business," said Mary, "and I took you with me because I didn't want to go alone."

"No girl," replied Mrs. Moreland, "with any self-respect would couple her name with that of a man who is getting a divorce from his wife."

Mary had gone past her mother and was standing in the door of the house.

"I haven't had any supper," she said, "and I am going to get myself something to eat."

"Ritchie is sick," said her mother shortly. "You will have to go up to Brattleboro' on to-night's train."

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know," said his mother. "The principal telegraphed that one of us would have to go."

"Do you think he is very sick, mother?"

"No," said his mother unconcernedly, "I just think they want to expel him again — that's what I really think. I don't know which is the hardest to bring up, a girl or a boy!"

"I can catch the 9.30 train," said Mary.

Mrs. Moreland continued to rock serenely. Mary went into the house and in a few moments came out again on the porch.

“You will have to telephone Mr. Romney for me to-morrow morning, mother?”

“Well,” said her mother cheerfully, “I guess I am equal to that, Mary.”

“Ask for Fenton on the 'phone — 10783 Plaza.”

“Write it down,” said her mother, “there at my desk. The Vermont express leaves the Grand Central at 11.15, and you can get to Brattleboro' by nine to-morrow morning. If Ritchie is sick, bring him home; but if he is just bad —”

Mary had gone back into the house.

## CHAPTER XVIII

LIFE in a New York hotel, by the time August had arrived, had become intolerable to Romney. Fenton, accustomed to his master's caprices, changed the environment in twenty-four hours. A bachelor going abroad advertised for just such a tenant as Romney, and once again the Englishman luxuriated in his own home. He had been growing stronger, and once a day was carried down-stairs to his motor and with Fenton drove for an hour or more. He seemed to revel in the intense American heat — to thrive in it. His occupation, his amusement, his delight, was the companionship of his private secretary, Mary Moreland, which, from being a pleasure became a necessity.

Romney's mother, Lady Donegan, writing to Fenton, asked: "Whom does your master see; who are his companions?" And Fenton conscientiously wrote: "Mr. Romney sees a very great deal of his secretary, Miss Moreland," and with tact and wisdom was awaiting the reply of Lady Donegan and her questions before saying anything further.

Mary had taken her position in May; it was now the latter part of August. Not a lifetime, but the epoch was the most important in her life. Love, crushed at its very conception, had not developed in her all her possibilities, but Mary was reaping in her own nature the harvest of her devotion to others. Hitherto she had not known in herself the possession of mind and soul. Romney was awakening her mind.

One day he said to her abruptly: "Is this your birthday?"



Mary looked up at him in surprise. "Why, no; what made you think that?"

"I have it written somewhere in a birthday book: 'The 20th of August, Mary Moreland's birthday.'"

She smiled; she was beginning to understand his whimsicalities, his delicate fancies.

To Romney, the over-cultured, the over-civilised Englishman, this girl of the Western world, untaught, crude, though lovely, was a fascinating discovery, and she was accomplishing what his physicians in England had prayed that somebody would eventually do — interest him, take him out of his morbid, suffering self.

"Since this is your birthday, will you make me a present?"

"I can't do anything," said Mary Moreland, "except write in stenographic books and transcribe words."

Romney continued: "I have ordered the car, and I want you to go down to a shop I saw yesterday and look at the things Fenton and I selected and fetch them back."

"For you, Mr. Romney?"

"They are for you."

There had not yet, up to this time, arisen between them the slightest embarrassment.

"You realise," he said, "how I am debarred from pleasures; you have helped me to forget my infirmities. I love beautiful things: I cannot see them: I have no friends here. It was a fancy of mine to select a few articles, such as I might offer my sister —" He paused. "I have had them put aside. I want you to have them."

"Do you call that making you a present, Mr. Romney?"

"Yes, yes! Of the most delightful kind."

"I don't see how."

"A present of your generosity."

"Of my generosity?"

"Yes, the highest type of generosity is — understanding how to accept a gift."

She had gone away from him that afternoon in her every-day linen frock. A few days later she appeared as he had hoped, dressed in the things he had selected for her. He was delighted beyond words. Since he had taken an interest in her development, she had never disappointed him. He stretched out his hand to her with enthusiasm.

"You are charming, perfectly charming," and he added with boyish enthusiasm: "They are pretty, aren't they?"

"Far too pretty for me, Mr. Romney."

"They suit you admirably."

Then she sat down in her accustomed place, put the little silver purse on the table, laid the little parasol beside it, unfastened her hat, and as she laid it away, said to him practically, in a tone that she had learned was effective: "Just this once, I have done what you asked; but never again. I wanted to please you."

"You have," he replied, "but don't let's discuss that now. I want to ask you about your friend who studied French —"

"Why?"

"She might interest me."

"Oh, I don't think so."

"She is a human being, isn't she?"

"Very human."

"All human beings interest me," said Basil Romney. "I am a student of life, and I sit like 'The Lady of Shalott' and watch the images in the glass as they pass me. Show me this one, Miss Moreland. Be the mirror for me."

Mary sat back in her chair.

"Has the lady gone to Paris?"

"Why should she go to Paris?"

"Learning French is a preliminary, isn't it?"

"She is at the Nursing Hospital, Mr. Romney; she is learning to be a professional nurse."

"That," said Romney, "is one of the most interesting vocations in the world. It appeals to me. What is her name?"

"Amber Doane."

"Amber Doane? What a lovely name! That suggestion," he said, "I can tell you at once. She must be a miller's daughter. I hear the sound of the mill-wheel on summer days."

"She is the daughter of a man who is employed in a fruit importing house," said Mary practically.

"In a fruit importing house?" he mused. "Well, that is more picturesque than if it had been kitchen utensils, but I have not found out yet why she studied French."

"Well," said Mary, making a few strokes with her pencil on the back of the stenographic book, "I don't think she learned a great deal of the language."

Romney said: "If she learns a great deal of nursing, and if I should be so unfortunate as to be taken ill here —"

"I can't see why you should be so interested in Amber Doane."

"She is a friend of yours, isn't she?"

"I know her quite well."

"When will you bring her to see me?"

Mary looked at him in frank surprise. "Why do you wish to see her?"

Romney threw back his head and smiled whimsically. "Oh, I don't know," he said; "why does one wish to go to the theatre? (I can't go, you know.) Why does one wish to invite one's friends to afternoon tea?"

"I should not know what to say to her," said Mary.

"Well," said Romney hopefully, "tell her that I want to discover if she looks like her name."

"I am afraid I could not give her that for a reason."

"Has she no imagination?"

Mary thought a moment and then said rather regretfully: "I am afraid she has."

This interested him. "Do you consider imagination a dangerous possession, Miss Moreland?"

"For a girl in East Orange," said Mary Moreland, "going in and out to business, imagination is likely to get in the way."

Romney laughed.

If Maughm could have seen Mr. Romney's secretary as she sat there before her eccentric patron, he would have found her very charming. She was changing with the rapidity of a landscape under beautifying lights.

Fenton came in with a tray bearing a pitcher of iced tea and a plate of wafers.

"Will you pour tea?"

"And after that, don't you think you had better give me some dictation?"

"No," he said wearily, "I want you to read Stevenson to me. I feel like hearing about a man to whom, although much was given, much was also denied. And then," he continued, "you are going to tell me more about your friend who is learning to be a nurse at the Nursing Hospital."

When Mary took her leave later, Fenton spoke to her in the hall. "When you can make it quite convenient will you bring Miss Doane to see Mr. Romney?"

Mary knew this man as well as she knew his master. She had found, too, how valuable was the existence and the life of the delicate man of letters, and how a mood to him meant either sickness or health. When Fenton said, Will you do this or that, it was like an edict from a king, and as he now held the door open for Mary to go out, he insisted quietly: "I should not care to have Mr. Romney ask again."

## CHAPTER XIX

ROMNEY, in his agreeable sitting-room, cut the leaves of his last book of verse.

"What do you think of this, Fenton?" He lifted the volume and read a sonnet aloud.

Fenton listened respectfully, standing with his master's dressing-gown over his arm.

"You are sure that Miss Moreland said that she would not be here to-day?" Romney had already asked this question five or six times.

"Quite sure, Mr. Basil."

"She has never failed me before." Romney pensively folded his hands and looked out toward the park.

Fenton watched him apprehensively with the tenderness of a woman. "I am sure Miss Moreland's absence was unavoidable," he assured the invalid, and added: "Better not see any one to-day, sir."

"On the contrary," said Romney authoritatively, "I shall see any one who comes. If I could rent a bit of that Central Park, I should like to give a garden party in it, or an afternoon tea in the Metropolitan Museum. How long have we been in America?"

"About four months, sir."

"How many people have I seen since I arrived?"

Fenton noted the names of a few distinguished visitors, who in passing had been allowed to see Romney for a few moments; they were not many.

"I am inclined to think," he said, "that I shall receive a lady of some distinction to-day, Fenton."

"Yes, Mr. Basil."

“Miss Amber Doane.”

Fenton did not betray his feelings.

“I have wanted to see Miss Doane since August,” said Romney peacefully. “It seems that she has been, as they call it, ‘on a case,’ off somewhere at the seaside, I believe. Amber Doane,” he repeated fantastically, “a miller’s daughter, fat and brown, soft-eyed and demure. It is a pretty fancy.”

“You will do well to rest a little, Mr. Romney.”

“I have been resting for thirty years, Fenton.”

“If I draw down the curtain, you will sleep, sir.”

“Leave it up. Miss Doane may come and will amuse me, Fenton.”

Fenton never thwarted Romney unnecessarily. One could not damn Fenton by saying he was “almost a gentleman”: he was a perfect servant. He advanced toward his master.

“Will you slip on your dressing-gown and put on your softer shoes, Mr. Basil, and drink your hot milk and vichy?”

From the adjoining room a footman crossed the floor, handing Romney a card on a tray.

“Mrs. Moreland — it must be Miss Moreland’s mother. She is ill, Fenton; I knew it, I knew it!” Romney’s face blanched. “I will see her at once.”

Fenton put the dressing-gown on the chair and started toward the door, but Romney called him back and spoke to the footman. “Wait!” he said authoritatively. Fenton never disobeyed that voice. “Show Mrs. Moreland in.”

The footman drew back the curtains, and Mrs. Moreland, in an elaborate and expensive afternoon dress, with a great deal of manner and no perturbation, sailed in.

“You have come to bring me bad news! Give Mrs. Moreland a chair. Just a moment; don’t tell me until I have myself a little more in hand.” . . .

Mrs. Moreland, from the time that she had entered, had swung, as it were, into her own. The footman in livery, the beautiful rooms, the majestic entrance she had been enabled to make with this space before her, the costly objects, the frail figure of the young man reclining in his chair, flanked by his servant, the extravagant atmosphere, were intoxicating to her, food and drink to her, and she felt she was where she belonged. This was where Mary moved and lived and had her being, and she had told absolutely nothing of it to her mother!

Fenton with the greatest reluctance slipped out of the room when he had placed the chair for Mrs. Moreland; she accepted it as though it had been a throne and presided upon it.

"I feel this a great honour, Mr. Romney."

Romney's eyes were now wide open. "She's not dead, then? You wouldn't come dressed like that if Miss Moreland was dead." He was growing normal.

"Mary has gone to Brattleboro, Vermont," said Mrs. Moreland, "to see her brother in the military academy; he has a little attack of appendicitis."

The colour came back to Romney's cheeks and he smiled. "I dare say it is the first time that appendicitis has come as a relief. I could sacrifice that young man, Mrs. Moreland, and the whole military academy for your daughter."

Romney's voice, his elegance, ravished Mrs. Moreland.

"I am sorry that I startled you about Mary; she ought to have told you where she was going."

"It is enough that she is gone."

"It is one of her greatest faults," said her mother, "her dreadful secretiveness."

"One of her greatest faults," said Romney; "then she is human?"

Mrs. Moreland smiled acridly, and Romney, now him-

self, began to take her in. Her apparel was as ridiculous as Mary's was harmonious.

"I had to stop at the St. Regis to get your address. I knew my daughter worked for you, and that is all I know. Just think of keeping everything from your own mother!"

Romney's eyes were quizzical. "Are you her own mother?"

Mrs. Moreland sighed. "I suppose I am," she said resignedly.

"Do you think Miss Moreland will be back to-morrow?"

"She is coming back to-night; it is not serious."

"A day is serious," said Romney, "when you haven't much to put into it, Mrs. Moreland."

She gloated over the colour of Romney's velvet jacket, the gardenia in his buttonhole. On his little finger he wore a ruby sunk in heavy gold. His delicate hands were not effeminate; though beautifully formed, they were the hands of a man. There was nothing of the woman in Romney except his sensitiveness.

"I am going to ask you to keep this visit strictly confidential, Mr. Romney."

"You have only to ask, Mrs. Moreland."

"Mary would be furious!"

Romney repeated the word: "Furious!" and thought of Mary's calm.

"Mary keeps everything to herself — her employment, her interests" — she swept the room with her eyes — "I never knew whether she worked in a palace or a hovel!"

"You find us something between the two, Mrs. Moreland?"

"And you, I suppose, Mr. Romney, know nothing of our home at East Orange, of the struggles, and the battles with the world?"

"I know nothing of Brattleboro, Vermont, and the military academy," said Romney.



Mrs. Moreland would have bored him to extinction had his curiosity not been aroused. Why in heaven's name had she come?

Mrs. Moreland adjusted her head in a swan-like position in order to charm Romney from the proper angle, and her attitude said: "I was born in the lap of luxury, Mr. Romney — born to command."

"About Mr. Maughm, for instance," she began. "Mary worked for him five years. I had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Maughm twice only. He motored out to East Orange on New Year's Day, unexpectedly. The pipes had frozen. He was agreeable," she said condescendingly, "and I think his greatest characteristic was his extreme generosity, Mr. Romney. On New Years and Christmas he was unfailingly generous — I may say largely generous." She paused and smiled upon her daughter's employer.

Romney reached over to his table and picked up an ivory paper-cutter, which he held from then on lightly between his fingers.

"This is really my introduction to Mr. Maughm, whose name I scarcely know."

"I am not surprised," said Mary's mother; "I shouldn't have known anything about him or why Mary left his employ, if it had not been for the newspapers —"

Romney held the paper-cutter steadily.

". . . And piecing two and two together," said Mrs. Moreland.

As Mrs. Moreland spoke, he realized how little he knew about Mary — how much he wanted to know. She had swung into his life like a creature from another planet, and Maughms, and Oranges, and distant brothers and actual life as connected with her, were nothing to him. Now in a moment everything might be cleared up for him in a word. Indeed, in these indiscreet words, much had already been revealed.

"You spoke," he said, "of Mr. Maughm's generous gifts. Since they have ceased —" Romney went immediately to this woman's point.

She continued dramatically: "The struggle for existence goes on around you, Mr. Romney; but you are so set apart —"

"Something of it sometimes even reaches here."

"I shouldn't call Mary a miser," said Mrs. Moreland, apparently thinking out her words generously.

A miser! let the years when she held the home together, let the hours of labour, the nights of fatigue, and the self-forgetfulness speak!

"But she has been seized with a passion for investment," said her mother, as though she spoke of a vice, "she is saving money." Mrs. Moreland paused after this, that the enormity of it might sink into the ears of Romney. "And of course," continued the lady from East Orange, "when you assume outside responsibilities like the supporting of" — and she paused — "*Amber Doane* —"

Romney put down the paper-cutter. "Mrs. Moreland," he said, "you ought to write books. Have you ever thought of taking up literature as a profession?"

She smiled fatuously. "I *have* thought of it," she said, "when I read what is written."

Romney touched the bell at his side. He seemed scarcely to have done so before Fenton came in.

"Will you fetch that little book on my writing-table — the small yellow one — and dip a pen in ink and fetch me a blotter?"

As Fenton went out, Romney asked: "How much of a trip is it to East Orange, Mrs. Moreland?"

"Thirty-five minutes in the tube."

"Ah, the tube; but can one motor?"

"Oh, yes," and added: "To show how far apart from the rest of the world a woman can be placed by her

financial position, I have been in a motor but once in five years."

"That is rather a distinction," said Romney, "when you see the butchers' wives in cars they cannot afford. There is something extremely delightful about your exemption."

Mrs. Moreland sipped the sherry that Fenton presented to her, touching the napkin with appreciation.

Romney, opening the little book Fenton had given him, leaned over to his table and wrote for a second on a slender leaf, which he tore out and folded twice.

Mrs. Moreland finished her wine, wiped her mouth with the napkin, and put down the glass.

"It must be a great inspiration," she said, "to live amongst such elegant things." She sighed.

"I have thought it must be a great inspiration to live with Miss Moreland."

"Mary is exactly like her poor father. I never knew where he went or what he was doing, and I was sometimes surprised when he came back."

Romney, lifting his eyebrows, said interrogatively: "Yes?"

He was occupied now solely with how to get her out of the room before she should have told him things that he did and did not wish to hear. Fenton, who had not received the nod of dismissal, waited between Mrs. Moreland's chair and the door. Quite frankly, Romney held out to Mrs. Moreland the little paper he had folded.

"Unfortunately, I have not been Miss Moreland's employer for five years, and neither Christmas nor New Year has come yet into our calendar; but perhaps —" His smile was winning and sweet.

"I don't know how to thank you, Mr. Romney!"

"Please don't try."

"I have payments to meet of which Mary is ignorant."

"I understand. Then perhaps it would be as well, since

you suggested it, Mrs. Moreland, that this visit should be quite between ourselves."

"She would never forgive me, Mr. Romney, never!"

"We won't ask her to."

Fenton delivered Mrs. Moreland to the footman, who was waiting on the other side of the portière, and came directly back to his master, whose face, even to the man who knew him well, was a study.

"Fenton," said Romney, "don't forget that my doctors have told me that if Mrs. Moreland calls again it will not be well for me to see her."

"Quite so, sir."

"Throw open that window wide and let in the fresh air, and I will put on my dressing-gown and my softer shoes; and fetch some tea. Then," he said, "have somebody who has a sense of guide-books look up Brattleboro, Vermont, find out where it is, how long it takes trains to come back from there, what train is likely to come in and where to-night, and go yourself with the motor; and when Miss Moreland gets off the train, take her down to the subway or underground or tube and put her in, and find out how her brother is, and if anything can be done for him or her."

## CHAPTER XX

To Maughm the nervous strain became intolerable; it unfitted him for business; his views of life were distorted. The morning after Mary had left with her mother, he had absorbed himself in planning his deal with the Upjohn Mining people. The state of his affairs obliged him to concentrate his mind on the important details which pressed for attention, but underneath all his thoughts ran twin fires — his anger against his wife for her treachery, which Mary had revealed, and his growing passion for Mary herself.

He had determined to prepare a plan to lay before his wife, which he hoped would solve their mutual problems. It was unfair to himself as a human being to permit the state of affairs to dismember and disorganise him. He would not submit to the mental demoralisation. She would not divorce him, that was clear. Under these circumstances, she must agree to a legal separation.

The muscles round his heart contracted as he thought of how, when once before he had faced his marital disaster, Mary had promised to go with him anywhere! She had evidently changed!

Basil Romney — that was the name of the fellow at the St. Regis for whom Mary was working. He was rich and free. What if he were an invalid — and there swept over him the first fierce rush of jealousy, that is at its bitterest when at its newest.

Sitting in his Club, he formed a plan to lay before his wife. He would offer her half his fortune, the house in town, the place in Newport, if she would set him free — she loved money. Otherwise he would reduce her to a small

income. And if she remained unflinching and hung like death around his neck, he would leave the country.

Late that evening, Maughm went to his house, closed for the summer and under the management of caretakers. He let himself in with his latch-key. In the drawing-room he heard the sound of a woman's voice, and as he entered Cicely Torrance came forward exclaiming :

"Why, Tom, what luck you should have happened in ! I have just asked the caretaker to get me a little supper. Have you eaten ? Won't you eat with me ?"

Maughm wrung her hand warmly.

"I have had a late dinner at the Club, Cicely, but am awfully glad to see you, and I will sit with you."

"I came here from Long Island," said Mrs. Torrance ; "Daisy telegraphed me to meet her here."

"When does Daisy come ?"

"She is up-stairs now," said Mrs. Torrance, nodding toward the hall, and added, "with Doctor Thomas."

"With Doctor Thomas !" echoed Maughm.

"Why, yes, she has been quite ill. Didn't you know ?" Then Mrs. Torrance lifted her eyebrows and laughed. "What a perfect example of united life you are !"

Maughm winced. "Be careful what you say, Cicely. Everything flicks the raw to-night."

Mrs. Torrance made herself comfortable in the corner of a sofa, and Maughm arranged the tray for her on a little table. She ate a chicken sandwich, holding it delicately between her slender fingers, and daintily sipped the iced tea. Maughm opened one of the windows on the street, and the hot air, not yet cooled after sunset, came into the room. Mrs. Maughm had not permitted the house to be made hideous for the summer. The coverings for the furniture were of flowered chintz, and there were pretty hangings at the doors and windows.

"What are you doing in New York in August, Tom ?"

"Terrific business."

"Growing richer and richer?"

"Poorer and poorer, perhaps."

"That won't do for Daisy."

He said somberly: "It may have to. You haven't seen Daisy since the flood, have you, Cicely?"

Mrs. Torrance laughed. "Not since that delightful interview when she accused me of trying to win your affections."

"And yet," he took up a book which lay on the sofa by her side, with her gloves and veil, "you come when she sends for you."

"Oh," said Mrs. Torrance, choosing a small, thin sandwich, "she will always need me more or less, and of course I shall always come."

Maughm by her side said: "By jove!" and opened the book.

"Oh," said Mrs. Torrance, "it is not your kind."

"It is curious that you should have this book, Cicely."

"It is curious," said Mrs. Torrance, "that Romney should find out that I am in America. He always sends me his books."

"Do you know him?"

"Luckily, yes."

"What is he like?"

"Well, he is not like you, my dear Tom," said Mrs. Torrance, smiling at him.

"Have you seen him?"

"I don't know where he is. The book came from his publishers."

"He is at the St. Regis."

"The St. Regis in August?" she echoed. "Well, the papers say he is taking the cure."

Maughm laughed disagreeably. "So that's what they call it, is it?"

Mrs. Torrance looked at him keenly.

"Why," she said smiling, "poor Basil Romney seems to be *persona non grata*. You don't know him. Don't you like his satires?"

"Hang his satires!" said Maughm, and he rose, picked up the tray and for something to do, carried it into the dining-room and came back to Mrs. Torrance, who had Romney's book open in her hand.

"Romney has a heart, Tom — a wonderful one."

"He scores heavily," said Maughm unpleasantly.

"Basil Romney," said Mrs. Torrance, "is capable of renunciation and sacrifice." She shut the book and held it, looking up at Maughm. "And you," she said, "with your determination and your desires, would get what you wanted, if you could, never mind over what ruin."

Maughm stood with his legs apart and hands behind his back, musing. The caretaker came into the room with a glass of water, went to the writing-table, and found a pad and pencil, which she carried up-stairs with her.

"Get what I want," said Maughm below his breath. "Well, you know pretty well what I've got, I think. No one knows better. You have lived under this roof; you have seen the daily life, you know it; and if I wanted a witness, I couldn't have a better one than you. Do you know what Daisy has been doing lately?"

Mrs. Torrance shook her head.

"She has been having a perfectly defenceless and innocent woman followed by detectives, and me as well, I daresay. Maybe there's one of them waiting down on Long Island for you."

"How perfectly disgusting," said Mrs. Torrance quietly. Then asked: "How did you find this out?" Before he could answer, she did so for herself: "The perfectly defenceless girl told you, I suppose."

"That is neither here nor there," said Maughm; "but the end has come, Cicely."



"The end?"

"I am going to make myself free at no matter what cost."

"You will find it difficult, Tom."

"I am prepared for it."

Mrs. Torrance wore a little fan at her waist; she unfurled it and fanned herself measuredly.

"She is perfectly mad about you, Tom."

"Don't," he said, with something like a shudder; "don't!"

"She has become 'hipped' on the subject," said Mrs. Torrance. "She seems to have fallen in love with you all over again."

"Don't call it love."

Maughm sat down by her side. "Cicely, if this goes on, I shall lose my mind. No matter what it costs, I am going to 'cut it out.'"

"I don't believe in divorce," said Mrs. Torrance quietly.

"Would you cage up two human beings like mad beasts for life?"

"Oh, I don't know, Tom; but I don't believe in divorce."

"Well, I do!" He sprang up and walked to and fro between the mantelpiece and the sofa. "And, by heaven, I will have it or a separation! The house suffocates me already—" He stretched out his arms. "I must be free!"

Maughm's gesture for freedom was hardly accomplished, before his arms dropped to his side and he greeted the family physician, who entered the room.

"Can I have a few words with you, Maughm?"

The doctor walked back to the door and closed it behind the portières.

"Certainly," said Maughm; "but you can say what you have to say, doctor, before Mrs. Torrance; you know she is my wife's most intimate friend," and added, looking

at the doctor's face with a singular leap of the heart: "Is Mrs. Maughm very ill?"

"I am going back to Bar Harbour to-night. I came on solely to see Mrs. Maughm." He looked intently at the husband.

"In heaven's name, what is the matter with Daisy?" said Maughm heavily.

"Didn't you know that she is going to have a child?"

Maughm turned white as his linen; his hand went down to the back of the chair nearest him. Mrs. Torrance on the sofa gave a little exclamation and rose. They stood all three together.

"But that," said the doctor, "is not the most serious aspect of her condition; her heart is extremely weak, and it is a question if she can bear it and live." He glanced from the husband to Mrs. Torrance. "She will require the utmost care, the utmost consideration. If she has any whims, they must be gratified; and," nodding at Maughm, "I fancy you have everything with which to do so."

There was no response from Maughm, whose fingers had gone down deep into the upholstery of the chair.

"I advised Mrs. Maughm," said the doctor, "not to return to Newport, but to go, possibly, to some place like Long Island, where she could be in reach of town; but you will, of course, do as you think best about this."

"Does Daisy know how serious her condition is?" Mrs. Torrance asked.

"Certainly not," Doctor Thomas responded sharply. "You could hardly expect me to tell a woman she is likely to die at any moment," and he turned to the husband. "Any excitement would be likely to prove fatal, so keep her shielded, if possible."

Mrs. Torrance looked at Maughm.

"A child," he said. "*Is it true that she is going to have a child?*"

## CHAPTER XXI

MAUGHM began to consider the aspect of an existence which would be radically changed by the advent of a child. His wife became interesting, and if Daisy Maughm had been a human woman, with a human woman's heart, their domestic problems would have been solved; but the news which meant so much to him was unwelcome to his wife. She wanted freedom, selfish enjoyments, and undisturbed supremacy. She wanted to amuse herself, wanted to look beautiful. She was selfish: she wanted to be selfish.

She didn't want a child, but she knew that she had now a tremendous hold over her husband. Each day developed a new desire in Daisy Maughm, and more than ever she planned and projected schemes for her amusement and extravagance.

Maughm took an expensive place at Mt. Kisco and added the rental of the Newport house and the Mt. Kisco house to his burden. "Upjohn" became absorbing, and there were times when he seemed to look down into an abyss of ruin.

During the week he was in town; he went up for Sundays to Mt. Kisco, finding the house full as a rule. He rarely saw his wife alone, and when he did, he found her nervous and capricious.

Through the maze of his entangled thoughts there constantly rose the image of the child. Down in Wall Street, when his ears were deafened by the menace of disaster, he thought of the coming of this child, which in coming should find things straight and decent, and it awakened a keen desire in him to prepare for an existence for which he was responsible and bend to the task of bringing harmony out

of chaos. He effaced himself in his home. He bore his wife's caprices, spoiled her for fear his refusals to grant her often unreasonable requests might menace her health, and did it all for the child.

Daisy filled her house with people, and at eleven in the morning they danced the tango — got up from luncheon to dance between the courses — danced until morning again — Maughm's sleep was broken by the sound of late violins: and through the whole thing passed the figure of the child — like a saint to him, an angel. . . .

After their first conversation on the subject, in which he had been obliged to wipe his wife's tears and promise to send up to her from Tiffany's a yellow diamond, they had never reverted to it again.

At the first strain of the music at their first week-end party, he had said to Cicely Torrance: "She won't dance, will she?"

"Heavens, no, Tom! Don't worry."

"It would kill her."

"Don't suggest to her that she should not," said Mrs. Torrance; "you know her spirit of contradiction."

"Watch her," said Maughm, and Mrs. Torrance had promised sympathetically to do what she could.

He came down-stairs very early one Monday morning to eat his solitary breakfast at seven o'clock, before taking his motor to New York. The dining-room gave on a broad Terrace, round which clustered the red and gold brilliance of the October woods in glorious flame of colour and changing leaf. At six o'clock the last dancers had gone to bed. He had scarcely closed his eyes, but in spite of that there was something in the fresh, sparkling morning, in the early sunlight, that refreshed his spirits. He was physically so strong and so normal that it was a hard thing to crush him down; he was vital, and underneath the burden he was alive.

He was eager to get down to town. It was a long drive, and he looked forward to it for putting his mind in order, in contemplating the affairs that should meet him there. He finished his breakfast, got into his overcoat, took his gloves and stick and hat from the man servant, and went out to get into the motor. Sitting in the corner of it, dressed for town, a Pekinese dog in her arms, was his wife.

"Daisy! You are not going to New York?"

"Yes, I am, Tom; get in; don't bother!"

He stood with the door open. "You can't go to New York, my dear."

"Get in, Tom. Don't fuss! Of course I can go!"

He leaned forward toward her. "Daisy, it's a long, hard drive to town. You don't have to go. There is nothing that can't be brought to you. Please, *please!*"

Mrs. Maughm held the little dog between her white gloved hands. Her beautifully cut face was as cold and hard as a diamond. She was very pale. She had taken off her ball dress to get into her street costume.

"Don't thwart me, Tom!"

"I just want you to be reasonable, Daisy; you ought not, you know. It's not right. You are tired to death; you've been up all night."

She said quietly, with that determination he knew so well: "Of course, if you stand in the door of the car, we can't start; and if you stand there all day, I shall go at the end of it; and Doctor Thomas said that the worst thing in the world —"

Maughm shrugged his shoulders. He knew her, he knew her well; he got into the car and shut the door sharply, and they swung out over the blue gravel of the drive. They slipped along out of the place under the glowing trees, under the young sky of the early day.

It was a long time before either of them spoke. Maughm was trying in a boyish, unselfish way to think of something

he might say to her that would touch her. There was no resentment in his heart; he had gone beyond that; he didn't think that he could ever feel that again toward his wife, but he was helpless before the mental problem of her obstinacy and selfishness. He put out his hand and touched the silky head of the little dog.

"He is a nice little thing, isn't he?"

"I adore him," said Mrs. Maughm.

"I believe you care more for dogs than you do for children, Daisy."

"You know how I feel on that subject; don't let's agitate it!"

He withdrew his hand.

"There was a reporter from *Town Topics*," said Mrs. Maughm. "He said it was the smartest country ball of the season. I hope Parsons will get everybody off all right."

"You should have had some extra cushions in the motor, Daisy."

Maughm tucked the rug around her knees carefully. He was thinking only of the long, fatiguing road.

Mrs. Maughm, having gained her point, her mind fixed on whatever she wished to accomplish in town, thanked him graciously.

After some time, she said to him: "Where do you think we can go this winter, Tom?"

"This winter?" he repeated absently, for his thoughts had been elsewhere. "Why, nowhere. You will have to stay pretty quiet in New York."

"Oh!" she exclaimed violently, "you never let me forget, do you! I wanted to take a dahabiyeh and go up the Nile — have a little party with amusing people."

"I am sorry," he said, "it wouldn't be wise. Another year."

"It is unfair," she said and turned her face away from him. "There is nothing to interfere with your going where

you like, is there? Or your pleasures! You can go east or west or north or south! It is unfair!"

She had not spoken so frankly since their first conversation. Now she turned violently to him: "You know, you know, I don't like children. I don't want them. They mean nothing to me, nothing!"

"Try," he said quietly, "to take the drive as peacefully as you can, Daisy. It is tiresome at best. We will talk of something else."

Her hands trembled as she caressed her dog. He knew there were tears in her eyes; he was afraid that she would cry. He tried to obliterate himself in the corner of the car, and they drove for a long time without speaking, and in the confusion of his mind, every now and then there passed a little, intangible shape that seemed ever and ever farther away, and he was miserable, impotent, nailed to the cross — as it were — of the woman's antagonism.

## CHAPTER XXII

AMBER waited in Mr. Romney's drawing-room for Mary to appear and explain why she had been telephoned for at her rest hour. Amber had never been in so beautiful a place as the drawing-room of this apartment. It made her think of a museum, and if she had not been hurried and hungry, she would have enjoyed wandering from one lovely object to another. The environment was a surprise. Amber knew nothing whatever of Mary's employer beyond his name, but when Mary had sent for her to come, she had dropped everything to obey. She had given up her heart and soul to Mary.

Something of the other woman's calm and strength had lingered with Amber after her friend had gone. Mary's nature, where the depths were soundless, had a wonderful effect on the lighter, effervescent, capricious girl. As she stood waiting to find out why she had been sent for, she was thinking of Mary, and her face, as she thought, softened, and her splendid eyes became gentle.

Of Fenton, who crossed the floor of the room to her, she asked: "Does Miss Moreland know I am here?"

"Mr. Romney will see you, miss."

"Mr. Romney will see me, will he?" she replied tartly; "I will see Miss Moreland, if you please!"

Fenton gave her a penetrating glance and disapproved of her; his tone showed it. He drew apart the curtains between the drawing-room and the next apartment.

"Will you be so good as to step this way, miss? Mr. Romney's waiting."



At Fenton's elbow she said: "There must be some mistake. Miss Moreland 'phoned me —"

The curtains were in Fenton's hands. In the same tone with which he would have announced a duchess, he said: "Miss Doane!"

Amber crossed the floor like a breeze. Romney, from his chair by the window, held out his hand.

"Come in, Miss Doane, come in! This is awfully good of you. Fenton, put a chair there against the light."

Amber did not take the chair, and she regarded the gentleman's extended hand merely as a graceful gesture.

"There is some mistake," she insisted. "Miss Moreland 'phoned me at the hospital; I came to see her."

"Miss Moreland," said Romney, "has gone to Brattleboro, Vermont. Why she should prefer it to New York, I cannot think. Brattleboro — it sounds noisy — but I believe her brother is ill. People like Miss Moreland," he said, speaking to Amber as though he had known her for twenty years, nodding and smiling at her, "should have neither brothers nor sisters, and I think I will add mothers, Miss Doane" (emphasizing the word), "chiefly mothers! Don't you agree with me?"

Amber was used to invalids. For a moment it flashed over her mind that this delicate-looking gentleman was slightly "touched."

"Sit down, Miss Doane."

"There is some mistake," she repeated; "I am not available for a case."

"Unfasten your cloak," said Romney, "and let me see the uniform of mercy. I can't tell you how I adore trained nurses, Miss Doane. When I was a boy, they asked me what I wanted for a Christmas box, and I said: 'A trained nurse.'"

Amber had not understood Fenton's tone, and there was a half-mocking note in Basil Romney's voice, together with

the unusual reception, that embarrassed her. She held herself stiffly on her guard, as she was always now.

"If Mary is in Brattleboro, I won't wait."

Romney leaned forward in his chair, amused at her dignity and more than delighted with her physical appearance.

"Of course, you think I am a little crazy, Miss Doane. I will try to explain: you won't stay if I don't. I begged of Miss Moreland to ask you to come to see me."

"To come to see you?"

"Yes," he indicated the chair again. "Won't you sit down?"

"Did you want a trained nurse?"

"Awfully. I always do!"

Amber sat down on the edge of the chair, very much as though there were a pin in it. His individuality began to penetrate her.

"I am in the training school of the Nursing Home; I can't go to a case."

"I didn't send for you in your capacity of trained nurse, Miss Doane. . . . Miss Moreland has told you what an autocrat I am."

"She has never spoken of you at all."

Romney gave a start and laughed. "Of course she hasn't. She doesn't speak, does she? How stupid of me! But I have heard of you!"

Amber caught him up quickly. "You have? Why should you?" And then added with spirit: "Mary does speak after all, does she?" and rose from her chair.

"Please, Miss Doane, *please!* Miss Moreland doesn't speak. You know her as well as I do. I say four hundred words to her silences. She has been kindness itself to me. I am alone in New York and an invalid. I have asked her about her friends—she has spoken of you alone—I was curious to see you."

Amber, who had been listening to him intently, repeated the last words with spirit: "Curious to see me?"

"Interested."

Amber Doane tossed her head like an angry child. She put her hands to the fastening of her cloak as though it might undo of itself and slip back against her will.

"Well," she said, "I never heard of such a thing! You just sent for me like that!"

Romney repeated penitently: "Just like that —"

"I call it cheek!"

"You are perfectly right," he admitted, "awful cheek."

Leaning forward in his chair — the only effort he could make to approach her — he continued, trying to win her: "A queen came to see me once, in England."

Amber, still holding her cloak, said sharply: "Did you send for her?"

"Something that I wrote seemed to call her, I expect, for she came of her own accord."

Amber's handsome lip curled.

"I don't know anything about queens," she said, "but the next time you want a nurse out of a hospital at her meal time, just to look at her because you are curious — well, write: perhaps she will hear you call."

She swung on her heel, crossed the floor quickly, her blue dress bright beneath her long cloak.

Romney implored: "Miss Doane, Miss Doane," and then called to her across the room: "*Mademoiselle, je vous prie de revenir.*"

The nurse stopped at the door as though she had been shot; then came back quickly enough across the room to Romney. Her face was pale, as she said in a low tone:

"Why did you speak to me in French?"

Romney, very much intrigued by this, said: "I wanted you to come back and asked you to do so in a language that I understand you love."

"Mary told you that I liked French," she said, in an agitated voice. She drew a long breath and bit her lip. "How awful of her, how awful of her!"

Amber was now gone out of the room like a storm, and in Romney's sensitive hearing the front door of the apartment shut with a slam.

When Fenton went in, he found his master leaning back in his chair as white as a ghost.

"I should never have let the young woman stay so long, Mr. Basil." He poured a glass of sherry from the decanter on Romney's table.

When Romney had drunk the wine, he said, with his eyes still closed: "Telephone to the florist's to send a box of flowers to Miss Amber Doane at the Nursing Hospital. Choose" — he thought a moment — "roses, Fenton, red roses."

Fenton took the glass from his master's hand.

"With your card, sir?"

"No. Find a copy of the last book of verse and have it sent with the flowers."

"Yes, Mr. Basil."

"See to it, at once, and I don't want her called 'that young woman,' Fenton."

The man's look was on his master's face, where the lids were down.

"Very good, sir."

"I have offended her, Fenton, I think."

"That is scarcely possible, sir."

"I am too spoiled; you have spoilt me; every one has spoilt me."

"No one could know you, sir, and not do for you."

"I thought I could have everything, everything!"

"You should have, sir."

"And I know, Fenton," he opened his eyes — they were profoundly sad and there was around his mouth a slight

smile no less tragic — “and I know that I can have nothing.”

When Mary Moreland arrived at her usual hour the next afternoon, she was admitted by Fenton. Romney was lying at full length on the sofa and the room was in semi-darkness. She knew that Romney was to give her merely a few verbal instructions and that she was not to stay.

“And she is not at all like her name, Miss Moreland.”

“Amber? Then she came; you saw her?”

“Not in the least like her name.”

“Fenton did not tell me she had been here.”

“A hurricane — rather, I should say, a thunderstorm.”

Mary didn't repeat the words “hurricane, thunderstorm,” or any words: she waited.

“Find her and see her,” said Romney, “if you can; and beyond all, use your grace and your charm, Miss Moreland. Pray her to come again.”

