Mere Man

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March 18nd '18

Mary Renner

THE LAST FADING BANNER OF THE DAY

MERE MAN

By

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THE PENN PUBLISHING COMPANY PHILADELPHIA
1914

Illustrations

Mere Man

CHAPTER I

MISS JANE HOWELL was conversing. It is a pity to begin a perfectly well-meaning story with a bit of tautology like that, but it is unavoidable. Miss Howell was always conversing. Talking, with her, was a condition, a state of mind, a physical function, like the beating of her heart or the circulation of her blood. As a conversationalist, she was thorough. Nothing was left to chance. She left no yearning listener hanging helpless over an abyss of doubt.

If she mentioned casually that her father had once been postmaster in the little town of Judas Iscariot, Arizona, she did not leave that bare, barren fact to rest on the unsatisfied mind, for-

ever a thorn and a matter of uncertainty. Her frank nature led her to tell why he was the postmaster of that particular town, and what he said on the day of his appointment, and what his wife said and his brothers and his sisters and his aunts and his cousin in Pennsylvania. In the end the story she was telling was a complete work of reference, and if properly edited and printed would have consisted of about two lines of text per page and the remainder of exhaustive foot-notes. The word exhaustive is used advisedly.

Such conversation required concentration. The chime of plates at Mrs. Prouty's boarding-house, the manœuvers of the vegetable dishes marching and countermarching and crisscrossing over the table, passed by nimble hands grown used to such legerdemain, disturbed Miss Howell not in the least. Her mind was on the seriousness of her task. She was oblivious to such small things.

"Tea or milk, Miss Howell?" demanded Mrs. Prouty, wedging in the question at the

point of the former lady's remarks where there should have been a comma.

"Coffee, please," Miss Howell replies, feeling herself addressed, not pausing an instant. Her story marches on.

"And no one," she said, "supposed they would do it. People have talked about it, certainly, just as they have talked about breaking windows and burning houses and pouring ink in the letter boxes. Though what I can't understand is why the women don't get caught doing such daring things as they do in England. Some people say that is a proof of the superior intelligence of women over ——"

"Now, Miss Howell," observed young Mr. Derry, "you are talking woman's suffrage, I know. Don't try to pretend you are not."

The lady laughed in the helpless way she had when she felt she was being teased. But the gulf between earnestness and frivolity was one she could not leap across at so short notice.

"Of course I'm talking woman's suffrage," she exclaimed, stoutly. "What else should I

talk about to-day? Why, a friend I met on the street said there were three thousand women outside the hall who couldn't get in. You know this was the final day of the Equal Suffrage Convention. Of course you read about it in the papers. And what happened this afternoon is going to revolutionize everything. The action of the militants in England doesn't compare with it in effectiveness. I really think the women have solved the question at last."

"I'm all impatience," cried Mr. Derry. "What did they do? Willy, urge the potatoes this way, please."

"This friend of mine says—who was there *right in the hall*," she began, by way of reply —"that the principal speaker of the afternoon, this Mrs.—now what is her name? I thought I had it right on the tip of my tongue." She waved her hand up and down helplessly. "You know, the woman who helped in the shirt-waist strike. It seems to me her name began with B. Oh, pshaw!"

"Never mind the name," suggested Mrs. Prouty, wisely. "We are all waiting to hear your story."

"I almost had it then. It is a short name."

"Brown?" suggested Mr. Derry, at random.

"No."

"Barker?" offered some one.

Miss Howell smiled.

"Barker," she cried, elated at having run this fact to earth. "Now let me see. Where was I? Oh, yes. Well, this friend of mine said that Mrs. Barker made a very impressive speech. She is absolutely beautiful and wears the most expensive clothes, and, when she talks, every one goes wild. She had on a blue net dress over crepe de chine with real lace at the wrist and throat, and only one piece of jewelry, an amethyst pin set in diamonds. She is the one who advocates that all women in the country refuse to marry until the men grant them the ballot. She says that will bring them to terms quicker than anything else. And she proposes to tour the country from now

on getting as many women as possible to sign the pledge of celibacy—refusing absolutely to marry *any* man."

"Yes," said Mr. Derry, patiently, "and what happened this afternoon?"

"She started her crusade," cried Miss Howell, "and three hundred Washington women signed their names!"

Mr. Derry held his head in his hands.

"What chance is there for me?" he moaned.

A girl entered the room and drew out the chair between the two speakers.

"What's the matter?" she asked, adjusting the already faultless lace that hung below her throat.

Miss Howell reached out her hand and laid it on the girl's arm.

"I was telling them about the action of the convention this afternoon."

The newcomer nodded.

"You know about it?" cried the other, eagerly.

"Yes, I was there."

A gentleman across the table who was called the "Colonel" cleared his throat.

"Miss Carver," he said, addressing the newcomer, "I have listened with great attention to Miss Howell's statement as to the action of the convention, and I want to ask you frankly, as a woman of reason, what you think of such a thing?"

"Am I a woman of reason?" asked the girl.

"Of course you are," asserted the Colonel, warmly.

"And of infinite beauty," observed Mr. Derry, industriously stirring his coffee.

The girl gazed at the back of the young man's averted head. She laughed outright.

"That frivolous young man," said the Colonel, "has unwittingly stumbled upon the very line of argument I wish to pursue. I maintain that those three hundred women who refused to marry until women are allowed to vote are three hundred women who could not get married if they wanted to. A handsome, bright young woman like you—if you will

excuse an old man for saying so—who could have her choice of any one in the whole United States, wouldn't have signed that paper."

The color deepened on Miss Carver's face.

"In a moment, Colonel," she said, "I am going to blush with confusion."

"The Colonel is right," asserted Derry; "it's just a lot of the old standbys who have been on hand for the past forty years that agreed not to get married. Of course they agreed. They had to. The idea had been wished on them years ago."

Miss Carver bent over her plate and smiled.

"I should like your frank and unbiased opinion, Miss Carver," pursued the Colonel. "I know you have said you favored woman's suffrage. But do you honestly think that any young, beautiful woman with a chance to get married would have signed that paper?"

"I'd like to hear your opinion on that too," exclaimed the young man beside her.

"Come now," cried the Colonel.

Miss Carver looked up, and her eyes shone mischievously.

"I'm embarrassed at having to say this," she observed, "but did you say I was—ahem—young and beautiful and probably marriageable?"

"I most certainly did," asseverated the Colonel.

"Well," she said, "I signed the paper."

CHAPTER II

IN the third floor rear room of Mrs. Prouty's boarding-house, which Deborah Carver occupied but which Miss Howell, abiding theoretically in the room adjoining, used as an overflow for herself, her clothes and her conversation, the latter was making preparations to go out. If Deborah Carver had intended to go out on that mild September evening, she would simply have put on her hat, taken her gloves and departed. But not so Miss Howell. She had spent half an hour already trying the effect of several different waists upon herself, each change of scene requiring a complete removal and substitution of more of the beribboned and belaced strata that lay underneath. She was not really satisfied now, for the last shirt-waist showed the mark of the iron in an obscure place; but there was no time to change again,

and seizing her white lisle gloves, she left the room. Deborah, reading in a big comfortable chair, smiled and wondered if she had really gone. She returned almost immediately, completely out of breath from running up the stairs, saying that she had forgotten to put on suitable evening shoes. And then, after she had returned once more, because both the gloves she had were for the right hand, and again for an umbrella, because the paper had said there might be rain that night or the next day, she was finally gone.

Deborah stretched out her arms lazily, and throwing her book on the bed walked to the window where she could look out over the vista of other people's back yards, commanded apparently by a myriad of other third floor back windows, where she knew lived workers in the hive like herself. But no face appeared anywhere. The still, hot night had driven them all out to their separate diversions—to the cool joy of the open street cars, or to the hot, but exciting interior of the stock company theatre,

or to the dance halls. It seemed as if she were the only human looking out upon that hollow square of houses. The air in her room was hot and still. With the falling of the dusk, the excitement of the day had left her, and in its place hung about her a slight, intangible melancholy, such as comes to any one who suddenly realizes she is twenty-six.

When one is ten, twenty-six seems like a ripe old age; when one is fifteen it seems like a point when one's destination in life will have been decided on, when the ship will have left port under full steam with the course plotted on the chart. If one is to be married, it will have been done by then. If she is to succeed in some fine pursuit that is to enrich the world, the indication of that success will have begun to appear. But, for Deborah, twenty-six had come and passed, and neither of these things had happened. Her ship still lay at the dock.