Mary did not say: “I don't understand, Mr. Romney,” but went out quietly to do as he asked.

## CHAPTER XXIII

MARY, at the hospital, was told she could not see Miss Doane at once and waited for Amber in her little bedroom.

She occupied her thoughts in putting together the facts of her own existence, piece by piece; then, standing back, she regarded it as a whole. In the old days (like days in the calendar of another person's life), she thought only about getting up, going to business, transacting what she had to do faithfully and expeditiously, and going home. Now she could reflect, differentiate. Through Romney's picturesque and delightful mind, she was coming in contact with other delightful minds and discovering that she had one of her own. So many of the men and women of whom she was reading now, under his direction, appeared to be living their lives for love. Books that were written without the love problem were dead and lifeless — how its flame ran through the dry grass of things! Going home on the subway, coming in on the train, to and fro from East Orange, and here and there, she thought of the problems of the heroines of the books she read and what they would have done in her place and she in theirs.

Her position with Romney meant a great deal to her — everything. When he went back to England — now and then he spoke of it and he always said: "When we go back, Miss Moreland," smiling. . . .

She had not seen Maughm since that August day down in his office, where she had gone to tell him about his wife's undignified course of action. She had tried faithfully and honestly not to think of him. It was a task that she was setting for herself — to go on, to crush out, and to

occupy herself with other things. There were times when Mary could say to herself quite boldly: "I shall take care never to see him again. I shall probably not see him again." Then there were other times: "If I see him again," and others: "When I see him again." Here she lingered. She had not been able to bring herself up to that big, sharp break, to the idea that she could or would have force enough to wipe him out of her life. She didn't want to do so; there wasn't any doubt about that. Back, back, away back and down deep, Mary kept thrusting and crushing, living her life and doing her duty; but now and again there would come across her hearing just that word that Maughm had said as she passed through the door — "Mary" — and when that word crossed her mental hearing, her peace of mind was disturbed. The Maughms were at Mt. Kisco. Mary knew that, she had seen it in the paper; and whenever she saw the name of Maughm, it shook her quiet existence like a little earthquake.

Amber's question came back to her many times: "What do you think about life, Mary?" Mary Moreland made no demand upon life. She was unlike Amber, whose very attitude of mind was a constant demand. Life came to Mary and claimed her, but Amber with outstretched hands went out to it and implored it.

There was a consolation to Mary in the fact that she was really useful to Mr. Romney. Even Fenton turned to her and asked her advice. The rooms in his apartment to which she went daily became something like home to her. She hardly dared think how much she enjoyed her work with him. When he went back to England, what should she do? His dependence upon her made him dear to her. She thought of him as one thinks of a fragile child. Generally there was nothing weak about Romney. Indeed, his mind and spirit were so distinguished and everything he did and said was so graceful, so different, that she began to

place him, little by little, apart from every one she had ever known — certainly above every one she had ever met. She thought of Amber learning French in the night-school and said to herself: "I am learning everything, every day." His allusions quickened her wit, awakened her curiosity. She longed to know about the things to which he so lightly referred; and as she grew to know him better, now and then she hazarded a timid question which never failed to delight him, and he recommended books to her and gave her, in the wittiest, most mocking way imaginable, bits of information, bits of knowledge.

She did not compare him with Maughm, ever. For some delicate reason, she never brought them together in her thoughts, any more than she would have wished to bring them together in reality. Once or twice during the summer, Romney was ill for a day or two, and knowing that he would wish her to do so, she came with her usual punctuality and remained waiting, lest he might have some errand for her to do. And two or three times during the day, when she knew that he was refused to every one, Fenton would come out to her and say: "Mr. Romney asked if you were there, miss." And Mary understood that it was, in its way, a comfort to the lonely invalid to know he was not deserted.

As she thought about these things — Maughm, in the excitement of his life down-town, a big, vital man, living a vital life . . . and Romney — the door opened, and Amber burst into the room.

Although busied all the afternoon with her work among the sick and absorbed in the details of her profession, Amber burst in now as though not a moment had elapsed between her parting with Romney and this. She came directly over to Mary, and without greeting her, folded her arms across her gingham dress and her stiff, starched apron.



"You think I am some sort of a show, don't you?"

"Amber!"

"Not much of a show in a hospital dress — I ought to have done better than that — my old clothes were better!"

"Don't!" said Mary. "You're crazy."

"I am not much," said the girl, her voice shaking. "You haven't any reason to think I am much, but I am better than that, Mary Moreland — to be sent for over a telephone by a swell just to be looked at. My God!" and she was shaking so that she sat down on the side of the bed near Mary and held on to the knob. "Why," she said, her voice breaking with each word, "you know all about me — you think you do. I have told you lots I ought not to have told anybody. But to think you would —" and she could not go on, the chaos and disturbance of her thoughts were so great. She wouldn't listen to Mary's attempt to speak, shaking her head violently, and in so doing let fall bright tears that sprang to her eyes.

"How could you tell him about me," she said. "Why did you tell him about me? Because he is rich and has got all sorts of swell things and everything he wants — sitting there to look at what he wants to see — No, no, let me go on! Well, I am too — I was going to say good, but I will say proud — for that." She threw up her charming head. "'Curious about me,' he said." She laughed. Her lips curled as they had done in Romney's room. "Wanted to see if I looked like my name! What is my name to him, Mary Moreland? And he knew about French!" Her voice trembled so on these words that she could hardly articulate, and her lips quivered.

"Amber, dear!"

The girl pushed away the friendly hand violently.

"Why," she said, "when everybody knew in East Orange, I thought I would just die to have them know; when my mother knew, I thought I would die; then father;

and here in the hospital nobody knew, and I could go on all right; and all this summer — oh! it has been awfully stupid, tiresome, rotten work — taking care of a half-crazy old man, in a dead hole of a town on the sea; but nobody knew, and I could hold up my head.” Her hands, as she clasped them together, were white to the nails. She nodded at Mary. “And then to go in before that swell and have him jolly me like that! Oh!” she cried, “I hate him, I hate him!”

Mary Moreland had forcibly possessed herself of the tense hands. “And you hate me, too?”

Amber heard it; her nervous tension was so great that she would have caught hold of anything. She did not now push Mary’s hands away; she seized them convulsively.

“I can’t hate you,” she said. “You’ve done a lot for me; but now you have done this!”

Mary had drawn her chair close up to her friend. “Done what?”

“Told him!”

“I have never told Mr. Romney anything about you, Amber, except that you were my friend.”

A nervous tremor swept through the nurse’s body; she winked her eyes fast, and the tears fell.

“He is an invalid,” said Mary quietly. “He is one of the kindest, gentlest people in the world. He is a great friend of mine. He gets lonely — they won’t let him see people — and he just wanted to have a little brightness — just wanted to see a new face, that’s all.”

Amber put her hand to the pocket of her apron, took out her handkerchief, and wiped her eyes.

“Why did he send for me like that?”

“I ’phoned you, Amber. I meant to be there. It’s too bad.”

“He knew about French!”

“Well, there’s no harm in a girl liking French, is there?”

The other repeated the words tremulously. "Harm? Well, I guess you forget!"

"No," said Mary, "but you don't see things clear." And with wonderful tact she switched the girl's contemplation of herself to Romney.

"You must have been awfully rude, Amber. He is not used to anything but kindness. When I got there, he was so ill they will probably have to send for the doctor, and he won't be able to work for days. I thought you would cheer him up."

The girl on the bed laughed harshly. "He's got style!" she said, "hasn't he? To just sit there and count his money and send for people here and there to cheer him up!"

"He counts his money for others," said Mary Moreland. "He does good with it all over the place. If you could see the letters I have written at his dictation and the cheques I have sent to the poor! If you could see how he bears his pain!"

"Oh, I've seen enough pain," said the nurse; "I am sick of people bearing things! I want to see a little of the other side."

"You think too much of what you want," said Mary quietly, and it was the first reproach she had ever made her friend.

"I haven't had much," said the other.

"I don't know," said Mary slowly and looking at her fully, "you have taken a great deal right out of life." She waited.

"You never judged me before," said the other girl, drawing back.

"I am not judging you now," said Mary Moreland. "I am just telling you to give for a little while and see what you get back."

Amber looked down into her lap. There was a silence between them. She raised her eyes to her friend; her face

had become natural again, and there was a look on it of greater humility, as she asked: "Then he doesn't know everything?"

"Why," said Mary simply, "I don't see how you can ask me such a question!"

Amber slipped down from the bed on her knees beside Mary and put both her arms round her friend, and lifting her face to hers, said ardently:

"Mary, forgive me. I just get wild sometimes. It is like a storm set loose inside of me. I don't know what it means, and sometimes I am afraid."

Mary drew back a little, looking down at the expressive face.

"You think I don't understand, Amber."

"Forgive me."

Mary bent down and kissed her.

## CHAPTER XXIV

As Mary came out of the hospital, she saw a familiar motor standing at the curb. She knew the car and the man well, and as she realised that Maughm's motor was in front of the hospital, the shock of apprehension was so great that she could hardly walk up to the chauffeur.

"Anybody hurt, Rufus?"

Maughm himself, who had come quickly out of the hospital behind her, put his hand on the door of the motor, opened it, and answered her: "Nobody's hurt. Will you get in?"

She had not seen him in two months. The vivid colour rushed to her face; she was immensely relieved.

"I was afraid, when I saw the motor here —"

"Please get in."

"Oh, no, Mr. Maughm!"

"Get in!"

She could not disobey his voice, and his face, with its tense, strained expression, commanded her even more forcibly. She got into the car. Maughm gave his directions, seated himself by her side, and shut the door.

The motor crossed Madison and Fifth Avenues and went toward the Seventy-Second Street entrance to the park. She should be on her way down-town to her train, and they were going in the opposite direction, but Mary did not think of her own direction, or of her train, or of herself at all. She thought of nothing but Maughm's face.

With his head a little bent, his hands clasped tightly together in their grey gloves, he sat there with his face set. To have seen him like this down in the old familiar room of

the office, Mary would have been sure that things were in very bad shape "up at the house."

She did not say: "You seem to be in trouble, Mr. Maughm." She was more to the point than this — she made the offer that is precious: "Is there anything I can do?"

The man in his corner turned to her like lightning, and as Mary met his eyes she saw a film there, that in another man would have meant tears.

"My God!" he exclaimed, "I have reached out for you twice. There must be something you can do!"

She had been forced into the motor against her will. She was in the company of a man with whom for her to be seen meant scandal. Only the day before another detective had been out in East Orange. She thought only of the man.

"If there is anything I can do," she said gently, "I would be glad."

"Mrs. Maughm and I were motoring down from Mt. Kisco. My wife fainted; our house in town is in the hands of decorators; I took her to the hospital."

"I am sorry. Is Mrs. Maughm very ill?"

"She was up all night at a ball," said Maughm, "until we started in at seven."

"Perhaps it is just being a little tired," said Mary.

They drove through the park and out of it, turned to the left under the elevated and up Broadway.

Mary was surprised that Maughm should be so overwhelmed by this illness of his wife — he must have grown to love her. The realisation didn't please her as it should have done.

Maughm, whose response to her had been made in a low and tense voice, continued:

"You ask me if you can help me. Can you tell me how to make a wife a human, feeling woman? Can you tell

me how to find her heart, if she has one? Can you tell me what to do and whose fault it is?" He could not, for some reason, frankly tell her the secret. He went on: "You know how crazy I have been about children. You have heard me say a dozen times that I wished I had a son."

Maughm looked out of the window to the right, as the car went along the trolley tracks.

"Mrs. Maughm doesn't want a child." His expression hardened. "Why, I am a chap on a desert island looking for something that will never come. It brings a queer feeling —" he turned his face toward Mary — "to think there might be a little life which could be yours and yet over which you have no power."

"Have you talked like this to Mrs. Maughm?"

He laughed shortly. "I have no influence whatsoever over my wife!"

They drove for a few moments in silence. The car flew along toward Washington Bridge. The lights were being lit.

"I am carrying a tremendous financial burden," said Maughm, talking now to the woman in his office, who had known all his affairs so well. "I need my strength for Wall Street — I find nothing to help me anywhere!"

To a woman who loves there is nothing more appealing than the need of a strong man.

"You think I am insufferably weak, don't you?"

"I wasn't thinking that."

He had that sense of security in her presence that he had always recognised.

"A man's needs," he said, "are pretty big, Miss Moreland. A man wants some things with all of him, or he isn't a man. We would be moles and grubs if we didn't want and crave, and, by jove! when you are a live, demanding, human being and get nothing" — he made a comprehensive gesture with his hands and turned fully toward her.

They crossed the bridge. The sky was red above the

river and the water cut like steel through the warm light. Its reflection fell on Maughm's face; he looked ruddy and strong. "You are looking very well," said he.

"I am very well, thank you, and will you tell Rufus to drive to the nearest subway, Mr. Maughm? I must take the train for the tube."

"No," he replied, "I am going to drive you down to Thirty-Fourth Street myself," and gave the order.

"There are no tragedies in your life. Everywhere you go, you bring good. I have envied that writing man a dozen times. If you saw what I have down in the office in your place." He smiled. "Come back, Mary Moreland."

The lamps were lit, hundreds of them, and on the top of the graceful iron stems they hung like luminous grapes in the clear atmosphere. They shone lemon yellow, warm orange, and here and there were set a cluster violet as lilac flowers. The motor turned to the left in the direction of Riverside Drive. They sped along for a few moments in silence, and Maughm began to realise the fact that she was there with him after a long absence. He was at home in her presence. There were many things he found himself wanting to tell her.

"You don't know," he said slowly, "how hard I have had to struggle to keep you out of my mind."

Mary faintly smiled. "You mustn't think of me at all."

"You are right," he said shortly, "I musn't; but you don't know as well as I do what that means."

To Mary, he was — as he sat there — the expression of need, and everything in her called out to answer him, but there was no sign of this on her quiet, lovely face. Indeed, she was so serene that she brought him back out of all his personal perplexities straight to her. A faint smile crossed his face. He nodded his head slightly. Maughm had been living lately away from his thought of Mary.

"You see, I am trying to put things through."



"Yes," she said.

"I have been trying to pull the thing together."

"I knew you would."

"I am pulling all alone."

She scarcely dared to speak for fear her sympathy would colour her tone.

"I have not let myself think about you!"

"There isn't any reason why you should, Mr. Maughm."

"Don't think that I am unconscious of what a brute I have been to you. In order to save myself, I came near wrecking your life!"

Mary looked away from him and said quietly: "I don't think you really did."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, I don't think you could wreck my life."

"It was a pretty close call."

"No," she said, "I guess each one of us stands on his own feet."

The woman at his side was a different woman from the girl of whom only a few months ago he had asked everything. He couldn't ask such a thing now.

They turned down into the city, and neither of them spoke, but the feelings of the man in her presence had begun to change. When he had met her at the hospital, he had been absorbed in his anxiety for the life of his child, absorbed in his own affairs; and nevertheless, subtly, quietly and surely, the influence and presence of this woman entered into the sanctuary of his heart and soul. Her realness, her strength, her companionship — why, they were wonderful.

He leaned over to her and took both her hands between his own and again said her name, as he had said it in his office: "Mary!"

She was able to meet his eyes without trouble, quietly and gravely.

“I am trying,” he said, pausing between each word, “to put things through.”

She did not answer him. She was perfectly silent, but he knew that she understood.

Rufus stopped the car at Thirty-Fourth Street, at the subway entrance, and Maughm got out and helped Mary from the motor. As he did so, Mary looked up and instinctively put her hand on his arm.

“Why,” she said, “over there in that motor is the private detective that has been hanging around our house in East Orange! And there is a woman with him. It is — it is —” she leaned forward — “it is my mother!”

## CHAPTER XXV

MRS. MORELAND had dabbled in mystery, adoring a secret. She deposited Romney's cheque in the bank and with all sheets to the wind sailed at a fine speed over the sea of life. Some of her debts she paid in self defence. Parcels were smuggled out of sight, and if she could have moved into a larger house and refurnished it without Mary's knowledge, she would have done so.

Mary, possessed of the weapons that Mrs. Moreland could have used well — beauty and youth — was a constant irritation to her mother. She said to her daughter acridly :

"If I had had your looks and your figure, I would have married a millionaire. A woman should receive everything. A man should shower gifts upon her."

"Women don't feel like that nowadays," said Mary.

She took out a bit of paper on which she had been making a few calculations.

"Mr. Maughm ought to make a splendid reparation to you," said her mother.

Mary interrupted her. "My salary is one hundred and twenty dollars, and your income is a hundred, and you must have spent five hundred dollars last month."

Mrs. Moreland coloured. "I have the talent of making a dollar go five times as far as the average woman does."

Mary looked at her gravely. "You have the talent of spending five times as much as we have."

A few months ago, Mrs. Moreland would have quailed : now she was building an edifice of which she was the supreme mistress — a huge mental house, in which she sat enthroned.

Before her she saw a little figure that was Mary. Mary, in her mother's estimation, was dwindling.

Mrs. Moreland said superbly: "I have borne almost enough from you!"

"What have you borne from me?"

"Your triumphant pride!"

"I have nothing to be proud of."

"Because you are a working woman, making your own living, you are intolerant; you criticise your mother simply because she is a woman."

"I am a woman too."

"A girl who begins at sixteen to go in and out on ferry boats and trains filled by crowds loses something of her sex."

A smile crossed Mary's lips. "Lose something of her sex!" The woman she was, the power she had, the way she drew — Maughm and another man as well!

Mary was on her way to town and paused at the door before going for her train.

"I just wanted to say that when I come home, I will look over the accounts, mother."

A flame sprang into her mother's cheeks. Mrs. Moreland said between her whitening lips: "You will not look over my accounts, Mary Moreland!"

"Why?"

Mrs. Moreland's voice trembled. "I have passed the age where my daughter — where a woman —" she paused.

"I haven't time to discuss it now," said Mary. "I will be late for my train."

That night, when Mrs. Moreland — who herself had gone to town — came back, she slipped into the dining-room and was pouring out a glass of water for herself at the side-board when Mary opened the dining-room door.

"Will you come into the parlour a few moments? I have something to say to you, mother."

Mrs. Moreland drank the glass of water deliberately, put the glass down, and followed her daughter into the parlour. There was a gravity and coldness on Mary's face that might have given a woman less absorbed in her own opinion than was Mrs. Moreland occasion to think.

"If it is about the accounts," said Mrs. Moreland, "spare yourself the trouble. I am quite able to run this little establishment successfully without any interference, Mary. If I were not a capable woman, an executive woman — if I were a weak, silly, extravagant —"

"It isn't about the accounts."

Mrs. Moreland took off her things with the precision of an old maid. All her wearing apparel was new, and each time she put it on or took it off, the articles gave her exquisite satisfaction. There was even an excitement in the thought that they were not all paid for. At any moment there might be a cataclysm. She was so keyed up by the double life she was leading that it was as though she were constantly under a stimulant.

"Sit down there," said Mary, "on the sofa," indicating it. Her mother did as she was told, her eyebrows slightly raised, as if to say: "I will sit for my own convenience, but as for yielding one mental point to you, Mary —"

Mary took a stiff chair, her hands clasped on the back. Looking full at her mother with her fine grey eyes, she said simply:

"You spoke about my triumphant pride, mother. I didn't have much to-day when I saw my own mother in a taxicab with a private detective, following me."

Mrs. Moreland's jaw dropped. This matter-of-fact statement, this sudden ripping off of the lid of her box of secrets, the girl's unmoved demeanour, knocked her weapons out of her hands. But Mrs. Moreland was not an intrigante for nothing.

"What did you think became of my pride when I saw

my own daughter having a clandestine meeting with a married man?"

"I don't know where your pride was, mother. I think it must have gone a long while ago."

Mrs. Moreland's reserve gave way. "What do you think," she exclaimed, "of the position you have put your mother in, Mary Moreland! What do you think of a woman of my age and my standing being placed in the attitude toward the world that your intrigues are placing me in! You have kept your affairs secret from me! I don't know what you do; I don't know where you go! I don't know whom you see; I have never known! You are private secretary for five years to a man of the world. He showers presents on you. And all of a sudden you become private secretary to another rich man, whose indifference to us is as marked as Mr. Maughm's generosity was marked!" Mrs. Moreland paused here.

"The papers are full of the Maughm scandal in the household of your former employer. Meanwhile, our house is made the object of visits from a detective agency. And through it all, you walk unconcerned, silent as a monument, and with the airs of a grand duchess! What position do you think it places me in, Mary?"

"I think," said Mary, "that the only thing which can place a woman in an unpleasant position is when she is doing something she ought not to do."

This quiet, poised philosophy pricked a hole in Mrs. Moreland's balloon.

"Your presence in that automobile was justifiable?"

"I met Mr. Maughm at the hospital," said his former secretary, "where he had been to see his sick wife. He drove me down to the tube." She had never explained anything to her mother before. The very fact of her doing so made the occasion unnatural. With her eyes fixed on her mother, she waited.

"I went on with that man," said her mother caustically, "to protect you!"

Mary waited.

"He had been hanging around here for days," said Mrs. Moreland, "to my disgust and fury. I have not bothered you about it, because I thought you had enough on your mind."

Still Mary waited.

"The other day I went out boldly and asked him about his business. It was a clear case of blackmail. He offered to sell me his information about my own daughter!" She stopped, watching the girl's unchanged face.

"Of course," said Mrs. Moreland, with a slight smile, "I was equal to him. I understood him perfectly; I read him like a book, and I played with him like a cat plays with a mouse."

She was, as she passed her life in doing, making herself the heroine of her own romance.

"When he told me that he was going to take a cab and follow you to-day, of my own accord I suggested going with him. But," went on Mrs. Moreland, looking at her daughter sternly, "I went expecting to see him foiled in his own ends. Nothing could have surprised and shocked me more than to see you, as I did, get out of Mr. Maughm's motor. I was planning," she finished, "his defeat and confusion; on the contrary, he triumphed over us."

"Did you pay that man any money, mother?"

"I —"

"Did you pay him any money? And," she continued, "how much money did you pay him?"

Mrs. Moreland, hypnotised by the stronger will, was impressed into telling the truth. "A hundred dollars."

"A hundred dollars! Why, it is blackmail! Mr. Maughm must stop it." The girl rose from her chair and stood before her mother accusingly. "You paid him a

hundred dollars to spy upon me! Well, never mind that. Where did you get the money, mother?"

"Mary," her mother began, calling together the forces that Mary's figure was scattering, "I refuse to be catechised by —"

"It won't do you any good to beat around the bush," said Mary Moreland, "I am going to know the truth, mother! Mr. Maughm didn't give it to you — I know that!"

Her mother rose from the sofa. "I am going to my own room," she said grandiloquently. "I refuse to remain here to be put through any such inquisition."

The daughter stepped between her and the door. The colour was beating in Mary's face. She did the unwonted thing of putting her hand on her mother's shoulder and facing her.

"You didn't," she began and could hardly frame the words; "you couldn't have borrowed that money from Mr. Romney," and under her hand she felt her mother's shoulder waver. They stood thus for a moment, then Mary stepped back.

"Oh!" she exclaimed in a low voice, "it can't be possible. You don't know him! Why, I never want to see him again!" she exclaimed. Then she asked: "How much money did Mr. Romney give you, mother?"

Before her mother could answer, she had walked away to the window and stood there, her hands clasped before her, looking out. A horrible shame possessed her. All the delicacy that Romney's own personality was making more keen in Mary was offended, shocked, wounded. She felt trodden upon by her mother's iron heel of indelicacy.

"Things have come to a pretty pass," said Mrs. Moreland, "when a mother is insulted under her own roof by her only child." (She wiped her son off the slate of remembrance.)



Mary turned, her breast heaving. "Insulted!" she exclaimed, "You speak of insults, mother; why," she said, struggling for words that never were very ready to come, "*I feel as if everything had been dragged in the mud!*"

Having with extreme egoism accomplished all her little ends, and as little ends never lead toward any big whole, Mrs. Moreland stood before emptiness. She had done a great deal, and she had accomplished nothing. She had made a Machiavellian strategy to find herself before an empty field. Everything seemed a complete and empty blank before her. She was in the power of the stronger mind. One thought stood out distinct — the balance at the bank — Romney's money: it was unspeakably precious to Mrs. Moreland. She couldn't, wouldn't, shouldn't give that up. Then through her vacillating mind were flashed the thoughts of how she could protect this — what lie she could tell that would confuse her daughter; but before she could make a dash at it, Mary said:

"I won't ask you anything more. I would rather you didn't tell me. I shall ask Mr. Romney myself, and I shall see that he is paid back every cent; and of course," she continued, "I shall give up my position."

Mrs. Moreland fingered her watch-chain. If Mary paid him herself — why, then — But perhaps Mr. Romney wouldn't tell her anything; perhaps he would deny the fact of Mrs. Moreland's visit; in which case, with this possibility in view, the strategist determined not to give herself entirely away.

"You jump at conclusions," she said. "I haven't told you that I borrowed money of anybody" (and it was quite true). "I haven't borrowed money of anybody!"

"What could he think of us?" said her daughter, in the same low tone. "He is so used to —" she paused for an expression and found it — "good breeding."

If Romney was used to good breeding, he would have seen it in this young woman as she stood there in revolt. The fact that she had been followed by a private detective, that her mother had succumbed to temptation — everything was swallowed up in the horror that Romney had been approached, had been imposed upon.

## CHAPTER XXVI

As the mother and daughter stood like this, antagonism and enmity between them, one of those singular coincidences transpired that make "fact stronger than fiction."

A motor, such as was not often seen in Park Avenue, drove up in front of the Moreland cottage. The older woman, glad of the interruption, turned quickly to the window.

"Why, it's Mr. Romney!"

Fenton was helping him out of the car.

"Mr. Romney!" exclaimed Mary; "how do you know it is? Then you have seen him!"

Mrs. Moreland, with one comprehensive look at the motor, the chauffeur, Fenton, and Mr. Romney, went without speaking into the dining-room and drew to the folding doors. Her exit was as eloquent as words.

The atmosphere of what had just transpired seemed to linger in the room into which the "girl" (with her wet gingham apron tucked under her arm) opened the door with one soapy hand and admitted Mr. Romney.

Romney, leaning on Fenton, came in pale and smiling, holding out his delicate hand. He spoke with an effort, and Mary thought: "He oughtn't to have driven out so far. How pale he looks! How queer he should have come just now." She placed the new plush chair from Wanamaker's (which had not been paid for yet; but Mrs. Moreland intended paying for it out of Romney's money) and taking Romney's hands in her own strong ones led him, with Fenton's help, to the chair.

"Oh, Mr. Romney, you oughtn't to have come."

He smiled at her. "Don't tell me that."

"Fenton, you should not have let Mr. Romney motor out here."

"Don't scold Fenton, Miss Moreland. It will be the last straw!"

"I think a little sherry, miss," said Fenton.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "we never have wine in the house."

Fenton went to fetch Romney's flask from the motor. Romney leaned back for a moment and closed his eyes. There was a deprecating sweetness in his face. He made a slight gesture.

"I am such a duffer, but you see I have done what I could. Wait a moment, and I will pull myself together. A chap, you know, who can't stand rattling over a bit of rough road to see a lady isn't much good, after all, is he?"

He gathered himself together with a fine effort and opened his eyes with a sort of defiance, but as he did so, his expression changed.

"What is the matter?" he asked. "You are disturbed — what has gone wrong?" And before she could speak, he was leaning forward with the most flattering interest. "Something is wrong, and I hope I have come just at the right moment to set it right."

Fenton came in with the flask, which he handed to Mary and then, without waiting for further orders left the room and went back to the motor.

Mary was surprised beyond expression at this visit. Wonder at it began to possess her. She knew that any Englishwoman would consider it a tremendous honour to receive a call from Basil Romney and that not many women had this honour now.

Romney drank the brandy off at a draught and wiped his lips delicately. "I am waiting for you to tell me what is wrong."

Mary had not seated herself and did so now on the sofa her mother had vacated, opposite Romney.

"Nothing is wrong, Mr. Romney," but her heart was beating rapidly.

"I know your face," said Basil Romney. "I thought I knew all its expressions; but there is one there now that I have never seen before."

"Is there?" she asked. "What do you see, Mr. Romney?"

The invalid, sitting opposite her in her mother's luxurious chair, looked curiously out of his element in the ugly little parlour of the New Jersey house.

"Sit here," he said, indicating the chair by her mother's desk. It was nearer him — so near that when she sat there he might, by leaning over a little, have touched her hand.

Romney's glance rested on the capable hands clasped in Mary's lap and travelled up her slender figure, in its simple dress, to the fine, sensitive face, over which the play of feeling was so legible to a man in love. He leaned forward in the red plush chair.

"Never mind what I saw on your face when I came in," he said. "I would like to chase away every look, if I could, but one."

At the sudden transformation in him, Mary started. In his tone there was whimsicality, tender humour, and seriousness.

"Fenton says I may only stay fifteen minutes. It is not long for a man who has got a lifetime of things to say."

"Mr. Romney!" she began.

He leaned forward and put his hand over hers.

"Just wait a moment — just a moment. You have been patience itself for months. . . . I am not such an invalid as people think, and my doctor in England gives me

hope that I shall, with happiness" — he threw up his head a little — "and time, be quite as the rest of the world."

"Mr. Romney!"

"Wait, wait; don't speak now. Silence is one of your strong points; don't say a word! I have come out here to ask you to let me give you everything — I want you to be my wife."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mary and rose quickly from her chair.

The face of the invalid lifted to her was transfigured by his feeling, but he spoke easily, without apparent emotion, gracefully, delicately.

"I know what you have in mind. You would grace any position. You don't remotely know what you are. Let me tell you," said Romney, dropping his voice to a soft and delicate key, "you are the ideal woman, the woman a man needs, strong and yet pliant, unselfish yet full of character, noble and tender. You are the ideal woman," he repeated, "the ideal woman. I have seen many women: I have never seen anyone like you. There are duchesses that haven't your dignity; there are women of letters who haven't your poise. Your very quality of mind is grace itself. When my father dies, I shall be Lord Donegan. You will be Lady Donegan. I shall be proud of you —"

"Mr. Romney!"

"You would grace any position," he repeated.

"I wasn't thinking about position, Mr. Romney."

"It will be the best in England."

"I wasn't thinking of position."

The colour came and went in Romney's delicate cheeks.

"I know you are not, or of the fortune. You are thinking of just one thing — the only thing that Mary Moreland would think of. I know you are thinking whether or not you love me — that is all that would ever matter to you, I know." He lifted his hand in a pleading fashion. "Now I am going to ask you not to speak. Whatever way it is, I

cannot bear it here. If there has been anything precious to you in our intercourse, if I have been able to bring you anything, if my coming out here like this is anything — will you grant me this favour? Wait; write me in a fortnight?"

Romney spoke with great seriousness, his eyes holding joy or great disappointment here, and she was so touched by him, the influence of his voice and his personality was so strong, that she came very near going over to him, kneeling down beside his chair, and without any question giving him her promise.

As though to time proposals and the affairs of the heart were what he was best fitted for, Fenton, after a discreet knock, opened the door and came in upon the perfect silence that was palpitating like a visible atmosphere; though Romney in the red plush chair might from his attitude have been dictating to Mary, standing obediently a little away, some very important communication.

"Mr. Basil," said the servant and came over to his master's side.

Romney, as though he had been infused by a sudden miraculous strength, rose alone and stood for a moment quite erect, and Fenton did not even extend his hand. As he walked with Fenton toward the door, he said:

"I haven't had the pleasure of speaking with your mother. I am sorry."

"I will tell her," said Mary.

The front door had hardly closed upon the distinguished man when Mrs. Moreland broke into the parlour where Mary stood. From the stairs, the hall, and the dining-room, Mrs. Moreland had encompassed the situation. She had listened as well as she could and heard something. This visit swept aside everything between her daughter and herself. As she came into the room where her quiet daughter stood as Romney had left her, beautiful and pale, she

was trembling with excitement and exclaimed: "Mary, aren't you going to tell me anything, anything?"

Without response, Mary walked across the room as though to leave it in silence. Mrs. Moreland rushed upon her daughter and caught her arm. "Speak to me, for mercy's sake!"

"About what?"

Mrs. Moreland slightly shook her. "You would try the patience of the saints! Anybody can see what he came for! He has asked you to marry him. This solves all our problems! Of course you are not such a big fool as to refuse him, Mary!"

Mary firmly detached her mother's hand from her sleeve. "I don't know what you mean by solving all our problems."

"You don't!" exclaimed her mother, somewhat regaining her composure. "Why, there is no question about paying back the money now."

"Oh, that problem," said Mary Moreland.

"There is no question about anything. It is the most elegant chance a girl in your position ever had!"

"I am sorry," said Mary to her mother, "I am sorry that you know. You must never speak to me about this subject again."

"Of course not!" cried Mrs. Moreland violently. "Of course not! It is part of the whole business — secrecy and intrigue! Never speak to you, never know, kept in total ignorance!"

"You take care not to remain in total ignorance," said her daughter, and her tone was so comprehensive that the elder woman's eyes quailed. She threw out her hands in real desperation.

"Oh, you will do what you like! You don't know a chance in life when you see it! I believe you enjoy the sordid, commonplace grind. You are not like me; you are like your father all over again!"



Mary opened the door; she was as implacable as fate itself, and her undisturbed determination goaded Mrs. Moreland to the last degree. The vision of the apartment, of the glories of Fifth Avenue, swept across her limited mind — the ease with which he had signed the cheque! . . . What it had done for her! It was too much, too much!

“You are not going to be such a fool,” she said in a low tone, “such a perfect fool!”

Mary, without speaking, went out of the room and upstairs, and Mrs. Moreland stood alone in the little parlour, its realities hard and close upon her vision. It was too much! She was made for bigger and vaster ends. Her breast heaved, tears sprang to her eyes. The war of temperaments, the impossibility of making human beings seize their opportunities, overwhelmed Mrs. Moreland.

In the Nursing Hospital, standing in Amber’s little bedroom, Mary — and in thinking of it afterwards, Amber realised how extraordinary a thing it was — Mary spoke of herself.

“I want you to do something for me, Amber.”

“You’ve but to say what it is, Mary. It’s as good as done.”

“I don’t know about that. People promise, you know, and then when you put it up to them —”

“I am not that kind —” and Amber interrupted herself. “Do something for you? Well, now, I can’t imagine your needing anybody to do anything for you, Mary!”

“When a person is in the state of mind you are in, Amber,” said this keen and quiet student of life, “she thinks all the troubles in the world go on inside her and there is nothing left for anybody else to feel.”

Amber smiled faintly. “A girl with the fine position you’ve got, Mary —”

“I am not going back to work for Mr. Romney at once.”

"What!" exclaimed Amber Doane, stepping back.

"And what is more, I don't want you to ask me why."

"After all the things I've told you, Mary!"

"Well," said Miss Moreland slowly, "we're different. It comes just as easy for some people to tell as it comes hard for others —"

Amber Doane looked at her closely. "That is the second good position you have given up, Mary!"

"Yes."

"Perhaps you get mad too easily."

Mary smiled.

"No," nodded Amber, "I know it isn't that — you don't bother about it. Men are no good!" She bit her lip and nodded again.

Mary switched her thoughts, in the clever way she had of doing, on to the track she wanted them to take.

"I don't want Mr. Romney to miss me too much."

"H'm," murmured Amber.

"I don't mean the secretary and the stenographer," said Miss Moreland; "I mean — a sort of — well, just the every day having some one in that you —"

"What do you expect me to do about it?" asked the nurse shortly.

"You have said quite a few times that you wanted to do something for me. Well, I got a telephone message from his man servant to-day saying he was ill, and I want you to go over and see him every day."

"You speak as if I owned the Nursing Hospital," said Amber Doane. "I will have to give up my job."

"Well," said Mary, "perhaps you can take him as a private case."

"What are you going to do?" asked Amber.

"I am going into the Trust Company out home," said Mary, "for the present. It is a very good position, and I can have it for a few weeks, anyway."

## CHAPTER XXVII

THE drive out to Orange had been too much for Romney's sensitive nerves and constitution, not to speak of the emotional excitement. The day after his call upon "The Golden Girl" as he put it to her in a charming note which he sent out by Fenton to East Orange, Romney was seriously ill. In the note, whose handwriting showed both his feebleness and his determination, he begged her to wait — "for the sake of everything her heart held dear, to wait — if his life had any value to anybody, to wait." He knew her well enough to be sure that she would not refuse him this.

On the following afternoon, Fenton extracted from his master the first word that he had been able to obtain. Romney said to him commandingly and appealingly: "Fetch Miss Doane at once!"

She had come. Romney's extreme indisposition lasted only for a few days, but Amber continued to come for an hour a day, for there were little delicacies that the doctor wished him to take, and she prepared them for him daintily on a big table in the sitting-room, by the window, surrounded by all sorts of attractive culinary aids.

"You are a wonderful nurse." He was watching her admiringly one day, as she stood stirring over a little lamp a fragrant cream.

"And you are a wonderful im-patient —"

"Am I?"

"If the hospitals were full of sick people with whims like yours, Mr. Romney, there would have to be rest cures for the nurses afterwards."

"You are cruel!"

"It is the truth."

"That is often cruel!"

"There are plenty of delightful truths," he went on, "and I can tell you some now."

Amber stirred and tossed her head. "You needn't."

There was a little suggestion of brogue in her speech and it pleased his ear.

"You will tell me that my cap is becoming, that you like the blue of my gown, that there is a world of comfort in having a woman about to do things. I know it all — I have heard it all before."

"Have you?"

"Not but what you think you would find a new way of saying it!"

Romney swung his single eyeglass by its black silk ribbon on his finger. "I should like to try."

Between Amber and himself there was a most delightful sense of barriers broken down since she had come in to take care of him. He wondered just why this should be, and why it was that he was so perfectly at home with this unknown woman — more than he was with Mary.

Amber turned the yellow cream out into a glass bowl and set it aside to cool; then wiped her fingers delicately on the little serviette.

"You find me conceited, Miss Doane?"

"I have never seen anybody in the least like you."

"Is that a compliment or not?"

"Take it as it is," she said, "and make something out of it. That is what you do with everything." She nodded at him saucily. "It is your job."

Near Romney, Fenton had arranged a small red sofa, and on it, with pillows back of her, Mary Moreland had been used to sit, reading aloud to her employer. Amber took the corner now, in her blue uniform, her spotless apron, her spotless cap, and her spotless cuffs. The one dark

note was her abundant hair, throwing the whiteness of her skin into sharp relief.

Romney contrasted the two women, both of them capable, strong, — both of them more or less mysterious. Mary soothed him; Amber vivified him. Just now, as she sat there, he could not take his eyes off her.

“You will be able to work to-morrow,” said Amber; “Mary will be coming back.”

“I haven’t thought of work.”

She continued, half dreamingly: “She is the finest woman in the world. I could kiss the earth for her; I could walk round it.”

Romney liked her ardour and her expansion.

“She doesn’t give me any books,” said Amber shortly. “You think there is nothing in the world but books.” Then she asked him quickly: “Why don’t you give me some books, as you do to Mary?” And answered herself: “You think I haven’t brains enough.”

“How can you think that when I know that you studied French?”

Romney saw the colour run up her cheek. The word “French” was a shock to her. The lines around her mouth suddenly intensified. Her face was transformed from the roundness of youth to one of experience and defiance. She sat up very straightly on the little red sofa.

“Why should you speak of French to me?”

He laughed: “You seem to think that crime is connected with the study of the French language! Of course, your accent may be criminal!”

The wave of terror began to die down in her face. She saw he was innocent of any intended offence.

Romney went on smilingly: “I liked it awfully about you when Miss Moreland told me that. I at once said to myself: ‘There is a girl of temperament.’ It was plucky of you, working, as you did, so hard. You ought to have

a woman's pleasures, pretty things, amusements; you ought to devote yourself to some one you are fond of — not to just an im-patient! You ought to make heavenly dishes for some one who will know how to thank you in a heavenly way."

Amber, regaining her ease, looked at him amused. "I guess that is what every woman wants."

"And every man wants the devotion," said Romney softly.

The trained nurse took from her pocket a clean white handkerchief. Mary had given her a dozen of them. In one corner there was a letter A generously marked in red.

Romney, looking at it as it lay on her hand, said: "*The Scarlet Letter!* There, Miss Doane, read that if you want a fine book."

Amber's face went deadly white. Unconscious of her action, she rose, putting the handkerchief quickly in the bib of her apron.

"Don't go," said Romney appealingly, extending his hand; "don't go."

"I must," she said, speaking with difficulty; "the doctors make their visit about now."

Romney was looking up at her, charmed with her. "In fiction," he said, "people do much for love."

"How do you mean?" asked Amber.

"I am thinking," he said slowly, "of *The Scarlet Letter* and the sublime sacrifices that these sublime people are always making; and in real life —"

Romney's slight reference to French had taken her back, as the word always did — back, back; and she was trying so hard to forget! But she saw that he had no idea that any of his references could disturb her.

"Don't you think," she asked, "that people are doing things for love, right here in New York, every day?"

Romney smiled at her quizzically. Above the bib of her

apron the little scarlet letter on the handkerchief rose and fell with her breathing.

"I am 'right here in New York'," he quoted, with a plaintive note in his voice, "and nobody does anything for me for love!"

"The trouble with love is that one never gives it in the right place."

Romney caught her up quickly. "You are mistaken there. There isn't any wrong place for love. Anything that has to do with love is divine. Give it where you will, as you will, all you will, and stand the consequences!"

The nurse stood before him perfectly immovable; her sauciness had gone, and her flashing brightness had dimmed a little.

"I have read the book you spoke of."

"What book?" He had forgotten.

Amber gave the name bravely: *The Scarlet Letter*.

"It is a fine novel."

She questioned slowly, thinking back — back to East Orange, to the French class, to the handclasps and the kisses, to the wonder and the danger, to the thorny path and the misery, to the parting: "*Was the Scarlet Letter kind of love, love divine?*"

Romney, strong on his point, answered her with unusual gravity: "*All love is divine.*"

Amber hung on his words. Impertinent, dashing, careless as she seemed, he impressed her. Of late, the figure of the man who had spoiled her life had been crowding himself back into her thoughts, crowding back until she had come here to nurse Romney. His need of her appealed to Amber very much indeed.

Fenton announced from the door: "Some one on the telephone from the hospital for Miss Doane," and withdrew.

Romney extended his hand. "Good-by, if you must go," and added, "angel that you are to come at all!"

Amber touched his hand.

"Will you let me look at your hand a moment?" and before she knew it, she had given it to him, and he looked down into her palm.

"I see a love marriage there, a star on the mount of Jupiter." He lifted his eyes to Amber's and saw the sudden awakening response there. Before she could withdraw her hand, Romney bent and kissed the star on Jupiter.

Fenton opened the door again. "They are urgent on the telephone for Miss Doane."



## CHAPTER XXVIII

“**THERE** never was a truer case of ‘watched pot,’ Fenton.”

Romney was better than he had been in months — able now, without Fenton’s assistance, to slowly traverse the drawing-room, to go from the piano to the window and back again. From the window, where he stood for a moment, aping the ease and the manners of a vigorous man, he could not see the street below or watch the passers-by.

“But I am watching,” he said to Fenton, “and it does not boil.”

“Perhaps Miss Doane will come in, but she has her hospital duties about now, sir.”

“A beautiful woman should have no duties, Fenton; all the pleasures you like, but no duties. Only the ugly and the old should have duties; the middle-aged can fulfil them splendidly; the very old become in themselves burdens and duties.” He made a gesture of distaste. He found his chair and sank into it with a sigh of pleasure.

“It is like getting all comfortable in bed again to sit down. I don’t like age. . . . By the way,” he added whimsically, looking up at his attendant, “you are middle-aged, aren’t you, Fenton? I hope you are not hurt about what I said regarding duties?”

“Not in the least, Mr. Basil.”

“I can make it perfectly all right,” said his master, “by telling you that you make duties seem like pleasures.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“But to return — Miss Doane might come presently.”

“Yes, sir. Shall I fetch tea, sir?”

"No, no," said the young man irritably. "I never want to have tea alone again — never."

Fenton, after transacting what he had to do, lingered. "I beg pardon, sir, but there were four young ladies here to-day about the secretaryship."

Romney shrugged impatiently. "I shall not fill it at present."

"And the book they are waiting for in London, Mr. Basil?"

"Let them wait," said the young man airily; "*let them wait!* I shall not work any more this winter. Perhaps I shall never work again. I am not thinking of work — I am only thinking of waiting. I can wait; let the world wait. . . . What time is it?"

"Just gone five, sir."

Romney tapped his foot impatiently on the floor, tapped his fingers together. His face wore the expression of a petulant, troubled child.

"Telephone to the hospital once more, Fenton."

The footman opened the door and announced: "Miss Doane."

Amber came brightly across the room, this time not in hospital dress. On her last two visits she had discarded her uniform and dressed herself as charmingly as she knew how. Under her arm she carried a red pasteboard box.

"Mr. Romney, I have brought you a jig-saw puzzle."

Fenton, withdrawing across the room, saw Romney's face as he welcomed the trained nurse. It was unmistakably happy — glowing, delighted, appreciative.

Miss Doane was laying off her things. She had come in like some one sent to amuse a child.

"Never mind, Fenton, never mind; we will attend to the table. Miss Doane will do it."

Fenton was accustomed to being so dismissed now. Miss Doane did it. Miss Doane did everything: she re-

arranged the furniture, she removed and replaced tables, she got for herself what she wanted, deftly and understandingly. In vulgar parlance, Miss Doane was "it."

Romney fingered the box which she handed to him. "You will hardly believe me when I tell you that I have never seen one of these ridiculous things. I haven't wanted to. I have glanced at it out of the tail of my eye on the ship, as I passed them spread on the tables. They have always seemed to me to be a ridiculous waste of time; but lay it out, expose it, explain it to me."

As Amber turned the bits of wood out upon the table and sat down in front of it, Romney, leaning across the board, said: "I'll play any game you like with you."

"Well," she said in her pretty, rich voice, "I will play this one with you, Mr. Romney, and you will put your mind to it. Don't think that because you can write verses and books you can do everything in a twinkling."

"I don't think I can do anything at all," he said meekly, watching her hand. "If you could have known how powerless I felt just now!"

"What were you trying to do then?"

"Make you come."

"Oh!" she laughed, "there were other powers at work. They were trying at the other end to keep me."

"But they didn't succeed! There," he said, "put that bit there — that bit of white under the green — I see it from here — it's a cap, the top of a cap. I'll bet you a penny, it's the top of a trained nurse's white cap. I see the whole picture in my mind already, Miss Doane. I don't have to put it together with my fingers. My eyes have seen it. It was like you to fetch a picture of a trained nurse ministering. What a wonderful thing a hand is — yours, for instance, Miss Doane — helping, ministering, giving."

Amber quickly folded both her hands behind her back.

"If you are going to study them and talk about them like that —" she began.

"And," he continued, his eyes amused, appreciative, and his smile peculiarly winning; "what a heavenly thing a woman is! What can we ever do to make her understand how we worship her?"

"I will never be able to do the puzzle," said Amber Doane.

Romney himself delicately fitted in two pieces of the wood, then leaned back and commanded her: "Go on; go on!"

She was accustomed to his exordiums, to his sudden outbursts of enthusiasm. They amused and entertained her, but there was something dangerously personal about Romney to-day.

"Nobody really worships a woman," said Amber. "They only expect of her."

"She should have everything," continued Romney ecstatically, "our fortunes, our devotion, and" he concluded, "as to the vote, if she wants that, why, let it be the supreme sugar-plum on top of her cake. . . . I suppose you know," he said, abruptly changing his tone, "that you have an awfully pretty hand, Miss Doane."

Amber blushed, but went on with her slow arrangement of the jagged bits of coloured wood.

"It is spoilt with antiseptic washings —"

"Oh, no," he said in a tender tone, "it is not spoilt. Everything it has done has made it lovely." Romney put his hand out impulsively over hers and encircled her wrist with his fingers, as one might with a ring. "And I am going to keep you an hour and a half. That is your limit, isn't it?"

Miss Doane very deftly and very firmly disengaged with her other hand the circle he made round her wrist and said meaningly, smiling into his eyes: "That is my limit!"

And as she looked up at him — charming, fresh — their eyes met, and they held each other for the tenth of a second, just off the danger line.

Amber distributed the bits of wood and continued her picture, and Romney, with a sigh, leaned back and watched her. Suddenly she broke out, not looking at him, but speaking down to the board: "When is Mary coming back?"

"Why," said Romney slowly, "I —"

"She has another position in East Orange."

"Has she?"

"Didn't you know it, Mr. Romney?"

"No," he said.

Amber looked up, a piece of wood poised in her hand. "I am worried about Mary, Mr. Romney."

"You are?"

"Yes," she said seriously, "I can't see her. It is not possible for me to go out there, for many reasons" — she hesitated — "and she has an excuse every time I suggest her coming in to the hospital." She dropped her voice and yielding to a sudden impulse (she was full of them) asked: "Did she ever speak to you about Mr. Maughm?"

"No," replied Romney, "she never did, but her mother has."

"Her mother!" exclaimed Amber.

"Why, yes," said Romney; "I picture him as a fairy prince distributing prodigal gifts, indifferent to frozen pipes, a constant, homelike visitor at the suburban cottage, a hale and hearty person."

Amber said rather impatiently: "What do you mean? He is a very rich banker."

"He would need to be" — Romney smiled — "in order to satisfy the fantastic Mrs. Moreland's expectations."

"I don't know what you mean," said Amber; "his wife is a society woman."

"Ah!" said Romney, "that is it," and grew serious.

"I don't know what you mean," repeated Amber; "I only know that I am worried about Mary."

If Amber's face was charming in gaiety, it was adorable when anything touched her sufficiently profoundly to make her grave.

Romney sat forward in his chair. "You are a good friend, Miss Doane."

"It is she who is the good friend — the wonderful, splendid friend. That's why I don't understand —"

"Well," said Romney lightly, drinking in the changes of her face, "perhaps you had better not try."

Amber touched the bit of wood before her and then, with clasped hands, leaned forward across the table.

"I don't like you when you are light like that, making sport of everything. It seems as though you didn't want to take right hold."

"Does it?" said Romney slowly and leaned toward her.

"Yes," she said, holding him with her deep blue eyes. "You just skim over things and don't get at the heart of them."

"That's just what I want to get at," he murmured, "*the heart.*"

Amber withdrew, rising so suddenly that she nearly upset the table, and walked away in a state of excitement, trying to control an emotion she did not wish to show; then she came back and stood by his chair in a trustful way, Romney looking up at her.

"If any harm should come to Mary, if anything should go wrong with Mary! Why, you don't know what she has been to me, how I think of her, like an angel, like a mother, like something so high!" Her voice trembled.

Romney, taking advantage of her disassociation and her feeling, gathered her hands between both his and held them.

"Don't worry about Miss Moreland."

"Worry about her!" exclaimed the girl, biting her underlip in an adorable way; "why, I would just give my life for her — I would do anything for Mary — anything!" She threw her head back and in so doing dashed off two shining tears.

Romney gently, but with distinct force, tried to draw her down to him, and Amber, as though semi-conscious of what was transpiring, faltered for a moment and then knelt on one knee by the side of the invalid's chair, her hand still closely held in his.

"Don't worry about Miss Moreland."

"There!" said the girl in a low tone. "That's the way you are — not taking hold of anything! Hasn't she been working for you for months? Didn't I think that you liked her better than anything in the world? And now you say: 'Don't worry about her!'"

"Miss Moreland is a very lucky woman to have you feel like that. I wish to heaven you would feel that way about me!"

Charmed by her, his feelings piqued by what he read to be a little flash of jealousy, he murmured: "So you thought I liked her better than anybody in the world!"

"Yes," she said stoutly, "and you would have, if she could have cared for you."

The image of the serene and tranquil Mary who had charmed him to make a sentimental journey, miles beyond the city, faded before the mobile sweetness, before the physical attraction of this girl.

"Amber," he murmured, "Amber Doane, your name is not like the sound of the mill-stream. It is like a jewel. You are like a lovely, deep-hearted jewel."

"Oh!" she shook her head slowly; "you are all alike, you men; you can't think of anybody but just your own selves."

"I am thinking about just you!"

“Don’t!”

“I need you, Amber!”

“No, no!”

“More than Mary Moreland does — more than most men would.”

He let go her hand quickly and took her face between his palms and looked down into it.

She returned his look through her tears for Mary, through her own emotion, and for a second the two remained like this. Romney would have bent and kissed her, but she drew back slightly. There was the sound of an opening door, and Amber sprang to her feet and stood a little way from Romney’s chair as Fenton came in.



## CHAPTER XXIX

ABSORBED as he was in his Wall Street affairs, Maughm nevertheless thought of his coming paternity and, day by day, more and more of the new responsibility, the existence which would depend upon his. As he harked towards this natural thing, dwelt upon this natural and right development of life, imperceptibly but powerfully, it lifted him out of himself.

He turned to the idea of Mary as one thinks of wonderful lands, whose shores are distant if desirable; as one thinks of peaks and heights, beautiful but far away; as one thinks of forests and countries, marvellous but almost unattainable: and toward him, ever drawing nearer, was the hope of satisfaction that was to be his.

Daisy Maughm had overcome her jealousy regarding Mrs. Torrance — because she had need of her — and Cicely was once more a guest under the Maughms' roof. She had been taking an early walk in Central Park, exercising her dogs, and Maughm found her in the library as he came out from breakfast, smartly gowned in a tailored suit, a ravishing hat on her blond hair, a ravishing boutonnière in the lapel of her dark, stiff coat, the two dogs by her side, and the monkey on her shoulder. She was taking off her gloves and talking to her dogs.

"Tom," she said, "it is good of you to give this personally-conducted circus a place in your house!"

"I want to talk to you, Cicely."

"There are laws against the indulgence of a great many pleasures, Tom, but I don't think there are any against that! Sit here."

Toto sprang from his mistress's shoulder to Maughm's and settled there cosily, putting his head against Maughm's cheek.

"You see, Tom, he is like the rest of us; he cannot resist your charm!"

"My charm!" exclaimed Maughm bitterly, "doesn't count for much in this house, Cicely."

"How can you say that, Tom!"

He asked: "Just how frankly do you think I can speak to Daisy?"

"About what?"

"Several things," he said slowly. "She is imprudent about her health — criminally so."

Mrs. Torrance shrugged. "She doesn't wish to be cautious."

"Good heavens, I know it!"

"She is bitter," said Mrs. Torrance; "she has attacked me in everything" — she caught herself up — "I oughtn't to have told you this!"

"Oh," said the husband, "it is nothing new!"

"My fondness for children, my fondness for married life, everything," said Mrs. Torrance, with a little natural annoyance.

"And yet," said Maughm, "she is to be the mother of my child."

She waited a moment, then looking at him earnestly, said: "I wouldn't count too much on it, Tom, if I were you."

He caught her hand, his face growing set.

"Don't say what you are going to say, Cicely."

"— Unless there is some very strong mental force brought to work here, you mustn't — Oh!" shrugged the little woman, "anything might happen. She doesn't want a child!"

The marmoset sprang from Maughm's shoulder into his

mistress's lap. Mrs. Torrance quietly withdrew her hand from Maughm's and caressed the little beast.

Maughm gave a low exclamation and, rising, walked up and down in front of his friend. Then he returned and said simply, looking down at her: "I can't tell you what it means to me."

"I understand."

"In a way," said the business man, "it is a sort of salvation. It will be, for her — for me."

"I know," said Mrs. Torrance. In spite of her ultra dress, she was very womanly as she sat there, and although surrounded by canine pets and the monkey, her intelligent, comprehending look, her grace and her yielding sweetness, were truly feminine and charming.

"I count on you, my dear girl," said the distressed man.

"Oh!" responded Mrs. Torrance, "don't count on me for any miracle with your wife, Tom. I have absolutely no influence over Daisy."

Maughm dropped his voice and came nearer to her. "I told you the other day that she was having Miss Moreland followed by private detectives."

"I know. It's too horrible!" exclaimed the woman on the sofa.

"I have done what I could. The annoyance has stopped; but I never can tell what Daisy will do next."

"And Miss Moreland?"

"She is," he said (giving himself away unconsciously), "the noblest creature in the world."

Mrs. Torrance, her hands clasped around her knees, leaned forward. "You love her, don't you, Tom?"

"You mustn't ask me that!"

"I don't need to." She turned her head from him, a faint colour coming up under her stiff collar along her cheek. Maughm's thoughts had gone back to the subject in mind.

"Cicely," he said, "I want my child—I want that child. They say a man is not paternal; that's rot! We are the house-builders, the home-makers, the props and pillars. Every man wants this expression of his life in life. I cannot face the idea of a catastrophe. What can I do?" he besought her passionately. "What can we do?" And added, almost cruelly: "You can't understand!"

"I had a child," said Mrs. Torrance shortly.

Maughm exclaimed. "What! You had a child! I didn't know."

His voice altered. He sat down on the sofa beside her and turned to her eagerly. "Tell me about it."

She put the marmoset in the corner of the sofa and stood up, smart, chic, a little boyish in her masculine dress.

"My child lived a year. I think, if you don't mind, I won't talk of it. . . . Why don't you get the wonderful Miss Moreland to help you?"

"Miss Moreland!" he exclaimed.

Mrs. Torrance walked across the room toward the door, followed by her three pets, the dogs at her heels and the marmoset running in its funny little way. "—Since she is the most wonderful person in the world." At the door her natural gaiety and her mischievousness triumphed over whatsoever other feelings she had. She turned her pretty head and said to him: "It will need something very wonderful indeed, my poor Tom, to pull you through!"

As Maughm opened the front door to go out, he saw the delivery van of a popular florist unloading palms and potted plants, and a man staggering up the Maughms' steps, two giant camellias under his arm.

"I thought Mrs. Maughm had recalled the invitations for this ball," said Maughm to the butler, and turning about, he went up-stairs to his wife's apartments, where Daisy was still in bed, under her lace coverlid and sur-

rounded by pillows. Her breakfast had been brought to her and stood on a tray at the bedside.

Maughm, looking down at her, realising how completely she was the master of both their fates, didn't know how to approach her.

"I thought you had gone down-town, Tom."

"Why, I came back," he said, trying to speak easily, "when I saw that the dance was on, after all."

Mrs. Maughm was pouring from the chocolate pot a cup of the rich liquid.

"You don't want me to have any pleasures, then?"

"Of course I do, my dear — lots of them; but not dangerous fancies."

"Men always call it 'dangerous fancies' when a woman wants to do anything!" and added; "I suppose you have your pleasures." Mrs. Maughm drank the chocolate and put the cup down.

Maughm sat down on the side of his wife's bed and took her hands, looking her steadily in the eyes with his kind sincere gaze.

"Daisy," he said, "just listen to me half a second. You know I have to be so terribly careful of you, just as though you were some precious thing that might break at a touch. I hardly know how to speak to you, and yet —"

"I wouldn't, if I were you!"

"Yes, yes," he said eagerly, "just a moment, dear! Won't you try to be a little more careful; won't you try to take care of yourself, for my sake and for —"

"Don't get sentimental," said his wife. "You sound like a melodrama! 'For the sake of the little life to be,'" she quoted. "That's what it would sound like in a book. Don't get excited, Tom. It is so delightfully easy for the men to talk about 'little lives to be.' There is nothing that prevents your going down-town, is there? and having a good time!"

"Daisy," he said seriously, "if you only knew what was

happening down-town these days! I am trying to hold on, for you and —”

“Please stop there,” said Mrs. Maughm, “and don’t refer again to any one else but me. Am I not enough? I ought to be; you are quite enough for me.”

Maughm gently caressed her hands. “No,” he said, “we are not enough for each other. Just two people get selfish, and we don’t want what we have to stop with us, you know; we want to have it go on.”

Mrs. Maughm settled herself on her pillows. She permitted her husband to hold her hands. She was watching him with pride in his good looks.

“It hasn’t been such a paradise always, Tom, that we should want it to go on.”

“We will make it anything you like,” he pleaded, “anything you like, if you will only try to make it complete, Daisy, and see it as it ought to be.”

“Don’t joggle the bed!” said Mrs. Maughm. “How does it happen you are not in a hurry this morning — you usually are?”

“In a hurry?” he said. “Why, I would give up anything I have on hand — and God knows it is important — I will stay here with you all day long, if you will give up your rotten ball.”

“How ridiculous!”

Maughm saw the flickering colour in her cheek. Dr. Thomas had given him careful instructions and elaborate explanations.

“I don’t invite a hundred people to my drawing-room to turn them into the street at a few hours’ notice!”

“Cicely will do the honours. You stay up-stairs in bed, Daisy, *please!*”

Mrs. Maughm definitely drew herself away. “You make me nervous on the bed, Tom; get up! How selfish you are — how brutal!”

"I don't mean to be brutal, Daisy."

"Oh," she said, "a man can't be anything else; he is made that way; everything's for him, for his pleasures!"

"Why," he said earnestly, "I would give up anything I had."

"Well, then, if that is true," said Mrs. Maughm coolly, "give up your rendezvous with your former stenographer."

Maughm stepped back as though she had struck him.

"And meanwhile," continued his wife, "you mustn't be surprised if I give an occasional dance in order to break the horrible monotony and boredom of my situation."

Her husband turned on his heel, angry beyond control. He did not dare to remain in the room. When he reached the door he said:

"I am going to Chicago this afternoon on business, and I shall not be at your party. Moreover, I shall go in to see Thomas and ask him to forbid it professionally."

As he went from his house, the hopelessness of his problem made his soul sick. He was like a man fighting in thundering seas. Down in Wall Street, problems would await him to-day with blinding, deafening importance. Daisy had a way of reducing everything in him to ashes. Of late his need, his craving for an object on which to expend his affection, had become extreme.

What did she mean by his rendezvous? She had been informed of his drive with Mary in Central Park. She had him followed everywhere by detectives! What a thing for a woman in her condition to do! But if she had been informed by the man of this drive in the Park, how could he blame her for jealousy and disgust? She was in her right.

## CHAPTER XXX

HE entered his office and the first question that he asked of the boy was: "Has Miss Moreland come?" Without stopping, he went through to his private room, threw down his stick, gloves, and hat, lit a cigar, and shut the door, then threw himself into his big leather chair before the table and waited. The day before, he had sent out to East Orange by private messenger a summons to Mary Moreland that he thought she would not ignore, and there had gone with the messenger a box of lilies-of-the-valley. Looking at the big hands on the clock, he waited.

At his side was a pile of carefully initialled and docketed letters regarding "Upjohn" transactions — papers which had been gone through by his private secretary. The deal promised for Maughm utter failure or a possible big thing; he couldn't tell which would meet him at any moment. Now the whole situation hung on the finding of the exhausted vein, believed by everyone to be exhausted — everybody but Maughm.

As he waited, his private telephone clicked softly at his side. The bell had been suppressed, as had all useless noises in this big, quiet, private room. From the other end of the wire a voice asked him: "Will you ratify our conversation of yesterday by your personal letter this afternoon?"

"Yes," he said and hung up the receiver, thought a moment, then rung for Miss Rensselaer. As she came to the door, however, simultaneously with her entrance the boy announced: "Miss Moreland!"



"Show Miss Moreland in," and to Miss Rensselaer he said: "Please wait. I'll ring for you later."

As Mary came in, the boy withdrew, shutting the door behind her. Maughm came toward her in a way that she never forgot. For a moment she thought that he was going to take her in his arms, but he thrust his hands in his pockets and turning, walked back across the floor toward his chair and table, mastering himself.

"Sit down, please, sit down. Thank you for coming."

"After the letter you wrote, I couldn't help coming, but you mustn't send for me that way!"

Maughm threw back his head and laughed. "Of course not! I mustn't live or breathe like a normal, natural man!" Almost violently he appealed to her. "What must I do? How must a chap live? You are a normal, reasonable woman. . . . How?"

"Didn't you send for me to ask me about the 'Upjohn' papers?"

She was changing, enriching; more noble, more upright, more serene — learning daily the lessons that were making her a force and a power in the world, a tranquil, uplifting force. He noticed, with a lover's quick intuition, that she was pale.

"You are tired. Aren't things going your way?"

"I am all right," she answered simply. "But the papers, the 'Upjohn' papers. Why, I made three packages of them — do you remember? — and took them down to the Safe Deposit. Did you look in the drawer you rented in 1912?"

Maughm murmured: "Yes — no," contradicting himself. Then he said: "Take off your hat and coat, as though you were at home here again in the office. Just for half an hour," he pleaded.

"I think you'll find the Upjohn papers —"

"Damn the Upjohn papers!"

“Didn’t you send for me to find them, Mr. Maughm?”

As he did not reply, she turned abruptly and started toward the door, but from where Maughm stood he arrested her going by just one word — her name again, deeply breathed: “Mary!” Then he came quickly toward her.

“I am not going to lie to you. When I sent for you yesterday, I sent just for the reason that I wanted you to come, that I felt I must see you again — hear you speak — have the good that you are! I don’t make any excuse for it. *I just wanted you*, that’s all!”

“You didn’t consider me, did you?” She spoke quietly, but her thoughts were becoming confused.

“How do you mean?”

“If you are fond of a person, you don’t put her in strange positions, do you?”

“No,” he said, “you are right!”

“And if you are fond of a person, you don’t send for them for reasons that aren’t true!”

The simplicity of her reproach struck him deeply because of her voice; for the first time there was something like a quiver in it.

“What a brute I am and have been to you!”

“Yes,” she said quietly, “I think you have.”

Her answer was a surprise; he didn’t expect it.

“When I got your letter, Mr. Maughm, I thought there was something really wrong with ‘Upjohn.’”

“And you came to help me?”

“I came to see if I could be of any use.”

The blood flew to Maughm’s cheeks. He walked back to the table and stood there, leaning his hand upon it, and the knowledge of her goodness, her strength, of the kind of woman she was, became potent to him. She was the woman a man should try to make the mother of his children, if he has them. This was the kind of wife for a

man to work for. To possess a companion like this, everything would be worth while. Her very presence there, in that room, transformed it.

. But to Mary, who saw only his serious face, his attitude seemed changed, and he was once more the practical Maughm that she had known and for whom she had worked for five years.

“You can help me very much indeed. Will you sit down there and take two letters for me and then write them out here in my office? I don’t want to give them to anybody but you.”

She hesitated a moment, went over to the table, sat beside it, and took off her gloves.

“Have you a note-book here?”

He took up the ‘phone and asked that a stenographic book and pencil be sent in. As they waited for them, she asked, going back to what she had known to be his great interest, an interest in which she had taken the pride of the private secretary, informed of her employer’s affairs, careful of his secrets, sharing them, guarding them as close as life: “Is it ‘Upjohn’?”

“Yes, ‘Upjohn.’”

“Aren’t the mines turning out what you thought they would?”

“They tell me the vein is exhausted.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, and knew that if it were true, it would mean the ruin of the company and the stockholders. “I thought I read in the papers that there was an extensive buying up of ‘Upjohn’ and that probably a lot of men were going to make a fat deal.”

“The ‘some one’ buying ‘Upjohn,’” said Maughm, “is I.”

Mary looked at him with professional understanding. Her past duties, her past life, came back to her as though it were yesterday. The refining influences of her later

months, her work with Romney, the transcribing of ethereal verse and subtle essays, the luxury of her life as secretary to a millionaire poet, faded, and she was only Mary Moreland, secretary to a Wall Street financier.

"Why, it would take a quarter of a million to buy up that stock!"

"Just about."

"And that means the stockholders won't lose a cent?"

"That's what it means."

She leaned forward on the table, looking at him. "Nobody knows about this, do they?"

"It is known to Mary Moreland and me."

"If the mines are no good, you will be ruined!"

He bit his lip and nodded at her: "Just about."

"So you've stood by the investment you believed in and are going to protect everyone who bought because of you?"

"Naturally," he nodded. "Thank God I've got the money to do it with!"

"I always knew you were a big man!" she exclaimed, the colour rushing to her face.

The office boy came in with the note-book and pencil. When he had gone, Mary said: "There's not a man in a hundred thousand who would do this. You know it!"

He came over toward her. She had opened the note-book and was holding the pencil poised over it. As she looked up at him, he noticed her accelerated breath. "You called me a brute just now — and it hurt. Now you call me a man of honour, and that does me more good than anything that I have ever had said to me."

They looked at each other for a few seconds. She watched his control and knew what he was fighting for. Her own feelings were all she could manage. After a moment, she said: "Will you dictate the letters, Mr. Maughm?"

Her former employer thrust his hands in his pockets and began :

“Atkinson & Co.,  
“Broadway, New York.

“Gentlemen,

“In ratification of my conversation with you yesterday, I write to say that I wish to purchase the Western Tract adjoining ‘Upjohn.’ I will send you my check for \$250,000 to-night. The remainder of the amount I will raise in a fortnight. It is hardly necessary to say that I want the deal to remain entirely between ourselves.

“Yours truly,”

“Mr. Herbert Walsh,  
“Portland, Oregon.

“Dear Sir,

“Through your New York representatives, I am filing my option to-day for the purchase of the lands west of the ‘Upjohn’ mines. It is hardly necessary to say that the deal is entirely between ourselves. Your representative will inform you of the details.

“Yours truly,”

“You see,” said Maughm, standing near her as he used to stand in the little office where she had taken his correspondence day by day for five years, “you see, I am not going to be in quite such a hole as you think. The vein we have been looking for runs all along the Western territory, and I expect to more than recoup my output. So,” he added, nodding to her, “don’t worry, little girl. . . . Now write those out for me, will you? I want to hear you touch the Remington keys again. I suppose that is commonplace music to the rest of the world, but it will sound better than grand opera to me.”

Mary went over to her machine, and Maughm stood behind her. She was as conscious of his eyes as though

her own had not been fastened upon the keys. In this moment, Maughm had grown in her mind to a height he had not attained before. This act of his to protect the people who had trusted in him won her deepest admiration. He was just like what she had always thought him to be — upright, beyond reproach.

She heard him say in a voice that thrilled her: “You can’t think what it is to me to see you sitting there like that again.”

She drew the page out of the machine, slipped in an envelope and addressed it, and her hand trembled as she did so. She knew that Maughm stood there, looking at everything she did. She felt his scrutiny of her hands. He had always admired them, he had told her that they were pretty. Maughm wanted to take possession of them, to lift them to his lips, to cover them with kisses, and she knew that he was thinking these things. His glance wandered to her fair hair, underneath her hat; then to her fine shoulders.

Mary finished the second letter, addressed its envelope, folded both letters, and put them in their respective places, then turned abruptly. The situation was growing too big for her, beyond her control. She wouldn’t have it; she forced her voice into a practical key.

“You’ve just got to win out; you’ve just got to win out in ‘Upjohn’!”

“Sit as you are” — Maughm spoke in a low tone — “just as you are. Don’t move! Don’t you know I would give my life to have you back here as you used to be every day, every day. Why, we don’t begin to realise what we’ve got, when we’ve got it. It’s only when it is gone that we know. Just to think that for five years I had you here in my office —” He leaned down without touching her, his hands on the table, outspread close to her arm. “‘Upjohn’ and the mines, my fortune and the loss of it,

or the making of it — I can forget it all. I can forget everything, but I cannot forget you. You are the finest woman I have ever known. I cannot conceive of a greater happiness than to have you for a wife."

He heard her murmur something and took it for an entreaty for silence. Without touching her, but with his face close to hers, his voice vibrating through her, he continued: "I only sent for you because I had to have you here!"

"Don't touch me — you mustn't!"

She could not rise or stir without being in his arms.

"I can't live without you, Mary!" His words were an echo of her own need. "I love you, I love you! Can't you love me, Mary?"

Mary lifted her face; he gave a low exclamation, bent, and kissed her. The next moment his arms were about her, and it seemed, as he held her, that she belonged there and that beyond that there was nothing. He kissed her on the cheek where he had seen the vivid colour rise and fall, on her neck where the hair met her white collar, on her eyes whose tranquillity had been a strength to him for years. He kissed her on the lips that had greeted him with the charming smile, had drawn him day after day, year after year.

She pushed him from her with both her hands. "Go, please —"

Maughm released her, and Mary sank forward with her head on her arms, burying her face on the table before her typewriting machine.

He obeyed her, crossed the floor to the window and stood there, his heart pounding. As she remained immovable, he was back again at her side.

"You are not crying?"

She rose: rare tears stood in her eyes. He would again have taken her in his arms, but she held him away. He

realised that she would never smile again as he had known her to do in the past. She had changed, as every woman changes under passion.

He put his arms around her again, and she hid her face for a moment in her hands on his shoulder. He had called her "wonderful." She was now only a human woman, and under the sway of passion they stood together before the abyss. Soon Mary withdrew herself from his arms.

"Let me get my things: I must go."

He gave them to her, helped her on with her coat, gave her her gloves, and without speaking, they found themselves at the door. There he held her.

"I must see you very soon. I can't let you go without your promise."

The telephone on the table clicked.

"Your promise!"

"I can't come here!"

"I will meet you at Cortlandt Street Ferry with my motor on Saturday at four o'clock." He went toward the telephone. "I will be there at four o'clock on Saturday."

Maughm took up the receiver.

"What!" he exclaimed and hung it up. He came across the floor quickly to her, his face white as death. "It is my wife and Mrs. Torrance — a friend of hers. They are coming here to make me a call. They are on their way to this room now. Wait! Stand there by the table, just as you are."

The door of Maughm's private room was opened, and Mrs. Maughm and Cicely Torrance were ushered into the office.



## CHAPTER XXXI

MRS. MAUGHM'S and Mrs. Torrance's sudden appearance, shock though it was to Mary, was a so much lesser excitement that it was whirled away, as a bit of paper is destroyed in a gust of flame.

"Out home," she couldn't go down-stairs to the supper-table and meet her mother's curiosity and her questions.

She thought of Maughm's unhappy home life, and "Upjohn," and his anxiety and suspense regarding the enterprise, and mentally stretched out her hands toward the distant West, where down in the earth lay the gold to make him rich. She would have turned up the soil with her own hands to find the vein. She magnified his mentality and his power, and compared with the delicate, ephemeral Romney, he was dominant and strong; and now that she knew the quality of his passion, there was no doubt about her own love.

Making her modest toilet in her little room, before her mirror, she blushed, feeling again the enfolding of Maughm's arms and his kisses, and she realised that she was beautiful, desirable: she had much to give. She took off the bodice of her dress, and her neck and arms were like snow and cream. Everything about her was fresh, womanly, lovely, and on her face was the expression seen on the faces of those women who have loved and desired, and to whom love gives a reason for existence. Tenderness awakened in Mary toward the poor things who had no love in their lives. . . .

Mrs. Torrance had been especially gracious.

"I am so glad to meet you at last, Miss Moreland; I have heard so many charming things of you."

If she had really heard kind things of Mary, from whom had they been? Certainly not from Mrs. Maughm! This was the second fashionable woman with whom Mary had come in touch — different from Daisy Maughm, less proud, less terrifying.

Maughm, with remarkable presence of mind, had said composedly: "Miss Moreland has been so kind as to come down to look for my mislaid papers regarding 'Upjohn.'"

And then Mary had gone, leaving behind her the wife and the husband and the other lady, whose sweet smile had remained fresh in her memory.

Mary brushed out her hair. She would go down-stairs later and go out for a walk — not to church, where the bells would reproach her, where the light would shine through the marvellous words — but out of the town, where she could continue to think her heavenly, disturbing thoughts.

Every woman has her right to life and happiness. She couldn't have felt as she did toward Maughm if he had not been meant for her. His wife — what was she? An unsatisfactory woman who had made him suffer. Men made laws, but God made hearts; and if two people come together like this, and long for each other like this, and if they can't think of anything else that would be happiness, it must be meant for them by God. He didn't mean people to wear away their souls in misery, when just loving some one would ensure perfect happiness.

Maughm had needed her for a long time. She could hear him calling to her, and the miles between them seemed a living path, across which his feeling came, and hers went back to meet his. Its magnetism made her face in the mirror glow like a flame.

The room down in Wall Street, where she had lived her short love scene, became sacred — the table where she had leaned, the old machine before her, on which she had clicked out the short business letters, necessary and

unnecessary — all were enchanted things. . . . And Maughm leaning down to her. . . . Why, without that, the whole world would be smitten to ashes! . . .

This was Monday. She would not see him again until Saturday. He would write to her . . . she must wait.

And Daisy Maughm seemed to stand there by Mary's bureau, with her face turned away. . . .

She was going to live her life. What would become of him without her? Mrs. Maughm had been a bad wife. Mary coolly stared her down, and the figure by the bureau, with its averted face, faded.

It was five o'clock. She would have time for an hour's walk before supper. She heard a motor drive up, went over to the window, and watched the footman leave his box. In a few seconds, Mrs. Moreland came into the room and shut the door behind her.

"*It's Mrs. Maughm!*" she whispered. "In the parlour. The girl let her in — said we were both in the house. You will have to dress, Mary, and come down-stairs."

In the unusualness of the moment and all it might imply, for the first time the mother and daughter exchanged a look that was not close to enmity.

"What do you suppose she wants, Mary? I never heard of such a thing! You will have to go down."

Daisy Maughm looked about the little parlour with disdain. The day had been a long series of mental excitements; everything in her life was what she didn't want it to be, and she was battling against events and facts. Her condition made her nervous and keen to atmosphere.

That morning, when her husband had entered her room, her suspicions and her jealousies had nearly culminated. She had dressed and with great difficulty persuaded Cicely Torrance to accompany her to Wall Street, on the plea that she wanted to add a codicil to her will. She had been so clever as to actually hoodwink her friend.

"And Tom," she said, "is going to Chicago directly after luncheon, and I must see him. Come if you like, stay if you like; but I am going down to the office."

It had been for her a surprise and yet not a surprise to see the figure of Mary Moreland there beside her husband. Thanks to Cicely Torrance, whose diplomacy and delicacy had amounted to genius, there had been no explosion at the time or after. Maughm had taken them to luncheon at the Mid-Day Club, put them in their car, and bidden his wife good-by; going from the office directly to his train.

On their way up-town, Mrs. Torrance, from her corner of the motor, had said, as though she were speaking as much to herself as to Daisy: "So that is the wonderful Miss Moreland! I don't wonder you are jealous of her."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mrs. Maughm. "You don't — you don't! You have seen her there in his office again — with him everywhere! The insult — the disgraceful insult!"

"I wouldn't like to have to combat her as a rival."

"Ah, you see!"

"She has a quality that is difficult to combat with our little weapons."

"What do you mean?"

"Nobility."

"You are insane!" Mrs. Maughm had exclaimed. "Nobility! You don't suppose I am going to combat with a stenographer, do you!"

"I think," Mrs. Torrance had replied, "you might be jealous of her influence, but I don't think she is Tom's mistress."

"For a woman of the world," Mrs. Maughm had said, "you are astonishingly naïve."

Mrs. Torrance had continued: "Women with the expression that Miss Moreland has on her face do not throw themselves away."

Her words made no impression on the jealous woman by her side. Mrs. Maughm had shaken herself free of Cicely, and no sooner seen her friend safely behind the doors of the Maughm house than she had given her man directions to run her out to East Orange.