She turned away from the window, where the clatter of dishes and the odor of kitchen rose from below. She wondered if moving the trap-

door in the ceiling of the room would afford an outlet for the heated, heavy air that surrounded her. She attempted to dislodge it with a curtain pole, and this proving ineffectual, she decorously closed the door and presently the bureau was surprised to find a pair of white shod feet resting where the pincushion ought to have been. From this point of vantage she was able to reach the wooden trap and slide it back from its position. Above, all was dark and exuded the heat of a bake-oven. But the spirit of adventure was upon her.

Of course, no dignified, aged woman of twenty-six should have done it. It was an anachronism. It was the thing she would have done twelve years ago—and been spanked as a result for being a tomboy, no doubt. She smiled as she thought of it. At least there was no one to spank her now. She caught hold of the sides of the opening and her strong young arms drew her up into the cavern. What must Mrs. Prouty have thought had she appeared then and seen the two feet of an angel, clad in

pumps and silk stockings, disappearing heavenward from the third floor back room just like Mr. Forbes Robertson in the play!

But no Mrs. Prouty or other deputy Nemesis appeared. It was dusty in the regions above, and not very beneficial to white summer clothes. But a short ladder led upward, at the top of which was another trap, fastened with a rusty hook. And when that was finally forced open, there was the moon shining in the sky.

She stepped out on the pebbly roof. It was an enchanted garden she stood in. Two long lines of brick parapet bounded her in, like parterres of closely trimmed hedge. The heads of the sidewalk trees protruded above it and sometimes lapped over, their leaves rustling in a pastoral whisper. The moon shone pleasantly in the sky above. In the distance the search-light from a hotel roof-garden rested on the obelisk of the Monument. Turning to the other side she saw far off the great dome of the Capitol—a silver thimble in the moonlight. She might have been some pre-Renaissance

Roman duchess leaning on the white marble balustrade of her formal garden.

All this suggested a metaphor to her. She had once been asked to make a street corner speech in favor of woman suffrage, and she had refused, partly because she had no very convincing public argument and partly because, as she had said laughing, she "was not man enough." She thought now if she ever had to make that speech, she might compare her room, stuffy, hot, and shut-in to the condition of the voteless woman and her emergence out into the free, pure air with the glory of the soft night about her to the bursting forth of woman from her cell and chains of bondage—she smiled as she thought of those well-worn phrases—into freedom and power and her rightful prerogative.

Of course she could make a speech if she wanted to. The suffrage held out no apparent advantages to her personally. She had no selfish interest in it. Its appeal was an ethical one that roused her enthusiasm. The propa-

ganda was an uplifting effort for the whole body of women. She could not help comparing it to great movements like the Reformation and the Renaissance and when she put her determined shoulder to the wheel, she felt that she was revolving it in a way to make history —to accomplish something lasting and worth while. It seemed as if this were a new Renaissance—an awakening of woman—a bursting forth out of mediæval darkness into light.

She was willing to devote her life, now passed the mark where she should have picked out her sphere of usefulness, to such a deserving cause; to march to the crusades, carrying a spear that should help in the beginning of a new era for woman. Her enthusiasm and her conscience, stung by what her body had not accomplished, drove her on. Following the dictates of the latter, with the fortitude of Spartan women, she had offered up the thing most dear to her, and taken a vow of celibacy. She, Deborah Carver, had doomed herself to be an old maid—for a principle.

She laughed and looked over the parapet into the lighted room of a wing below her where a dark-haired young man, in his third floor room, bent over his desk. That young man, whoever he might be, and every other man, henceforth had no interest for her. She might lean over the parapet as she did now, and look at him, like Moses viewing the promised land, but she must not endeavor to possess him. He seemed to be a nice person. She was interested in the slim fingers which held the papers he read. His room was furnished more luxuriously than most third floor rooms. The flat-topped desk in the middle of the room where he sat was of mahogany. A brass drop light with a garnet shade sat on the desk. The rug caught the light like a real oriental rug, and the pictures and hangings on the walls spoke of a height of ease and comfort to which the average boarding house did not aspire. She gazed at the Promised Land with much interest, speculating idly as to what he might be doing, until presently the Promised Land

rose, slapped his hat on his head and turned out the light. She was alone then on her broad white roof with the moon and the stars.

She had always felt that one day she should be married. Her instincts and emotions all led her that way. Her life in her school brought her always in contact with children, whom she understood and guarded and sympathized with by virtue of some instinct within her. She had the hovering wings of a mother. Yet she had seen no man whom she would marry.

She often found herself being terribly excited over Bobby Mitchell—for five minutes at a time. But then she realized he was pursuing her and saw love and devotion in his eyes and immediately became bored. She liked his automobile, for that made her go fast and provided her with excitement. But the man who was to possess her must control her with an iron hand. He must be a man to whom, when she was tired of struggling to arrange her life, she could turn over the reins and let him drive. Whereas she controlled Bobby Mitchell—and

he was merely typical of them all—with more ease than Bobby controlled the big car which responded immediately to his touch on the lever.

She heard the newsboys on the street below crying an extra paper, and when she descended from her roof she purchased one. It contained a list of the women who had signed the celibacy pact. There was her own name near the top. She snipped it out with her scissors and impaled it upon her pincushion.

"Lest we forget," she said, smiling, and undid the fastening at her throat.

CHAPTER III

THE nice, hot sun caressed the street until the weary asphalt sank under your feet. Deborah walked along in the narrow shade of the buildings, aimlessly gazing into their show windows. Her work over for the day there remained no place to go but her room at Mrs. Prouty's—a place which she religiously avoided when it was not absolutely necessary for her to go there. People, when their work is over, like to go home and find comfort and cheer in surroundings that are familiar to them. But if you have to climb two flights of stairs to get to your home, and it is only twelve feet by fifteen when you arrive, and has the same dejected appearance that it had when you left, it holds out few inducements. Deborah did not go home.

Filled with notions of clothes for the fall, she slipped with easy nonchalance into an ornate

shop and wandered about until she found long glass cases in which were expensive gowns—"creations," they called them in that store—fashioned out of bewilderingly soft and costly fabrics which were draped and turned and tortured into the very newest designs. It was an education to any one who in a few weeks would have to make her own fall dresses—both of them. She looked these over carefully and made copious mental notes. But one of the duchesses of the place, observing the desecration of the hallowed spot where stood only those with money in their purses who came to purchase, bore down upon her with haughty disdain.

"Did you wish to see something?" she said, loftily.

Deborah looked clear through the disdain. She smiled pleasantly.

"That smoke-colored one—does it hook up the back?"

"I don't know. Were you looking for an evening dress?"

The other laughed a soft, low laugh.

"Not I," she said, turning to the girl. "But wouldn't you like to have one like that made of challis? The material wouldn't cost more than three dollars."

Deborah was thoroughly interested in her scheme. The salesgirl's face lit up for a moment at the idea. That small second of warmth volatilized her aloofness and it floated off into thin air. After that it was impossible to climb back into the strategic position she had occupied before.

"I think I'll do it for myself," she said. She looked about her guardedly. "Would you like to see the dress?"

"Of course I should like to see it."

The dress, rustling with tissue paper, came down from its place, and the two alert vivisectionists noted its anatomy and physiology. In the course of this the sales duchess, recognizing a certain unmistakable humanity in Deborah, was divulging the fact that it was only two weeks before the such and such dance, for which

she must have a dress. And, never doubting her companion's interest in the matter, she spoke of men with a sparkle in her eyes of one in the midst of the game. When Deborah caught that look of enthusiasm, accustomed and hardened as she was to the confidences of chance people, a lump of lead seemed to drop, uninvited and unexpected, into her heart. For that was the enthusiasm that was now denied to her. Her interest in the dresses soon waned. Presently she gathered up her bag and gloves and, thanking the girl, went out into the street again.

The lump of lead was still in the same place. She decided to walk to the headquarters of the Equal Suffrage Association and leave it there if possible. Mrs. Dobson, secretary of the association and chairman of a thousand committees and sub-committees, bounced up from her desk and embraced her when she entered. Deborah adjusted her hat and attire.

"Sit down," cried Mrs. Dobson.

Mrs. Dobson herself never sat down. Some-

times she perched for an instant on the edge of her swivel chair. But most of the time she was darting about like the squirrels in the park.