Here in the sordid little parlour, and not before, she planned out her campaign, because in the motor, driving out, she had been so physically weak, so trembling with excitement and battling against a feeling of illness, that she had not been able to think consecutively. She could not sink down on any of the hard chairs or on the sofa, but sat clutching the side of the little plush lounge, striving for control and to still the too-rapid beating of her heart.

What a dreadful place! So this was where Tom came and sat with his mistress! Out of this ugliness and commonness he had chosen the woman who had evidently pleased him. Over and over she repeated the words to herself: "common, disgusting, horrible!"

She was glad that Miss Moreland did not appear at once — glad for the few seconds that made it possible for her to breathe a little more freely. Her lips, which were perfectly white, were parted, her breath came rather painfully; she would have given worlds for a glass of stimulant. Across the room from her, the fragile Romney had sat whilst he battled with weakness to express his love; and here on the little lounge Daisy Maughm sat battling with weakness to express her hate. She hated her physical weakness now. If she could only control this rising feeling of faintness, here in the house of her enemy! She was weak physically when she should have been strong and dominant. Daisy Maughm felt her consciousness almost slipping away. . . .

A few moments had elapsed when the door opened and Mary, followed by her mother, came into the room.

The tact and diplomacy that Mrs. Maughm had used a few hours ago in her husband's office were not necessary to her now — so she thought. She walked directly up to Mary and said (ignoring the fact that she was accompanied by any one):

“I have come out to East Orange to have a few moments' conversation with you, Miss Moreland.”

“Mother,” said Mary, “this is Mrs. Maughm.”

“Won't you sit down?” Mrs. Moreland invited with great urbanity, indicating the most comfortable chair. “We used to see Mr. Maughm when Mary was in his employ.” She vouchsafed to Mrs. Maughm her best society smile, but it was somewhat forced. She was trembling with excitement. “It was New Year's Day when Mr. Maughm came here last. I remember it distinctly, because the pipes had frozen.”

Mrs. Maughm, standing before Mary, did not once look toward the older woman. A bright red colour, like that on the leaves of the fuchsia, burned on either cheek.

She repeated: “I wish to have a few moments' conversation with you, and I hope we can be alone and not interrupted.”

Mary gave her mother a look which even Mrs. Moreland did not dare disobey, and she withdrew. Then Mrs. Maughm and Mary, without a word, crossed to the lounge and sat down side by side. The silence was broken by Mary.

“It is a long trip out here in the motor —”

Mrs. Maughm forced herself to look fully at the “wonderful” Miss Moreland, as Mrs. Torrance had styled her — the woman whom her friend had called noble — the woman whom her husband loved. Mary seemed out of keeping with her “sordid, common, disgusting” surroundings, as Mrs. Maughm termed them. She was a very different woman from the timid, mouse-like creature that

Daisy Maughm had summoned to write her invitations, that she had peremptorily sent for on the day that she thought her husband was going to elope with his stenographer. That was a stenographer and secretary in a questionable position. She sat now before a poised, noble-looking woman of undoubted beauty and unmistakable aplomb, and a woman whom she now believed was in such a position toward her husband as to make Mary the arbiter for the moment of all three of their fates. It was Mary who was on top — Mary with whom the advantage lay. It was a galling and bitter thing to the proud and jealous woman. The girl's extreme dignity had baffled Mrs. Maughm in the office to-day; her quiet poise baffled her now.

"A few months ago, I sent for you to come to my house to see me. Do you remember?"

"Yes."

"I sent for you in a moment of great weakness."

Mrs. Maughm had been planning her campaign when the faintness overcame her. It had seemed to her an easy thing to rush like a defender of her rights into this environment; but now that she was here, confronting this woman, it was not so easy after all. She turned about slightly and held the side of the lounge tightly, nerving herself for every word she said, forcing her voice to keep an even pitch.

"You are playing a losing game, Miss Moreland — a losing game. As far as I am concerned, I love my husband; I am going to keep my husband. I don't care what it costs me, or what it means, I am going to keep Tom!"

She accentuated her words with a sharp precision not without its force, and as Mary looked into the cold, handsome eyes, at the cold implacability of her face, where the only colour was one of fever and excitement, she was conscious that about Mrs. Maughm there was a certain power

— it was the power of the law, of convention, of things as they are, of fate. Strangely enough, this woman sitting there became for the first time something tremendous, something real; she was the wife, she had everything behind her, everything around her — everything!

“I am not a sentimentalist, Miss Moreland, and perhaps I do not understand my husband.” (She dwelt on the word “understand” for a moment with a sort of sarcasm.) “But I have been able to give him a great deal. . . . But that is neither here nor there. I am going to keep my husband!”

Mary rose.

“I have come out here to ask you to stop seeing Tom.”

Mary stood tall and slender as a lily and as pale. Mrs. Maughm’s fingers in her delicate gloves clutched as though they held something alive.

“It is to your own advantage,” said Daisy Maughm, “to give Tom up. I must say, as I did before, it is a losing game. I have everything on my side — realise it, be sensible!”

She stopped speaking, turned fully to Mary and waited. She could never have come with a plea at a worse moment than this. Mary Moreland, who did nothing by halves had taken her stand. What she had been through was just as real as anything Mrs. Maughm had ever known.

“I am sorry,” she said in her quiet voice, “that you felt you had to come and talk to me.”

“You mean to tell me you will not give him up?”

“In the first place,” said Mary, “you wouldn’t believe anything I had to say, and there are certain things about which I wouldn’t talk to anybody in the world.”

Mrs. Maughm threw back her head and laughed.

“That is being, I suppose, the ‘wonderful Miss Moreland’ — you don’t want to talk about the man you love with his wife!”



"Daisy Maughm dropped her voice, clasped both her hands in her lap, and sat erect, her face raised.

"I knew what I would have to battle with out here. A woman like you doesn't attach herself to a millionaire for nothing. I understand; but, Miss Moreland, I am determined, I am desperate! Do you understand? I love my husband! That means nothing to you." She waited.

Mary Moreland said: "It means a very great deal — if it were true."

Mrs. Maughm stared at her and laughed again.

"Well," she said, "we won't discuss that. I think I feel as you do — we won't discuss it — be that as it may. Miss Moreland, I am going to keep him."

In spite of herself, the words fell from Mary's lips: "I don't think you ever had him!"

"Oh, don't you?" said Mrs. Maughm; then added: "If I haven't, I am going to get him now."

The two human beings looked at each other in silence a moment, then Daisy Maughm said:

"The fact that you took from him a thousand dollars shows me what kind of a woman you are. I haven't come empty-handed, Miss Moreland. I am going to make it worth your while, and I am going to show you, too, that I trust your word, for if you will promise me never to see my husband again, I am going to give you —" she paused — "ten thousand dollars. That is all I can lay my hands on. I know it isn't much when you think what you might get from Tom."

The insult that fell from the woman's lips touched Mary as water on marble: it made no impression. Mrs. Maughm could not insult her. She looked like marble as she stood there, white and tall.

If Mrs. Maughm were going to keep her own, Mary was going to keep hers, and there was rising in her steadily a great antagonism to this woman with whom was all the

apparent right. She would not let herself listen or be touched, nor was there anything in Mrs. Maughm, as she sat there breathing quickly, crimson-cheeked and bright-eyed, cold as steel, to touch Mary.

She said quietly, as though she were discussing a business proposition: "You would not offer me this if you didn't think I would take it —"

But before she had finished speaking, Mrs. Maughm, who did not trouble herself to lower her voice, interrupted.

"I will make it twenty thousand," and added, "I would sell my jewels — I would do anything!"

Mary retreated a step, and Mrs. Maughm at the same moment rose.

"I am determined," she said, nodding her head, "determined! And I want you to promise me that you will never see my husband again!"

The two women faced each other, perfectly silent for a second.

"If you do not," Mrs. Maughm continued, "I will open divorce proceedings immediately! It is scarcely necessary for me to say what that disgrace will be —" her lip curled — "When I speak of disgrace, I mean for my husband and myself."

As they stood thus, the door opened noisily, and the maid came in with a big florist's box, an unmistakable gift, which she put down on the sofa with a letter and a telegram and then retired.

Although Mrs. Maughm had made a sentimental and melodramatic flight to East Orange, she was neither a sentimental nor melodramatic woman, and what she had met in Mary Moreland — the implacable futility of her apparent appeal — nerved her to her best. It was on the tip of her tongue to exclaim: "Those flowers, that telegram, that letter, are from my husband!" but she had the genius — for it amounted to that — to ignore the entrance of the

gift. She moved slowly over toward the door and there paused trembling, her limbs shaking under her.

"What do you women do?" she asked in a low, vibrating voice, her chin forward, and her lips as white as her cheeks. "I have often asked myself. When I sent for you some months ago, I was fool enough to believe that perhaps you could in some way teach me some lesson." She laughed. "I wouldn't want to learn your lesson! It is disgraceful, dishonourable! Taking a man from the woman he has sworn to love and cherish! Some one said you were noble! Why, you are degraded! When a woman like you gets hold of a rich man —" She tried to control her voice. "Tom is very rich — you know that. He will be richer. I dare say that I can lay hands on more money —"

"I cannot discuss it, Mrs. Maughm," said the other woman.

At this moment, the folding doors between the dining-room and the parlour were rolled open, and Mrs. Moreland came into the room as though dashed in by a powerful impulse. She went directly to the two at the door. Her fingers were wound about her new watch-chain, her eyes were as bright as Mrs. Maughm's, and her cheeks scarcely less red.

"I have heard every word of your conversation." She threw a superb look at her daughter. "I considered it my Christian duty in my own house to inform myself of what was going on. Now I know," she emphasized, "and, Mrs. Maughm, you are not going out of my house insulted like this by Mary."

Mrs. Maughm, almost reeling against the door casing, appeared unconscious of the older woman.

"Mother," began her daughter.

"Hush!" said her mother violently. "A woman in the position in which you have placed yourself has no voice. I am down on my knees before you, Mrs. Maughm,

and if I could I would bend my daughter's knees beside me. Your magnificent generosity!"

Mary opened the door. "Mrs. Maughm is going, mother."

"Not," said Mrs. Moreland, "before her mind is made easy. I think your suspicions are unfounded, Mrs. Maughm. I think you are mistaken in what you imagine. My daughter is headstrong and secretive. We live our lives apart; but she is a Moreland, and I don't believe —"

Mrs. Maughm interrupted her. Her troubled vision dimly took in the eccentric figure, and her ears, that the voice assailed, were humming with weakness.

"If you have heard what I said," she managed to get out, "you understand the situation. I want Miss Moreland never to see my husband again!"

"Your magnificent generosity," began Mrs. Moreland again, but Mrs. Maughm cut her short. She drew down her veil.

"You understand the situation," she repeated, moving through the door.

"Wait," said Mrs. Moreland, going to her side, and taking her arm, put it through her own. "I will take you to your car."

Supported by Mrs. Moreland, whose attitude seemed to say: "I am protecting you; confide in me, count on me," Mrs. Maughm made slow progress from the parlour to her motor.

When Mrs. Moreland came back to the parlour, Mary stood by the little sofa, where the florist's box, with the letter and the telegram, had been placed by the maid.

Her mother, breathing quickly, said: "You remember what I said about Amber Doane!"

"You needn't repeat it to me, mother."

"Either you are to accept Mrs. Maughm's noble proposition —"

Mary, turning, seemed for the first time smitten to life and sentient feeling; her eyes darkened, and the colour, which had entirely left her face during her interview with Mrs. Maughm, returned in a flood.

"You mean you want me to accept that money from Mrs. Maughm!"

"She couldn't do less," said her mother, "than give you a fortune; her husband has ruined your life."

Mary bent down and picked up the florist's box, the letter, and the telegram, and started to leave the room without replying.

"Don't go out of here in that maddening silence!" cried her mother, stopping her path with her own figure. "I am tired of seeing you bring affluence and luxury to our doors and then turn them away for a folly. You act like a crazy girl! You are willing to ruin your reputation, make a public scandal, and you are *not* willing to make us comfortable for life!"

Mary started to turn from her mother and go in the other direction, to the dining-room doors; but Mrs. Moreland, before her, put her arms across them like a bar. The "golden sands" seemed slipping beneath her feet. She couldn't bear it.

"You shan't leave this room until you have told me what you are going to do!"

Mary crossed the floor to the other door. (This time her mother let her go.) There she turned and said: "I am going to New York, mother," and after a moment added: "for good!"

Mrs. Moreland's hand dropped from the folding doors.

"What!" she exclaimed in a low voice, "you dare to tell me to my face that you are going to join that man!"

But Mary had gone out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXXII

IN a little room in the Hotel — toward ten o'clock that night, Mary sat down by the table and opened her box of flowers. Her trunk stood in the corner of the room, her suit-case and bag beside it. She had left East Orange without any further word passing between herself and her mother; their mutual life had snapped short.

The odour of the lilies-of-the-valley slipped into and around her senses. With the magnetism that brings back forgotten things and will not be gainsaid, it brought back the figure of her little sister Mamie lying in her coffin. "Dust to dust."

The printed words of the telegraphic message on the yellow sheet vibrated under her eyes. She was loved by a man whose love meant, according to the world, wrong and ruin. But the crude facts, together with the shocking scene at East Orange, faded: her mother's face, Mrs. Maughm's attack — everything was forgotten in the call of the senses. The flowers' perfume penetrated her and called to her like a living voice that asked for caresses, that promised caresses. Again she felt Maughm's kiss — that transfiguring, thrilling thing against whose power everything else in the world is as nothing.

She lived over everything from the beginning, back to the day on which he had engaged her first, when she had gone, timid and frightened, into the big office to take the position of stenographer. His personality had impressed her immediately. Then, self-effacing and self-sacrificing as she was, she had thought for five years of him, never of

herself, and all that time she had been growing to love him. She said to herself now: "It is not a thing of yesterday; it is a long, old story."

Her mind brushed lightly the scene in the office, when he had asked her to go to Boston, and came down to the more vital present; as she thought slowly and absorbedly, to her memory came the drive in the motor, and once again she seemed to sit beside Maughm as they drove through the upper part of Manhattan. She was remembering, and since she had started on this road, she could not stop the memories; they came, as memories will — faithfully, not to be tricked or denied. . . .

She became conscious of the closeness of the room, and turned off the heat and opened the window wide. Her room was on the ninth floor of the little hotel, and from it she looked over the sweep of lighted New York. Countless lights palpitated before her eyes. They hung like stars on the high buildings, crowning them, a culminating radiance, lifting, as it were, its glow up to the pale winter skies. Illuminated signs flashed out their advertisements and then disappeared. In the semi-obscurity, tall and lily-like, rose a spire, overpowered and over-topped by the commercial buildings. The distant clang of car gongs now and then alone broke the silence of the streets.

Mary was swept up over the city, out of it, set apart with her problems — only one human being in millions, but in whom just now lay the power of deciding vital things that must influence other lives. The vastness of the prospect before her, its impersonality, its bigness, the remoteness and the silence, as she stood in the freshening air looking over the city, impressed her.

Then she closed the window and went over to the little table where her gods lay — her flowers, her love-letter, and her telegram.

From the little hotel where she had flown, Mary went to the St. Regis, thinking that she might find, through the manager, a position as private secretary to some one of the guests. It happened that the position of house stenographer was vacant, and for the time being it was given to Miss Moreland: so in the little office apportioned to her she sat the next day before her machine under the electric light, transcribing letters she had taken from a client in room Number 964. As she wrote his messages to his bankers in London, she said to herself: "I have a right to live, a right to something — every woman has," and the face that was bent over her typewriter was set.

The day following her flight from East Orange, she had written to her mother, sending her a cheque for all the money she could lay her hands on, reserving the very slenderest sum for her own beginning of a new career. Her mother's letter in return was a combination of sermon and plea, close to pathetic; but Mary, glancing it over, couldn't think of her mother without anger.

Her own problem pounded on the ears of her mind night and day. She was to see Maughm again on Saturday at four, and nothing but death or disaster should keep her from this happiness; the wife's reality and other claims failed to exist to Mary. He was her man, and she was going to him. She had made up her mind. . . .

She piled the letters to the people her client had written to by her side, looking down at them absently. . . . It was all she knew of love — that short interval in the office. . . . Outside, in a distant part of the hotel, the orchestra was playing for another tango tea — just such a one as had taken place on that afternoon when Mrs. Maughm had surprised her husband with Mary in the hotel office. As she fingered her business correspondence, the music came floating in to her — the languorous *maxixe* — and the charm of it ran along her thoughts. She in-



errupted her own personal musings to reflect upon the picture that the room up-stairs, number 964, had made in her mind.

She had taken the business correspondence of a Mr. Josiah Briggs — she was clicking it out now on her machine — a Denver man, one of those Western capitalists with whose type the New York girl was somewhat familiar. Mr. Briggs had broken his leg and sat propped up there in his parlour, growling at his misfortune — kindly and businesslike and “very Western,” as even Mary would term him. He had given her a lot of work in a couple of hours — important work. She was enough of a business woman to be interested in it. He, too, was handling big things. . . . She liked these big deals. . . . Mr. Maughm would have been interested. . . .

Mr. Briggs had regretted the absence of his own secretary.

The manager had especially recommended Mary to him as somebody reliable. But it wasn't Mr. Briggs who had this time impressed Mary. It was the woman who, busied with her fancy work, had sat there throughout the morning, whilst her husband transacted his affairs. The big, handsome, blond Denver woman had a personality very different from Mrs. Maughm's. In this little moment of time, as she wrote her stenographic notes, Mary had been conscious of Mrs. Josiah Briggs. Fair and plump and forty, her white hands flashing with jewels as she sorted her silks, a kindly expression on her face as she nodded to Mary, there was about Mrs. Briggs that ineffable thing, atmosphere; and Mary Moreland felt it. Twice Mrs. Briggs had done some little service for her husband, and both times she had bent over him, touching his hair at the temples; and both times she had kissed him, and both times she had said “Darling.”

Never, never, never, in all her history, had any one said “darling” in Mary's presence before; nor had she ever

used the word. She knew it, she could spell it, she had read it; but this expression of tenderness was new to her — it had sounded sweet on Mrs. Briggs' lips. Both people were perfect strangers to the stenographer; but the morning hours had made their mark on her mind.

The telephone rang at her side, and the voice of her client in room number 964 brought her back to business.

"If she wasn't doing anything, would she come up again and take a little more dictation?"

It was half-past four. Mary covered her typewriter, took the letters to post, and went out toward the elevator.

"Sit down," said Mr. Briggs, nodding to the St. Regis stenographer. "Sit down over there on that sofa." She was to him as impersonal as his bill — just 'the girl from down-stairs.'

Mary, placing herself in the corner of the sofa, opened her note-book on her knees.

On the table beside Mr. Briggs were the materials for mixing drinks, a box of cigars, and the general lay-out of hotel note-paper, etc.

"Just take this letter, will you?"

"Mrs. William Briggs,

"Lakeside Drive,

"Chicago.

"Dear Mother, — There hasn't been a train into New York from out your way for twenty-four hours. We are all tied up here in the grip of the blizzard, and I guess you've got it worse out there. They say there's not a telegraph line working. It is a great old storm and the New York streets are a big sight, I can tell you.

"Now about the deal. What we are doing is simply going to make some people in Wall Street feel like punk. We have gotten together down here, and you will be glad to know that the purchase is to be put through. We have got a six-day option on the whole tract south of the mine."

(Here Mr. Briggs interrupted himself long enough to bend scrutinisingly over the map.)

During this pause, Mary glanced up to the window, against which the wings of "the good old storm" were beating. It rattled in its casing, and all around the edges were piling in the fine flakes of the snow. She was glad that she did not have to take a train out home to-night. The cars were stalled, and the Fifth Avenue stages had ceased to run. She would probably have to walk down-town.

Mr. Briggs continued :

"I have been able to persuade the boys down here that I am something of a miner, and I haven't had much trouble in getting together the one hundred thousand dollars for the option, but I could not get another cent if it was to buy out the State."

Briggs interrupted himself again to telephone to the office.

"Anybody to see me?" . . . "Send the gentlemen up when they come."

He resumed his dictation :

"It is going to be one of the biggest surprises the New York stock market has seen for years. We are going to give a bad twist to a few people when we get loose. There are some chaps down-town who think they have got one of those great big melons, but they are going to look pretty sick when they get a peek over our fence and see our crop. Why, the south vein, according to last week's tests, is just about enough to make sixty millionaires."

Mr. Briggs here dictated a good deal of personal matter and a few homely details, which Miss Moreland faithfully transcribed, while the man at the table smoked his cigar, beaming upon her and over her out to Denver, thinking

of the new possessions which were to accrue as the result of the "big, fat deal."

Mary finished her transcription.

"Just wait a moment, please. There will be a couple of gentlemen here in a minute, and we will want to send out a few wires."

Mary waited. The window still rattled in its casing, and the storm continued to beat. Mr. Briggs opened a Grand Trunk time-table and buried himself in the study of it, a cigar between his fingers. In a few moments the telephone rang shortly, and a minute or two later the two men who were expected came up-stairs to number 964, arriving fresh from their battle with the storm outside.

Mary Moreland, in her corner of the sofa, waited while they mixed high-balls from the syphon and bottles on the table by the side of Mr. Briggs and indifferently heard their business communications, her thoughts elsewhere. In this very hotel, down-stairs, she had for months been private secretary to a man very different to these. Her life had seemed to move then in easy, charming channels. She was far away from that now. It was like a dream, like a picture book, but every now and then the words "mine" and "gold," rich and picturesque, fell from Mr. Briggs' mouth so roundly that they caught her attention, and finally she began to think about the people in the room and looked over more apprehendingly toward the group of business men at the table. One of the callers had seated himself comfortably, while the other stood.

"As far as I can tell," said Mr. Briggs, "there's not a wind of this abroad. They seem to have bitten off all round the excavations, as a boy bites a cake. Right down to the South is clear and clean for us, and just where the gold lies has been left for 'yours truly' and his pals. It's funny, isn't it?" — He smiled with satisfaction, took a

drink, and looked from one man to the other. "Fortune is a very curious thing."

The other man, sitting by the table, said: "There is only one thing for Peters to do, and that is to start right out West."

Peters, standing by the table, laughed shortly.

"It isn't such a cinch just to go 'right' down town. There's not much going except a man's own feet in New York and around it."

"Why, it might be a matter of three days," said Briggs, "before we could get a wire through. Peters, you will have to go down to the Grand Central Station and sit!"

"It looks good," laughed Peters.

Mr. Briggs took down the telephone receiver. "Get me 'Information' at the Grand Central Station."

Then, turning to Peters: "You will take our cheque and put the thing through just as quickly as you can, and as soon as you've got a line on any of the wires, you will get hold of Walsh and protect our interests."

"Information" at the Grand Central Station informed Mr. Briggs that there would probably be a train through to Albany, but there were no schedules, and nothing had come in from the West for twelve hours. The train was scheduled to leave the Grand Central Station in forty-five minutes.

Mr. Briggs said to one of the men: "You were not successful in discovering who it is that has been buying up the western tract, were you?"

"It is a little group of bankers," said the man addressed, "but I don't know who they are."

"Well," said Mr. Briggs complacently, "they might just as well go and buy up a few yards in Central Park!"

He wrote his cheque. Mr. Peters put it coolly in his waistcoat pocket, and after receiving some further hasty

directions, bade his colleagues good-by, walked out of the room, and began his battle with the storm.

For some minutes after he had left, Mr. Briggs and his companion discussed the storm in its relation to traffic, commerce, city government, and previous blizzards.

"Do you think Peters will make it?" Briggs asked.

"Judging from the way he forged up from the subway, I guess he will."

"Good boy," said Briggs, settling himself back comfortably in his chair with satisfaction. "Makes you think of the 'forty-niners,' doesn't it, plugging out for gold?"

The man at the table rose leisurely.

"I am sorry to leave you locked up here like this, Briggs, but I've got to have a try at getting out to Newark. It's lucky for me the subway isn't on top. I guess it is the only time that being under has an advantage." He shook Briggs' hand. "So long," he said. "You can call me up at my house in Newark, and I will probably show up some time to-morrow."

"Well," replied Briggs, "I am going to frame up a few wires for this young lady to send out just as soon as any go through."

Miss Moreland, from the sofa, asked if she should wait.

"Yes," said Mr. Briggs, "I want to send out some wires. Take this down, will you, and be very correct about the words; they are all code and important."

A long telegram followed, faithfully transcribed by Miss Moreland in her note-book.

"When you have written that out, let me see it before you send it, please. I will give you the address later, and then I would like to have you send it yourself from the nearest Western Union office. I don't want it to go through the hotel."

Mary quietly rose to leave, and Mr. Briggs immediately became deeply absorbed in his code telegram, comparing it

aloud with a transcription he held in his hand. As Mary crossed the room, she heard these words :

"This is how it will read to Walsh. One hundred thousand dollars six-day option for . . . acres south of the 'Upjohn' mines. Peters going out with cheque."

"Upjohn!" The word electrified Mary. Instantly her mind seized the situation, and she seemed to feel herself floating like something in the air, to float back toward the table with its commercial weight of train schedules, mine maps, pen and ink and hotel stationery, whisky bottle and syphon, the paraphernalia and conglomeration — all flashed before her vision and wavered like a moving-picture show. She seemed to float toward the door again, to get there. She tore the sheet on which she had written the code words out of her note-book, and it seemed to flash from her hand toward Mr. Briggs.

"I can't send your telegram; I can't send your letters to Denver! When you said 'Upjohn' I understood for the first time what you have been talking about." Her hands grasped the door-knob tightly: her head was up in its fine way. "The man who has bought the western tract of mining land is a great deal to me! I am not going to see him ruined — just understand it, will you! I am sorry to be unprofessional — I am sorry. I want you to understand that! I am going out of here just as fast as I can to find him. . . . I am going to tell him! It is between the man you sent out to the West and me! Please understand. I am sorry, but I am going to race for this. It is his fortune, and it is all his life! Just understand, please." And she was out of the door.

Mr. Briggs swore a mighty oath and called to his wife. She had taken advantage of this moment to wash her hair and was in the farthest bathroom of the suite, with her hair down in the basin, and the water running from the bath-tub taps, and she heard nothing. He called "Mamie, Mamie!"

in vain, swore again, and sat up as far as he could, his eyes blazing, and caught up the telephone receiver. But it was one of those maddening, thrice-irritating moments when "Central" kept him waiting. He thumped the apparatus violently.

"Give me the office!"

The office kept him waiting. He got the room clerk.

"I want you to hold the house stenographer! Don't let her leave the hotel! She is going down-stairs now! It is a matter of great importance! Don't let her leave! Send some one up here at once to my room to communicate with me!"

This time Mr. Briggs' voice penetrated to his wife's ears over the commotion of running water, and she came hastily in, her dripping locks in her hand.

"For heaven's sake, Josiah!"

Her husband could hardly articulate. He had the telephone in one hand, and he gesticulated toward the door with the other.

"Stop that girl! Stop that stenographer!"

"For heaven's sake!" repeated Mrs. Briggs. "Is she a thief?"

"Never mind! Get after her! Stop her!"

"But," exclaimed Mrs. Briggs, whose handsome figure was but inefficiently covered by a Turkish bathrobe, "I can't, Josiah, like this!"

"By God!" swore the mine owner; "I can!" And made as though he would move from the sofa with his plaster-held leg.

Mrs. Briggs hurried toward the door, the water dripping from her hands and hair. She opened it, looked out.

"There's no one in the hall," and added: "Don't make yourself ill, Josiah. What has she stolen?"

The telephone rang at his side. "Did 964 mean the manicure or the hair-dresser?"



"Damn!" said Mr. Briggs. "The hotel stenographer!"

Mrs. Briggs came back to the sofa, to her husband. "Tell me what it is," she asked serenely.

"Why," said Mr. Briggs, trembling, "that girl here is going to give away all our deal with the 'Upjohn' mine to some damned sweetheart of hers!"

"What! That nice-looking woman! You're crazy!"

The telephone rang again. "Did Mr. Briggs mean Miss Moreland, who had come up to take some letters a short while ago?"

"Yes, yes!"

Miss Moreland wasn't in the hotel.

As soon as she left the hotel, Mary hastened to the nearest public telephone booth and after carefully shutting herself in, called up the Maughm residence. The butler answered her.

"Can you tell me what hotel Mr. Maughm is stopping at in Chicago?"

"Who is speaking?"

"It is Miss Rensselaer from the office."

"Mr. Maughm has left Chicago."

"Oh, he has?" A blank desperation seized her lest they shouldn't know where he was.

But Miss Rensselaer at the office had a perfect right to ask, the butler thought, so he vouchsafed: "Mr. Maughm is at his camp in the Adirondacks — Lake Placid."

"Oh!" she repeated.

"You can't get any word in to him," informed the butler, "by wire. Anything important? I will tell Mrs. Maughm."

"No, no," said 'Miss Rensselaer'; "that's all right. Do you know when he will be back?"

"Saturday," said the man; "some time in the afternoon. I will just ask Mrs. Maughm, miss."

"No, no," and presence of mind returned to Maughm's aforetime stenographer. "It is a question of signing some important papers. We may have to send up there to him by an office boy."

"Red Wing Camp," said the man intelligently, "Lake Placid. He gets off at Placid and drives in fifteen miles."

"Thank you."

"I had better tell Mrs. Maughm."

But 'Miss Rensselaer' had rung off.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

AROUND Red Wing Camp, the pines, black as coal against the grey sky, rose straight up out of their beds of snow. From the porch where he stood, Maughm looked into the heart of a forest deep as a well. The trees epitomised strength, and about them was an inexpressible loneliness, as they clustered thick and close, silent, unshaken by any wind.

With two men, whom he kept year in and year out here at Red Wing; he was to pass forty-eight hours. After sleighing as far as the lake, he had gone in the rest of the way on snowshoes with his guide. Like a half-moon, the semi-circle of the forest lay round Red Wing on the right; to the left, covered with ice and snow, sank down the grey cup of the lake.

The Adirondacks were not so "smart" as they had been and did not offer to Mrs. Maughm the amusement without which life now was stale. Maughm never came in the winter without thinking what jolly sport it would be for children here, and how they would love this life, and what fun it would be to share these sports with a son.

He had not ventured to come so far from New York without first finding out from Doctor Thomas if it were a safe thing to do in view of his wife's condition.

Looking at the husband keenly, Doctor Thomas had asked: "Do you need a change yourself?"

"No," had said Maughm, "and it is very awkward" — he had laughed almost apologetically. "You will be surprised when I tell you what I am going up there for. Ten years ago, I was godfather to the child of one of my guides —

a bully little chap — the only child that has ever come across my path, doctor, and I have taken an interest in the kid. I've been looking after his education. He was hurt a short time ago — struck on his spine by a falling tree — and if you think I can leave home, I want to go up there and look over the boy. I think there may be need of an operation. It seems to be getting worse."

"Go along up to Placid," Doctor Thomas had said. "I will look after Mrs. Maughm. I suppose," he had added with professional interest, "there will be some man or other up there who can do what is necessary for the boy?"

"If anything can be done," Maughm had said, "you may rest assured Tommy will get what he needs."

Four miles from Red Wing Camp, straight through the pines, over a trail to be made only on snow-shoes, was the little town of Spoonersville, where the guide lived with his family. Maughm had not been yet to see the boy, as he was waiting for Orin to come over and take him through to the village. Already the freshness of the untainted air was sending invigorating sensations through Maughm's body, exhilarated as he was by the long tramp.

His guides, Foster and Smith, were building a gigantic fire in the living-room, whose windows opened on to the porch. Maughm heard their slow, drawling voices and the loud crackling of the kindlings under the mighty logs. Otherwise the only sounds were the faint cry of some little woodland animal or the call of a bird. Maughm lit a cigarette and smoked. Wrapped in his long fur coat, his cap drawn well down over his ears, he stood a big, staunch figure, enjoying the winter scene.

His thoughts ran in distinct grooves; he could easily change from one to the other and absorb himself in any one of his interests for a certain length of time. There was "Upjohn" and what the venture meant to him, the triumph

it would be in his career when he should master this financial problem. Nothing in his business affairs had withstood his keen judgment so far, or disappointed his anticipations. In Chicago, where he had gone for that purpose, he had culminated his "Upjohn" transactions, and there was nothing for him to do now but await the outcome.

When Cicely Torrance and his wife had appeared so unexpectedly in his office a few days before, he had been spared prolonged embarrassment by the entrance of Wainwright, who had come to keep an appointment with him in the "Upjohn" matter.

When Maughm had run along far enough in his financial groove, he reluctantly followed the channel regarding the affairs of his home, and when the torturing uncertainties of the position there grew unbearable, turned with deep-breathed satisfaction to his thoughts of Mary Moreland.

There on the porch of his camp, stretching out his arms as an athlete stretches himself, exulting in his physical development, Maughm regarded the world with healthy satisfaction.

Mary was a true woman; she was a perfect companion, and she loved him! Neither "Upjohn," nor his wife, nor the thought of his child, could crowd her out of his thoughts. She haunted him with the persistence of a desired object, and now that he had the remembrance of the embrace in the office, the reality of that sweetness, he couldn't get rid of her if he would. He turned passionately to his desire, reflecting to himself: "What qualities she possesses." And he recalled picture after picture of Mary in his office during the many years: her quiet entrance, the laying aside of her hat and gloves and coat, the putting away of her things, the enjoyment that a man feels when a woman has settled down before her occupation, whatever that may be, and is there to stay.

He wanted to claim her presence everywhere, to make a

home for her, and here Maughm snapped his thoughts short, refusing to plan for a future — wouldn't let it come to his mind for fear that details would blur his mental pleasures — and returned slowly to the contemplation of the Woman — the turn of her cheek, the closely-set ear under the fair hair, the line of her neck, her shoulders, her waist, the slenderness that charmed him. Her capable hands, her serene eyes, had always brought him peace, and their changed expression now brought him delicious torment. Mentally he kissed her again, and again drew himself up. His cigarette burned down; he stamped it out under foot.

Here he was beyond the reach of telephone or wire, for the lines had been broken down by the last storm. The guides came out on the porch.

“Orin ought to be over here any time now, Mr. Maughm.”

“I think I'll get on my old togs, strap on my snow-shoes, and go out a bit on the lake.”

“Waal,” drawled Foster, “we'll build a fire in the kitchen stove and get a snack of supper.”

“Good,” said Maughm, “I'll eat it before the fire in the living-room. Any old thing will do.”

The two men, standing one on either side of their employer, were typical woodmen, North Woods guides — silent, uncommunicative, simple as the animals with whose haunts they were familiar.

“Too bad 'bout Orin's little boy,” said Foster. “He was as spry as a squirrel.”

“Too bad,” said Smith, his pipe between his teeth, his hand clasping the bowl lovingly.

“Yes,” agreed Maughm, “it is too bad.”

Half an hour later, in corduroys and sweater, a red comforter wound about his neck, mittens on his hands, and his snow-shoes strapped on his feet, he shot out over the glassy smoothness of the lake.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

It was four o'clock on the following afternoon when the Montreal Express — several hours late — deposited a single passenger at Placid Junction. The train, which through snow-drifts and blizzard had made its way, forged on through the sunlight, leaving Miss Moreland on the station platform, surrounded by what seemed to be an entirely white world.

The excitement, which had not left her for one single moment for nearly twenty-four hours, thrilled her still. She was insensible of the fact that she was hungry, that she was tired. To the only occupant of the little station — the ticket agent who acted as general factotum, telegraph operator, and signalman — she said, as the train went out: "How can I get over to Red Wing?"

The woodsman stared at the handsome girl and said in his slow, even voice: "Don't kill me with excitement."

The young woman was simply but fashionably dressed. She had no luggage, she had no rubbers. Her clothes, which had been wet up to her knees when she boarded the Adirondack train, had been dried by the car porter during the night.

The station-master, who lived across the track, had been able to transact his duties in spite of the storm.

"What do you want to get over there for?" he asked curiously.

"How far is it?"

"Seven miles by road, two by lake, three by carry."

Though Mary had no luggage, she had money. Fortunately (and how she blessed that chance!) she had, the

day before, cashed Romney's last cheque to her — the accumulation of three weeks' salary.

"Come inside," said the man, opening the door of the station; "anybody could freeze standing."

Within, the air was stifling from the red-hot stove in the middle of the room.

She took five dollars from her purse and held it out.

"If you will find me some kind of a rig, something to get over in —"

The man put his hands in his trousers' pockets. "It is ten-fifty over to the lake and back by sleigh."

"I don't care how much it costs. I've got to get over there just as fast as I can."

He looked at her from head to foot. "See here, lady," he said, "I've known Tom Maughm for a long time, and I ain't going to lend no hand to no chasing of him into the woods. I'm a married man myself, and I wouldn't thank anybody —"

Mary forced down the tide of tingling excitement that was running through her veins. Such a contingency as being held back in this way had not crossed her mind.

"You're just about half crazy," said the man.

Every hour of that delay on the train had beaten itself into her, every moment's delay had added to her nervous tension. Now here she was held back like a prisoner by this suspicious official.

"I don't wonder you think I am crazy," she said quietly; "but it is a matter of the greatest importance to Mr. Maughm that I should get over to Red Wing."

The station-master sauntered over to the chewing-gum machine in the corner, dropped a penny in the slot, possessed himself of the package, unfolded the paper, and filled his mouth with the gum.

"Well," he said, "if that's a fact, I guess Mr. Maughm'd be here to meet ye himself with a rig."



Mary followed him over to the machine. "I am Mr. Maughm's secretary. I have come up here with important papers that require his signature, and I must get to him."

The man grinned rudely. "Why didn't they send a man; folks don't send a woman out in blizzards like this, after a gentleman who has gone in to his camp to get a little rest."

From outside came the clear sharp ring of sleigh-bells. The door of the station opened, and a man muffled up to his lips, with a whip in his hand, came in and slammed the door. Before he could speak or even greet the station-master, Mary went up to him.

"I hear you have a sleigh outside. I have come from New York to see Mr. Maughm at Red Wing on important business. If you will get me over there, some way or other, I'll give you twenty dollars."

"Don't do it, Bill," said the station-master. "This is a crazy woman. She has come here without any luggage."

The man unwound his muffler. A better judge of human countenances than the station-master, he was also not indifferent to money.

"How you goin' to git 'cross the lake?"

"Just as Mr. Maughm got across yesterday."

"How you goin' to git 'cross the carry?"

"Just as Mr. Maughm did."

The moments were flying. She had already lost time in this maddening parley.

"Rumson's over there to the store," said the stage-driver, speaking equally to Mary and the station-master. "He is one of Tom Maughm's old guides. If he wants the responsibility of takin' her in, I don't care."

Mary went toward the door on the opposite side of the station and out into the cold, where in front of the platform was a rude sleigh drawn by a pair of mountain horses. The cold struck her like a blast from the Pole, but it was

clear and fresh and sun-filled. She got into the sleigh.

"Now," she said, "I am going to sit here, and I want you to drive me over as fast as you can."

The stage-driver exchanged a look and a wink with the station-master, who threw up the responsibility.

"Tom Maughm won't thank you," he said; "but it's nothing to me."

The man got into the sleigh. "We'll go over to the store and get Rumson. He'll have to wrap you up in something or other, or you'll freeze to death."

The starting of the horses brought Mary relief. She didn't believe she could freeze to death. In fact, she was very nearly insensible to any outside influences. She waited in the store till Maughm's guide was routed out, and a few minutes later, wrapped in an old automobile coat, men's mittens on her hands and a muffler tied over her head and round her throat, sat triumphantly in the sleigh, with the two men on the front seat.

As they started off and the runner slipped into the grooves cut by Maughm's sleigh the day before, as the spotless tract of snow spread away to where it met the sharp, black line of the woods, Mary began to realise for the first time that she was actually attaining her purpose; and then came to her the consciousness that unless she froze on the way or disaster stopped her, she would soon see Maughm again.