"My dear, I am *so* glad you are with us," she said, running her nimble fingers over a card-catalogue drawer and pulling out a card.

"I think it's my duty—I think it is every one's duty to help in every way possible," Deborah replied, stoutly.

Mrs. Dobson pounced on the fountain pen that lay on her desk.

"It's the example that counts," she exclaimed, adding some notation on her card. "It's the example of noble self-sacrifice. That's the spirit that is going to win."

She held her pen in her mouth and ran through another card index, descending upon the proper card and tattooing it with more hieroglyphics which only she could read.

"What's that card index for?" demanded the girl.

"Congressional. We have all the congressmen written up, showing just where they stand

on the question." She pulled out a card. "There is the man to beware of," she commented. "He is our most astute foe."

"John Marshall Lea."

"The same," she repeated, tartly. "Remember that name as of the Black Douglas. He has done more to block legislation favorable to us than any five other men in the House. He is the man who is going to oppose most bitterly the bill for an equal suffrage amendment in the House of Representatives when we bring the question before a committee of the House in November. If I can beat *him* I shall consider that I have gone a long way toward winning the whole fight."

"Very well, Mother Dobson." The girl laughed. "Do you realize you've wasted a whole minute of your precious time standing still?"

"Bless me, so I have." She looked at the clock and took the receiver off the hook of her telephone. "Don't go. I can talk to you and telephone at the same time."

"I believe you could," observed Deborah.

"Remember," cried Mrs. Dobson, "we are going to ask you to make some speeches for us soon."

A chill crept gently over Deborah. She saw herself standing on a soap-box, rising to address a roaring, turbulent, out-of-doors crowd. Could she bring herself to do it? She thought she would infinitely prefer to stand in front of the Capitol in a pillory. Her impulse was to tell Mrs. Dobson so and warn that lady not to count upon her. But she did nothing of the sort. She sat with her hands calmly folded before her, telling herself that all great movements must be accomplished by a series of sacrifices, and that she would not be the one to refuse when her turn came. And all she said was, "Very well, Mrs. Dobson," quite calmly and pleasantly.

She did not leave all her low spirits behind her as she had hoped. And when dusk fell again, she was once more sitting in her room full of the realization that she was twenty-six

and trying to forget the idea by reading a funny story. But who can forget so far-reaching a calamity as that in a mere story? As it grew too dark to read, she let the book fall idly into her lap and watched the scarlet moon rise over the housetops, silhouetting the chimneys and dormers and the wooden rails of the apartment house porches. A soft after-glow spread like a rose haze over all that open square, transforming with a magic touch the box-cluttered yards, and turning the whole scene, sordid with its kitchens and scullery maids, into a soft evening picture. She leaned against the window frame and watched the light gently fade. She wondered what that scene looked like from her roof, and gazed speculatively at the trap in the ceiling. A trap it was indeed. The lure of it held her lightly in its grasp. It was like Aladdin's lamp to her. She had but to touch it, and she was wafted away from her fifteen-dollar room to priceless Elysian fields. The door softly closed, two shoes left their impress on the bureau scarf, and, with the rustle

of no wings, a white clad angel had disappeared heavenward.

To guide her in her return through the dark attic, she had brought her tiny electric flashlight. Virgil, or one of those old fellows who knew nothing about attics, said "Facilis est descensus in Averno," but the descent from the roof into the darkness of this particular Averno was anything but easy. So she slipped the little nickel thing into her belt. She stepped out on the roof, and went to the parapet wall.

In the west, behind the square jagged skyline, shone a narrow ribbon of deep red drawn across the heavy purple of the sky. That was the last fading banner of the day. The city had given itself over to night. Haphazard squares of light appeared on the distant office buildings. Restless electric signs told their story over and over again. She saw the moving picture theatre at the street corner, blazingly alight, receive its throng of people like an ant-hill. But on the roof there was almost no

sign of artificial night. The moon shone in pastoral quiet. The trees hanging over the parapet wall were like willows hanging over the banks of a stream. And in the midst of their thick foliage she imagined she could see the figure of a lurking man, just as one does in country fields at night, when all around villainous pine trees lie in wait to murder one and steal his purse.

She gazed over the top of the rear wall at the window where she had seen the man the night before, but all was dark there. The moon shone in on the floor, illuminating a small square of the Eastern rug, but no other thing was visible. She walked along the length of the roof, stepping over the ridges of brick wall that protruded above its level, in accordance with the fire regulations, at the line of demarkation of each house. She gazed down into unfamiliar side yards, into window-boxes filled with ferns, into rooms where people were surreptitiously cooking things over the gas burners, and into a window by which a woman

sat—shame on her in this modern day—rocking her baby to sleep.

And as Deborah turned back by the thick foliage where she had thought she saw the figure of a man she started and stood still.

The imaginary figure of a man was holding a lighted cigarette!

CHAPTER IV

DEBORAH was properly frightened. The surprise of it made her suddenly weak at the knees. She felt as she did in dreams when she was half-way up the stairs with a murderous robber pursuing her, and her feet refused to move. But only for an instant. Then she turned for the trap-door, miles away. All would have been well had not the nickel-plated electric flash-light—notoriously undependable! —slipped from her belt and fallen on the roof. That spoiled everything. She could not hope to clamber safely down the steep, dark ladder to her home with this fleet-footed man pursuing her. She stooped to recover her light. But it had fallen in the shadow of a projecting ridge of brick wall and would not be found. She heard the footsteps approaching. Then she straightened up, her eyes flashing—a tower

of strength and independence. The man was upon her. She could hear her heart beating. He raised his hand. "Will he strike me?" she thought, dully. But he only took off his hat. He spoke. His voice was suave and dignified.

"I must apologize," he said, gravely. "I know I frightened you, but I really did not see you in time to give you warning of my presence."

Deborah murmured something in reply.

"You have lost your—your—powder-puff," said the man, still with the same gravity.

"It was an electric flash-light," she informed him.

He bent over and scanned the pebbled surface of the roof.

"Naturally," he replied, whimsically. "Part of the regular equipment of the wise virgin of biblical times."

He spoke in a pleasant, easy, bantering tone, and yet with a very dignified courtesy, as though he were endeavoring to tacitly reassure her of his thorough harmlessness.

Presently his hand struck the trinket, and he stood up abruptly holding it behind him.

"Those pebbles run into a fellow's knees like fun," he exclaimed. "I shan't be able to say my prayers for a week. Would you be able to identify this article?"

"Certainly. It is nickel-plated."

"Yes. Proceed."

"By pressing a button at the side of it, it lights."

He fumbled with it, and suddenly as his finger touched the proper spot, a beam of white light shot across the roof.

"Your description is astoundingly exact," he said. "Without a doubt the jeweled thing is yours."

He handed it to her.

"I am exceedingly obliged," she assured him.

He bowed. She noticed in the moonlight that his fingers were long and slender. His hair was brown.

"Oh," she cried, naively, "you are the man with the red lamp-shade."

"The very man," he said. "I have inadvertently forgotten to bring it with me to-night. But it is fragile and apt to be broken climbing up steep ladders."

She smiled.

"The man with the red shade," he repeated. "A truly romantic soul. How did you know of my existence?" he asked, abruptly.

"Last night," she confessed, "I peeped into your room."

He laughed.

"From that spot over there," she said, pointing, "it is possible to see."

"By all means let's go there then," he exclaimed. "I should see myself as others see me."

He looked over the wall.

"An absolute blank!" he cried. "Ah, myself!" he observed, apostrophizing the dark window. "I have discovered you. Nothing at all!"

She leaned on the wall.

"Do you believe that about yourself?" she asked, curiously.

HE LOOKED OVER THE WALL

"Not at all," he affirmed, stoutly.

He turned his back on his room and thrusting his hands in his pockets, leaned with his elbows on the wall.

"In considering yourself," he said, with a pleasant air of thinking aloud, "you must forget that you have a sense of humor. Of course you are ridiculously inadequate. Everybody is. But take yourself seriously. Have confidence in your ability to accomplish the impossible." He thumped himself on the chest. "That's the way I give myself courage," he said, thoughtfully.

"You have almost the air of an orator," she murmured, presently.

He smiled.

"I hope you will excuse me."

She turned away from the wall.

"It is getting late, I am afraid," she said.

He stood beside her.

"May I escort you to your—trap-door; or shall I call a cab?"