## CHAPTER XXXV

MAUGHM had gone for another spin on the lake and had only been out for a short time when, across the stillness which he was enjoying profoundly, he heard Foster call. He obeyed unwillingly, for it meant that Orin had come in, and that he was to start back with the man on this errand of mercy. He didn't want to go in, for the sport enchanted him, and he felt reluctant to face the ordeal of going to the bedside of a sick child. He thought to himself as he crossed the lake toward the camp: "If I had made the world, there wouldn't be a heartache in it — not one."

He saw Foster standing on the edge of the porch, and the camp, the pines around it, the snowy shores, were all bathed in the afterglow, as though steeped in crimson wine. With the snow-shoes slung across his back, he came up the rude steps from the landing to the camp. He was glowing like fire from head to foot, drinking in the sweetness of the air, his pulses beating quickly, and his mind clear as a bell. "What a solitude to share with a woman!" he thought, as he went up the camp steps to the porch where stood the immobile figure of the guide.

"Orin over?"

"No," said Foster, looking at him curiously, "he ain't shown up, Mr. Maughm."

Without another word, Foster walked over to the door of the living-room and held it open for his employer. Through the window, Maughm saw the leaping flame on the hearth. He heard Foster say: "There's a lady here to see you. Rumson brought her in."

And Maughm saw before the fire, in one of the rustic

chairs, the figure of a woman in the flickering light. Smith was on his knees before her, rubbing her hands; and Rumson, his old guide, held a glass of spirits to her lips. Coming as he did from the glowing outside into the softened light of the room, he couldn't believe his eyes. The woman's head was thrown back against the chair. She was as white as the snow, and her eyes were closed. Maughm sprang forward.

"My God!" he exclaimed.

He took Smith's place, and stooping down, put his arm under her head. Her face looked then as though it were carved out of ice. He took the whisky from Smith's hands, and tipping the glass, forced it between her teeth. Her head fell back on to his shoulder.

"Just about carried her in the last mile," said Rumson.

The shock and the surprise were great to Maughm.

"Fetch up that couch, boys," he said to the men, and they rolled the big lounge up close to the fire. Maughm lifted Mary in his arms and laid her down; she was as limp as a broken lily.

He heard one of the men say: "You take off her stockings and rub her feet with whisky."

The blood flew to Maughm's face. "No, no," he choked.

Everything about her seemed to him sacred and marvelous. He loosened the collar of her dress, and couldn't bear to have them standing there, and heard himself giving his orders in a voice that choked for utterance.

"Get hot water and fill the hot-water bag! Fetch blankets from my room! Make us some strong tea!"

In the intense heat of the fire, he kneeled close to her, holding her with one arm, while he continued to try to make her take the stimulant. Close to her ear he called her name—"Mary"; and through the fog and cold in her brain she heard. Her eyelids stirred; he felt her

breathe deeply, coming back into existence, and in another second something of life rose into her icy face, and her lips moved. She opened her eyes and stirred, finally sitting up and taking hold of the lapel of his coat to bring herself back into life. Meeting his eyes she whispered: "Upjohn, Upjohn!"

He thought she was delirious.

"I have come from New York to —"

The colour slowly ran into her lips and into her cheeks. Maughm kissed her.

"My God! I thought you were dead, Mary!" He folded her in his arms.

Rumson, from the kitchen door, with the hot-water bag in his hand, saw the blended figures in the firelight, and stepped back into the kitchen, and shut the door.

"Johnson, over there at the station, said he wouldn't thank me," he said to his comrades.

Mary pushed Maughm away. It was strange to feel this humiliating sense of weakness, to find it difficult to collect her thoughts, to be, in short, a trembling, almost hysterical woman. The weight she had been carrying so far slipped; her mind was a blank, made so by long hours of battling with the cold, hunger, and fatigue; and then the sudden coming back into warmth and consciousness in Maughm's arms was too much for her equilibrium. She managed to say: "Upjohn!" but couldn't find the word again. "Wait, please; keep away from me, please!" She put her hand to her eyes.

Maughm, kneeling by her side, both his arms about her, murmured: "It is the biggest miracle that ever happened. To think of your being up here; to think of your having come in like this! Keep away from you! Don't ask me that."

He felt her fingers pulling at his arms.

"Please, please!"

Her brain was clearing. She put her hands to her disordered dress, blushed furiously, touched her hair.

Maughn, seated beside her, drank in the picture she made, dishevelled, charming. This was a helpless Mary Moreland, and it made her attractive to the man in a new way. He couldn't keep his eyes off her. Before she could forbid him, he had taken off both her shoes.

"You are soaking wet," he said, startled into more practical concern. "You must take these wet things off immediately! You must get warm and dry! This fire will do it! You will have a chill — you will be ill!"

Shoeless as she was, Mary sprang from the sofa and stood up in the red firelight.

"Wait! Never mind about me! I am all right. Listen!" and she was, in a second, the real Mary Moreland. "I came here to tell you about 'Upjohn.' There's not a moment to lose, not a moment!"

He got up from the sofa, and took both her hands between his warm, strong ones.

"No, there's not a moment to lose! Down in the office I said 'Never mind Upjohn.' Never mind it now! The one important thing is that you should get warm and get off these things. Nothing matters to me but you!"

She let her hands remain there, her fingers linking themselves with his.

"You used to tell me, down in the office," said Mary, trying to push herself back into practical business life, to talk through this singularly benumbing and blinding sea of feeling that, as she felt his hands and looked at him, kept rising through her, the most dangerous, the most possessing element that there is in life, "You used to tell me down in the office that I was a help to you. Just listen to me! Don't ask me any questions. If you think I am a good business woman —"

Maughn, who was carrying the interests of others,

whose fortune was involved, who had spent tortured hours and wakeful nights thinking about the western gold mine; who, in order to have pulled his venture honourably through would have been willing to work his fingers to the bone (for he was that kind of a man) — Maughm scarcely heard a word that the woman whose hands were held in his said.

The neck of her blouse was unfastened; her hat, which had fallen off upon the floor, had left her hair disordered round her face, and it hung down in a soft golden curl at the back of her neck. She was breathing quickly. Her lips, chapped by the cold, were red and feverish. Her grey eyes, usually so serene and full of quiet strength, were troubled and so dark that they might have passed for black.

“Mary,” he murmured, “Mary,” and in another moment he had put his arms around her, drawn her into his embrace, and kissed her in the neck, close to her soft hair. She heard him murmur:

“You don’t suppose I care a hang about a gold mine, do you? Why, I don’t care about anything in the world but just this, just this. . . .”

Mary, drenching wet, trembling with fatigue and excitement, on the very edge of the biggest moment of all, never forgot his voice in her ear: “Nothing but you. . . .”

She remained like this, held against him. Then she made herself free. Maughm saw the tears on her face.

“The man over at the station said I was crazy. I guess I am. But you have just got to listen to me! If you don’t —”

“Don’t threaten me,” murmured Maughm. “Be very careful.”

“There isn’t a single train out of here before to-morrow, but couldn’t they get a telegram through to New York from the Junction? You must cancel your purchase of the western section and —”

"Is that what you have come up here to suggest to me?" Maughm asked. He smiled serenely and let go her hands, and as he did so, the great human wave of passion slipped back from the beach of his soul, and he could think and listen to her.

"Yes," she whispered, "don't buy the western tract. Can't you get together enough money to wire out to Oregon an option for the southern tract?"

Maughm went across to the door leading into the kitchen, opened it, and called to his guides.

"How about those hot-water bags and the hot tea? And fetch some water and towels and some soap in here by the fire."

To Mary he said: "Take your wet things off. I am going to give you my dressing-gown, and what I can to make you dry and comfortable; and what there is you've got to put on" — he laughed — "and give all your wet clothes to Foster."

Mary made an appealing gesture.

"Mr. Maughm!" she exclaimed, "one would think it didn't mean your fortune and everything to you! I have come all the way up here like this to try —"

On the opposite side of the big living-room was Maughm's bedroom, and he went toward it tranquilly. As he crossed the floor, he said: "Keep close to the fire until I bring you dry things."

He sent by Foster a big bundle of fragrant masculine things, warm and inviting. He went himself into the kitchen, where the three men were engaged in conversation, and prepared for her something to eat, his heart beating wildly, his veins on fire, the most wonderful sense of triumph and happiness in his heart that he had ever known. Here was a most undreamed-of realisation of a man's most delicate and highest hopes and desires, up here in this silent forest, out of reach of humanity, out of the noise of the world



and of things. In a universe created for him and for this moment, the woman he desired had come to him! It was a miracle, a dream, that nothing could shatter or break. . . .

He spoke to one and then another of the men, giving them orders, and realised that there were too many of them, and that their presence was intolerable. He could not get rid of Rumson. There was no way of sending him back that night. As he put the last touch to the tray, which he had prepared for Mary as temptingly as he could, he said: "Where are you boys going to sleep?"

"Why," said Foster, "we have rigged up the laundry — built a big fire there in the stove, Mr. Maughm. It's all right."

"You will take Rumson in?"

"Sure!"

This would leave Red Wing alone. . . .

## CHAPTER XXXVI

WHEN, half an hour later, Maughm came into the living-room, he found Mary curled up in the corner of the big sofa, wrapped in his dressing-gown. He carried her tray himself, putting it on a little table which he drew up to her side. The excess of fatigue had gone from her face, but the excitement was still there. Her hands were clasped around her knees. Her hair, which had been brushed and combed, full of light and electrically golden, stood out like a halo around her face. The dressing-gown gave her a boyish appearance, its soft, dark material folding her round, its rich colour setting off the fairness of her skin. Below the large, loose cuffs, her hands looked fine and delicate, and Maughm could see her wrist and the suave, bloom-like texture of her forearm.

She lifted her face earnestly to him. "Mr. Maughm, you don't seem to realise what I have been through to get here in time. Won't you listen to me?"

"I want you to have something to eat, Mary."

She pushed away the tray and shook her head. "You must find some way to stop the 'Upjohn' deal. I left New York at seven yesterday. You know what it is to go out in a storm such as we've had!"

Maughm was standing by her side, looking down at her. "I know what it must have been. Rumson has told me how he brought you in and what the trip over was. I want you to be warmed and rested and fed."

He drew up a chair by the side of the table and took the knife and fork. "Now, if you don't eat some of this, I am going to feed you by force."

"Mr. Maughm!"

"I want you to call me Tom — nothing else, ever any more!" He was cutting a piece of ham. "And when you have eaten a little bit of this food —"

"Will you listen to me then?"

"I will try to."

Mary took the plate from him, forcing herself to eat a little of the meat, to drink a little of the tea. After a few mouthfuls, she laid down her knife and fork. Maughm, seeing that she was determined, set the table away.

He sat down on the sofa by her side and took her hand. She gave it to him for a moment, the warm colour flooding her face at his touch. Then she drew it away and clasped it, with its fellow, round her knees again.

"No one can get through to Placid Junction to-night?"

"No," he replied, "and there is a great satisfaction to me in knowing that you are a prisoner. What have you heard about 'Upjohn' to so disturb you? Whatever you have heard about 'Upjohn,' I'm not sorry you heard it. It has brought you here!"

"I can't tell you what I have heard. If you can buy the southern section —"

The deal, which in Mr. Briggs' room in the St. Regis had seemed to her so vital, the rush down-stairs and out of the hotel, with not even time to take her things from her office — for she had gone from Mr. Briggs' room exactly as she was, with the exception of snatching her hat and coat and purse — the tramp down to the Grand Central Station through snow and sleet, with the wind in her throat and the blast about her, the boarding of the same train with Peters, the excitement of the trip to Albany, the exultation when she had found that Mr. Peters couldn't get a western train before morning and might even then be stalled on his way; the slow progress of her own train to Placid Junction, the fever and the fatigue of the trip into Red Wing with the

guide — all of these had seemed to her matters of grave importance and thrilling, because they touched money and Maughm's success and meant either victory or defeat. Now in this remote wilderness, in the light of the great campfire, in the warmth and security of this room, where to all intents and purposes she was alone with the man she loved — all these things crumbled into insignificance as she looked at him and saw on his face nothing but his passion and his love.

Maughm had again taken her hands, unclasping her fingers.

"I don't want to talk about business, Mary. Don't you understand that?"

"You must think of what this means!"

"I cannot," said Maughm firmly. "But it is only fair to you to say that if I could, it wouldn't make any difference. Don't bother your head about 'Upjohn,' little girl! I wouldn't have the southern tract as a gift!"

"You don't know what I know!"

"When I was in Chicago," said Maughm, "the other day, I completed my purchase. I own the western tract down to the next claim. I have had to borrow a colossal sum of money to make this deal, but I will be able to pay it back in two months!"

"Oh!" she gasped, and he felt her fingers tighten on his, "then you are ruined!"

The smile did not die from Maughm's face. He shook his head.

"No," he said, "I'm not ruined, but whoever has got hold of the southern tract is. Don't worry, Mary!"

"Your deal has gone through?" she asked.

"Definitely."

"You can't get out of it?"

"I don't want to get out of it."

"You couldn't raise money enough to control the southern section?"

"I tell you there is nothing in it."

The tension of her fingers in his relaxed. She drew a long breath, her lip trembled. She murmured: "My trip up here is no good at all. I am too late."

She turned her head away from him, and he saw the tears spring to her eyes. In another moment, she was crushed in his arms, and she heard him say:

"Don't cry, Mary! Not a tear for 'Upjohn'! Don't cry! I would spend every bit of gold there is in the earth to save you a tear. Listen to me — believe me. My deal is all right. I am sure of it. I wouldn't have gone into it if I hadn't known!"

The fatigue and the excitement broke her control — the knowledge that everything was lost to him. With her face hidden against him, she cried as she had not since she was a child. Maughm wiped her tears away and kissed her.

"To think," he whispered, "that you care like that! That any woman could feel like that for me, and come here like this to help *me*. Why —" his lips were close to her ear — "what do you think a gold mine is, or a little bit of the ground, *compared to this!*" . . .

Mary leaned for a few seconds, her head against him, regaining her self-control — charmed and soothed and carried away by his voice and what he said; and she let "Upjohn" go, and the gold mines go, and the complications of business life go. Perhaps he was right, and she was wrong; perhaps he wasn't ruined. She couldn't help it, anyway. She was too late; it was done. And the West rolled itself up like a map, and as she only was there for him, so he only was there for her. . . .

She buried her face in his big, cool handkerchief that he gave her and removed the last traces of her tears, but Maughm took her face between his hands, lifted it to him, and said, looking down into it:

"Do you know how a man feels to a woman who has cried for him?" He kissed her on both her eyes. "Mary, you're my wife! You are the woman who feels for me, who has a human heart! You're all I want in the world!"

The fire had begun to die down.

"I don't want to go so far as the fireplace to put on fresh wood, but you will be cold." He laid a couple of great logs across the dark red glow and stood for a second looking at her and enjoying the picture she made in the corner of the sofa, her head sunk upon her hand.

"The men have gone over to the laundry. There isn't a human creature here to spoil our solitude, Mary! Do you take that in? We are alone here with each other — two people out of the world who care for each other — I wonder if there is anything better in life, to pay me back for some of the hell I have lived through? I wonder if I can ever do enough for you, give you enough to prove to you all I feel!"

As he spoke, there flashed across Mary's mind the words that Mrs. Maughm had said to her: "When a woman like you gets hold of a rich man —" and from the sofa she said: "You must never, never give me anything at all!"

"If I had my way," Maughm said, "I would give you everything — my name, my fortune and" he added, "my child!"

Mary's hand dropped from her face. "Your child!"

"Yes, I haven't told you."

"I didn't know that Mrs. Maughm was going to have a child."

"She doesn't want it — you know that — she hopes some disaster will happen. She is doing her best to thwart me even now."

Maughm came slowly back to the sofa and once again sat by Mary's side. The room was darker, for the fire had not yet fully caught: the logs were slow to burn.

"It made me suffer horribly at first," said the man, "to think of that little life that might be mine and that she wouldn't give me; but I don't think about it as I did any more. It can't make me suffer, as it did, any more. I don't think about anything or care about anything, Mary, but you!"

Mary's expression had changed. He heard her murmur: "I didn't know . . ." and, afraid for any feeling or reflection that might come over her and take her from him, he said: "Don't think about it, don't think about it!"

He bent over her. "Kiss me, Mary, of your own free will. You have never kissed me."

She kissed him, and as she did so, heard him cry her name in a way that shook her to the foundations of her being. She was drawn back into his arms, and the world slipped away and left her just a heart beating against another heart in the silence of that forsaken place. . . . Then she pressed her hand against his cheek and pushed him from her.

"Listen! Some one is calling! There is a voice!"

"No, no," he breathed. "Mary, Mary!"

"Yes, listen! Some one is coming up the porch steps," and the next moment there was a pounding against the door.

As Maughm stepped back from her, it was like breaking a living chain with a cruel hand, and as she saw him reluctantly take his eyes from hers, still looking at her as he crossed the floor to the door, she thought then that in all her life there would never be anything like this again. . . .

He opened the door, letting in a blast of cold and admitting a man with snow-shoes slung across his shoulder and a lantern in each hand. The man who staggered into the room was breathing like a runner in a race as he set the lanterns down on the floor.

The guide's coming at this moment was so unwelcome to

Maughm that he couldn't greet the fellow decently; but Orin, unconscious of any lack of cordiality, wrung Maughm's hand.

"Gosh, but I'm glad to see you, Mr. Maughm! 'Fraid you couldn't get up here in the blizzard. When I see the light in the livin'-room, I said to myself: 'He's here.' I'll go right out to the kitchen and fix your traps."

Maughm put his hand on the man's shoulder. "You go down to the laundry, Orin. The boys will give you supper and —"

"No, no," said the guide, shaking his head, "there's no time for supper, Mr. Maughm. I come over in as short a time as any man ever made the trail, I guess. We'll go right on back, now, if you don't mind —"

The guide put his hand to his mouth and covered it, with that instinctive gesture with which a strong man hides his weakness.

"Is it as bad as that?" asked Maughm.

The man turned his face from his employer. "Doctor says he can't live till mornin'."

There was a silence and Maughm, turning to Mary, said shortly: "I haven't told you why I was up here. Orin's little boy is my godson. He has been badly hurt. I got word down in New York."

The father looked over at the woman on the sofa.

"Didn't know that Mrs. Maughm had come up. The kid just calls for Mr. Maughm all the time, Mis' Maughm. Seems to think if Mr. Maughm was there —" He left the fireplace and crossed the living-room to the kitchen door. "I'll git your traps," he said, taking it for granted in his simplicity that there could be no question about his employer starting at once with him to the carry.

Maughm said to Mary: "There doesn't seem to be any way out of it. I'll have to go to Spoonersville."

"Of course."



"There's nothing in the world I wouldn't rather do than leave you here."

"Never mind about me."

"I'll get the megaphone and call the men up from the laundry. They shall sleep here in the kitchen and look after the fire. I'll be back as soon as I can, but I won't go unless you promise me on your word of honour that you will be here when I get back."

She put both her hands on his arm. "Where do you think I'd go?" she asked, with something like her old smile.

Maughm caught her in his arms and crushed her to him. "There's a fire in my bedroom. I want you to rest and sleep. I'll be back in the morning."

There was no loitering in Orin's movements; he was already down the front porch steps. Maughm clung to Mary's hand lingeringly.

"Has the little boy a mother?"

"Yes."

"Poor woman," said Mary Moreland.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

AFTER they had gone, Mary stood in the window and looked out into the moonlight. It was like looking into glass: everything was cut so distinct in the icy brightness. She saw Maughm and Orin go down the steps, and their figures were hidden; then she saw them again below the slope — two dark shapes against the white snow. Then they were lost to view entirely, and as they disappeared at the entrance to the trail, although Foster was there at the fire, kneeling in the glow, stirring the logs, desolation settled down upon her.

The guide told her that he and Smith were to sleep in the kitchen, that she had but to call if she wanted anything, and stole out of the room as noiselessly as an Indian.

It was characteristic of Mary that her first thought was a practical one. On a night like this Maughm might have sent one of those guides over to the junction with a telegram. He must be awfully sure about "Upjohn"; he must know it was all right, that he was going to win out over them all, that success was his. (She knew that this reflection was a compromise, nothing but a commonplace dam to keep back the dangerous rush of other things.) If Mr. Maughm were right in his belief, then Briggs and the others were fooled, and her trip, her long race with fortune —

It was too cold to stand in the window, and she moved away from it with regret. She did not want to go back into the lonely room. There was the sofa in the firelight, but this was not the only radiance round it.

What a trip for him to take through the night, over that little carry! She had come over one herself, and she knew

what it was like. Her thoughts followed him as he went from this warm shelter into the cold of the night on his tragic errand. What would he find at the other end? Sadness and death. She knew what the death of a child was. This child was nothing to him but an interest, but it was death, and it was sad, very sad. . . .

Mary walked slowly back to the sofa, but she would not sit there. She took the rustic chair where she had fallen in a faint when she had come in from the carry. She looked down at her feet: she had slipped them into Maughm's bedroom shoes and wore his dressing-gown. She loved it; she enfolded herself in it closely; it was his. There was a peculiar joy in touching the possessions of the one she loved.

It was now ten o'clock. It would not take him more than two hours to make the carry each way. She recalled his voice as he had said to her: "I won't go unless you give me your word of honour that you will be here when I return." He had expected her to go, then; he had feared that she would go!

She went over to the little bedroom that opened to the left, where, according to Maughm's directions, Foster had prepared his master's bed for Miss Moreland for the night. The little wood fire that had been lighted in the stove had died down. The room was cool and fresh and smelled of pine and burning wood. Even up here in the wilderness there was every luxury. The bed was open, and the very sight of it told her how exhausted she was. She had not closed her eyes the night before, and was conscious for the first time of the great fatigue overpowering her limbs — the fatigue which her late excitement had made her forget. She drew the dressing-gown warmly about her and threw herself down on the bed, drawing the covers over her. She left the door open into the living-room and could hear the crackling of the fire and Foster's voice speaking to his companions. Then that ceased, the noise of the fire grew

fainter, and after a few moments she fell into the profound slumber of utter exhaustion.

Her exhaustion and her excitement were too great to permit her to sleep peacefully and she dreamed that she was looking down into a great box of lilies-of-the-valley, piles upon piles of them, fragrant and wonderful; and when she put her hand in and brushed them aside, she saw the pale, cold face of her little sister. . . . Then the dream changed, and the child became a little boy lying in Maughm's arms. . . . And the dream changed again, and they were burying the little boy in the snow, and over an almost impossible pass, cold as death, Mary herself was carrying the child in her arms. . . . And the dream changed yet again, and she was in Maughm's arms, and he was kissing her, and the sweetness of this was so great and so intense that she awakened in it, stretching out her arms and springing from the bed to find that the room was deadly cold. She awoke trembling, exhausted, from the sleep that had not rested her. She went out into the living-room, where the fire, faithfully replenished by the men, burned brilliantly, its light mingling with the cold greyness from the outside, for the moon had gone down, and the light was that pallid uncertainty that comes just before the dawn.

Mary trembled so that she could hardly walk over to the sofa. This time she sank down in the corner of it and sat with her arms folded across her breast. . . . The dam that she had raised up gave way, and her thoughts came rushing in upon her with the force and the bigness of a sea. What had he said, there before the fireplace? Mrs. Maughm was going to have a child! When she had come out to East Orange to plead for her husband, she was really pleading in the name of her child! She had not told Mary, and Mary was glad that she had not known it then. Not that it would make any difference; why should it make any difference? What would Maughm's wife ever be to

him again now? She would be the mother of his child, of *his* child. . . . That was what a woman wanted most to be in the world — the mother of the child of the man she loved. . . . He was crazy about children, that was what he wanted most of all; and that was what his wife was going to give her husband — a child. . . . She could not give him up — no, Mary would give him love. There was no question about that point; she could give him that. Well, was that the only thing in the world? Amber had thought it, and it had spoilt her life. She would never be the same again, she couldn't be. . . . And when his child was born, and he was proud of it and grateful to the mother for having borne it, and absorbed in its life and its career — where would *she* be; what would happen to *her*?

The eternal question of the child rose up between Maughm and herself like a mountain. The room seemed haunted by its presence. If he were fond of the child — and he would be; if he were proud of it — and he would be sure to be that — the time would come when he would resent in his life what Mary was. And if Mrs. Maughm got a divorce, as she had said she would, there would be the question of disgrace to the child. He wanted a clean record in "Upjohn," in Wall Street; he wanted to stand as a man of honour, whose word was so good that he would imperil his whole fortune rather than have any man lose by him. That was the kind of a man he was; she knew it, she loved him for it. And if he had a child, he would not want anything in his life that would shame his son or his daughter. . . .

So she mused, huddled in the corner of the sofa; and again the human presence of the man was near her, and she felt the enfolding strength of his embrace and heard his words in her ear. His wife would not bring him the comfort that Mary could. The child couldn't bring him the comfort that

a man needs, and she could. She knew that he needed her. She tried to think of it with all her force, she tried to argue it for him and to want it for him. She wiped the tears from her eyes and looked into the fire, where so many people have built their ardent castles and seen them fall. . . .

And the presence of the child seemed to fill the room, to be between her and every thought. He had come up all the way from New York to a dying child, just because he took an interest in it. He had gone away to it this night, from the very arms of passion and love, because it was a child and called for him. What wouldn't he do for his own — what oughtn't he to do? And what could she really be in his life? For a moment her thoughts quietened her somewhat, and the silence of the place seemed absolutely living. That soundless, soundless remoteness of the forest and the winter dawn!

It wasn't right. Look at it any way you would, it wasn't right. She remembered going into the little church that day, when she had come home from Boston. She remembered sitting under the window, and how the light had shone through the coloured panes, and the words of the hymn.

Everything that was right went around such words as these. Love was great; there could be nothing sweeter in the world. She knew that, and that nothing like it would ever come to her again; but if it wasn't right, and she took it — why, there was going to be suffering for others — Maughm and perhaps the child. As far as she herself were concerned, if it were just herself, that wouldn't matter so much. If she could give herself and fill the need and bear it all, — but things weren't made like that. No wonder Mrs. Maughm had said to her: "I am going to keep my husband." She had come up here to warn him about "Upjohn," and he had told her that his own section was full of gold. Her trip had been unnecessary, her anxiety had

been for nothing, his fortune was secure. And he had told her a child was coming.

She got up from the sofa, and her limbs were stiff. She walked to and fro in the room, her head bowed. Then she went again to the window where she had stood and watched Maughm go down the steps with the guide. The bright beauty of the moon was gone. The windows gave on the east, and over the lake, beyond the black velvet of the pines, the sky was faintly red. It would soon be morning.

She opened the kitchen door a crack and called Rumson, who answered her in a voice dazed by sleep.

“Give me my dry clothes and my shoes, and I want you to take me right back to the Junction.”

Rumson, who had slept sprawled out on two chairs, came into the living-room in his stocking feet.

“Fore Mr. Maughm gits back?”

“Right away — just as fast as you can.”

“Mr. Maughm won’t thank me —”

“Hurry!” she said, “and if you don’t take me, I will go alone.”

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

"It is only a fortnight to Christmas, Daisy!"

Mrs. Torrance and Mrs. Maughm sat together before the fire in the latter's boudoir.

"Anniversaries and festivities mean nothing to me," and her friend shrugged.

"I have yet to discover the thing that does mean anything to you, Daisy."

"When a woman has an existence like mine," began Mrs. Maughm.

"Rot!" exclaimed Mrs. Torrance, with sincere impatience. "I wish I'd had your chance!"

Mrs. Maughm smoked, watching the slender fingers that held her cigarette.

"What's the matter with your own chance?"

"I was married to a man I worshipped, and he died. My adorable child lived only a year —"

This was one of Cicely Torrance's ardent days, that came in spite of her every now and then into the calendar of her well-regulated and cleverly thought out scheme of existence. It was the anniversary of the death of her child, and she had shed her tears early in her own room. It was her fashion to do everything disagreeable before breakfast and as far as possible clear off the slate for the day. Any friend but one so selfish as Daisy Maughm would have noticed her emotion.

"You could make a *chic* marriage, Cicely."

"You are very flattering, Daisy."

"Meanwhile, you are free to go and come as you please!"

"That has its limitations!" Mrs. Torrance was short.



"It's easy," said Mrs. Maughm, "to envy another person's 'chances', as you call them!"

"Think of the child that means so little to you, Daisy — that you don't want, that you would be rid of, if you could. It isn't given to me! I would give my whole life for a child!"

"Why," said Mrs. Maughm slowly, looking at her in surprise, "I didn't know you were so emotional."

The other woman did not reply directly.

"You have not even bought the sweet things that a woman should love to buy."

Mrs. Maughm put out her hand. "I thought we agreed I wasn't to be disturbed."

Mrs. Torrance turned and said curtly: "We are too good to you."

Mrs. Maughm sank back in her chair, a hard look settling on her face.

"You don't think of me — put by my husband in the most degrading position that a man can put a woman!"

"Tom hasn't put you there!"

"He has!"

"I went with you down-town against my will," Mrs. Torrance recalled, "and there I saw a fine young woman going about her business with the calm assurance of one who has nothing to conceal."

"'Calm assurance,'" repeated Mrs. Maughm, "that she has!" And leaning forward to her friend, she added: "I went out to East Orange and confronted her!"

"What!"

"Yes!" exclaimed the other, "and she brazened to my face the fact that I could get my divorce when I liked."

"You accused Miss Moreland of being your husband's mistress?"

"Yes!"

"Heavens!" Mrs. Torrance did not hide her disgust. "Poor Tom!"

"Of course! 'Poor Tom!'" Then, crushing her cigarette out on the ash tray: "How about me?"

"If I were your husband, and you had done to me what you have done to Tom —"

"How about me? You speak of Tom's child," she continued. "If I can help it, it will never be born, even if I risk my life!"

"Daisy!"

"I shall get a divorce when my proofs are complete, and I think they will be soon," she said quietly; "and to-night I am going to the Wilbrahams' ball. I shall dance till morning."

"Why, what do people want!" exclaimed Mrs. Torrance. "Give them everything, and they crush it under their feet! You had the best husband in the world. He has a heart of gold! What have you done with him? You ask me to think about you, Daisy. If what you say is true — that Miss Moreland is Tom's mistress —"

"There's not the smallest doubt about it in the world," said Mrs. Maughm, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"Well, then, given the fact that you are about to become the mother of his child, it's dreadful, perfectly dreadful!"

There was silence for a moment between the two women.

"Then you don't blame me for wanting to get a divorce, Cicely?"

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Torrance, "I would stick out anything myself, to keep the home together. Good God! You had everything in your hands. Your self, Daisy, has spoilt everything — that self that you put above Tom and human life and even God!"

Mrs. Maughm looked at her out of the corner of her eye.

"I think, if you should marry, I'd advise you to marry a minister; you would be a great help to him in his evangelistic work!"

"Oh!" her friend seemed to draw from her. "You are perfectly shocking." She added: "What preparations are you making for a child?"

"I am not making any," said Mrs. Maughm coolly. "I should think you would know that."

Mrs. Torrance's experience had been different from what she was called upon constantly to consider in the lives of her friends: it took her a little while to adjust her balances. After a few seconds she said: "You speak of absolute proof, Daisy, before you open divorce proceedings?"

"Yes," nodded Mrs. Maughm. "Tom went to Chicago on business, and directly after I had seen Miss Moreland in East Orange, she left her own home. Then Tom went up to the Adirondacks, ostensibly to see Orin's little boy. He really went that Miss Moreland should meet him there — and she did!"

"You have a very able detective," laughed Mrs. Torrance. "It must cost you a great deal of money, Daisy."

"It was never better spent."

"I differ from you there. Since I told you a few months ago that there was no tragedy in the situation, the situation has changed — thanks to you."

"You are too kind!"

"You had everything in your own hand, my dear!"

"You don't know Miss Moreland, Cicely."

"If, when Doctor Thomas told you, you had been human and reasonable —"

"Knowing what I do," Mrs. Maughm insisted, now asking the friendly advice she had wanted all along, "you would advise me to go on living with my husband and accept the situation?"

Mrs. Torrance waited a few moments, then asked: "You really want my advice?"

"Yes."

Mrs. Torrance paused again and looked at Daisy with her bright, intelligent gaze, putting her hand out on her friend's knee.

"I should keep my husband," she said; "I don't care who was there, I should keep my husband, and through your child you will win him back again away from any woman in the world!"

Daisy Maughm did not reply. She seemed to waver, for the first time, before Cicely's eyes.

The man brought in the tea and placed it on a small table between the two ladies.

"You make it," Mrs. Maughm turned away from her friend, leaning her elbows on the arm of her chair, sinking her cheek on her clasped hands. It was the averted face Mary Moreland had seemed to see in the little bedroom.

Mrs. Torrance silently poured the tea and glanced at her friend, wondering what impression she had made upon her and thinking of Maughm.

"Will you have some tea, Daisy?"

"As it comes from the pot and very strong."

The man servant returned with a plate of hot buttered toast, which he put down on a small stand at Mrs. Torrance's left.

"Miss Moreland is down-stairs, madam. I told her you were not at home, but she asked me to say she was here."

Now Mrs. Maughm's position changed.

"Miss Moreland!" she repeated and looked at Cicely Torrance. "Is she alone?"

"Yes, madam."

"See her, Daisy!" exclaimed Mrs. Torrance. "See her, by all means see her."

Mrs. Maughm's fingers tightened.

"Ask Miss Moreland to come up."

## CHAPTER XXXIX

WHEN Mary Moreland, eight months ago, had come into this room, she had seen Maughm's wife sitting before the fire with traces of tears upon her face — a woman who had sent for her in a moment of excitement and curiosity. Now, when she entered the room, there were two women there, one of whom rose, extending her hand to Mary.

"How do you do, Miss Moreland? Won't you come in and sit down and let me give you a cup of tea?"

Mary said: "I will stand here, thank you. I came to say a few words to Mrs. Maughm."

"Mrs. Torrance will stay, if you don't mind, Miss Moreland."

Mary stood by a tapestry chair, on whose back she rested her hand in its grey glove. Mrs. Torrance, who did not reseat herself before the tea-table, went across the room into the shadow and there sat down and watched Miss Moreland.

Cicely knew life, its shades and its complexities, and she thought that Mary, like a mariner, had been battling with high seas and had come serenely into port. There was something victorious about that quiet, dignified figure. Mary's dress was that of a woman who has taken pains to dress herself with care. It was the girl Mrs. Torrance had seen in Maughm's office, yet not the same. She was thinner; she looked older, and she was pale; but she was victorious.

"You came to see me out in East Orange the other day, Mrs. Maughm."

Mrs. Maughm, without speaking, slowly inclined her head.

"I was very much surprised. That was the first thing I thought of — I didn't think that a woman married to a man would do anything like that."

"A woman married to a man," quoted Mrs. Maughm with subtle rudeness, imitating Mary's simplicity of speech, "will go to any length, Miss Moreland, to keep what she has a legal right to hold!"

"Legal rights," said Mary Moreland, "don't hold, though. They are broken all the time. I didn't have time to get over my surprise when you offered me money if I would promise never to see him again."

Daisy leaned forward eagerly. "I can double it," she said; "I can double it!"

(Cicely Torrance saw the girl quiver and draw back, but the quiet serenity of her face did not alter, and Cicely knew that, hot as the stab was, it didn't reach her. She had gone beyond it.)

"I didn't take it in, then — what it meant to have you come like that. I didn't take in what you must have gone through before you could do a thing like that."

"What I have 'gone through,' Miss Moreland, "again quoted Mrs. Maughm, "cannot be of the slightest interest to you. Don't try to make it so."

"You sent for me," said Mary, "a few months ago, to come here to see you —"

"If I had been possessed of my reason, I should have left my house that night, never to have returned."

"And when I came —"

(Cicely saw Mary pick up her thread with perfect continuity, unbroken by Daisy's interruptions.)

— "You asked me one or two questions about what I thought a woman should do to hold the man she loved."

(As Mary said these words, Cicely saw her stop and bite her lip, as though the words "the man she loved" were just a little too much to say.)

"Are you going to tell me now," Mrs. Maughm asked, each word incisive and sharp as steel, "how to keep the man you love?"

Cicely saw that Mary tried to comprehend these words, as though they might have a bearing on what she had come to say, and to Cicely's surprise — although she would not have been surprised if she had known Mary better — the girl said gravely: "Yes."

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Mrs. Maughm and looked over at Mrs. Torrance. "You're perfect; your assumption and your arrogance are complete!"

"When you came out to East Orange, you asked me to promise you never to see him again —"

"I don't ask you to promise me that now," said the wife, starting as though to rise from her chair and then re-seating herself. "You may pursue your love affair; I am going to open my proceedings for divorce to-morrow."

"And when you came out there" — Mary pursued her course, which seemed as unchanged as an eternal law — "to ask me that, I didn't know that you were going to have a child."

(And with these words, Cicely saw a very faint colour tinge Mary's perfectly pale cheek. She heard Daisy laugh.)

"Really," Mrs. Maughm exclaimed, "what a part a child seems to play in the affair!"

"When you came out to East Orange," continued Miss Moreland, "I had only seen him a few times alone in my life —"

She paused. (Cicely watched her, seeing unrolled before her eyes, by Mary's quiet voice, the romance and the tragedy of what had been supposed to be such a disgraceful *liaison*.)

"Just a few times," continued Mary. "But I guess you know all about them through your detective. When I say 'alone' in my life, I don't mean the business times,

when I saw him every day for five years. I mean alone since I knew that he was not happy at home — that you didn't care for each other — that you didn't want to give him anything he wanted — that you didn't watch out for him — that you only asked him to bring you back his money and not himself — that you only wanted just to go on your own way and let him go his."

"Upon my word!" Daisy murmured.

(Cicely leaned forward, where she sat in the shadow, watching the immovable figure of Maughm's aforetime secretary.)

"I had seen him in the office that day you sent for me to come here, and I was going with him to Boston, because his heart was broken. But I didn't go to Boston with him, and I came back from Boston alone — so did he. I met him at the St. Regis, that time you saw us both, by accident. I saw him in the street the day you fainted and went to the hospital. He took me down to the station in his motor, and he told me how hard things were going with him, and how he was trying to pull through. I have seen him twice in his office since then" — she stopped.

"I didn't send for you this time," said Mrs. Maughm from her chair, "and your confessions and your information are unsought and unnecessary."

"And when you came out to East Orange," continued Mary, unbroken in her continuity, "I didn't think of anything you were saying to me; I didn't really hear what you were saying to me. I was thinking only of him."

(Ah! thought Cicely in the shadow, she has it — the whole philosophy of life and love, the power of it, the magic of it, "thinking of him!")

"And I didn't think you were the one for him," she said simply. "It didn't make so much difference to me that you were married to him. You didn't love him the way you should; you hadn't made him happy, you hadn't cared to; and I thought I could."



"Will you allow me to interrupt you for a moment," said Mrs. Maughm with excessive politeness, "to ask why you should think a woman of your position — uneducated, unaccustomed to anything with which my husband is in the habit of being surrounded — could make him 'happy,' as you call it?"

(Cicely saw her hesitate. She was afraid Mary was on the verge of answering that question, but she was not thrown off.)

"But I didn't know then about you. I didn't know until quite a little time afterwards that you were going to have a child."

"You needn't dwell on that, Miss Moreland."

"When I found that out, I made up my mind that I was wrong, that it wasn't me he needed, who could make him happy, it was you. And I came to say that I want to give you the promise you asked of me — never to see him again."

(Mrs. Torrance saw Mary bring what she had to say quietly to a close.)