She looked about her thoughtfully.

"It's such a fine night," she said. "Suppose we walk."

At the door leading down to the depths of her own house she paused.

"You were speaking of speeches," she observed. "Would you make a speech? If you were I?"

"Right now. Of course. Stand on the closed trap-door, and I will sit cross-legged before you."

"No, no," she said, smiling. "At some future date. A public speech."

"If I wanted to."

"But I shouldn't know how."

He looked at her quizzically.

"The old manner is best," he exclaimed. "Hair brushed abruptly back from the forehead—as in the portraits of Webster. The left hand should be thrust under the skirts of the coat—do women wear coats in making speeches? Of course they do. The right hand toying with the fob of one's watch, except when gesticulating. And refer to the sanctity of the hearth."

"You are not serious," she said.

"No," he replied, instantly grave. "I am not. About the speech, you are the only one who can tell."

She held out her hand to him.

"Good-night," she said, "and thank you."

He bowed over her hand.

"You must let me light you down the first stage of your journey," he observed, taking her light and illuminating the ladder to the attic.

She permitted him to do this. She reached up for the light, smiling.

"Now please run. You must not view this next contortion."

"I run," he said.

CHAPTER V

THE first cold days of October had come. Football colors decked the town. The white and yellow badges of the Suffragists appeared here and there on the streets. Speech-making for "The Cause" had begun on the broad avenue that connects the White House with the Capitol, or, more correctly, that separates the two. Deborah Carver was approached seriously for this purpose.

"You must," announced Mrs. Dobson, "really you must. It is your *duty*. Good looks hold attention. We need you."

She threw down the telephone book she was consulting, and, seized with a galvanic impulse, strode across the room and caught the girl by the lapels of her coat.

"I'll hold you right here," she said, "until you say yes."

Deborah looked at the whirlwind lady. In

spite of the terror in her heart a disturbing excitement seized her.

"But what could I talk about?" she asked, breathlessly.

"About the eternal stars, if you like. Only *talk*."

"But I must say something."

The old lady released her and darted over to her chair, perching momentarily on the edge of it.

"Talk of this iniquitous Lea," she cried. "Speak of these fat, waddling congressmen, with moist hands and moist collars and celluloid cuffs."

There was no inspiration in this.

"Is that the sort of person he is?" she asked, dully.

"Aren't they all that way—all those that oppose us, I mean?" she added, smiling. She pulled down her gold-rimmed spectacles from the place where they rested against her gray-black hair.

"Listen!" she cried, taking a book from the shelf behind her. "Saturday the twelfth, six

thirty o'clock. What could be fairer?" She wrote a hasty scrawl on the book. "See Mrs. Devine. She arranges these things."

Deborah drew in her breath sharply, as though she had plunged into cold water. But an enthusiasm, a realization of new responsibility, and a youthful appreciation of action brought a flush to her face.

"I'm game!" she said, steadily. "I suppose no one likes to make these speeches."

Mrs. Dobson reached for her telephone and gave a number.

"Like it!" she cried. "They *hate* it. They do it because they think it is their duty. They're martyrs, bless their souls! Mrs. Devine," she said on the telephone, "Deborah Carver will speak at one of your street corner meetings next Saturday."

And thus was her doom sealed.

"Mrs. Devine is a feather-head," volunteered Mrs. Dobson, "but she has a large automobile and infinite leisure. She is the most valuable bit of machinery of my office."

Deborah dated her life, following this interview, up to Saturday the twelfth of October. There was no beyond. Sunday morning had that same dim, shadowy inconsequence to her that it would have had if on Saturday night she were going to be merely hanged instead of to make the street corner speech.

Saturday at noon, Mrs. Devine sent Robert, her chauffeur, in the machine for Deborah, to bring her to lunch. Mrs. Devine was not there when she arrived, but the maid said she would return shortly. She sat in the library playing with the little Pomeranian and wishing it were midnight and the day were over. In spite of the fact that the fire of battle was in her, she could not help shrinking from this unknown conflict. She knew exactly the ideas she would talk about, and she knew that she could have made her speech very readily to an audience of quiet people in that library where she sat. But what sort of people were these to be to whom she was to speak?

Mrs. Devine rustled in.

"Oh, my dear, not that solemn expression. Be blithe, be blithe! See the spirit of Christobel here. Christobel, do you believe in Woman's Suffrage?"

Christobel crawled under a table.

"Christobel! At once! Attend to me! Do you believe in Woman's Suffrage?"

The dog, seeing the futility of it, emerged, stood up on his hind feet, waved the front ones in the air and barked vigorously.

"See," exclaimed his mistress, "how the movement has spread."

"How did you happen to be a suffragist, Mrs. Devine?" Deborah asked, feeling she must say something.

"First I started taking cold baths and then I got to sleeping out-of-doors, and after that I just naturally drifted into the other. Come out to lunch, won't you?

"You see," she pattered on, "all these things are the things women are doing now. I want to be modern. This idea of the woman's intellect being equal to the man's appeals to me.

I have gone so far now that I don't grant man —or masculinity—superiority in anything. I feel that my mind is the equal of any one's. Don't you feel that way?"

"Oh, I——!" exclaimed Deborah, with a start. "I have always thought that. I have never believed any one was wiser or more resourceful than I. That is a sin of mine."

"Really! Now I don't go so far as that—at all. When a sturdy, strong-willed person like Mrs. Dobson tells me to do a thing, I just do it. I could never struggle against her."

"Yes," said Deborah, politely. "When I find a man—a person, I mean—who makes me feel like that," she added presently, "I shall have come to an epoch in my life."

At six o'clock the lighted streets were crowded with people. There had been a football game, and victorious students surged along the sidewalks. Saturday night crowds with money in their purses mingled with them. As Mrs. Devine's automobile, with four ardent suffragists—and Deborah—sped along the street,

Deborah steeled her heart. She was not ardent. She was determined. She sat back in the corner of her seat, her hands folded in her lap, and watched with a faint smile the carnival concourse of people. Presently she raised two fingers and touched the velvet rim of her hat.

"What was that for?" asked Mrs. Devine.

"Morituri salutamus," murmured Deborah.

"That's Latin, isn't it?"

"Every word of it. It means 'In God we trust.'"

An iron-jawed woman sitting by her, who was also to make a speech, raised herself from her apathy.

"No need for the gladiatorial spirit," she said, without expression. "Just talk. The one rule to be remembered in a street corner speech is—don't look at any particular individual. Talk to the lamp-post behind the crowd."

Deborah remembered this when they set her down on the sidewalk. Mrs. Devine's scheme

was to have three, or perhaps four meetings, a block apart, all occurring at once. The idea of the whole performance was first of all to attract attention. Mrs. Dobson's strategy was not so much to convince people by the force of the arguments of her speakers, as to advertise the movement, to let the public know there was activity. Therefore she had said to Deborah, "Just talk."

Deborah was left at a street corner—with a supporter bearing an explanatory banner—in the midst of a strenuous jostling crowd. The machine had been standing by the curb for fully five minutes before she alighted, and she had sat calmly in her seat as though she were not at all a part of the thing that was to come. A great phalanx of students, flushed with victory, had paused at the brink of the fountain in the parking, disgorged from its midst two freshmen of their beloved alma mater and driven them, trembling but elated at the distinction accorded them, across the shallow water of the basin. The crowd of citizens gathered about had

laughed indulgently at this sacrifice to the goddess of good fortune. When the freshmen, grown twelve months in importance, had stepped out of the water and the phalanx, thirsting for something bizarre enough to satisfy its jaded appetite, had swept by, but while the crowd still remained, the iron-jawed woman had thrown open the door.

"This is the psychological moment," she said.

Deborah nodded. When the door of the automobile swung shut again, it might have been the iron clang of the gate shutting her in the lion's den. But she had now a Daniel's self-possession. When the machine drove off she did not regret it. The joy of action was upon her. She stood up on her box and cried, with just the ease and egotism the situation needed:

"Look at me!"

And they all looked. She had absolute confidence in the power of her own personality; and in the second of silence that followed those

three words, she caught their attention and held it in the hollow of her hand. Their curiosity was aroused. Their interest in the trim girl standing there—a picturesque, slender goddess, her hands held to her sides, her chin tilted upward—made them wait to hear what she would say. She was keen enough to see then that the starting point of her speech must be the idea that was already in their minds, and when she spoke she spoke of the freshmen who had just been made to walk through the basin of the fountain. Her voice carried across the crowd. She spoke in short sentences. Once she made them laugh. Then she deftly drew a parallel between the students forced to wade in the fountain against their will while the world looked on and approved, and woman wading in the muddy waters of Inferiority. It was a crude metaphor, hastily thrown together, but admirably suited for this open-air gathering, where ideas had to be delivered in bulk.

She felt she was making an impression. Here and there she was conscious of eyes look-

ing intently upon her. Near by, on her left, was some one who seemed to have jostled his way through the crowd, whose eyes she felt did not leave her; but, following the warning of the iron-jawed woman, she looked at no one. Her speech would have been a tremendous success had it not happened that, at the very climax of it, the phalanx of students, roaring like an angry Roman mob, returned and burst, a human battering-ram, through the midst of the crowd. Like Sherman marching to the sea, it divided the audience in twain; and so great was its cry, it was impossible to be heard above it. These youthful enthusiasts, the freedom of the city theirs, all their dynamic enthusiasm let loose, hysterical with excitement, searching only for some excess more absurd and unreal than the last, spread everywhere like an ominous horde of Goths.

Then they saw Deborah on her box.

Theirs not to reason why! Theirs not to weigh the situation delicately, to consider the question of courtesy and sanity and advisability.

Theirs not even to imagine what they might have done in a less hysterical moment.

"To the fountain with the Suffragettes!"

To the lions with the Christians! The Roman mob has tasted blood. Nothing will stop them. The phalanx turns its head. The crowd is thrust apart and down the lane sweeps the mob of avenging spirits, crazy for sacrifice. There is the fountain, and there are Deborah and her standard-bearer. The standard-bearer, pale as a ghost, pulls her sleeve.

"Come away!" she cries.

But Deborah continues to talk over the heads of chaos. No word of hers is audible. She is outwardly calm, but within is a great tumult of excitement. Her mind is working quickly. She scarcely gives a thought to her words. The riot is upon her. For the first time she glances down at the faces before her. A man in her audience has stepped to her side, but she does not need his help.

The onslaught is led by a great flaxen-haired boy, huge in his college sweater, with mischief

in his eyes. As he reaches the pavement before her box, she bursts into a radiant smile, and holds out her hand.

"Who," she cried, "would have thought of seeing you here?"

Certainly not Deborah, who had never seen him at all before. The boy stopped astounded. He could not remember that face, but he was confused and rattled and suddenly ashamed. The color mounted his cheeks. He stood there backing up the crowd behind him, and took her hand.

"We came," he said, sheepishly, not knowing at all what to say, "to congratulate you."

She smiled, and then the crowd, its inertia gone, its interest fading, began to flow in another direction.

"Bravo!" cried the voice of the man who was standing beside her. "Back with your heathen horde, Ethelwolfe. She beat you to it that time."

The boy smiled, with a diverting mixture of

shamefacedness and interest, and was presently lost in the crowd.

Mrs. Devine's automobile rolled up to the curb. The standard-bearer clambered in. Deborah looked curiously at the man who had spoken. It was her young man of the roof!

"Don't go in that machine," he said. "Come with me."

She smiled and shook her head.

"Hurry, please, Miss Carver," said Mrs. Devine, grown suddenly nervous.

A great turning of the crowd swept Deborah away. Mrs. Devine saw the young man seize her and shoulder a way through it. When the girl stood still once more the machine was gone.

CHAPTER VI

"'PON my word," said her young man of the roof, "this is a wild night. One thousand congratulations," he went on, "for your strategy. It was Napoleonic."

She laughed.

"It was necessary," she replied.

He looked for the automobile.

"Gone!" she said.

He smiled.

"Marooned, are you? Let's strike out for the mainland, then. I see a bright light ahead."

They started out along the sidewalk, now less densely crowded.

"I am in a delicate position," he observed. "You refuse to accompany me, and then your friends thrust you defenseless upon me. I am a monstrous ogre carrying you off."

"I could take a street car," she assured him, placidly.

"Always resourceful. So you could. I am

reassured. If I find you dashing off in the middle of a sentence, I shall know that you have taken a street car."

"Where are we going, anyway?" she asked. "Are you taking me home?"

He looked at his watch.

"Seven o'clock," he said. "Who ever heard of going home at seven o'clock!"

"What then?" she asked.

"I must ask you an intimate and highly personal question first," he said.

She looked at him warily.

"Go on," she said, smiling.

"Have you had your dinner?" he asked.

"No."

"If I should propose to you that we stop at this twelve story wayside inn, and call roundly for our suppers, would you inform me that you did not know me well enough, or would you insist on my procuring from the thin air a dull, toothless chaperon?"

"Neither," she replied, with bewildering directness. "I should say 'yes,' quickly."

His face brightened, and presently they entered the inn, ablaze with lights and people.

"As a suffragist and a feminist and all those iniquitous things," she explained, when they were seated at a table and he was glancing at the card with the air of a poet about to compose a sonnet, "I am supposed to take care of myself without the aid of a chaperon. Haven't you heard that woman is the intellectual equal of man?"

"Yes, I knew it had been so decided. Tell me," he added when he had arranged the various formalities that would assure them of their dinner, "how did they get you?"

"Why not?" she asked, amused.

"You are that unusual type of woman who possesses femininity. People would have recognized you for a woman in eighteen forty."

She put her elbows on the table.

"You are delicious," she said. "It isn't only the masculine woman that is backing the equal suffrage movement."

He shook his head doubtfully.

"The whole thing is upside down," he asserted. "Here is a multitude of women—and men—who bring forth the doctrine that woman is indistinguishable from man and possessed of all masculine attributes—and call their propaganda the feminist movement. It is the *non*-feminist movement. They say no such thing as woman exists."

"I feel somehow," she said, pleasantly, "that you do not sympathize with women in their crusade."

"Sympathize with them! My heart goes out to them. I pray for them with tears in my eyes."

She laughed and then grew suddenly serious.

"Why shouldn't women have the ballot?"

He waved his hand.

"It wouldn't be interesting to hear me rehash all that."

"Certainly it would. Take this theorem. If women are intellectually the equals of men, why shouldn't they vote?"

"But, my dear woman, what has intellectuality to do with the ballot? The ballot is a thing of brawn—not brain. It has been passed up, so to speak, by women during the years because it is symbolic of brawling man. It isn't a man's intellect that makes us respect his vote. It's his biceps."

"I don't think I understand."

He gazed at her thoughtfully.

"This is an age," he said, "of substitutes. When I buy a city house for one hundred thousand dollars—this is all pure fable, of course—I don't pay for it in gold florins. I give a check—a check absolutely worthless except for what it represents. Well. In the olden days when there was a ruler to be chosen, each side got together its voters and provided them with spears in place of ballots. Sometimes a wise head would win with a minority by means of strategy—just as at the polls to-day. But in general the majority prevailed, after their opponents had sampled the quality of their spears. In our wise civilization, the piece of paper called

the ballot simply represents a man with a spear —or a Winchester rifle, as the case may be. It does not represent intellect."

She looked at him keenly, but did not reply.

"One thing which most people fail to consider," he went on, "is the fact that had it not been for the efforts and the finer feelings of men, the propaganda of equal suffrage would not even have been possible. Our civilization accords woman a consideration, which the strength God gave her would be powerless to exact. There was no such civilization three or four centuries ago. In those days a man would stretch a lady on the rack with the same carefree spirit with which he now rises to give her his seat on the street car. Those were times of absolute equality of the sexes, when she must expect to be treated just as if she were a man. Imagine her then chaining herself to a seat in Parliament and screaming at the speakers, or conducting a hunger strike. The militant suffragist is a person who seeks to defeat man by virtue of his own consideration for her. She

exists as a result of the civilization he has perfected. She shouts for equality of the sexes; and what she really wants is a little more inequality. She does not go about her crusade frankly. If she would bend her energies to proving that all women, or most women, want the ballot, men—in this country at least—would undoubtedly grant it to her. But I sometimes feel that in her heart she does not find much excitement in having it merely granted. She wants to believe that she forced it."

Her eyes had not left his face. She smiled.

"Is that last an argument," she said, "against equal suffrage?"

He spread out his hands.

"I forgot myself," he replied, with a whimsical smile. "It is useless for a man—a mere man—to argue on the subject of woman's suffrage. It is a woman's fight. Her greatest trouble is to convince, not men, but her fellow women."