It had come with such simplicity, there had been so little pose about it, it was so dignified and tranquil, that its importance impressed itself upon the invalid in her chair. Mrs. Maughm looked at Mary and drank in the truth and the actuality of what she had said, and Mary was such that Mrs. Maughm could not doubt her. She had known from the very first time she saw this woman that she told the truth.

"You have come here of your own accord," she asked measuredly, "to give me this promise?"

"How do you mean 'of my own accord?'" It was her first and only question.

"Why," began Mrs. Maughm, "my husband — has my husband —?"

(Mrs. Torrance saw the colour now dash against the fairness of Mary's face, and again she was afraid that the girl

would say: "When you see your husband, I don't think you will ask if he sent me, or if he has given me up," but Mary didn't say this. She didn't answer at all, although turned aside very slightly from her perfect sequence.)

"Mr. Maughm is very fond of children," she said simply. "He has always wanted a child. That will make him happy, and that is what I want him to be — happy."

Mrs. Torrance heard Mrs. Maughm ask: "Then you are giving Tom up for the sake — as you say — of the child?"

But Mary had not said she was giving him up. It was not like her to take upon herself that she could keep him or that she possessed him. She was simply putting herself out of his life. For the first time since her entrance, she moved from her quiet, statuesque repose. She drew a little nearer Mrs. Maughm. Her hands were clasped in front of her. Cicely Torrance could not see her so plainly now, but she felt the tension.

"When you came out to East Orange," Mary said again, "you offered to give me quite a large sum of money."

"Yes, yes," began Mrs. Maughm.

"I do want you to give me something, and in return I will give you my word of honour that I will never see your husband again."

(Cicely saw Daisy sit forward in her chair, and the two women regard each other earnestly. Daisy's lips were parted, and Cicely understood that Mary had impressed herself on Daisy at last.)

"What do you want me to promise?"

"You don't want the child?"

"Well?"

"I want you to promise me —"

Mrs. Maughm rose from her chair and walked over to where Cicely sat by the table in the shadow, put both her hands on her friend's shoulder and leaned there, her breast heaving.

"I can't stand it, I can't stand it! Tell her — speak to her! I will go to my room."

Mrs. Torrance put her arm around Daisy. "I think you will have to give her your promise yourself," she said. "You see she loves Tom; she wants him to be happy."

For a moment Mrs. Torrance held Mrs. Maughm strongly, her cheek against her friend's, and her eyes were upon Mary, who stood by the fire, waiting; and as she waited, Mary herself broke the silence.

"I went up to the Adirondacks to see him," she said, "to take him some important news about 'Upjohn,' and I found him there alone, and it was there that he told me about the child. He went over to see a sick little boy in the night, and while he was gone, I came back, and I want you to know — I want you to know — that what you think about Mr. Maughm and me — is not true."

Mrs. Torrance felt the woman in her arms stiffen. She drew a long breath, and from across the room her heart and soul went out toward Mary.

"Speak to her, Daisy; don't you understand her? Don't you see what she has given you! Speak to her yourself!"

And Daisy Maughm in a broken voice faltered: "I promise you what you want — I promise you. Will you go?"

## CHAPTER XL

**WHEN** Mary came down the steps of the Maughm house, she was bankrupt.

The day was cold and clear. All traces of the storm had passed, and overhead the brilliant sky spread its blue floor. In the streets the snow was piled like mountains.

For the first time she was without an aim. She had been used to going to and from offices, to and from home, seeking employment or fulfilling its duties. Now she was expected nowhere; she had nothing in view. Back of her the Maughm house rose like a tomb in which she had buried her life. She walked down Fifth Avenue to the little hotel where she had taken her room only a few days before. She passed Romney's apartment. She didn't want to see him; she didn't want to see Amber. She wanted to see one person so much that since that was denied her, the rest of the world was a heavy weight that she could, without regret, have thrown off into the sea.

She felt like a steel woman, moved by mechanism; but she was philosopher enough to know that life would return strong enough to make her suffer, that her suffering had only just begun.

The passers-by were full of their own preoccupations, and the city moved in its cosmopolitan, commercial, fashionable rut. There were the busses and the clanging cars; there were the smart motors filled with Mrs. Maughms and Mrs. Torrances, going their successful, triumphant ways; and Mary threaded her pedestrian path — one of the people, one of the mass, put back by fate into her modest place.

She paid her bill at the little hotel, paid for a new pair of shoes which had been sent C.O.D., paid for her laundry, for the re-lining and re-pressing of her warmest suit, ordered her things sent up to her room, and found her bank account was visibly reduced, though she had enough to live upon for a short time.

She knew that she must get out of New York. She had given her sacred word of honour, and in order to keep that word she must be not only out of temptation, but where she could not be found.

In her room were two letters, one from her mother, the other a scrawl from Ritchie (who had been sent home to recuperate after his illness), with its faulty spelling and big, boyish handwriting.

“Dear Sis,

“The doctor says I can go back to school. When can I go back to school? ’Tis no fun out here. Ma goes shopping in New York all day long, and yesterday I got my own supper. The girl was out, and she sassed me. You know Ma. ’Tisn’t any fun out here. When are you coming back? Say, can I go back to school Monday? I am half-back on the football team, and the doctor says I can look on. Say, can I have a dollar and a half? There’s a boy up-street who says he will lick me if I don’t pay him. Ma won’t give it to me.

“Your loving brother,  
“Ritchie.”

Her mother’s letter was a long, sentimental, religious plea and a series of covert threats, after reading which Mary wasn’t sure whether Mrs. Moreland was going to see Maughm, Mrs. Maughm, or Romney, and she didn’t care. She put Ritchie’s letter in her bag and destroyed her mother’s. Then, after packing up her few belongings, she sat down and wrote a note to her brother.

“Dear Ritch,

“Enclosed find two dollar bill. Don’t borrow money.”

(There was no further admonition to her brother on this score. She merely made the remark. When Ritchie Moreland received Mary’s letter, the boy up-street already had given him a sound thrashing. Ritchie had a black eye and a few other things. Curiously enough, this son of the financially fantastic Mrs. Moreland and the serious and obscure Mr. Moreland learned a hard lesson in his tender youth. He ceased to borrow money from that day on.)

“If the doctor says you can go back to school, I should think you could go. Ask Mother to write to Mr. Blackie, and I will write to him too. Tell Mother I am going to get a position out of New York — I don’t know where. Be as good a boy as you can. You will play a better game on any team they elect you to if you are square all round.

“Your affectionate sister,

“Mary.”

Mary then sat down to turn over in her mind the different corners of the United States which might harbour her, and where, without any friends or references, she might go. The steely mechanism that she had become was working toward the advancement of her commonplace existence, which in spite of the fact that she had been near to passion and the realisation of love, must go steadily, unswervingly forward; and it depended on her attitude of mind whether or not that continuation should be dreary. . . .

She would stand by Ritchie right along. It would be a good thing to go to some place near his school, where she could see him, and she realised how he had been without her influence, and how little she had entered into his life. Everybody needs something—indeed, a great deal. Where she had found what had helped her through, she couldn’t have told.

She called a boy and sent her letter out to be posted and picked up her gloves preparatory to leaving. There wasn't anything to keep her now. There was no reason why she shouldn't go at once. There was no one to stay her, to forbid her; she had shaken off her family responsibilities, she was dreadfully, cruelly free; and before any one came to prevent her, which Mary believed they would surely do, she must go. Before Maughm should follow her — for she thought he would do that — before she should meet him by chance and have to face the anguish of a parting and a struggle, she must go.

Some one knocked sharply at the door, and her heart stood still with fear and hope and that tremendous leap of expectation, that great wish for a thing we know is better not to be, and that with all our being we nevertheless hope will be.

Amber Doane came in; she rushed at Mary. "Mary, Mary! Where have you been? What has happened? Why did you leave home like this? What are you doing here?"

Amber hugged her in a feminine and human way, then stepped back. "I 'phoned out to East Orange, and Ritchie told me where you were."

"You should not have followed me, Amber."

"Why not?"

"If I came away like this, it was because I wanted to be alone."

"Didn't you follow me?"

"That was different."

"I wish I could think so," said the other woman seriously, looking at her bravely, believing that between them now there was a bond.

"What do you mean?" asked Mary Moreland.

Amber seized her hand. "You can't deceive me any more, Mary. A woman who has been through what I

have been through, knows." The steadfast look that she fastened upon her friend strove to read Mary through, but it was not like reading a human woman. Amber was before a steel mechanism not yet warmed back to life.

"I am fond of you. I will stand by you through thick and thin." Amber lifted the hand she held and pressed it against her breast. "You can count on me!" She was before a human tragedy, and she thought it was like her own. She drew up a chair and sat down in front of Mary. "You don't trust me!"

"You look very well and very happy, Amber."

"Oh!" cried the other, "what do I matter?"

"How is Mr. Romney?"

"He's all right." She blushed crimson.

A ghostly smile broke over Mary's face. "He isn't the awful snob you thought he was, is he?"

"Mary, he has asked me to marry him!"

"You couldn't do that, Amber!"

"Would I have to tell him?"

"Certainly."

"Well," said Amber excitedly, "I have laid awake nights. He is just crazy about me, Mary!"

The smile on Mary's face grew subtle.

"Why shouldn't I marry him, Mary?"

"Do you have to ask me?"

"Yes. I am as good as lots of girls that marry titles and fortunes!"

"You couldn't do a thing like that to him!"

"I don't know," said the other girl despairingly, crossing her arms on her breast. "Why shouldn't I take what is coming to me of good? I have had to take the bad!"

"You couldn't do anything like that to Mr. Romney."

"He will be a lord some day," said Amber. "He told me I would make a beautiful Lady Donegan."

Mary's smile was still more subtle.



"It is a big temptation to a girl like me," said the Irish girl.

"It isn't your first temptation, Amber."

"I have a right to get even with the world." Amber was looking with half-closed eyes at her own problem.

Mary asked her a simple question. "Do you love him?"

"Nobody has ever been so kind to me."

"It's a queer way of paying him, Amber."

"Why!" exclaimed the girl sharply, "you speak as though I were the dirt under his feet!"

"I don't think you ought to say that to me, Amber. I just ask: Do you love him?"

"He is so kind," said the other; "different to anybody I ever saw."

"You have told me quite a few times that I was kind to you, Amber."

"Angel kind."

"Well," said Mary slowly, "I thought that what you did — you did for love."

Amber didn't answer.

"Anything a person does for love," said Mary Moreland, "is one thing. It may not be what the world calls right; but there is something about it that puts it apart from other things."

"I know what you mean," said Amber slowly.

"Don't you ever think about him?"

Amber waited a few moments; her head began to droop. Mary heard her murmur: "Why do you ask me that?"

"Because," said Miss Moreland, "I am fond of you. If you married Mr. Romney like that, it would be an awful disappointment to me — not so much for him, although I would be sorry for that too — but it would show me that you are not the girl I think you are, Amber."

Amber stirred, and in her voice there was a feeling that

Mary had never yet heard. It was sombre and deep. She did not seem to be conscious of Mary's last words.

"What is the good of thinking about him?" She whispered. "He has forgotten me! What's the good?"

Mary watched her. "But you do think about him!"

Amber put her arms on the table and bowed her head upon them. "Yes," she whispered; "yes."

"I'll go to see Mr. Romney. Don't you go."

Her head still bowed on her arms, Amber murmured: "What will you say to him — what will you tell him?"

"I guess you can leave that to me," said Mary Moreland.

It was characteristic of her that her own problems, deep as they were, had not been mentioned. She was absorbed in the other's only.

Amber, swayed by her own feelings for a moment, forgot her. In a few seconds she lifted her head and wiped away her tears, for she had been crying. She leaned forward to Mary and took her hands.

"You are great," she said; "just great!"

Mary leaned forward and kissed her on the forehead. "I just have common sense, Amber."

"And I came here to help you, because I thought you were 'up against it!'"

Mary rose. "I'll go and see Mr. Romney now," and as though it were a sudden thought: "I am going to get a job out of New York, Amber. I don't know where, yet. Suppose I find something for you? Would you like to come?"

The blood had mounted to Amber's cheeks; she caught Mary by both her arms and clung to her.

"Why, I couldn't go out of New York, Mary. I couldn't go anywhere where — if he came back — if he ever turned up again — he wouldn't find me! Why, there isn't a ship comes in from France but I think — I hope —"

The smile that broke over Mary's face was no longer subtle; it had tears behind it.

## CHAPTER XLI

"FENTON," said Romney, "I am tired of living alone!"

"I have done my best, Mr. Basil."

"I know," said his master, nodding at him gently, "but you are a human being, Fenton, and a man. I should like to surround myself with divinity!"

Fenton bowed. "Yes, Mr. Basil."

"I am stronger than I have been in my life. I feel vigorous, I feel elastic. I want to live."

"His lordship and her ladyship," said Fenton, "will be very happy that you are so well, Mr. Basil."

"Of course," said Romney hastily, "and whatever is my happiness —"

"Just so, sir," said Fenton.

Amber Doane had not made her appearance for three days. Fenton had put through a hard bit of time with his erratic, nervous, exacting employer. He was now mixing an egg-nog for Romney.

"You don't do it as cleverly as Miss Doane, Fenton."

"I am sorry, sir."

Close as Romney's relationship was with this man, Fenton was nevertheless a servant, and Romney couldn't say to him: "I have asked Miss Doane to marry me, and I hope she will. I am going to make a hospital trained nurse the future Lady Donegan," and he dreaded to see what Fenton's attitude would be toward this extraordinary step. If, however, Fenton had ventured a word of interference, close as was his relationship with his master, he would have lost his place.

"Beg pardon, sir, may I ask if there has been any news of Miss Moreland?"

"No," said Romney shortly; "I believe she has another position."

"I have been in service for thirty years," said Fenton, deftly placing the egg-nog which was inferior to Miss Doane's concoction by his master's side, "and I may say, sir, that I have never seen a—" He didn't know quite how to qualify her — whether as a person or a lady. In his mind he thought to himself: "Mr. Basil is going to commit an irreparable folly. Miss Moreland would be a better choice."

"Miss Moreland," said Romney, "is a very fine woman — a very unusual person."

Mr. Romney, having chosen two nouns to describe his former secretary, left one in the vocabulary, and Fenton used it.

"She is a beautiful lady, sir," he said simply.

"There is beauty and beauty, Fenton," said Romney with his agreeable sententiousness. "There is an ardent beauty, and an icy beauty; one type appeals to one, the other to another. The world is full of preferences and types. That is what makes taste, and that is what makes harmony. Thank you for the egg-nog; and, by the way, Miss Doane will be here in a few moments. Will you show her in?"

"Yes, Mr. Basil," said Fenton, and going half-way across the room he met the footman entering from the other side and turned with an expression on his face that was little short of delight.

"It is Miss Moreland, Mr. Basil. Will you see her?"

The slightest shade of disappointment crossed Romney's mobile face. He said: "Delighted, delighted! Ask Miss Moreland to come in."

They had been sitting together for some minutes, not in their old relationship of employer and secretary. They had spoken of the blizzard, of Romney's health. Mary had

avoided his questions regarding her position, and there was between them the very slightest shade of embarrassment and strain, but embarrassment and strain could not exist long in the presence of so direct and so clear-minded a person as Mary.

"I came to speak to you about my friend, Mr. Romney."

"About your friend," he echoed. "That can be neither more nor less than the only friend of yours I know — Amber. You did a charming thing the day you brought her here, Miss Moreland."

"I don't know," she said thoughtfully; "I am afraid perhaps I made a great mistake."

"A great mistake!"

"Yes. I just thought of you and your loneliness and that you weren't very well."

"You did a great kindness."

"I ought to have thought of her!"

"Miss Moreland," said Romney, trying to maintain his attitude of easy lightness, "you are too sincere to be enigmatical. I know you well, and I know your mother slightly. You are not alike, Miss Moreland. Mrs. Moreland loves mysteries."

"I have just seen Amber," said Mary simply, "and she told me."

"I am not surprised," he said seriously; "it was quite right that she should."

"She said that you expected her to come back here this afternoon."

"I hope she will."

"I said that I would come in her place," said Mary Moreland.

"Then she is not coming back? My dear Miss Moreland," linking his hands together and leaning forward toward her, all the lightness and badinage gone from his tone, "have you come to bring me bad news?"

"If I came to tell you that Amber was going to marry you," said Mary Moreland, "that would be very bad news indeed."

"You are wrong, Miss Moreland!"

"No," she said, "and I think I have worked for you long enough, Mr. Romney, and been with you enough to have your confidence."

She was so grave, so dignified, so quiet, so mistress of the situation, that she impressed him.

"You have my confidence, Miss Moreland, absolutely; but I want you in turn to tell me very plainly just what you mean." And after a moment's reflection, he added: "Why does not Amber come to see me herself, since I cannot go to her?" The idea flashed through his mind that Mary was jealous of Amber, but he could not hold that thought a moment, knowing her as he did. "Has she refused me?" he asked quickly.

"Amber cannot marry you, Mr. Romney."

"Cannot marry me! Why—why? What do you mean?"

"She cares for somebody else." Mary made the statement quietly. It was a definite answer to all Romney's hopes.

"Impossible! Why, it cannot be! Why didn't she tell me?"

"I don't think she knew," said Mary, "just how much she cared."

Romney, who was studying her closely, hung upon her words, saw her absolute mastery of the case and that she knew what she was saying.

"If that is true," he accepted, "there is nothing more to be said, is there?"

"No," said Mary Moreland, "there is nothing more to say."

Romney unlinked his tense hands and put his fingers together at the tips, as was his habit, lightly touching them. After a time he asked:

"Is it some one she is going to marry?" He waited a moment for Mary to reply, and as she did not do so, he looked back at her and nodded his head. "I see, it is her secret; but whatever it is, I have no right to it."

Mary said nothing more. They sat there for a few moments, and Romney's old whimsicality and his philosophy came back to him somewhat.

"I am destined," he said, "to go on alone."

"A good many of us are that," said Mary Moreland.

He put up his hand to her cordially. "You are right and we can at least go on gracefully, can't we — gracefully?"

Mary had risen to take her leave.

"Wait," he said, "just a moment, Miss Moreland. Wait! I want to collect myself. Thank you for coming. It was like you. I couldn't have borne it so well from any one else. I shall go back to England immediately. I have been making pictures for myself — dreaming. The dream is shattered, and I cannot stay here any longer with these broken dreams. You understand — I must go. But it is more of a disappointment than you know, Miss Moreland — than you can believe."

He heard her say: "I am sorry, very sorry, Mr. Romney. I don't like to think of you alone; that's why I brought Amber. I did wrong."

Romney turned to her with the eagerness now of a child.

"I want to do something for her," he said earnestly. "Don't be angry; don't withdraw. I cannot go out of the country without doing something for Amber. I don't know what I shall do, or what it will be; but it will be through you, and I want her never to know. I shall think it out with Fenton, and you will help me." He appealed to her, and she saw in his face the emotion which his pride made him try to control and conceal.

"Remember," he said, "I shall have to go away alone. This will make it easier for me to go — gracefully."

## CHAPTER XLII

**MAUGHM** started out on his midnight journey a passionate lover, a man thwarted in his happiness, and it was some time before he could adjust himself. Through the night, bright with the moon and lit by the lanterns, he made his way behind his guide across the four miles between the camp and Spoonersville, and hardly heard the man's voice. Back of him were the lights of his camp and the warm room where he had sat with Mary. He could think of nothing else, but the feel of her, the touch of her. Finally, the cold air, the surrounding of the moonlit woods, and the voice of the man in front of him, penetrated through his senses to his brain.

Orin was telling him of what had happened to his boy. The father had gone back to his son's babyhood, reconstructing picture after picture of his child's short life: the christening at which Maughm had actually stood sponsor in the little Spoonersville church, Tommy's prizes in the country school, rehearsed by the guide's monotonous voice. Every now and then in his recital Orin would stop — Maughm understood — for control; the memories hurt. And as Maughm listened to the father's words, he thought of his child for whom he was waiting. He followed mentally, as he followed the footsteps of this rustic father over the snow. He heard the pride in Orin's voice — father of the smartest boy in the county; he heard of his school successes, his popularity with his little mates. When Orin's voice brushed the words "his mother," he would touch them and pass on quickly. Then he brought his



story down to the accident, the falling tree, the carrying of the boy home to his mother, the weeks of suffering, and the wasting away. Maughm's own name came in frequently, and he saw the figure he had been in the boy's life, and how he had studied at school in order to please his godfather. Before they reached Spoonersville — the little town of guides' houses which stood cold and bleak in the winter moonlight, only one of them lit — Orin had brought his monologue to a close.

As they entered the town, the guide stopped; his breath steamed on the frosty air. They had come through very fast and were breathing heavily. Maughm had felt the haste of this race with death.

"They was keepin' him up with brandy when I left; perhaps he ain't lasted out."

Then Orin forged on to the single light. There at the door outside, they set their lanterns down, and again the guide faced Maughm, and this time with a familiarity that his state of mind excused, exclaimed, putting his rough hand on Maughm's shoulder:

"You are just like God to him; he looks up to you!" And for the hundredth time he repeated: "Ain't talked nothin' else but Mr. Maughm since he was hurt. I sort o' feel that takin' you in here now is just about as much as I kin do for the boy," and he opened the door.

Maughm shrank from the ordeal before him. The air was hot and heavy with the smell of disinfectant and the smoky mixture of fried food and kitchen odours, in the room in which three people lived and moved and had their being, were sick and well. There was the smell of kerosene from the lamps, and the shaded lamp on the table over by the bed was covered with a calico counterpane. A woman in a cotton dress, a thick crochet shawl pinned around her spare shoulders, came forward. Maughm found himself wringing her hand with great

cordiality and heard Orin ask in his smothered voice: "How's the boy?"

There were other people in the room, among them the doctor. The boy seemed to Maughm a little, waxen thing, too small to be eight years old, too wasted and impalpable to be interested in school prizes and baseball nines and boys' things. In the shaded light he lay like a little specter on his bed, with closed eyes, and his painful, laboured breathing filled the room. Maughm never forgot it. He went over to the bed with Orin, and the mother and the three stood there. There was nothing to do but wait until those long, painful breaths should cease.

Outside on the dark coverlid was the boy's hand, too pallid, but knotty and rugged still. He had been a stalwart, muscular little fellow, Maughm remembered. The hand was pathetic to him. He took it in his own; he could cover it.

Mrs. Orin, composed and resigned, was a tragic figure in her black shawl, bowed by hard work and sacrifice.

Maughm sat there for hours. Now and then it seemed an eternity — now and then it seemed to go hideously fast, as the breath raced with the loud ticking of the big kitchen clock, ticking out its minutes, its measure of life.

Maughm occasionally went over and conversed with the doctor at the further end of the room. Then he went back and took his place by Tommy's side, in case those eyelids should lift, and the boy should ask, as he had done all day: "Mister Maughm comin'?" Orin had told Maughm on the way through the woods that they had comforted Tommy with the answer: "Sure to come 'fore mornin'."

This was what it meant to have a child. This great anguish of the heart. He had been spared this. Nevertheless, there was a deep feeling stirring in his heart, and he knew that it meant fatherhood, and that there would

be nothing like that feeling for anything else but one's own child.

They did various things for the boy, though it seemed cruel to Maughm to disturb him on his last journey. He sat opposite Orin and couldn't bear to look at him or the mother. This was their only child. He was to have gone to college — it was their dream.

Every now and then the warm and glowing thought of Mary strove to find him in this isolated, homely cabin; but the cold blast of death met it, stifled it; he couldn't think of anything but this. He sat and waited — waited, the ticking of the clock and that hurried, hectic breathing in his ears. He held the boy's hand for a long time. Now and then it moved convulsively in his. Finally there was a strange interruption in the breathing, a ruffled, troubled effort. Tommy's mother went to him and lifted him in her arms, talking to him, and Maughm got up, walked over to the window, and stood there. He heard the mother give a cry and a sob, and he couldn't bear it; he went out of the house like a coward.

The moon had set, the morning was grey and bitterly cold. At his feet were the four lanterns and their snowshoes, and after the suffocating air of the cabin, the outside air struck him like ice. He drew a long breath. There were tears on his eyelashes. In a few moments Orin came out of the house and shut the door, leaning up against it with his head buried against his arm, his body shaking with sobs. Maughm didn't know what to do, what to say; he only wanted to get away. He felt brutal, incapable. He put his hands on his guide's shoulders.

"Come, Orin, you must think of his mother."

The man turned his simple face, distorted by grief, humble, grateful. He fairly clung to Maughm's hand.

"Ever so much obliged for comin' over, Mr. Maughm. It was too late."

He didn't know what he said further to Orin, and he didn't go into the house again. He wouldn't let the man or any one else take him back over the trail. He made the trip in the intense grey loneliness, hurrying as fast as he could back to life and realities, away from the ghostly spectre; but it haunted him, it kept him company until he was nearly through the woods. The sun rose, and then he let himself think of Mary.

In Boston, when she had come to him there, Aym's was dead. There had been a funeral and the melancholy of that experience; and he had lost her then. And now, when he was about to know the sweetness of her love, death had come a second time. It was a bad omen.

He finished the carry, and before him, down the little hill, was his camp. Above the greyness and the whiteness of the lake and shores it lay, dark, big, like a shadow on the snow. It was broad daylight. She would be asleep, he hoped, resting. He would go in quietly so as not to waken her, and the shadow of death slipped from him as he went up the steps and opened the door of the living-room. Foster was there with a great basket of pine cones, which he set down beside the fire.

"Is Miss Moreland asleep?" he asked in a whisper.

The man cleared his throat. "She ain't here, Mr. Maughm. She routed Rumson up 'fore dawn and made him take her out."

This news struck Maughm like a blow. He stared at the guide.

"You mean to tell me that Miss Moreland has gone back to the Junction?"

"Yes, sir."

His first thought was that he mustn't let the man see how it affected him. He crossed the floor to his bedroom, opened the door, and saw his disturbed bed.

"Go out and make me some coffee and get me some

breakfast, and get your own breakfast. I want to start right out." He spoke from where he stood in the door of his bedroom to Foster, who went immediately to the kitchen to obey orders, and Maughm returned to the big, generous fire and stood there before it, his hands behind his back, looking out into the lonely room.

Two days afterwards, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Maughm let himself into his own house with his latch-key. Cicely Torrance stood in the hall in a long fur coat, a small hat on her head with a gay sprig of holly red against the sealskin. Two dogs were at her side.

"Tom!" she exclaimed and stretched out both her hands. "I am so glad you are back!"

"Just going out?"

"I am going to do some Christmas shopping at Schwartz's for the children."

"For the children?"

"For the little boys." She laughed, glancing down at the dogs. "I am going to get eight Christmas stockings and hang them up for them."

"You are a goose, Cicely!"

She spoke flippantly, but her tone was not flippant. She was delighted to see him back. She was excited. The dogs were barking at the front door. He found that he was shaking hands with her a second time.

"I must go," she said. "You will find Daisy up-stairs. I think she will be awfully glad to see you. Good-by."

He opened the door for her. "Cicely," speaking with more gravity than he had yet spoken to her, "when you come back, I want to have a little talk with you."

As soon as the door was opened, the dogs rushed out, barking. Her eyes were scanning his face. She thought she knew, she thought she guessed. She wouldn't have had him think for the world that she was in any wise informed.

"Orin's little boy?" she questioned; "up there at Red Wing?"

The footman had appeared and was helping Maughm off with his coat. Maughm shook his head.

"Too late. He never knew that I went all the way up into the North Woods to see him."

"Oh," she said gravely, "I am sorry, I am sorry. Go up to Daisy."

Maughm did not go directly up-stairs. He waited in the drawing-room fully fifteen minutes alone, walking up and down, his hands in his pockets, and his head bowed. A man servant brought him his correspondence on a tray.

"They sent these up from the office for you, sir, this afternoon."

He opened one of the telegrams. It was brief, conclusive. Only a few words on a sheet of paper, but they meant enormous wealth. It read: "O.K. Rich as wedding-cake." That was all, but it meant that he had won, that he had come out "on top." It meant that he would be several times afresh a millionaire. It meant the relaxing of tension, the new adjustment of his affairs; and if he had bought a paper, he would have seen that the stock was booming, but he hadn't even looked at a paper. He thrust the other letters in his pocket with the telegram and went up-stairs.

His wife was not in her boudoir, and he knocked at her bedroom door and went in. Mrs. Maughm was lying upon the bed in her dressing-gown. As he came in, she exclaimed: "Tom!" and sat half-way up among her pillows.

He went over to her, saying: "How do you do, Daisy? I have some news for you," and bent down and kissed her. "'Upjohn's' all right!"

"Really?" exclaimed Mrs. Maughm. "How heavenly!"

"I have a telegram from Walsh. The western section is chock full of gold." He took out the telegram and handed it to her and stood there watching her as she read. His glance wandered from his wife to some things at her side. There was a pile of soft silks and very fine linens. There was a basket lined with muslin and trimmed with lace. There were some very small things in it — little stockings and shoes. Maughm could hardly believe his eyes. He had never seen articles like this near to before. Mrs. Maughm followed his glance. A mighty feeling surged up in Maughm's breast. Everything that he had been through in the past few days seemed to culminate into one tremendous surge of feeling and then to be brushed aside by a touch infantile, tiny and yet with dynamic force. Daisy Maughm lay there, watching him, the telegram in her hands. Her husband bent down and said close to her ear:

"When he comes, he is going to make 'Upjohn' and everything else look very small indeed."

Maughm went down to dinner at eight-thirty. Cicely Torrance waited for him in the drawing-room in a beautiful décolleté frock, Toto sitting on her bare shoulder. Maughm, in evening dress, a gardenia in his buttonhole, came over to her almost buoyantly, she thought. He was not the same man she had greeted in the hall.

"You said you had something to speak to me about, Tom?"

"Did I? Oh, well, I have some news, Cicely."

She raised her eyebrows. "Yes? Good news, apparently."

"'Upjohn' has turned out all I thought it would."

"How ripping, how perfectly ripping! Congratulations, Tom!"

"Thank you."

"You have seen Daisy?"

Mrs. Torrance had put out her hand when she congratulated him, and Maughm still held it.

"Yes," he said, "and you have worked a miracle, Cicely!"

"I have done nothing at all!"

"Something has. She is a changed woman!"

The footman at the door announced dinner, and Maughm gave Mrs. Torrance his arm. As she sat opposite him at dinner, and he talked of "Upjohn" and what it meant and what it would mean, Cicely Torrance thought of Mary, and what the miracle had been, and how she had stood by the chair, her hands resting on it, and of her words: "I want him to be happy," and her plea for the child. It was curious to note that it was the woman who thought of the woman, while in Maughm's heart Mary and what she was and all she meant to him, and his need of her and his desire for her and his passion for her, not yet dead, and his bitter disappointment, were all shut out and crushed back and barred away, and the hand of a child stretched its tiny shape against the door and shut it.



## CHAPTER XLIII

MRS. MORELAND consoled herself by thinking she was a martyr and had been set apart out of the universe to suffer, be insulted, and misunderstood. She settled down in East Orange to enjoy unhappiness, as she enjoyed everything connected with herself.

The teller in the Trust Company told her her balance. She could not keep accounts and had no idea of credit or debit. Everything in the financial line — profit or loss — came to her as a complete surprise. She could live on her own monthly income, there was the balance at the Trust Company, and she put her mental house in order as well as she could, with the conviction that as long as the department stores and the Wednesday night prayer-meetings continued to exist, she could weather any gale.

Her sole anxiety regarding Mary's absence was what the neighbours would say, and she built up a jaunty little fabric of lies about Mary's having left for a rest and a change and threw it out broadcast, ready to invent a new one when obliged to do so.

"I can trust you," she vouchsafed her freckled-faced boy, who stood gloomily in the window, looking at his mates in the street. "I don't want you to tell a living soul in East Orange where your sister is!"

"Ain't she never coming back?"

"Certainly!"

"What'd you do to her, Ma?"

"Your sister needs a vacation," Mrs. Moreland began to elaborate; "she has worked hard all her life. I shouldn't

be at all surprised if she went abroad," and she began to wonder if Mary would.

"What you givin' us?" asked Ritchie under his breath.

"Can't you take a book and amuse yourself, Richard?"

"Naw," said the boy, disrespectfully; "it's fierce out here without Sis!"

"Your language —" And Mrs. Moreland added, "What are you looking at so hard?"

"A dago," replied Ritchie laconically. "He's rubbering at this house."

Mrs. Moreland, thinking it another detective, looked out of the window and saw a foreign-looking man approaching the house as though to come in, but apparently he thought better of his intention and turned down toward the station.

"He's rather more distinguished-looking than the rest of them," murmured Mrs. Moreland; "he has a foreign air. I wish," she said to her son pedagogically, "you would be more choice in your terms, Richard. You call every man who wears a moustache a 'dago'!"

"Say, can I go up to school next Monday?"

"The man's coming back." Mrs. Moreland watched him.

"Mary says I can."

"Would you leave me alone here, Richard?"

"Yep," said the boy laconically; "I want to see the fellers."

Mary, before she had gone in and out every day to New York, had brought up her little brother and sister. In their early years they had been left almost solely to her care, while Mrs. Moreland pursued her interests hither and thither. There had been larger means to dispose of then; there had been a man then for her to harass and make miserable; and the children went their own way and she went hers.

Mrs. Moreland would not have acknowledged that she depended on Mary, although more than she would confess

she leaned upon that strong and efficient daughter, and the night that Mary fled had been a bitter one to the vain woman. The fact of having Ritchie there, sleeping in the next room to hers, was a comfort. She wasn't going to let him go away yet. With her eyes still on the village street, Mrs. Moreland said :

"I am going to keep you over a term, Richard. I want you to go regularly to church and Sunday-school, and I want to improve your speech. It is shocking!"

The boy flushed. "You ain't going to let me go back to school?"

"Not this term," said Mrs. Moreland elegantly, as though paying in advance for terms and resigning the tuition were a matter of small moment to a woman of her means.

"Oh, that's fierce," said the boy, and without another word of pleading, he rushed out of the room and slammed the door. Mrs. Moreland followed Ritchie to open the door for the man, who had decided to ring the bell. Her first thought was that he was a private detective; she was glad of any visit to break the monotony and debated in her mind whether she should give him marching orders or drain his information dry.

The man came in with his hat in his hand and made her a very grave and polite salute.

"Is this Mrs. Moreland?"

His strong foreign accent increased the romance to Mrs. Moreland. She led him into the sitting-room, for she could be simple in nothing.

"To what do I owe the honour of this visit?"

She thought he was the handsomest man she had ever seen in East Orange. Everything about him looked odd — his shoes, his clothes. The soft felt hat he held in his hand had an air of another country about it, and his carefully brushed moustache curled up at the ends above the finely-made, attractive mouth.

"I have been walking several times up and down before your doors, Madame."

"My little boy saw you."

"This is not the house I should seek, but where I should go, I cannot."

"Indeed!" Mrs. Moreland was agreeably mystified.

"But why should you come here?"

"Because," the man began, "your daughter —"

"You may sit down."

The man did so, thanking her, and Mrs. Moreland sat viewing him like a judge on his bench.

"Before you begin," she said coldly, "I want to make it plain to you that I will hear nothing whatsoever about my daughter; what she does, where she goes, are her own affairs — neither yours nor mine. My daughter is not in East Orange."

"Ah! She is not?"

"It is likely that she will shortly go abroad." The fiction was becoming a fact to her.

"I have just come from abroad."

"Then you are new to this business!"

"This business, Madame?"

"Don't try to hoodwink me," said Mrs. Moreland tartly. "I am sick of scrutiny and mystery. It is insulting, and I shall place the whole affair in the hands of my lawyer!"

"But, Madame —" ventured the man gently.

"We were quiet, unobtrusive people, living our peaceful lives in harmony, and through the men who employ you, we have become conspicuous and our home is a wreck." She indicated the wreck with a flowing gesture of her hand.

"Madame," began the man, "I am not what you think!"

"Probably not," she said shortly; "few people are!" and added, looking at him with the keenness of a ferret,

"if you have anything of importance or interest to tell me, however —"

"I beg your pardon," the man leaned forward earnestly; "I know very slightly your daughter. I saw her but once in the distance; but she is a great friend of a great friend of mine, and it is to ask news of this friend of mine that I am come."

Mrs. Moreland started forward in her chair; the expression of her face changed. She looked at him wonderingly.

"You've just come back from Europe?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Are you French?" She dwelt upon the word as though she asked regarding the lower regions.

"I am from Paris, Madame."

"My!" ejaculated Mrs. Moreland, clearing her throat and brushing her hand across her lips. Then asked, as though she questioned a prisoner at the bar: "Are you the man who taught French here in the night school?"

The blood mounted to the man's cheeks, but he was composed and possessed dignity. In her eyes he was the veriest lowest scoundrel that could cross a threshold. She entertained for the sins of love disgust and disapproval. She rose to her feet; the air was tainted for her.

"How dare you come into a respectable house!" She pointed to the door. "How dare you mention my daughter's name, or the name of any decent woman!"

The man rose. "I could not go to the Doanes'. I have asked in vain for news of Miss Doane, and I thought that Miss Moreland —"

"Go out of the house this moment!" cried Mrs. Moreland. "If I could, I would have you arrested; but there is no law for people like you! There ought to be a whipping-post! Go out of this house!"

The man made a quiet exit, Mrs. Moreland following

him to the front door. There he turned. "You will not tell me where I can find Miss Doane?"

"I don't know," said Mrs. Moreland, "and if I did I wouldn't tell you. You are not fit to live — not fit to live!" And she almost forced him out of her house, slamming the door after him. She watched him go down the steps and up the street, her cheeks burning with righteous indignation. "Ugh! Men!" she exclaimed. And as he was lost to sight around the turn of the road, she reflected: "No doubt he would have been willing to have paid me well for any information."

## CHAPTER XLIV

THE spirit of excitement in her was too strong to allow her to be inactive. Romance and tragedy and evil were at work around her, and up to the present she was not a participant. Too much was happening to others — too little to Mrs. Moreland. She called Ritchie. A smothered voice answered her. The boy was up-stairs, crying on his bed.

She went to the telephone and called up the Doane house. "Is this Mrs. Doane? Would you come down and see me a little while?"

The poor mother, shut off from social intercourse with this lady for so long, accepted eagerly. When a little later she came into Mrs. Moreland's sitting-room she found her elaborately dressed for the street. Why she had put on her hat and coat and gloves and taken her shopping-bag is known only to extravagant natures like her own.

"Jest goin' out, Mis' Moreland?"

"No," Mrs. Moreland assured her. "I am just coming in."

She treated her neighbour affably, made her take a comfortable chair, and sat down opposite her with an air of protecting, condescending interest.

"I haven't seen you for a long time, Mis' Moreland." Mrs. Doane was plaintive. "I am so cut off. He didn't care to have me see any one in town, and they didn't care to see me. I live by myself."

"So do I." Mrs. Moreland could not let her neighbour monopolise this distinction. "It gives a person time for reflection and to know their own souls."

"Goodness!" Mrs. Doane sighed; "I can't say I find my own soul so interestin' that I want to be shut up alone with it." She put her work-worn hand impulsively on the hand of the other mother. "Why, I am just eating my heart out. I don't live any more; I just wait on him and run the house and wonder what Amber is doin' and how she's gettin' on."

"Children are a peculiar chastening of the Lord, Mrs. Doane. They say: 'Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,' and I think he must love me very much indeed. It is my only comfort."

"I wonder if it is all the children's fault?"

"It is in my case," said Mrs. Moreland; "I have nothing to reproach myself for in the world."

Mrs. Doane shook her head. "I don't know as I think about any of those things. My heart just aches, that's all. How's Mary?" She had heard rumours and scandals, but she looked upon the Morelands as higher up in the social scale than herself.

"Mary's sailing for Europe." Mrs. Moreland opened her shopping-bag, taking out one of her new handkerchiefs.