"Are you a mere man?" she asked.

"It's all one word," he replied, smiling.

"Man is simply the abbreviation—from your point of view."

While her companion had been talking, he had looked around him, and spoken to several people scattered here and there about the room. She could not help wondering about him. He had the confident bearing of a man who accomplished things. The people who spoke to him did so with a certain amount of deference, and she imagined afterward that they were talking about him. It was a strange thing for her to be dining with him here when she did not even know his name. It added to the excitement of it. When she had tried to fathom him a little more she would ask him about himself and perhaps let him tell her his name. She felt satisfied as to his decency of feeling, which was credentials enough for the present. As to the rest, it lent interest to the situation to have a few things undetermined.

"Tell me something about yourself, won't you?" he asked, as if in evidence that he had been pursuing a counter line of thought.

She laughed.

"In the words of the women who write to the newspapers," she said, "I am a young brunette of an earnest disposition—except that in my case I have lost the bloom of youth."

"Is it possible?" he cried.

She nodded.

"I am twenty-six."

"Ah me!" he sighed. "It is the heyday of youth."

"But," she said, "I have accomplished nothing. I am a prim old maid school-teacher."

"Few of us really accomplish things. Once in a decade some one invents a sewing-machine or a telephone. But that is grand-stand play. If I could go to Heaven with a certificate stating that out of every two opportunities to help the people around me I had accepted one, I would have an even chance with the sewing-machine man and the telephone man."

She looked at him with a warm kindliness in her eyes.

"If you are a school-teacher," he said, "and

every day put one fine idea into a small mind, you have accomplished a wonderful thing. Think of a school-teacher sighing for more worlds to conquer!" he exclaimed. "Why, an old professor of mine, living along now on nothing at all a year, as he always has, I look back upon as the guiding star of my life. He was inspiration and incentive to me. And his reward in life was to realize that every once in a while he succeeded in sending a man out into the world."

She smiled appreciatively.

"And," she asked, with a new-born liking for him, "were you one of them?"

"You must not catch me up so quickly," he replied. "I try very hard to be one of them. But I am thirty-two—which is twice as old as twenty-six—and have accomplished very little of what I had expected to accomplish. So I may not be one of them."

The man put dishes before them, and they were busy for a while with the aroma and the first taste of much-desired food.

"I find myself groping about," he said, at length, "for something to call you. Have you a name?" he asked, laughing.

"Two," she replied.

"What is the proper way to go about knowing them, I wonder?"

"You have adopted it."

She told him then.

"Deborah Carver," he repeated. "I think I like that name."

She bowed to him. A tremendous curiosity tugged at her. She wanted to know his name, yet she scarcely wanted to ask him so quickly on the heels of his own similar question. The mystery of him entertained her.

But presently some men rose and passed their table. One of them, a round jolly man with that air of intimate familiarity with all the crowned heads of Olympus and elsewhere, that characterizes your newspaper correspondent, stopped by their table and addressed her companion with an air of simply wishing to say something friendly.

"When is that bill," he said, "coming out of your committee?"

There was a silence after that gentleman had gone. She looked at him with a renewed interest.

"Are you in Congress?" she asked, quietly.

"For my sins," he said.

"And which one are you?"

"Fifth row, third from the aisle. Name, Lea. John Marshall Lea."

CHAPTER VII

HE looked at her in amusement, quite well aware of what she was thinking.

"I am the ogre," he said, smiling.

She hesitated. She had the unconvinced air of a person into whose mind there is no space to fit an unexpected fact. The fact was unexpected and unbelievable. It was certainly ridiculous for her, an avowed and active suffragist, to dine and converse pleasantly with this strenuous opponent of woman's suffrage.

"Of course it's ridiculous," he asserted, when she said something to that effect presently. "But differences of opinion are very unimportant things. My opinion on this question is part of my profession. Yours is the result of philanthropic impulse. In our moments of relaxation we leave those things behind us. There is nothing incongruous in your dining

with me here to-night, and then throwing a bomb at me on the street in the morning. In fact, it would show that you did the thing on principle and not from personal motives."

"I have no intention of throwing a bomb at you," she said. "The trouble is if I am seen making a suffrage speech in the afternoon, and then trailing around in the most comfortable way in the world with you in the evening, it will cause comment."

"True enough," he cried; "we must hurry to shelter before that newspaper man returns and takes a flash-light picture of us."

They rose from the table.

"I see that the only way for me to enjoy a little of your society," he said, later, as they approached the house where she lived, "is to dash up in a cab, thrust you in it and hustle you off to dinner against your will. Then no one could doubt your sincerity."

"In that case," she said, smiling, "the rules require a hunger and thirst strike."

"You give me no chance."

"Unless," she observed, mischievously, "you change your opinions."

"A bribe!" he exclaimed. "Madam," he went on, thrusting his hand into the breast of his coat, "all congressmen are incorruptible. If you don't believe it, read the 'Congressional Record.'"

She laughed.

"Then good-bye," she said, holding out her hand.

"Good-bye. You know," he added, thoughtfully, "there is a great deal of very fine ozone to be breathed on the housetops nowadays."

She gazed at him understandingly.

"But it is growing too cold," she said, her lips firmly set.

He looked at her keenly, and then taking off his hat, bowed pleasantly, and walked down the street. She did not look after him, but went immediately into the house.

This gentleman was an ideal person to let alone. He possessed almost every characteristic to render him objectionable. He opposed the

crusade to which she had resolutely decided to devote her life ; and she could not run with the hare and hunt with the hounds. Moreover, he was entertaining and companionable and congenial, which barred him entirely from her sight. Those were faults in a man which she—nun that she was !—could not overlook. She had nothing to do now with men that appealed to her and interested her. All that was behind her. She smiled as she glanced at her reflection in the hallway mirror. She was a martyr. Like old Saint Simeon Stylites, she sat forever on the top of a high column and watched the world of men pass by beneath her. They were not for her. There was no love and marriage on the top of the column ; nothing but the storm and sleet of continued spinsterhood. The whole situation was indeed grotesquely improbable.

But she had joined in a serious movement with serious-minded women, and she must carry out her part. As a famous suffrage speaker had said, the beginnings of all great reforms were

ludicrous and excited the ridicule of the world. Mr. Lea himself had told her that she must not view her own ambitions with a sense of humor, for that destroyed the essential element of confidence. She looked at her trim, well-dressed figure in the glass.

"You don't look like a martyr, my dear," she said, "but I think you had best continue to be one."

She stumbled up the dark staircase. The gas lights in the hall above burned like pin points. Miss Howell met her in the third floor hall.

"Deborah," she exclaimed, in an elaborate stage whisper that could be heard all over the house, "Mrs. Dobson has been here nearly an hour waiting for you. She is almost wild. I never saw such a fidgety woman. She paces the room like a lioness."

"Surplus energy," the other commented.

"Where is that girl?" cried a voice suddenly. Mrs. Dobson burst out of their room, and to Deborah's immeasurable astonishment and confusion, kissed her right on the mouth.

"Come in and sit down," she said, when she had recovered.

"I hope I never have to sit down again," the lady ejaculated. "I sat in that chair twelve months waiting for you to-night."

"Sorry I was so late," the girl replied, penitently.

"Never mind. I would have waited two hours more. I made up my mind I was not going to leave this room until I had told you how splendid you were. I heard all about your speech and the way you put the college boys to rout. You have real resourcefulness. I need you. I admire you. I adore you."

Deborah blushed rose-red.

"My dear Mrs. Dobson," she protested.

Mrs. Dobson sat down on the edge of the bed for a moment and then bounced excitedly to her feet again.

"I mean every word of it, and I want you to help us in our hearings before the Congressional Committee. You can help us."

"But," Deborah exclaimed, awed by this new

responsibility, "I should make a very poor witness."

"Why?" shot out the visitor.

"I haven't the poise, the *sang froid*."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Mrs. Dobson. She reached for her umbrella.

"Well," she said, "think it over. I will not rest until I get you. But the hearings are a month off. I simply wanted to let you know to-night that you are a doomed woman."

She started toward the door, and then coming back looked at Deborah searchingly.

"Has anything happened to make you regret that you signed that paper?"

"Why do you ask?" the girl demanded, surprised.

"I have an intuition about things sometimes," she responded. "If you have changed your mind, I can have the pledge you took rescinded."

Astonishment was in Deborah's eyes.