"My! She's doin' fine, isn't she?"

"That is," Mrs. Moreland temporised, "she may sail. I'm not quite sure yet." When she had allowed this vision to pass before the eyes of her humble neighbour, upon whom she smiled now with a sort of condescending supremacy, she came to her point.

"I sent for you to talk about Amber."

Mrs. Doane fell frankly into tears, and her friend, in whom bursts of grief aroused no sympathy, waited stiffly until she had wiped her eyes.

"You don't hear anything from her?"

"He has forbidden me to write to her or receive any letters from Amber."

"Mary sees her."



"I'll bless Mary Moreland to my dying day!" said Amber Doane's mother.

Mrs. Moreland received this acridly. "If she had shown the same devotion to her mother as she did to your daughter, Mrs. Doane —"

"Oh!" exclaimed the poor woman, "don't begrudge her that!"

"Do you ever hear anything from —" Mrs. Moreland paused and added in a sepulchral tone — "the man?"

"Don't speak about him, Mis' Moreland!"

"I must," said the other sternly; "that is why I sent for you to-day. It is a pollution to speak of him, but he is in East Orange!"

Mrs. Doane stared at her neighbour, her pupils dilated. "What!" she exclaimed. "That devil in East Orange! Oh, it isn't possible! He's in France!"

"He came to see me to-day in this very room!"

"My God! Mr. Doane will shoot him, just as sure as fate!"

"And he came to see if he couldn't find Amber. As I didn't know anything about her, I couldn't give him any information. She ought to be warned!"

"Mis' Moreland," asked Mrs. Doane, her trembling fingers picking nervously at her handkerchief, "do you think it would be wicked of me to my husband if I should go to see my child?"

"I don't think anything justifies breaking a promise." (Mrs. Moreland had never kept one in her life.)

Mrs. Doane got up and walked to and fro in the room. "It seems to me that I will just go crazy between him and her. He holding me here and her calling me there; and now if this devil is on her track —" She came back to Mrs. Moreland. "Tell me about it — what did he say?"

"Do you think I would let a man like that talk?" Mrs. Moreland fixed her with a reproving stare.

"But if he came right out and asked to see her, Mis' Moreland, he must have had a conscience call, perhaps."

"It called him out of here." Mrs. Moreland smiled with grim humour. "He went out of this house faster than he had ever gone out of any other."

Mrs. Doane stood, her hands meekly crossed. "Amber was as good as gold, Mis' Moreland. She liked pretty things all right, and I don't say she didn't spend her money on herself more than she ought; but there's no harm in that, if a girl is pretty like she is. But if any one was in trouble you couldn't go to a kinder heart, and if she gave her word to anybody, nothin' could make her break it. I have said to myself over and over again: 'He must have had some good in him to have got Amber.'"

Mrs. Moreland still fixed her icily. "She must have had something very bad in her!"

"Don't say that!"

"I say it of every girl who does not put her God and her mother supreme!"

Mrs. Doane's hands were clasped convulsively; she shook her head meekly. "Oh, I don't ask that, Mis' Moreland. I only want her to be good and happy."

Mrs. Moreland replaced her handkerchief in her bag, which she shut with a snap. "What are you going to do about the man?"

"Me?" questioned Mrs. Doane helplessly.

"Why, yes; if he gets on her track again."

Mrs. Doane's face was as pale as a dead woman. Her lips were weak and tremulous. Every now and then the tears poured out of her eyes, and she wiped them away indifferently with the back of her hand. "He made me swear with my hand on the Bible—"

"I would like to see the man who would make me swear anything!" said Mrs. Moreland. "I have always been my own mistress. You sit down," she commanded, rising

from her chair and warming to the situation. She had not been hobnobbing with private detectives for nothing. "I'll get Mary on the wire, and when I do, you talk to her."

Mrs. Doane sat before Mrs. Moreland's Wanamaker desk, her eyes fixed on her trembling hands, seeing nothing and hearing nothing, thinking of the big-hearted girl, "good as gold," who had gone so far astray. She knew Amber was in the Nursing Hospital, and that was all she knew.

After a few moments, Mrs. Moreland came back to her. Something of her stiff, starched pride and assurance was gone.

"Well," asked Mrs. Doane eagerly, "is she on the 'phone?"

Mrs. Moreland was agitated. The assurance with which she had striven to impress Mrs. Doane was broken. She stood for a second or two trifling with her expensive gold chain. Then she broke forth.

"I don't know that you are any worse off than I am, Mrs. Doane. I have no daughter, either! I had a quarrel with Mary. She left here with her trunk ten days ago. She hasn't written since."

"Why don't you follow her?" asked the other woman hastily: "You haven't got any man to hold you back."

"She wouldn't see me. Don't talk to me about children!"

"Wasn't she where you 'phoned to?"

"No, she's left the hotel for the West."

"Then she didn't go to Europe? My!" exclaimed Mrs. Doane, trying to forget herself in this new complication, and asked timidly: "Did she go alone?"

"From all I can make out from the hotel people, a girl went with her. I guess it must be Amber."

An expression of brightness swept over Mrs. Doane's face. "Oh, if she's with Mary, she's all right!"

Mrs. Moreland gave a queer laugh of disgust. "H'm, I don't know about that! What do you think of a daughter turning her back on her brother and her home and her mother?"

"She must have done it for a man, Mis' Moreland." Mrs. Doane had had her experience. She looked at the other and waited.

"We are in the same boat," Mrs. Moreland said grudgingly, with an almost malevolent look at the poor woman who dared to be connected with her in the same kind of sorrow.

Poor little Mrs. Doane put out both her hands to Mrs. Moreland. "Oh, Mis' Moreland," the tears streaming from her eyes again, "it can't be true! Not Mary — not Mary Moreland! Oh, it ain't so!"

The other looked at her curiously. "Would you believe it sooner of your own child than mine?"

"Why, Mary is so high!"

Mrs. Moreland went over to the Wanamaker desk and took up her shopping-bag, from which she extracted her handkerchief again and touched it to her lips.

"I guess you will find that most women are alike when it comes to a man," accentuating the words.

"Her and Amber have gone off together?"

"It looks so!"

Mrs. Doane said nothing for a moment, sunk in profound meditation, her features working. In the distance the whistle from the train blew shrilly.

"I've got to get home, Mis' Moreland. It's my husband's train, and I am always there; he looks for me to be there."

She hastened toward the door, Mrs. Moreland watching her with a pitying look for her enslavement to a man. At the door, Mrs. Doane stopped and said with more assurance than her nature suggested:

"I suppose you know what you are talkin' about, Mis' Moreland; but somehow I can't help but feel safe if Amber's with Mary. I trust Mary!"

Mrs. Moreland received Mrs. Doane's tribute in silence.

"I have done my duty, I have informed you about this man. Now, if Mr. Doane shoots him, I don't want it done in front of my house. I have breathed the breath of scandal and mystery long enough." She waved again, and her gesture expressed the most complete renunciation. "I leave the matter entirely in your hands."

Mrs. Doane received the commission aghast. "I am torn between him and her!"

Mrs. Moreland allowed her humble visitor to find her way out as best she could, then stalked majestically over to the window looking out on the front yard, in front of which the detective had passed in shadowing Mary, and through which to-day the man from France had passed.

The "girl" came in from the next room. "Will I take up some soup to Ritchie? He says he won't come down. I've set the supper on the table."

"Won't come down!" Mrs. Moreland repeated. She went out into the hall and called: "Richard, come down-stairs immediately! Supper's on the table!"

From among his pillows, Ritchie bawled back: "I won't come down unless you let me go to school!"

"Well, then," returned his mother, goaded to desperation by her children, "you can stay up-stairs and starve."

## CHAPTER XLV

ON her way down from Romney's apartment, Mary went into the St. Regis to fetch the things she had left behind on the evening when she had rushed out of the hotel to race with Peters. They handed her over the desk the package of her belongings, and the manager informed her that the gentleman in Number 964 had been asking for her every day since she left, and at the same time handed her a sealed envelope, unaddressed. Mary read the note:

"If you come back to the hotel, will you run up and see me a few moments? You needn't be afraid; I'm not going to make it unpleasant for you.                    "Josiah Briggs."

"Is Mr. Briggs still here?" Mary inquired.

It appeared that he was. Mary turned the envelope between her fingers, had herself announced to Mr. Briggs over the 'phone, and in a few moments was on her way to the room she had left so wildly the week before. She had nothing to fear from this man, and even if she had, she could tell him that her information had been of no service — that she had brought it too late. And the memory of how she had brought it made her thrust back her personal thoughts over a caught breath of pain and a suffering that she wouldn't let herself approach.

Mr. Briggs' leg was out of its cast. He was sitting up, his foot resting on another chair before him.

"Come in, don't be afraid of me, Miss Moreland; come in!" and he nodded toward a chair. "I can't get up to be polite. Sit down, will you?"

"They gave me your note at the office just now. Do you want to say anything to me in particular?"

Mr. Briggs, with his head on one side, like a connoisseur, scrutinised the handsome young woman whom he had seen but twice before.

"Well, yes!" He reached his hand out and took a cigar from a box on the table by his side, put it in his mouth, and turned it round without lighting it. "It's very good of you to come up; lots of girls wouldn't."

Mary made no reply.

"Well, you won out!"

"No, I didn't win out!"

"Well, your man did."

She blushed.

"But of course you know all about it?"

"I thought there might be something regarding your business you wanted to ask me, Mr. Briggs; about the letters I took, perhaps, before I came up the second time?"

"Working here now?" asked Mr. Briggs, with his head still on one side, his unlit cigar between his fingers.

"It was only a temporary position."

"You are not looking for a job, are you?"

Mary, made keen now by experience, studied Mr. Briggs' face and its expression. It was admiring, it was kindly; but it was not strictly personal, and there was no animal magnetism there.

"If by any chance you want a good position, young lady, with a chap who knows how to value a good thing when he sees it, I am going to offer you the position of private secretary with me, which is vacant at present. I have been advertising for the last two days. Any girl who could stand up the way you did the other night, and who's got the nerve that you have, ought to be a success. You weren't 'playing in my yard' as you might say, and you won out — or your man did. The position is open — thirty dollars

per week." He motioned with his cigar toward the telephone: "You ring up and ask the manager who I am if you want references."

"I am not looking for any work in New York."

"Well," nodded the man with a smile, "Manhattan has taken in all it can over a wide radius, but it hasn't got Denver yet in its census. I am going West to-morrow, and if you are free and want the job, you can come along."

It seemed like the hand of Fate picking her up and carrying her away.

Mr. Briggs took out his note-book. "I have a very good woman here. I'm not crazy about her, but she will do, if you won't go, and I have got to give her my answer to-night."

"About references —" began Miss Moreland.

"Mine are in Bradstreet's and down-stairs at the office, anywhere you like; and as far as you are concerned, you gave me all the references I want the other day. You'll do."

She had not taken the chair he had invited her to occupy. She stood thoughtfully before him — tall, slender, a graceful young woman in a dark street dress, a pretty bit of fur round her neck, her small hat close to her shining hair.

"I will speak to Mr. Brown down at the office."

"Quite right, Miss Moreland; that's right!"

"And I will let you know my answer over the 'phone from down-stairs."

"Just so. But then," he added, "how does it happen that you are looking for work?"

"I have been private secretary to an English gentleman," said Mary Moreland, giving her references, "and he is going back to England. If you would like to call him up?"

"No, no." Mr. Briggs was satisfied. "But a young lady who carries such valuable information about gold mines ought to be on Easy Street."



"If I take the position with you, would you mind not referring again to the other day?"

Mr. Briggs lit his cigar. "It's a darn good story," he nodded and smiled. "I shall be tempted to tell half a dozen fellows about it."

"I wouldn't feel like coming, then."

"All right," Mr. Briggs assured her, "you can rely on me if I tell you that I won't speak of it; but wasn't it a darn bit of luck that you should have gotten where you were going too late?"

"I didn't get there too late," said Miss Moreland. "The people had already made their deal; they couldn't change."

Mr. Briggs smiled resignedly. "Lucky for them they couldn't!"

"I haven't seen the papers for a day or two," said Miss Moreland.

"Then you don't know?"

"I haven't heard any news."

Mr. Briggs put his thumbs in the armholes of his waistcoat, leaning back in his chair. He bore his disappointment like a mining philosopher.

"Your part of 'Upjohn' had the vein." Mr. Briggs saw his new secretary animate marvellously.

"You mean the western section is all right?"

"Just a little bit of all right," philosophically; "your people have 'gone through,' they've 'put it over.' The Upjohn Mining Company, Incorporated, are selling their stock at 1.75 on the curb."

It was her news of "Upjohn" — the way she found out that the man she loved had won his race with Fortune.

## CHAPTER XLVI

"SOME time ago, I told you not to mark or mention the days of the week or month, Fenton, and to hide the calendars. You have obeyed me. Now, what is to-night?"

"Christmas Eve, Mr. Basil."

"H'm," Romney breathed, "you couldn't disguise the feel of it or hide the atmosphere; it is everywhere, and I may as well tell you that I knew it all along. What time do we go on board?"

"I have ordered the taxi at ten, sir."

"Have you arranged about the distribution of all my little gifts, Fenton?"

"I think so, Mr. Basil. I ordered a large hamper to be sent out to Mrs. Moreland, and I posted your note to her myself."

"We will spend Christmas at sea."

"Plenty of sailors do that, sir, every year." Fenton was purposely commonplace because of the underlying note in the beloved voice.

"Quite true, Fenton. We are only travellers, after all."

"And we are going home, sir," said Fenton cheerfully, "to England," and the very way in which he pronounced the word showed his feelings on the subject.

"Do you call it home? An invalid gentleman and a man servant cannot make a home; they can pass away existence — that is all."

"There are Lord and Lady Donegan, sir."

"Yes, and they have each other."

"If you will excuse me, sir, for a moment, I want to see about the small luggage."

As he moved away, Romney asked: "And the red roses?"

"I sent five dozen to the hospital, sir, to Miss Doane," and the servant was quite at the door before Romney had the courage to say to him: "I am hoping that Miss Doane will be here in a moment. Just let her come in; don't announce her, Fenton."

The English poet was dressed for travelling. Everything in the room was ready for his departure. On the chair at his side were his mackintosh, gloves, hat, and stick, for he never stopped in the hall to put on his outdoor things.

In sending a short, appealing note to Amber, he had committed a great weakness, so he felt, but it was his habit to do as he felt, irrespective of any barrier or obstacle. "Feeling," he was once known to say, "is the only thing I can control, and I choose to play with it as I will." Nervous, excited, keyed to a high pitch of emotion, the stimulus of the voyage to be agitating him, the break in leaving this country for the old, where he would find the old unchanged, made him as tense as the string of a violin. He heard the clock strike eight. He was to go in two hours. The note and the roses should have found Miss Doane early in the afternoon.

In a few seconds, however, he heard the outer door shut, and in another moment Amber had come into the room, crossing the floor quickly and going directly over to Romney, not as one who has been sent for, but with the abandon of one who comes of his own free will.

The young man, looking up at her, saw her in her dark dress, her dark furs, dark hat, her cheeks red as Christmas roses, and her splendid eyes shining like Christmas stars.

"Oh, Mr. Romney, I couldn't get here fast enough to tell you that I have just found out; and I can't take it, Mr. Romney; you mustn't ask me to take it!"

She had never been so much at ease with him as she was now. She sat down in a chair close to his side.

"I am going away to-night. Did you get my roses? Did you get my note?"

"No, Mr. Romney; I have been away on a case. I was just going back to the hospital now."

"I wrote you to-day and asked you to come."

"Well, I came of my own accord."

Romney impulsively caught her hands, one by each wrist, on either side of her muff.

"Amber," he leaned forward to her, "stay of your own accord! Come with me, Amber; I cannot go back to England without you!"

"Mr. Romney" — her voice was thrilling — "if I'd thought you would speak like this again, I wouldn't have come!"

"Then I am glad you didn't know. I want you to reconsider. I want you to be my wife!"

"Mr. Romney, dear —" He remembered it afterwards; it came to him on the Christmas voyage; it came to him afterwards in England, soft as velvet: "*Mr. Romney, dear. Didn't Mary tell you?*"

"I can't believe it; I won't hear it!"

The Irish girl freed her hands and instead took his in her firm, strong clasp.

"I cannot take the money you left for me with Mary! It is kind of you, it is generous of you; but what would you think of me? You mustn't ask me to!"

"Don't speak of it!" said Romney. "Don't speak of anything, Amber, but love!"

She met his appealing, demanding gaze with her unchanged eyes. She saw his agitation, and she knew how frail he was.

"I want to take you back to England — to my mother — to make a home for me. I am lonely; I have nothing in the world."

The tears sprang to Amber's eyes.

"Oh!" she murmured. "Don't tempt me!"

He caught eagerly at her words. "Is it a temptation — is it?"

She waited a moment, bit her lip and said: "There is something else in my heart. Mary told you."

The temptation, such as it had been to Amber, to be Lady Donegan, to solve her problem in this way, had passed. She had taken Mary to her Western train, she had kissed her and clung to her and given her her promise, and since then she had thought of one sole thing — the possible return — and for the first time in many months, the thought of the man she loved came to her with something of its old sweetness and less of pain.

He read her face eagerly, drinking in the rich exuberance of her beauty. Under her furs her breast rose and fell quickly. Amber felt his tense hands relax.

"I want to hear it from your own lips! You do love some one else?"

He could not hear it from her own lips, for she was beyond speech, but she inclined her head.

Romney let her hands go. He sank back a little in his chair.

"I am sorry, Mr. Romney, heart sorry!" She hesitated a few moments, watching the shadow on his sensitive face. "Would I," she asked, "be any good to you like that, with this pulling at me, drawing me somewhere else?"

Romney shook his head. "No." And then asked almost brutally: "Why don't you marry him?"

As she did not answer him at once, he leaned forward to her and said tensely:

"If any one has done you any harm, I'll —" then added, with a shrug of his shoulders that was touching in the extreme: "Why, I am not even a man to defend a woman. I am an invalid. I can hardly stand alone."

He gave a half cry and caught both her hands and put

them to his own eyes. Amber could easily have taken that delicate head and drawn it to her consoling breast, but she refrained.

Far off, on the East River, they heard the long whistle blow that sounded like the going-out of ships to sea.

He tried to smile. "You will think me a weak fool, Amber, and I don't want you to think that."

"Oh, no," she murmured; "oh, no!"

"You spoke of taking something from me. How did you know it was from me?"

"Who else in the world would have cared?"

"I want you to do this for me. Before morning I shall be gone for ever. You won't refuse me this, Amber?"

"It's a fortune," she murmured.

"It will keep you from working your hands to the bone; it will keep you from being any one's sport; it will give you self-respect; it will give me peace."

She waited, and he watched her face. After a moment she said frankly, with great simplicity: "I'll take it, Mr. Romney. God bless you!" and added: "I can help Mary."

"Where is Miss Moreland?"

"Out West, in Denver."

"When you write her, wish her a 'Merry Christmas' for me."

Amber rose. "I must go."

Romney caught hold of her dress. As he looked up at her, his face was charming, touching, whimsical, tender.

"It is Christmas Eve. Even the poor have gifts on Christmas Eve, Amber."

She bent down. He kissed her, and then, before he could hold her, she turned and fled across the room, looking back at him once from the doorway. She saw that he had bowed his head down on his arms, as a boy might on his desk at school.

She hurried out of the house into the December night. Before the door were two taxi-cabs, one piled high with luggage. She went quickly on to the hospital, stirred and troubled, and more than once was forced to brush the tears from her eyes. Romney had made a little deed of trust for her and monthly, for the rest of her life, a sum would be paid to her which would keep her from want.

Up-stairs in her room she found his box of roses — five dozen American Beauties, in December! It was Christmas Eve, and she distributed them throughout the hospital wards, keeping, in a glass on her bureau, one single rose. As she turned from arranging the flower, a boy from downstairs brought her a letter; he said there was an answer and waited outside.

At the sight of the writing on the envelope, Amber sat down on her bed, the letter in her hands. Stirred at the inscription, she opened it. The words blurred before her eyes; it was several seconds before she could make them clear. The note was in French; she knew little French, and she had studied so hard! But she could have read this somehow, she thought, if it had been Greek.

“Amber, my little Amber: — I have come back; I am free. Just as soon as I was free, I came to New York. I have been looking for you everywhere, and I have just found you, chérie, chérie. I want to marry you just as soon as I can — just as soon as you will. Do you remember me, my little Amber? Forgive me! I never loved any one but you and you love me.

“Louis.”

She read it twice with trembling lips, her heart pounding against her side. Did she remember! God! Could she ever forget! How had she forgotten? How had she lived with, such memories and such a blight and such despair! Did she remember! Did she remember the night in Brooklyn, when he left her in their little room, never to

return! She had cursed him then and afterwards and she had loved him just the same!

She held the letter between her trembling fingers, as the boy knocked at the door. "There was to be an answer, Miss Doane."

"Who brought the letter?"

"A man who is waiting down-stairs."

She had not taken off her outdoor things. With his letter in her hand, Amber went down to the parlour, where she had seen Mary. Under the picture of the Divine Shepherd a man was standing. She was hardly in the room before he had her in his arms, before he was kissing her as Romney would never kiss her, but as his poetic nature had longed to kiss those lips "meant but for others."



## CHAPTER XLVII

MISS RENNELAER had been taking dictation all the morning from the president of the Upjohn Mining Company, and Maughm continued to dictate to her short business notes as their importance came to his mind, while he talked with Wainwright at the expiration of a board meeting of the directors of the new mining company.

"That will be all, this morning, Miss Rensselaer," and thus dismissed, she passed to the outer office.

"The fourteenth of February," said Wainwright, looking up at the big calendar on the wall. "Valentine's Day. And speaking of valentines, Maughm — now that the affair is probably cold — what has become of your transcendent former secretary?"

The president of the Upjohn Mining Company was comfortably seated in the corner of the big leather sofa that ran alongside the long table in the centre of the directors' room, which was an addition to Maughm's suite of offices, an outcome of the necessities that the Upjohn Mining Company developed. It was beautifully furnished, austere yet cordial, and had seen the formation of one of the biggest companies engaged in the mining of gold. On the table, under glass, was a bit of the first ore from the western tract, which had declared so richly for Thomas Maughm.

It was nearly three months since Mary, in the corner of the sofa up at Red Wing, had tried to tell him not to buy the western tract. Here in the corner of this sofa, as Wainwright spoke, Maughm thought of it with a twinge. He could never think of it without the suffusing glow that

certain memories bring; and back of it was bitterness, balked pleasure, disappointment; the circumstances that had been higher than the man's desire and will.

"If you know where she is, Maughm" (Wainwright was also remembering Mary) "I should like to send her a valentine. I recall how she came to me just after she left you, Maughm; she wanted a position. She had a stunning figure, and her hair was too conspicuous; she was too good-looking, that is, for a Wall Street secretary."

Maughm balanced an ivory paper-cutter between his fingers. "Why should you want to send her a valentine, Wainwright?"

"I send them to all the pretty women I remember on Valentine's Day. I never know whether they receive them or not, but it gives me a certain harmless amusement." He took out his note-book. "What is her address?"

"She used to live in East Orange."

"East Orange. Miss" — he raised his eyebrows — "Moreland? Is that sufficient?"

"I don't know where she is now; she doesn't live in East Orange any more."

"Have you lost track of her?"

"Yes, since Christmas."

"I shall also send a valentine to Mrs. Torrance. She is a very pretty woman — she was quite splendid the other night at dinner at your house — and I'll send one to Mrs. Maughm.

"Funny combination, isn't it, Wainwright?"

"You will find that the women a man turns over in his mind make rather odd combinations. But about Miss Moreland, Maughm; I am curious?"

"It won't do you any good, old man." Maughm reached his hand back on the table, deftly opened a silver cigar-box with his finger, and extracted a cigar, which he proceeded to light. "It didn't do me any good."

Wainwright turned this over in his mind, thought several things, decided it was none of his business, and opened up afresh their previous conversation regarding "Upjohn."

"Upjohn's" success and the floating of his stock, the dignity of his company, were a satisfaction to Maughm, and especially so as he looked forward to the birth of a child whom he could enrich.

"Up at the house," since his entrance on the night when he had found his wife more maternal than he had ever hoped to see her, things had been going well. There had been something like the breaking-up of ice floes, holding the imprisoned barque of domestic happiness. Thanks to the presence of Cicely Torrance (for she had not left his house), things went on smoothly. Everything was promising but Daisy's physical condition. She had been unwise too long, and though every precaution was being taken, there were times when her condition was serious. There had been a consultation of physicians, and Daisy obeyed implicitly now, and for some time past had kept entirely to her bed. By a sort of tacit agreement, the direction of the household and its reins of government fell into Cicely's hands.

He never knew how keenly and how perceivingly she watched him after his return. As she had observed Mary Moreland from the shadow across the room, and her struggle and her victory, so she watched Maughm. She understood his moods and his restlessness; she knew that he was disturbed and wondering about Mary, and knew also that he was on the verge of telling her everything, as a man tells a charming and sympathetic woman and afterwards regrets. She did not encourage his confidence; she didn't want to hear him confess his passion, or see his disappointment. When Maughm was not with his wife, he was with Cicely. She gave him fresh entertainment. In the evenings, when Daisy was too tired to see him, he sat with the other woman,

who knew the joint in his armour, his need of a woman's presence, and gave herself intelligently. Little by little Maughm slipped from the old grooves into the new.

It was a week after his return from the Adirondacks before he made an effort to find Mary Moreland, only to discover that she had left East Orange to take a position in the West. His wife had become alarmingly ill then, and Maughm devoted his attention to his home and its serious considerations. Down in the office, brilliant, alluring, filling the financial press with its import and news for speculators, bringing his name before men, bringing him into touch with old friends by whom he had so finely stood, was "Upjohn" — and Mary?

Mrs. Moreland, from the extravagant pagoda of her own importance, had looked down on the dwindling figure of Mary. Did she so dwindle to Maughm as he, from the heights of domestic anxiety and financial excitement, looked down upon his own personal life?

It was a divine day in February, with an indication of spring coming through the window which, at his suggestion, Miss Rensselaer opened wide for a few moments. He walked out of the building with Wainwright and went on up-town alone.

Daisy lately had been decidedly better, and the night before Maughm had taken Cicely to an amusing play, at which they had laughed and thoroughly enjoyed themselves. Personalities and sex this woman kept out of their relationship in a masterly fashion.

Maughm, walking up-town, smiled at Wainwright's idea of sending valentines to pretty women. He would send flowers to his wife and to Cicely, and he retraced his steps to a big florist's shop, where he ordered for Daisy a box of roses and spent a few moments in choosing for Cicely what she suggested to him: gardenias, waxen, with

polished dark leaves stiff around them, white and green. A little to one side, in the florist's cupboard, green and white and fragile, were masses of lilies-of-the-valley. Maughm lit a cigarette and went out of the florist's, continuing his walk up the Avenue.

In front of the house when he arrived were two motors, one of which he recognised as Doctor Thomas's car, and he hurried up the steps. Without listening to his servant, he passed rapidly up-stairs. In his wife's boudoir two doctors whom he did not know greeted him, and Cicely Torrance put her hand on his arm and drew him to the window. Doctor Thomas came out of Daisy's room. Maughm looked down into Cicely's usually animated and sparkling face and found it white and set.

"Tom, it is as serious as it can possibly be. Doctor Thomas will tell you," and to the physician who had reached their side: "Tell Tom, Doctor Thomas, just as you told me."

And Maughm listened to words that make a man wish he had never been a husband, fill him with compunction and regret, with self-condemnation and blind wonder at the laws of life. He found himself facing death for another, because of laws that must be fulfilled, or there can be no race. He heard Doctor Thomas tell him that there was one chance in five thousand for either his wife or the child. It wasn't possible to save both, but they would do what they could. It was the woman that they would battle for. And he would never be a father. He listened to Thomas, then talked with the other doctors. Cicely had left him and gone into the other room. There was a passing in and out of nurses with the accessories of the sick-room: the bags of oxygen, ice, masses of white linen; once they wheeled in a long, couch-like table.

The afternoon passed, and the interminable evening. Throughout the long night he remained in the feminine,

luxurious room — expression of the tastes of a woman of the world, who surrounds herself with beautiful things. He sat alone before the softly glowing fire part of the time, there to remember their quarrels, scenes when they had parted bitterly, when she had stormed and upbraided him for delinquencies he had never committed. The room filled itself with memories, few of them tender or sweet, until of late, when she had been more womanly, more wifely, and had often busied herself here with preparations for the child. There were moments when he covered his ears with both hands and sank forward, calling himself a brute and hating everything in the world.

Late in the night Cicely came in and took the chair opposite him, to sit without speaking, frail and worn, black rings under her eyes. Once she put out her hand and clung to his, as a sister might, beseeching him: "Don't, Tom, don't! It is life."

And he answered: "Death seems to be around me everywhere."

They wouldn't let him go into Daisy's room, and like a coward he was glad to be prevented by their wisdom.

Toward six in the morning, Cicely went back and remained in the other room, and Maughm, bowed over like an old man, sat before the fire till it quite died out and the blending of the electric light and day jarred; then he rose to extinguish the electricity, drawing the shades to let in the February morning, misty and indistinct. On the other side of the closed door was horror and menace to happiness. He never could forget what he had caused.

Everything seemed to him now flimsy, inconsiderable, worth little; the flush and flash of passion that he had known for a woman who was not his wife, whose existence in his otherwise well-regulated life was an insult and a dishonour to the woman whom he had sworn to love and cherish, seemed vile. Daisy had given him reasons for

unhappiness, that was true; but wasn't she paying in this horrible agony a thousandfold? What had he paid, brute that he was?

Daisy, in his imagination, became a saint and a martyr, and to have spared her the pangs she was enduring, he would have given everything in the world. Under the scourge of his conscience, under regret and remorse keyed to the highest pitch, Maughm went across to the door and turned the knob — but he simply couldn't go in!

Two of the doctors came out at length. He hardly heard what they said to him as they left, Thomas only remaining. On no account must he go into the sick-room, on no account; and exiled once more to his thoughts and to the loneliness of the room, Maughm obeyed.

He was sitting huddled in the corner of Daisy's sofa when Cicely Torrance came up to him. She took his head in her arms and drew it, as a mother might, to her breast. She was weeping, for as she bent down to him her tears wet his cheek.

"Tom, you have a little child; they say it will live. You have a son! Do you hear?" She was shaking.

He caught her hands like a vise, turning his grey face up to her. "Well, well — and Daisy?"

She didn't answer him by words. They looked at each other in silence — in a silence that seemed to come from the silent figure of the woman on her bed in the other room, who had given her life for a life and thus atoned.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

MARY had been a self-supporting woman for many years, and in her struggle for existence had met life first hand; known exposure and fatigue, been insufficiently fed, made her own living and that of others, seen the excitement of big financial interests, watched the fever of Wall Street sap the veins of men who had played with fortune. She had made sacrifices, had suffered. She had seen in Amber disaster. She had lived the life of repression and silence. She had known passion, had come to the edge of life, and if asked if she had been in love, she would have answered yes.

But until she came into the house of Josiah Briggs, she had not known what love was.

On the night of their arrival in Denver, Mary followed the Briggs's into the hall of their handsome house, where the father and mother were surrounded by the waiting children. It was the most bewildering, agreeable sight that Mary had ever seen, and when the children had all been kissed, and Mr. and Mrs. Briggs been almost devoured by them, Mr. Briggs put his arm around his wife's waist, then holding out a hand to the private secretary he had brought from the East, he asked:

"How do you like it, young lady? This is home. Here are the kids. They will make friends with you. They are not shy, and you will be just like one of them. Won't she, kiddies? This is Miss Moreland."

From this on, a new era opened for this girl whose life hitherto had been one of repression, limitation, denial. Mrs. Briggs was an important figure in Denver. A rich-



natured, generous woman — a woman of force, besides being so much of a mother. She inhabited a mysterious corner of the house, where she reigned, and from her realm love radiated to every child, her husband, and to Mary.

“She’s a wonder, Miss Moreland. Best in the world. That’s my name for her,” and Josiah Briggs’ face glowed.

The morning after his arrival, he sent for Mary to come to his big room. “Now I’ve got you to Denver under false pretences. I want you to combine a great many things. Will you try?”

There was a new expression already on her face. Her heart had gone out to these people.

“I will try to do whatever I can, Mr. Briggs.”

“It is a big order. I want my wife to rest. She doesn’t take in how much she has accomplished in the world, and I want Mrs. Briggs to take a back seat — have a little fun; and I hope you will be something that I will bet you haven’t thought of being.”

Mary waited.

“I want you,” said Mr. Briggs, “*to be a mother.*” He stopped and laughed. The colour came into Mary’s cheeks. “Mrs. Briggs gives herself right up to her children. Governesses are no good, nurses are worse. I don’t want you to be a nurse or governess, Miss Moreland; but instead of their coming to their mother for every little thing, I would like to have them come to you.”

“I would like to have them come to me,” said Mary Moreland. The blush was still in her cheeks.

“I am not going to call you a secretary, though I want you to attend to some of my affairs. We will shut ourselves up here for a little while in the morning, but it will be hard. There is lots of good feeling in this house, but not much discipline. In the afternoon, I am going to take Mrs. Briggs off in the motor, and let you stand by the helm. Will you?”

"Yes," said Mary Moreland, "I would just love to."

"I know you will," said Mr. Briggs, nodding at her. "When I saw you standing in the doorway at the St. Regis and got a line on what kind of a woman you were, why, I said to my wife: 'I will take that girl to Denver, if I have to chloroform her to get her on the train.' Now," he said, "do you think it is false pretences?"

"I don't care if it is," said Mary.

"Do you know anything about children?"

"I had quite a little to do with my sister. She died when she was five years old; and I have quite a young brother."

"What is he doing?"

"At home with mother. When you are in business all day, you get out of the way of doing home things."

"Yes, you do, and it is a bad thing for a woman. I'm not a suffragette."

"I am," said Mary.

"Well," said Mr. Briggs, "we won't discuss that here. This is the place where you are going to try the other side of the question."

Four weeks later, in the same room, standing before her, Mr. Briggs put to her the question abruptly: "Well, are you going back to New York?"

It was noon. Mary had been up at five o'clock that morning. One of the children had been ill the day before, and she had cared for it during the night. The little thing was the delicate child of the Briggs family and had conceived for Mary an affection amounting to almost a passion. She wouldn't let Mary out of her sight.

Mary had been fulfilling in a masterly way, during these four weeks, the duties which Mr. Briggs had put upon her. From the time that she had been old enough to assume responsibility, she had been brought face to face with other people's needs and met them by a gift of herself.

As she stood by Mr. Briggs' table, looking up at the Western business man, although she had worked here in Denver as hard as she had ever worked in her life, she did not feel that she had made a sacrifice. She had been studying this man and his wife. She had seen him, after four weeks of the closest business strain, facing the failure of the "Upjohn" scheme which had made Maughm rich, facing other close problems in his financial life, here in his family circle, of the sweetest temper, kind to every one, considerate to every one, untroubled at all times by the onslaughts of his children, to whom he never denied himself, sought after at all times by all kinds of people, for he never refused a favour, taking up his affairs in this library that had been almost a nursery; and she knew that during all this time he had been keeping from his wife the serious condition of his finances.

When he asked her this question, he was smiling at her. "Upjohn' has taken the liver out of me," he said, "but it hasn't touched the brain or the heart, and the new fields that I am opening at — are going to make 'Upjohn' look like thirty cents. I am on the edge of a great prosperity, Miss Moreland, and to-day I am going to tell my wife what I have been through. Now," he went on, "you know why I wanted a woman like you out here. I didn't think of you; I thought of my wife. I didn't know what was going to happen to me when I got out of that Denver train, and I wanted some one I could rely on."

The library door was open, and the two smallest children came hand in hand to Mary, and the elder asked her some little childish favour. They stood at her knee.

"Last night, in the middle of the night, my wife asked me: 'Do you think Miss Moreland will stay?' and I promised to go to her at half-past twelve and tell her." He laughed. "Why, you would think your answer was going to be as much to her as my finding out what the

veins are in these two fields would be to me." He was looking down at the children.

"I don't think you need me, Mr. Briggs. Why, it seems to me that you have got everything here in the world."

The little boy standing at her knee said to her in a high, clear voice: "I'm going to mawwy you when I gwow up."

"As far as salary is concerned," said Mr. Briggs, "I can make that all right for you, Miss Moreland, and I'm going to. You say we don't need you. What do you think about yourself? Don't you think you need us?"

"I love the children." She didn't say that she was happy here, for she wasn't, but she was more at peace than she had ever been in her life. "If you think I am any good —"

"Why," he said heartily, "we couldn't get on without you! I am going to tell the Missus that you will stay."

She had seen this man after wakeful nights, fighting, transacting his affairs, cool-headed, efficient, constantly interrupted by his children, on whom the least restraint had never been put. He had taken up new affairs, unwinding them before her in this library.

She remembered the onslaught that had been made on her by these children, the rain of kisses to which she was not accustomed on her cheeks, demands on her that to a woman are the sweetest in the world. The whole heart of the Briggs family had opened and taken her in. During the weeks that followed, she saw almost nothing of Mrs. Briggs. Relieved by the presence of Mary Moreland, Mrs. Briggs for the first time in her life gave herself up to Denver society, to her clubs and her friends, and to her husband more than she had ever been able to do before. Mary was private secretary, business manager — active even to the extent of going out to the gold fields with the assayer and returning with his report to her employer. She was absorbed in her duties, too absorbed to mourn over her own unhappy affairs. She could bring to bear now all the

lessons that she had learned, for here all the day she was learning a new one. She saw a home now that she never knew existed. She was learning lessons founded on love and the perpetuation of life.

Whenever she saw Mrs. Briggs, it was a pleasure. Once she had read aloud to her in that mysterious part of the house where Mrs. Briggs shut herself away.

Mary had seen Mrs. Maughm and Mrs. Torrance. She was a New Yorker, and she had seen beautiful, fashionable women; but for some reason this blond Westerner seemed a queen among them all. As far as she herself was concerned, Mary was waiting.

During all these weeks, although she never put the thought in words — not even mental words — she waited. At first that waiting caught her heart with a grip like steel, and she couldn't breathe when the mail arrived, when a telegraph boy brought a despatch. Even the telephone would make her catch her breath sometimes when New York was on the wire — as it often was — and there in Denver she heard the whisper that meant that great city with its millions, and for her, just one soul. Nothing came — no word, no sign; and as the time went on, Mary began to feel, to know what a wonderful thing she had taken into her empty arms, and the service that was all for others, that made hourly demands upon patience that can only be perfect through love, healed her and she grew with it, and the stature of her soul developed with it; and down in her nature, crowded down by her control and her sacrifice, was the feeling and the passion which was now being developed into the perfection of love.

## CHAPTER XLIX

NOTHING came from Maughm. But her mother wrote her long exordiums, reproaches, accusations of every kind of infidelity and cruelty, and covert demands for money, which Mary met as well as she could.

Ritchie sent her wails. He was going to the public school; he went twice on Sunday to church, and to prayer-meeting and to Sunday-school; and "Ma was fierce — fierce"; and when was she coming back? If she wasn't coming back, he was going to run away.

New Year's Day a letter came to her from Amber, and she read it in her room, sitting on the edge of her bed. On the back of the envelope she saw a ship's stamp: *Compagnie Generale Transatlantique*.

"Mary dear :

"I have not written before because I was afraid it would not go through all right, and I wanted to be sure. We were married in St. Francis Xavier's Church. His wife died, and he came back for me. I am so glad I didn't leave New York. I saw Mr. Romney to say good-by, and I took the money. He wanted me to. When you get this letter, I shall be out on the sea. Oh, Mary!"