"I am sure I have no such desire," she asserted.

"Good! Then think over what I asked you to do."

She presently departed, a majestic figure. Her skirt rode at an angle with the floor. Wisps of her hair, unrestrained, blew about her uncomfortably, so that you wanted to take affairs in your own hands and put them in place. But in her bright eyes, shining through the gold-bowed spectacles, was the light of determination. And when that foot, clad in its square-toed, common-sense shoe, planted itself firmly, it had the immovable air of a house builded on a rock.

"Of course she's efficient," Deborah exclaimed. "She has one idea, and she drives at that. All her impulses are masculine. Imagine her in a home superintending the dusting and cleaning of woodwork, and the preparation of hash from yesterday's beefsteak. She couldn't exist."

"I think she is a tremendous argument in favor of woman suffrage. Women like that ought to have an interest in public affairs."

"If all women were like that there wouldn't be any need of argument. They would march up to the Capitol and run every one out of it. But they aren't all like that."

"Sometimes I hardly know whether you favor woman's suffrage or not, Deborah."

Deborah laughed softly.

"I am always a woman," she said, enigmatically.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE day two or three weeks later, Deborah walked into the Capitol. It was a very unresidential thing to do. She had not been within those walls for many a day. She had passed by its glorious dome daily, and given but little thought to what happened beneath it, except to note that of late years Congress sat there almost continually. The long session dragged on until it merged into the short session; and in the nine months when there should have been a recess for the welfare of the country, they sat in special session until it was time to convene again.

To-day some impulse led her up the broad steps and into the rotunda. The place was filled with tourists trotting amiably in compact masses after their respective guides. She did not know why she came. She was like the girl in the fairy-story who followed an invisible

thread in her hand, which led her on to unknown places. The thread that led Deborah was invisible and intangible, but it had a tractive power. It led on through that circular storehouse for statues, by the busy telegraph desks, by the doorkeeper at his post, keeping all but the elect from the sacred floor beyond, up marble stairs, paused to allow a diplomatic exchange of conversation with another doorkeeper, and terminated finally in a secluded spot in the corner of the Members' Gallery. No one could have been more surprised in the end than was Deborah herself.

Under that dome is a diverting show. The Speaker pounds the wooden top of his marble desk, until the place resounds like a carpenter shop. Conversation continues. Gentlemen make speeches—some audible, some inaudible. The chosen representatives of a great people lose their tempers and invite each other outside, pugilistic encounters not being furnished on the floor of the House for the entertainment of the galleries. A lull. A man rises, and

before you know it, he has launched into a real speech which ends in a flurry of applause. In the morning the newspapers will repeat it, and perhaps fifty years from now your grandchildren may read a sentence or two of it in their histories.

When Deborah entered the gallery, the floor of the House sounded like the drone of the mob in Julius Cæsar. A gentleman was making a speech in a confidential tone to the official stenographer, who sat in the seat directly in front of him driving his pencil earnestly across his paper. The House buzzed with conversation. But the man on the floor was not talking to them; he was addressing his constituents through the medium of the "Congressional Record." The Speaker listened in a state of coma. Deborah's eyes wandered over the chamber. At length they stopped and fixed themselves on one spot almost with the air of being surprised at what they saw. John Marshall Lea sat at his desk. She watched him impersonally. If any excitement or interest

was aroused in her heart, she showed none of it in her face. By leaning forward she could have seen more of him than just his head. But she did not lean forward.

Presently the man on the floor finished his task and subsided into his seat. The stenographer, thrusting carelessly under his arm the only existing record of the recent winged words, rose, thirsting for more words. The clerk at the desk adjusted his glasses, and with a poise that was absolute, sang a short selection to the House.

The song, which like grand opera in English was more or less indistinguishable, had something to do with the limit of cost of a certain Federal building which the bill in the clerk's hands proposed to raise from such and such a figure to such and such a figure. All this was as unimportant to Deborah as it appeared to be to every one else in the chamber. The place this Federal building was to adorn she had never heard of before. She wondered what was to happen next.

The Speaker seized his gavel and delivered a muscular blow upon the desk.

"The gentleman from Kentucky," he cried. "The House will be in order. Gentlemen will cease conversation."

He glared about the chamber. Bang. Bang. The gavel fell again. The contented murmur died down a trifle.

"The gentleman from Kentucky."

Deborah did not know who the gentleman from Kentucky might be. She glanced at the clock, wondering whether to stay longer.

She made a tentative move, preparatory to rising. And then the sound of a firm, clear voice, a familiar voice, reached her ear. She did not have to look down upon the floor of the House to know that it was John Marshall Lea who had been elected from the State of Kentucky.

But she did look down upon the floor of the House. Her eyes sought the speaker. A tremor of excitement ran through her. He addressed the House of Representatives in the

same even, dispassionate tone that he had used when he had talked to her. A whimsical choosing of his words, a crispness to his sentences, and the carrying power of his voice mowed down the conversation about him. He used no flowers of speech. He was asking for the increase in appropriation carried by the bill that had just been read at the desk. He did not ask for it in the name of the forty-eight stars and the thirteen stripes. He asked for it by virtue of certain statistics which he read and followed by a logical, concise statement. The whole speech took two minutes by the clock over the Speaker's desk. But she noted with a feeling that might almost have been called pride that all about the House the members were listening. However, it availed him little.

After he had finished, a gentleman sitting near the Speaker's desk rose impressively and replied in a colorless speech that referred to a certain goddess by the name of Economy, that

great name to conjure with when all other deities fail. It was plain from his speech that he was saying, though not in so many words, that the House of Representatives was not interested in the needs of the town in Kentucky, that the money might be better used for buildings in Maine or California or whatever state it was the respective members had been chosen from. What is patriotism in one's own state is extravagance in another man's state. The vote was taken and the bill was, with a certain air of nonchalance, voted down. Lea had not touched deep enough. He was thinking, perhaps, at that moment that to put through a bill so special in its appeal, he must hold in his hand a great lever to pry the House out of its lethargy.

He called immediately for a division and delayed the decision long enough to send out for his friends who were in the cloak-rooms. But many were in the committee rooms which were in the House Office Building across the street; and it is a long journey even by the under-

ground passage, so that he could not get his majority. Deborah was as chagrined and cast down as if it had been her own bill that was defeated.

But John Lea was not idle. He left the chamber for a moment and returned presently to his seat. Something in the resolute set of his mouth prompted Deborah to remain. In a short time a score of members who had not been there before entered and took their seats. Lea rose. She wondered. It would have been impossible to get the House of Representatives under ordinary circumstances to reconsider his bill.

"Why does the gentleman rise?" demanded the Speaker.

There was a strange light in the gentleman's eyes.

"Mr. Speaker," he said, gravely and impressively, "I rise to a question of the highest personal privilege."

The House held its breath. This meant excitement.

"This question affects the right of a member to his seat in the House."

The statement was serious and far-reaching. Deborah could see the members leaning forward in their seats. But they all saw the glimmer of humor in his eyes. Lea was calm and self-possessed. He had the situation in his hands.

"The member," he said, amidst an absolute silence, "is myself."

The House burst into a roar of laughter. He had touched beneath their skins.

"If I do not get the appropriation for my custom house," he exclaimed, "under the imperative facts I stated a moment ago, my constituents will not return me to my seat in this House and I shall not deserve to be returned. I ask you now to reconsider and pass my bill."

There was nothing parliamentary in this unique method of attack. In fact it might have been said that it was merely a subtly transparent evasion of parliamentary proce-

dure. But in it was embodied a serene understanding of the natures about him.

The leader of his side of the chamber asked him again as to certain facts he had stated. The Goddess Economy faded into the misty distance. Lea pressed his advantage gently and skilfully. A gentleman rose and made a brief speech full of legislative humor which accentuated the good spirits of the tired members. Lea had put rose glasses upon them. And when the vote was taken again on the bill, it slipped pleasantly through by a comfortable majority.

Deborah looked at him when it was all over —triumph in her heart. He sat at his desk just as he had before. And then he looked up, almost directly at her, as though he felt her presence.

She walked home. Dusk was just beginning to fall. The sky in the west was a deep rose-pink and against it stood the black silhouette of the buildings before her. Lights everywhere were springing into life. The new moon hung

in the sky. The sidewalks bustled with people hurrying home. She turned presently into a quieter street and she heard footsteps resounding behind her.