And then followed a blessing on her faithfulness, that was swallowed up again in the protestations of her own happiness and her completed love.

One day in summer, a letter came to her from Ritchie that she couldn't ignore.

"Dear Sis :

"Everything is fierce. I wanted to come out to you, but I didn't have the money. Ma's dead broke, and she has some-

thing close on fits, I think. Gosh! I wish you would come home. I thought I would go to Mr. Maughm and get the money to come out to you, but he has gone to Europe. You lit out yourself all right when you found things fierce, and I am not going to stay home any longer alone with ma. There are people here all day long for bills, and I am ashamed to look anybody in the face. We haven't any girl, and I'm no cook. Won't you please come home, Mary?

“Your brother,  
“Ritchie.”

That evening she stood before the table on which she had piled the papers ready for Mr. Briggs' signature.

“Miss Moreland,” he said, “you have done a big thing, and I am going to ask you to accept this just as it's meant.” He took a cheque from his wallet, folded it, and gave it to his secretary. “Don't open it now; take it to your room and look at it there. Things are growing pretty bright up at the fields, and my wife and I want you to profit by the deal you have watched through.” He smiled at her with affection. “It is a second ‘Upjohn,’ and I don't think you have had much good out of *your* ‘Upjohn’ interests.” He stopped a moment, looking at her keenly. The red blood mounted to her cheeks. Mr. Briggs put out his big hand and leaned toward her. “I am not saying a word. I am not asking any questions. I only want to see you get the best there is,” he nodded slowly, “the very best.”

Back of Mary the evening sunlight streamed in at the window, and her hair was full of light. She was a very fine-looking woman. In these months she had been growing a far more capable one and a far bigger one. With her trim Norfolk suit and her sailor blouse and neat collar, she was the most charming figure of a woman imaginable.

“We've tired you out” (with compunction). “Don't speak of it, don't deny it — I know your kind! You need a little vacation.”

"No, I'm not tired."

"Of course you are," he said hastily, "but you are too good a sport to say so. When you take hold of a thing, you put it through. I shall never forget that day at the St. Regis," he loved to return to it. "How you stood up at the door there." He threw back his own shoulders in imitation. "Why, when you'd gone, mad as I was, wild as I was to get hold of you, I laughed at you. You were corking, corking! I don't want you to think that that little cheque of mine is going to pay you for what you've done." He paused. "Money don't pay for soul, you know, even though it does try to pay for body sometimes; and I want to tell you right here, Miss Moreland, that you're gold right through — *pure gold*."

"Mr. Briggs," she began, "I just wanted to say something this evening —"

He piled before him methodically, with unnecessary care and accuracy, the envelopes that Mary had addressed for his business letters.

"There are bars of metal," Briggs said, "and you start to cut through them, and some of them are half alloy; but with you, Miss Moreland, it is gold clear through. I don't know how to thank you, either. When you came back with me six months ago, I was just about all in. You certainly have saved the game."

He put out his hand impulsively across the table to her, and without hesitation she laid her cool, strong hand in it, meeting his honest eyes with her own.

"We all love you," he said, "from the Missus right through the whole bunch."

A tremendous feeling surged up in Mary. It seemed to come from some region unexplored as yet in her heart and mind. In Briggs' hand her own seemed to melt. In another moment she would have clung to it. She drew her own away and clasped it, with its fellow, in her lap.



"I wanted to tell you that I have had bad news from home."

"Yes?"

"Mother isn't very well."

"Now I am sorry, very sorry!"

"I've got to go back East."

Briggs, who had been leaning forward across the table, sank back slowly in his chair, still looking at his private secretary. "When?"

"To-night," said Mary Moreland. "I've got my reservation on the Limited."

There was a few moments' silence and it was a very full few moments.

"When did you know this?"

"This morning, but I've been trying to put things in shape."

"Well," said Mr. Briggs measuredly, "when they told me that the gold was in the western tract and not in the southern of 'Upjohn,' I thought I felt pretty sick; but I tell you it isn't a patch on what I feel now."

"Would you like to have me send you out someone from New York?"

"To do what?"

Mr. Briggs raised his heavy eyebrows. The cheerful smile on his face had died, and Mary didn't want to look at him.

"To take charge of things here like I do."

Briggs gave a short laugh. "Like you do — yes — that's a good one!"

Then, as though the words hurt him: "Do you think there is any one else like *you* looking for jobs?"

He got up abruptly from his chair, went across the room, as though he were going to leave it, turned at the door, and came back to her. In that moment whatever need he had for control had been met.

"I can't keep you from your sick mother. When do you think you will come back?"

Mary Moreland's head was up, her chin in the air in the fine, free way she had when she met life, faced it, and conquered it.

"I shall have to stay right on with mother; she needs me."

Briggs was standing by the table near her. He said: "Well, well," several times, as though he had not quite discovered words suitable to express his feelings.

"I can't keep you from a sick mother," he said again; "but I want you to do something for me."

"You know," she said, "that I would do anything I could, Mr. Briggs."

"Promise me that you will come back here and spend Christmas, *no matter what happens*. That is, of course, if you can leave without doing anybody else a harm. If you don't promise me that, I simply can't tell Mrs. Briggs; and I can't tell the kids anyhow — that's up to you."

"I want to see," she said, "if everything is all right at home."

"Well," said Mr. Briggs impulsively, "when you get there, it will be. I wish I were as sure of everything in the world as I am of that!"

## CHAPTER L

"I'LL go out in the kitchen and make you some iced lemonade, Mis' Moreland."

"I couldn't get a drop of anything down my throat, Mrs. Doane."

"Shan't I fix you up a little lunch, then?"

"Not a mouthful has passed my lips in two days."

Mrs. Doane tried again. "Wouldn't you jest lay down here on the lounge?"

"I haven't closed my eyes in forty-eight hours," said Mrs. Moreland, who sat stiffly in the best chair, dressed in a white petticoat and white dressing-sack, her spare hair done up tightly on the top of her head.

The sweltering heat of July filtered in through the windows and doors, and she fanned herself nervously with a huge panama, which she pointed at Mrs. Doane.

"Mercy! Don't sit in that chair, Mrs. Doane; there's fly paper on it!"

Mrs. Doane started back.

The contrast between the two women on this day was marked in the extreme. Mrs. Moreland had been coming down steadily from her phantasmagorical pagoda to the earth, and Mrs. Doane, on the contrary, had been rising on the wings of love into the air. Little by little, one by one, Mrs. Moreland's schemes and plans had failed her; and all of a sudden, out of a clear sky, on the first day of January, Mrs. Doane had seen her daughter reinstated, a married woman, and restored to her by the laws of the church and man. Before she sailed, Amber had been triumphantly brought home by her husband. On this

afternoon, Mrs. Doane had come in to bring her neighbour a piece of news, but Mrs. Moreland's state of exhaustion and despair were so great that her neighbour had not seen the moment propitious to tell her own bit of gossip.

"You will have to brace up, Mis' Moreland," said Mrs. Doane, turning comforter now, secure in her own happy lot. "What if Ritchie had turned out bad, and they had put him in a reformatory?"

"My children," said Mrs. Moreland, "have been my executioners. I doubt very much if I shall live through the summer."

Mrs. Doane looked at her pityingly. She could afford to pity: she had one child married to a man able to take care of her, and that one child was happy. Her letters said so, and she had news — she wondered if she could tell it now — if it would be kind.

"My!" she exclaimed, "don't say such a thing, Mis' Moreland!"

Mrs. Moreland's underlip trembled. She was vanquished, but she had no intention of letting Mrs. Doane think that her spirit had been broken.

"I have several plans," she began, "in my mind; but it needs money to carry them out."

"Well," said Mrs. Doane cheerfully, "you've got your income."

Mrs. Moreland fanned herself. She had survived Mary's departure. She had then absorbed herself in the management of Ritchie's life to a great extent, harassing and badgering him beyond endurance, a prey to her sentimental theology, as well as making him an errand boy between East Orange and New York on his holidays.

"What do you hear from Mary?"

"She's very, very prosperous. She's the head of a large establishment in Denver, confidential secretary and general director of a rich man's home. There are one or two chil-

dren, I believe, and if Mrs. Briggs should die — Mr. Briggs is a multi-millionaire — very much richer, I imagine, than Mr. Maughm, although I have not had any opportunity to judge of his generosity or lavishness —”

Mrs. Doane went peacefully over toward the sofa to find a resting-place, for she had not yet sat down. The room was in semi-darkness to screen out the heat.

“Better run up the shade a little, Mrs. Doane. There may be fly paper there. I put it everywhere.”

Mrs. Doane found the sofa safe and thought she might unburden her heart.

“I got a letter from Paris this week, Mis’ Moreland.”

“Yes?” inquired Mrs. Moreland with a sigh. “They tell me that the department stores in Paris are vastly inferior to Wanamaker’s and other New York stores.”

“Amber is going to have a child!”

“I don’t envy her,” said Mrs. Moreland coldly: “if her experience is going to be anything like yours and mine.”

“Oh!” exclaimed the other mother, “don’t say such a thing, Mis’ Moreland; both of our girls have hearts of gold!”

“Ritchie has a heart more like a baseball than anything I can think of! He would have lived in the street, if he could. They neither of them had the home feeling. Mr. Moreland was very much the same way.”

Some one rang the front-door bell.

“Would you mind seeing who it is, Mrs. Doane? I don’t feel as though I could take a step.”

Mrs. Doane complied and came back with a bill. She looked perturbed. “It’s a man from White’s. He says they have sent him out here to collect.”

Mrs. Moreland put down her fan and looked half appealingly at Mrs. Doane. “How much is it?”

Mrs. Doane held it out to her.

“You open it. I haven’t my glasses.”

It was a bill from a New York store for fifty dollars.

"Tell him to come back again."

"He says he'd just as soon wait."

"Well," said Mrs. Moreland desperately, "he had better arrange to board here then."

Mrs. Doane put the missive in its envelope and went out to parley with the man.

Mrs. Moreland, staring straight in front of her at the little crack made by the partially lifted window curtain, heard the front door shut, and the man go down the steps.

When Mrs. Doane came back, she asked with naïve curiosity: "Do you owe much money?"

"I really don't know how much," said Mrs. Moreland, with quiet insufficiency; "but it wouldn't make any difference, would it, how much it was if you didn't have any?"

Mrs. Doane stood before Mrs. Moreland, the envelope in her hand, gazing down upon her neighbour, who had once been so lofty to her, so patronising, so on a pinnacle of sufficiency and righteousness. Mrs. Moreland in her camisole and thin white petticoat, lifted high above her slippers, her scant hair screwed upon her head, was a peaked and despairing object.

"What are you going to do, Mis' Moreland?"

"I am just going to sit here and call on the Lord."

Mrs. Doane looked at her in stupefied admiration.

After one or two interviews with creditors between half-open doors, Mrs. Doane finally took her leave, and Mrs. Moreland found herself alone in the sitting-room. Her moral and mental depression was complete. With a bank account, no matter how small, she might have ridden supreme, but she was penniless and heavily in debt. The telephone had been taken out, as her bill was long in arrears. She had not even a ticket to New York. She had used her last cash in going to town and in vainly trying to see Mr. Maughm.

She rocked to and fro in the intense heat, fanning herself, trying to discover, back in the channels of her mind, some one of those constructive and magnificent ideas that would lift her up out of the abyss. Nothing declared itself to her now. On the contrary, she was very near to being haunted by memories — memories that took the form, for the first time, of remorse; but even her house now had no inhabitants. Long ago, her husband had gone out of it once in despair, never to return. Then her daughter, insulted to the quick by her mother's veniality, left her cruelly and definitely. Finally her little boy was being driven away.

What would Mrs. Moreland not have given to have heard Mary's step on the porch, to have seen again the entrance of that capable daughter, whose very capability had jarred upon her and made her jealous? She remembered now those entrances, familiar year after year, when Mary, tired with business, worn out from the struggle with the world, had come in bravely, uncomplainingly, to take up her round of duties at home.

She had not read her Bible very much of late. It was always on her desk, and she opened it now aimlessly, seeking comfort from its pages; but the words that her eyes fell upon did not bring her the balm she had hoped: "And the winds and the waves beat upon that house and it fell, for it had no foundation." She shut the book.

Tears coursed down her cheek, and she wiped them away with the corner of her white dressing-jacket. As she did so, she remembered that she had a two-cent stamp. She rose, and going over to the Wanamaker desk, sat down before it, hesitating for a moment or two. Then she wrote a letter, and perhaps it was the first one in her life that was real. She addressed and stamped it and went up-stairs to make herself sufficiently presentable to carry the letter to the nearest post-box.

## CHAPTER LI

FOR Maughm for a time there was nothing in the world but his son, whom to keep alive required every care and precaution and effort of science. His house up-town, which sheltered that infinitesimal bit of life, was the most precious place in the world to the banker. He couldn't leave it in the morning without the greatest hesitation and reluctance. He telephoned a dozen times a day from the office, and at night his motor could not carry him home swiftly enough. He tip-toed with the gentleness of a woman past the doors behind which his little child was being cared for, and Cicely Torrance had for him for a long time no personality. She was simply the individual who was caring for, watching over his child. He spoke to her almost with severity. He looked her through and through to discover what she knew about children, how capable she was, how wise. He put the reins of the house in her hands and merged in her all the authority.

The fact that her remaining on and on in the Maughm house after his wife's death might create a scandal, he ignored completely. Doctor Thomas told him that he owed the baby's life to Mrs. Torrance's wonderful care and direction. He accepted the fact with a nod. He would have sacrificed any number of lives to the baby now — one had already been given for it.

Cicely, who had said a short time before that she would give her life for a child, began to feel that she was being taken pretty nearly at her word.

The child grew and thrived, responded to everything as a healthy being who intended to live and did. By July



it was a rosy little baby, and Maughm felt that he could touch it with his finger and not break it or cause it to disappear.

One evening, after dinner, at which Cicely Torrance had been particularly charming, she said to him, as they sat in the drawing-room over their coffee and cigarettes:

"Tom, I want to break it to you gently, but I am sailing on Saturday."

Maughm almost dropped the coffee-cup he held in his hand.

"Sailing!" His look at her was blank.

"Yes, going home."

He repeated: "Home!"

She laughed. "Why, yes, my dear man, other people have homes, you know, and lives, besides yourself—strange as that may seem to you!"

"Why, but you can't go!"

She laughed again. "I think you will find that I can, my dear Tom. Of course, you know that I must!"

"But who will take care of baby?"

"Miss Ferguson is the best trained nurse I have ever seen, and Daisy's mother—"

"You don't suppose I would have a mother-in-law looking after my son, do you?"

"Why, you speak as if the baby were the heir-apparent to a throne!"

"Don't you care anything about him, Cicely?"

"Don't be a fool, Tom!"

Maughm put down his coffee-cup and walked to and fro in the room in front of her, his hands behind his back. Mrs. Torrance watched him.

"I don't know what to say." He stopped in front of her, looking down at her where she sat.

"I do," said Mrs. Torrance coolly. "I have wanted to say something to you for a long time, Tom." She lifted

her face to him quite frankly. "Of course you know that I must eventually go."

He mused. "Yes," he accepted, "I suppose you eventually must." Then he threw out his hands with a gesture of despair. "I shan't know what to do. Everything will be at sixes and sevens. Supposing baby should be ill! Don't you see how helpless I am?"

Mrs. Torrance put down her coffee-cup and sat with her hands clasped, leaving him to his own problems for a little while.

He started to speak to her, bit his lip, desisted, and after a few moments she took the thing in her own hands and made the suggestion: "Very well, then, Tom — you go."

"What!"

"Sail on Saturday. You need a rest, you need a change; and if you trust me —"

"Cicely!"

"I'll stay here with the boy."

"Do you think," he asked after a moment's pause, almost appealingly, "that such a sacrifice is necessary, Cicely?"

She repeated the word: "Sacrifice?"

"Yes, as my leaving my son!"

"Oh!" she said slowly, "I see! Well, there are certain conventions, you know, Tom — broad as you are in your dealings with life — they have at times to be considered."

"I beg your pardon!" Maughm exclaimed. "I beg your pardon, my dear girl! You must think I am the most selfish brute on the face of the earth!"

After a second, she said with determination: "Tom, I want to speak to you about Miss Moreland."

Then Cicely saw Maughm start. She had wondered for days what the expression of his face would be when she should eventually speak this name. Now she saw. He flushed a dull red. Mary's name had never crossed

his lips since the night when he had spoken it to herself. Now that name was being repeated to him here in his own house, and God! what a change had taken place in everything since he had held Mary in his arms. Everything then had been an obstacle between Maughm and the way to happiness. Now he was free. With Cicely's mention of Mary, the whole room in which they sat seemed to change into the Adirondack room into which he had returned to find her gone.

"Why do you speak to me of her, Cicely?" he asked.

"Because she stands out above all the people I ever knew," said Mrs. Torrance.

Maughm looked at her curiously. He knocked the ashes from his cigarette on to the floor.

"That's high praise." He hardly knew what to say. "And how have you seen enough of her to make her stand out?"

Mrs. Torrance did not answer this question. She was looking at him with intensity of feeling. "She is gold through and through — pure gold."

"I know that."

"I would like to see her happy."

"So should I," said Maughm; "so should I!"

Mrs. Torrance looked down at his hands. They had clasped tightly.

"Send for Miss Moreland."

Maughm laughed slightly. "Send for her? She is not the kind to send for!"

"Go to her, then."

Maughm's eyes were upon Mrs. Torrance with great gravity of expression. She liked his looks better than she ever had done before. His selfish absorption in his own existence had vanished.

There was a silence between them for the space of a moment: then the woman before Maughm said in a low

tone, removing her eyes from his and looking away, as though she had been able to solve for herself all her own problems in solving Maughm's: "In which case, Tom, I think I had better go to Europe."

And Maughm, in the complexity and interest of the subject she had opened, answered ungratefully, absorbedly: "Well, I think perhaps it would be just as well."

## CHAPTER LII

"I DON'T know," said Mrs. Moreland to Mrs. Doane, "what my husband would say, if he could have lived to see this day!"

"Men don't say much anyhow; they're so close-mouthed," said Mrs. Doane. "Unless my husband's real mad, he never talks at all!"

Mrs. Moreland had garbed herself in funereal black. As was usual when anything important was to happen, she was dressed for the street — hat, gloves, and veil. She sat stiffly now in the corner of the sofa, waiting for those citizens of East Orange who might be tempted by the red flag hung out at the gate to come in at four o'clock and buy her furniture at auction.

"I told Mr. Doane about the desk, and he says he can get a new one for less than you told me, Mis' Moreland."

"Not a desk like that," waved the lady, "with those legs!"

"But if nobody buys it, perhaps you will come down. Ain't you dressed rather early? It's only half-past one."

"Time," said Mrs. Moreland, "means nothing to me any more, Mrs. Doane; day and night are all alike, week-days and Sundays."

"You don't go to church then?"

"Not any more," said Mrs. Moreland feebly; "I feel as though I were outside the fold."

Mrs. Doane was not an exhorter, but asked the question that she put every day she came. "Ain't you heard from Mary?"

The deserted mother shook her head. "Not a word."

"I wish," said Mrs. Doane, "that I could be with Amber when her baby is born. I don't know how they fix things in France."

"She doesn't need you," said Mrs. Moreland comfortingly; "I daresay she doesn't think about you. She's got her husband, and a mother is the last thing, Mrs. Doane, that seems to be of importance in the life of a child."

"Do you ever hear anything of the writing fellow that Mary and Amber worked for?" Mrs. Doane asked.

She sat rocking peacefully between the Wanamaker desk that she coveted for her own parlour and Mrs. Moreland's sepulchral figure in the corner of the sofa.

"I am not in communication with my daughter's employers, Mrs. Doane."

"Do you hear anything of Mr. Maughm?" asked the neighbour, not in the least discouraged.

"I went last week to the office to see him, but he was out," replied Mrs. Moreland.

"Perhaps," suggested Mrs. Doane, "he had gone West to find Mary."

"I think not," returned Mrs. Moreland gloomily. "It's my experience that 'out of sight is out of mind.'"

"How many people do you think will come to the auction?" Mrs. Doane enquired, shifting her position so that she could peer out of the window, past the red flag which, dreary as its indication was, fluttered brightly in the summer breeze.

"Nobody, probably," returned Mrs. Moreland. "When you are down at the bottom of the ladder, even an auction can't pull you up!"

"Well," said Mrs. Doane, "if nobody does come, and there ain't no bids on the desk, Mr. Doane and you can talk over the price, Mis' Moreland. Say," she continued kindly, more really touched by this deserted neighbour

than she had ever known quite how to express, "you look real sick, Mrs. Moreland. Why don't you lay down on that sofa and put your feet up? If you sit up stiffly like that until four o'clock, you'll break your back! Let me fix you up and pull down the shade, and you just get a wink of sleep."

"What will you do?" enquired Mrs. Moreland, whose last fortress of stiffness and rigidity was breaking down. Mrs. Doane was possessed of quick understanding.

"I'll get a newspaper and sit here in the corner and read," and she did so, after arranging Mrs. Moreland in as comfortable a position as that lady's type — steel-like unbendingness — permitted.

Mrs. Moreland fell asleep and proclaimed it in a short time to Mrs. Doane's satisfaction. In the course of an hour, that lady saw a taxi-cab with a trunk on it roll up to the door. She put her newspaper down carefully and slipped out. In front of the house she saw Mary get out of the cab and went down the walk to meet her.

"What's that?" asked Mary Moreland, pointing to the red flag.

Mrs. Doane had seized her hand; tears sprang to her eyes. "Goodness! Mary, I am glad you're back! There's going to be an auction here at four o'clock this afternoon!"

Mary paid the taxi. "Take the trunk around to the back door and leave it on the steps outside." Then she went up to the red flag. "Give me your knife," she said to the man, "till I cut this cord." She took the flag down and carried it in her hand up the walk, Mrs. Doane following by her side, telling her in an undertone what news she could of her mother's affairs.

Mary went into the house with the auction flag under one arm and the *Outlook* and evening paper under the other, in which she had marked paragraphs of advertisements for private secretaries and stenographers wanted in New

York City. She put the papers down on the hall table. Mrs. Doane was at her elbow. The door of the living-room was open, and they could hear Mrs. Moreland's loud, contented breathing.

"Your ma's asleep," said Mrs. Doane. "I guess I'll go home and leave you to see her alone." On the front steps she turned back to say to Mary: "Suppose I stay down at the gate and tell the auctioneer that there ain't goin' to be no sale?"

"I wish you would," said Mary.

After the door had shut upon Mrs. Doane, Mary stood for a second in the little hallway, from which the stairs went directly up to the second story. It seemed to her a thousand years since she had come down that stairway, angry, rebellious, determined, passionate, with a beating heart and a condemning judgment, to take her way out of her home into the life she had chosen to lead. It seemed to her more than a thousand years since that night when Maughm had first asked her to go away with him, and she had stolen up to her room and packed her belongings in the suit-case to go. Well, she had nothing to be ashamed of at any rate; that was something. She hadn't brought home here a ruined name, a soiled reputation, and a broken life, for some one to heal. She had nothing to be ashamed of? She wasn't sure about that. She recalled the feelings with which she had left this house and gone away, almost hating her mother. She had never loved her mother — never. Even as a girl, it had been a burden to do those things sometimes that she had to do at home. The big wave of love and service that had carried her on its crest out in Denver had washed all the shores of her being. What she had laid down resolutely months ago had taken root, its seed had opened; there were flowers everywhere. She didn't think of her sacrifice. She thought as she stood there now that she hadn't done right at home.



Mrs. Moreland's heavy breathing awakened herself. She sat up: the room was semi-dark and she was alone. She had been dreaming. She jumped up hastily, half asleep, half awake, and hearing a step called her daughter's name: "Mary!"

Mary came into the room. There was a hesitation between the two women, and Mary went forward to her mother. She put her arms round her and kissed her. Mrs. Moreland shook like a tree in a sudden gust of wind, but it was only for a second.

"You decided to come back, did you, Mary?"

"You said you were sick."

Mrs. Moreland was leaning on her daughter's arm. She relinquished it, re-seating herself on the sofa, and Mary sat down by her side.

"I have been a great sufferer," said Mrs. Moreland. "I have been on the verge of a collapse, but it is more mental than physical. You see I keep up, I keep up." But her hands were shaking, her lips trembling.

"I came right away when I got Ritchie's letter," said Mary.

"I owe a great deal of money," said her mother. "I had no idea that things were so expensive, or that they could mount up to so much. There are bills everywhere, and there's going to be an auction here at four o'clock this afternoon."

"No, there isn't," said Mary. "I took down the flag."

Her home was now a prison and a cage to Mary. New York was like a bruise — a blow — and she couldn't bear to look at the familiar streets. She did not consciously contrast East Orange with the Briggs house in Denver, but she could hardly breathe in the confining walls and

the narrow atmosphere of home. Pictures of her life out West and the interests there filled her mind, till her arms ached for the children, and her eyes ached for the beauty of the luxurious house, and her mind ached for the employment and occupations to which she had grown accustomed.

So far as obstacles had come up in her life, she had conquered them, and this distaste for her home, this antagonism for her mother — she must conquer them as well; and she did her best to smooth the sharp corners and bear patiently with Mrs. Moreland's peculiarities. But Mrs. Moreland, who seemed to think she had purchased Mary because the girl had returned, exaggerated her idiosyncrasies and on a pinnacle of martyrdom sat and bewailed destiny.

The cheque that Mr. Briggs had given her and which, according to her promise to him, she looked at for the first time in her room at home, was so generous that she read the figures over twice before she could believe her eyes. It was a great deal of money, but she had given Mr. Briggs her promise to accept this unquestioningly as a gift from the new gold fields, in memory of the day when she had started out from the St. Regis to get the better of him. So Mary paid the bills, the debts, arranged her mother's affairs, closed up accounts, put everything shipshape, sent Ritchie back to boarding-school, fitted him out in clothes and pocket-money, and his shy boy kiss when he left was the one agreeable thing that had happened since she had come East.

"Say," he said, "you're some girl, all right, Sis." And when he was gone, the place was more dreadful to her than ever.

Mary sat in the window of the East Orange house looking out on what her mother called the garden, a scrap of grass

across the foot of which, close to the fence, Mrs. Moreland had caused a bed of tulips to be planted and they were coming up in purple and pink bands.

"You don't care much about reading, Mary?" asked her mother from her rocker, where she sat near the Wana-maker desk.

"I haven't had a great deal of time to read," said Mary, and then she thought of the books to which Romney had introduced her originally — Buckle's *History of the Civilization of England*, and many others, and the books in the Briggs library. "I think I have grown very fond of reading," said Mary.

"You ought to cultivate your mind," said her mother. "You come of a literary family. I took a prize in school on composition, and your father read to the exclusion of everything else."

"Perhaps," said Mary calmly, "it's just as well that I haven't. And," she added, turning to her mother, "I want you to make me a promise, mother. Don't run up any more bills."

"I call that an insult," said her mother.

"It's just honest," said Mary. "I don't think it's an insult to be honest. You see, when I get through paying up what we owe and for Ritchie's operation and the note you contracted to Mr. Briggs, I shall be quite poor."

There was something so quiet in her statement, indeed her whole attitude since her return had been so gentle and so strong, that Mrs. Moreland, looking over at her was impressed.

Incapable of complete concession, Mrs. Moreland nevertheless said, — and for her it meant a great deal —

"I'll try, Mary."

It was more than Mary had ever expected to hear from this mother, and she was grateful and vouchsafed to Mrs.

Moreland something that resembled the radiant smile that Maughm had known and loved.

“They say if we *try* hard enough we are on the way to a place called ‘Get there.’”

And Mrs. Moreland answered tartly: “That’s not very literary or poetical, Mary, but like most dreary sayings I guess it’s true.”

## CHAPTER LIII

MARY was homesick for the first time in her life, not for Denver, for she didn't want to be anywhere but within range of where Maughm was, but she was homesick for home and the atmosphere where the children were, for the friendliness and the companionship; she knew what that was now; there was a new thing to miss, and she missed the voices and the arms and the touch of the children. Several times Mrs. Briggs had been cruel enough to say to her:

"My! what a heavenly mother you would make, Miss Moreland."

Married women with children have a faculty for saying this to those women who are denied their joys.

Mrs. Doane, who wandered in every now and then to discuss her grandchild and her daughter with the Morelands, leaning over Mary's bed, up in the hall bedroom, looking at her with understanding said:

"Mary, you're just pinin' away." And it was true.

Every day when Mary awakened in that hall bedroom, it seemed to her that if something didn't happen she just couldn't go on — that was all there was about it.

On this special afternoon Mrs. Moreland, sitting in the rocker by the Wanamaker desk, was the only human being with whom Mary could exchange a word. Her mother had never given anything that could be called love, and Mary in return had never given her mother anything but the sternest fulfilment of a duty that was more irksome than anything else.

"Mrs. Doane is a regular fool about Amber," said Mrs. Moreland, rocking.

"I think she is awfully fond of her," said Mary.

"She has always been perfectly blind," said Mrs. Moreland.

"Well," said Mary slowly, looking down upon the hands in her lap — they were thin — "it certainly is nice to know that there is some one in the world that thinks you are perfect."

"Umph!" said Mrs. Moreland; "I never had any patience with those people who think their own is best just because it's theirs."

Mary made no reply. Her mother waited for a few seconds and then said: "Mrs. Doane never had very much to boast of. An insignificant husband — a daughter who —"

"Never mind, mother," said Mary wearily. "Amber's all right."

It was Sunday afternoon, and in the distance the bells were ringing for the late service.

"Aren't you going to church, mother?"

"Why, no," said Mrs. Moreland, "I thought I would stay home with you."

"I don't want to keep you from church."

"I thought you might be lonely."

Mary could hardly believe her ears.

"Would you like to have me read a little to you from the Psalms?" asked her mother and took up the Bible from the desk and chose one of those vigorous and condemnatory bits of literature that make the spirit quail.

"Aren't there any brighter Psalms than that?" asked Mary after a little.

"I don't know that I should call the Bible bright," said Mrs. Moreland tersely.

"Oh, I think it is, in spots," said Mary Moreland;

and her mother, with unusual docility, chose the Sixteenth Psalm :

“The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places. Surely I have a goodly heritage.”

She thought about the words. They repeated themselves. A heritage — that means what has been left you. Given to you by your parents — what you come into justly, according to law. East Orange, an extravagant, peculiar mother, the path of the breadwinner.

Mrs. Moreland shut her Bible. “If Mrs. Doane,” she said, “had a daughter like mine, you might forgive her boasting.”

Mary turned slowly round in her chair and looked at her mother. There was a softened expression on that lady’s hard features.

“I have always thought,” said Mrs. Moreland, bestowing on Mary a look tempered by extreme indulgence, “that you were the exact reproduction of your father, Mary; but since you have come home this time, I see that I have been mistaken. You are very, very much like me.”

A slight smile touched her daughter’s beautiful lips, and a faint colour began to mount in her pale cheeks.

“Like you, mother?”

“Yes, indeed,” said Mrs. Moreland with evident satisfaction. “You are exactly like me.”

Mary knew that it was the greatest compliment her mother could pay her, and that in doing so she meant not only to be kind, but to show affection. She was touched by it. It was a peculiar way of making advances, but it was Mrs. Moreland’s own. She was true to her character.

“I think,” said Mrs. Moreland, “you ought to have a complete rest. Mr. Maughm worked you like a slave, with scant appreciation of your qualities, I must say. Then

Mr. Romney came along and showed the selfish egoism of the artist."

Mary murmured: "Mother —"

Mrs. Moreland waved her to silence. "I must say that he tried to atone."

"Please —" her daughter began.

"Now these Western millionaires have finished the work. They have worn you to the bone."

"Oh, no," said Mary. "Oh, no! You don't know what you are saying."

"I am your mother," said Mrs. Moreland magnificently, and leaving her chair she came over to Mary's side, and put her hand on Mary's shoulder, and looked down at her. She was becoming superb again. She was mounting her pinnacle, and Mary was small and insignificant before her.

"I am your mother, and I am going to exercise my authority and protect my child."

Mary looked up at her in blank amazement, but she could not be antagonised or displeased, because on her mother's face, blended with magnificence, was still the softened expression.

"I want you to rest," said her mother; "and I am going to try to find some sort of employment — some ladylike employment in New York — companion or something like that — and see if I can't take care of my own child for a while."

Her stern lips broke into the most affectionate smile they had ever worn. The ridiculous words and the useless proposition did not destroy the effect of Mrs. Moreland's sacrifice.

"It's very kind of you, mother," Mary began, "very kind, indeed."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Moreland shortly; "it's nothing of the sort. It is my duty, and I won't disguise from you, Mary, that it is also a great pleasure."



Mary put her hand up and took her mother's hand, which lay on her shoulder. For a moment the two women exchanged glances.

Mrs. Moreland bent down for the first time since Mary was a little girl, and kissed her.

"Now," she said, "I am going into the kitchen to make some hot biscuits for supper. Don't you move; be still and try to compose your mind as I do. What you need is a complete rest."

After her mother had left her and gone into the kitchen, Mary sat there quietly looking out of the window, and she saw — to go back, away back, quite far back into the history of Mary Moreland — she saw coming up the walk a messenger from a florist in New York bringing a box of flowers.

Mary met the man in the hall, took the box from him and sent him away. She was glad her mother was making biscuits — there would be other things to make — and Mary knew that she would have the little parlour for a short time completely to herself. She opened the box of flowers, lilies-of-the-valley, masses upon masses of them, and on the top a letter in a thick envelope addressed in a familiar hand-writing. Mary put the box of lilies down on the Wanamaker desk. Already the pungent, heavenly odour began to fill the room. She stood there, opened the letter and drew it out.

"Mary:

I am writing to you in one of the empty rooms of my empty house. It can never be home to me again unless a woman can make it so. I call it an empty house. Well, up-stairs there is one room that has an occupant — a motherless little child.

I have missed you every hour since the night you wouldn't love me and went away at Red Wing.

I kissed you, Mary. I am so conceited as to believe that you have never been kissed by anyone but me. Am I wrong? Good God! That's one of the things I won't let myself think about.

I have tried to follow your life, Mary, and I find I don't want to know what you are doing, since you would do nothing for me.

But wherever you are I know that you turn everything you touch into gold. That nobody can be unhappy where you are, and that people turn to you, as I used to turn to you. But won't you turn to me, Mary? I have missed you every hour.

Mary, the little child and the lonely man are waiting for you."

She put the letter back in its envelope and laid it down upon the flowers, and as she stood there trembling, shaking, the telephone rang in the hall. It was not an unusual sound, but for some reason or other it went right through Mary, and she knew then that it was a call, but a woman's voice answered her across the wire.

"This is Miss Rensselaer of Mr. Thomas Maughm's office. I am awfully sorry to trouble you, Miss Moreland, but Mr. Maughm's given me a lot to do about the old 'Upjohn' matter, and I don't quite understand some of the details. I know it's Sunday afternoon, but I've had to work on here just the same. You wouldn't come over to New York, would you —"

Mary looked at the clock: "Yes, of course I will, if it will be any help." She hung up the receiver, after having told Miss Rensselaer that she would go right in to town.

It was after six o'clock when she reached Thomas Maughm's office, and the janitor, the only person visible, opened the door for her into what had once been her own room. He told her that Miss Rensselaer had been kept

“up at the house” and “would be right on down.” And would Miss Moreland wait?

She stood looking about her, looking about the old accustomed room, like a traveller, who, after a long journey, had unexpectedly come home. There was nothing to charm the eye in this usual office furniture, commercial, comfortable, utilitarian, but to Mary the place was instinct with charm; it was the loveliest room in the world.

Above the roofs of the high buildings, as she glanced out of the window, the city's smoke rose in columns against the evening sky; the air, clear as a bell, seemed to hold the city in its crystal atmosphere, and far up, like a single light, higher than the sky-scrapers, twinkled a solitary star.

The comfortable leather chair Maughm had bought for himself, so that when he came into this room he might make himself at ease gave Mary a twinge of memory and she sat down in her employer's old place with her hand outstretched upon the chair's arms. Since she had used to sit there before her machine, transcribing her notes, the winds of Fate, brutal and subtle changes of existence, had swept through this place. On the table lay a volume of letters relating to the “Upjohn” affairs, and since those letters had been written the “Upjohn” mines had made Maughm a rich man. If here in this office, standing before Mary, dictating to her his letters, Maughm could have foreseen that he was to become through “Upjohn” a king of finance! If here in this office, standing before Mary and dictating to her that first letter to Aymes in Boston, Maughm could have known that Destiny was to remove his wife out of his life! If he had known that he was to be the father of a son!

These were the great changes, and if Mary, standing before her employer, her hand in his, promising him in a second that which a woman holds higher than life itself; if

Mary could have known then that she should some day refuse this thing to Maughm, and that, in so doing, she should climb to the greatest heights she had ever attained ! If Mary could have known that the woman whose failure to pay her one hundred dollars was one day to owe to Mary a debt of love and tenderness that it would take Amber all her life to discharge !

She rose and stood, as she had done before, in the window, looking out on lower New York, at the bay where the ships were putting out for England and France. Above the city roofs the columns of smoke created by innumerable fires, were dissipated on the ever-changing air, forming again to be dissipated anew, — the same laws and the same effects reproduce themselves, but always with a new vitality in the creation. As the twilight fell, the single star grew more visible and sparkled brilliantly.

She sat for a long time, it seemed to her, quite immovable there in the office, the things around her unaltered and unchanged, the big scheme going on all about her, unaltered and unchanged ; but Mary felt that her own existence was utterly transformed. If happiness was for her, she must take it for herself ; if she wanted to grasp it, she must put out her hands.

The telephone stood on the table at her side. She took it up, held it a moment, looked around the familiar room, looked out of the window at the smoky, floating banners — and called up the Maughm house on the telephone.

“Is Mr. Maughm in?” “Mr. Maughm has just left the house,” she was told. She put the telephone down and went over to her old table, and sat before her desk where the Remington stood under the cover. She put her arms down on it, pillowed her face there, and sat waiting, waiting.

She believed, and felt sure for some reason or other that Maughm would come to her here — that he was on his way

— and so she sat waiting for him, waiting for her Fate, which, under such singular and complicated circumstances had come to be her own, and she was not surprised when she heard the door open, nor did she move, and he was half way across the floor to her when she rose and stood trembling, saw him standing there close to her, calling her name under his breath, with an emphasis she could never forget.

“Mary!” And the next moment she was in his arms.

Ever since Red Wing she had thought what this would be again! It was better than her thoughts! She had often dreamed what it would be like to come suddenly, unexpectedly upon him and have him sweep her away! It was better than her dreams!

As Maughm set Mary free, she stepped back a little, and he pointed to the chair by the Remington machine.

“Sit there,” he commanded, his voice unsteady, “there in your old place, Mary, and don’t move, don’t speak!”

Maughm afterwards remembered that she bestowed upon him that radiant smile, which had so charmed him in this room morning after morning for years.

“I sent for you,” he said; “I told Miss Rensselaer to send that message. I went out to East Orange yesterday and saw you sitting in the window, and I couldn’t face your mother — and I asked Miss Rensselaer to call you up; but how did you happen to come?”

“I thought perhaps the position of stenographer was vacant,” and she smiled.

“And you came to apply?”

“Well,” — she began.

He came over and took both her hands between his and crushed them to him and stood looking down at her.

“There is another position vacant — I want a mother for a helpless little child.”

The smile which shone so charmingly on Mary’s lips faded.

“Don't you want *just a woman?*” she asked.

He drew her by her hands until she stood again close to him.

“A woman who loves me?”

“Yes.”

“Then I want her with all my heart!”

“Well,” said Mary Moreland, “she's yours!”

THE END



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