"Miss Carver," said a voice.

She wheeled about.

"Mr. Lea."

"I hope you will forgive my sleuthing you, but I felt that I must see you."

"I sat in the gallery of your place of business just now," she confessed.

"I know. I saw you there. I have been endeavoring to have a moment's conversation with you for some time. But you are more difficult of access than the President. I promenaded the roof one warm evening a week ago hoping the starlight would tempt you. But I think you were not in your room."

"How did you know that?" she demanded.

"Deep deduction. I saw the shadow of the prim lady who occupies the room adjoining yours falling on the brick wall beside your window. You have said she talks readily. As

she was not talking, I assumed there was no one in the room with her."

She smiled at him.

"Sometimes you are really bright, you know."

He bowed.

"I value your good opinion above fine gold," he asserted.

"I wonder if you do," she said. "I am all curiosity to know what you wanted to see me about."

"Is it true," he asked, "that you are expecting to appear before our committee in behalf of the suffragists?"

"Yes."

He hesitated.

"I hardly know," he went on, "how to ask what I have to ask. I have no right to ask it as a favor, nor can I give a very good and sensible reason for it. I want to ask you not to appear."

"Why?" she asked, evenly.

"Because," he replied, "your friendship,

your personality, mean too much to me to have you appear there. To me you are wonderfully and exquisitely feminine. There are fundamental things in life for you—womanly things, motherly things, things that have been important in the world for thousands of years—which are more valuable and dearer to your heart than the mere matter of voting. Why drag yourself out of yourself for a bauble like that? Your supporters in this movement will say it is old-fashioned for a man to expect a woman to remain a woman; but I do. I would rather you stayed on your mountain height."

"I could not change now," she said, in a low voice, but firmly.

He looked at her keenly.

"You are certain of that?"

"Absolutely."

He sighed.

"Very well," he replied, smiling. "I shall have to forget for the time that you are you."

"I'm very sorry," she returned. "Wouldn't

it be better," she asked, presently, "to simply come over to our side?"

He smiled.

"'Again the Devil taketh Him up into an exceeding high mountain,'" he said.

CHAPTER IX

SOUTHEAST of the Capitol is the low-lying white marble structure that is the office building of the House of Representatives. It and its twin—the Senate Office Building—are the last word in refinement and culture. They are almost supercilious in their propriety, in their studied correctness, flaunting their architectural blue-blood in the face of the sturdy old Capitol as though they would say, "My wehd, old chap, don't throw out your chest so. It's crewd, you know. It isn't done at all, really."

Within are the Turkish baths and the restaurants and offices and committee rooms of those fortunate—or unfortunate, according as you look at it—individuals who have been chosen by the people at home to be statesmen, for which thankless job they receive a little bit of

money, the privilege of using their signature instead of a two-cent stamp, the maledictions of the public press, and railroad fare.

It was toward this white office building of the House that Deborah, her heart beating at more than its usual cadence, her eyes bright with excitement, walked slowly along one sunny day in November. This was the day she was to appear before the committee and make her plea. The leafless trees on the Capitol grounds stood bare and gaunt in the sunshine. The little gray squirrels, foreseeing the approach of winter, scampered over the hard earth searching for food, pausing now and then, alert on their haunches, enjoying the pretense that they were wild in the woods and that these humans who passed were carrying guns for little squirrels instead of peanuts.

At the street corner, a girl who had been waiting for a car ran up to her.

"Why, Deborah Carver," she cried, grasping both her hands.

"Frances."

"Where are you going?" demanded the other.

"I am a spinster lady going to make my testimony before some congressmen on the subject of woman's suffrage."

"Dear, oh, dear! There *is* such a question, isn't there? How do you get time—oh, but you are not married. I am so busy thinking about babies, and babies' foods and babies' baths and those flitting evanescent things called children's shoes, which are here to-day and to-morrow are worn to shreds, that I have no time to think of these advanced ideas."

"The foremost feminists say that's stagnation, Frances, dear."

"But I *like* it. I would go through fire for my children. Before I was married, I used to belong to current events clubs and discuss weighty questions and feel that I was stirring atoms of intellect that might help some day in the uplift of woman. The uplift of woman, indeed! Do you realize, my dear, that there can be nothing more glorious for women than in fol-

lowing out her natural bent and raising fine, strong children for the world. Beside that the mere privilege of casting a ballot twice a year is too insignificant to think about."

"Even," observed Deborah, mildly, "if it helped to pass legislation that was beneficial to the fine, strong children?"

The other hesitated—as if that were a phase of the situation she had not considered.

"The arguments for woman's suffrage," she said, at length, tracing a pattern on the pavement with her umbrella, "presuppose that all laws to be advocated by women will be beneficial laws; that is, that the feminine intellect is on such a high plane that no combination of women will support legislation which it will be necessary for the remainder of us to oppose. Women will all act together as a unit—for the public good."

"Don't you believe that they will?"

"I believe they are human. I believe they will sometimes support good legislation and sometimes bad. I believe that there would

come times when I should have to oppose issues that other women supported. And opposition in politics means endless activity. Simply dropping one intelligent vote in the ballot box helps very little."

"But if many women dropped in the intelligent vote, it would help materially."

"Some women could do more. Unmarried women and married women without children—or who leave the care of their children to nurses—would have an immeasurable advantage over the rest of us. Winning at the polls is a business in which organization and generalship are the essential things. A woman who wishes to be efficient in her home cannot properly give the time to perfecting an organization and laying plans of battle. She has an organization under her own roof that requires her to conserve her resources and is entitled to her first consideration. No one has forced the care of that household upon her. She assumes it willingly—no, in the majority of cases she assumes it with enthusiasm."

Deborah looked at her companion queerly. She remembered that, by the time she was twenty-six, she had thought she would have assumed that responsibility—certainly with enthusiasm.

"But," she exclaimed, "you are in the inferior position of having no voice in your own government. Isn't that a slur on your intellect?"

"No. I feel that the whole thing is merely an amicable division of effort. Woman, by reason of her ability to bear and nurse children, assumes the responsibility of the home; man, by reason of his strength, assumes the responsibility of earning their living and caring for their political welfare. It is just the same as any other division of responsibility. When my husband and I were first married and were too thoroughly poor to afford a maid, he took care of the furnace and I took care of the kitchen range. We made that arrangement because it best suited our respective convenience and strength. But I did not feel that it was a slur

on my intellect or capacity because I was not allowed to care for the furnace too."

"But suppose you felt that he could have done it better with your help?"

Frances laughed.

"It would only have ended in the range going out. Wouldn't I have made a pretty figure, my dear, explaining that I could do my work and half of his as well?"

Deborah smiled.

"I think, Frances, the thing you overlook is the fact that woman's influence will be always a power for good."

"Why should it?" demanded the other quickly. "Are women any more immune from error, or mistakes in judgment, or culpability, than men? Aren't they the same frail humans, possessing the same average of faults and virtues? You are not introducing a new element into politics. You are simply doubling the present one."

Deborah started to reply and then suddenly she was struck with the force of the statement.

"That is a new idea for me," she said, slowly.

Frances brightened.

"Then I shall not count this day lost." She stepped out into the street to board the car that was approaching. "Remember this, Deborah," she said. "God made you a woman, with all a woman's weakness of body. And God made them men. That is the fundamental idea to be borne in mind in this agitation."

Deborah stared after the car as it rumbled away, and then walked thoughtfully on up the steep street toward the white building before her.

The committee room was an ornate room, and not the bare, bald torture chamber she had expected. At one end a closely packed audience sat. They had been standing in line for hours, and hordes of their disappointed sisters were even now crowding the corridor, picking up crumbs of gossip and hoping that something would happen that would let them too into the sacred precinct. At the far end of the room

was a long mahogany table, around which sat ten inquisitors, to use a term that corresponded with the feeling within her. The chairman, drowsily awake, sat at the head of it and directed the proceedings. Mrs. Dobson, her bonnet sitting at the same angle at which she had firmly planted it in her haste immediately after breakfast, her square-toed shoes set resolutely on the rug before her, her mouth in a hard, firm line as if she were a reincarnation of the Sphinx, dominated the scene, dealing out the time allotted her to her various supporters as she saw fit.

Deborah found a seat waiting for her beside Mrs. Dobson. The hearings had already begun. A woman seated at the end of the long table opposite the chairman was making an impassioned appeal, the feathers in her bonnet bobbing emphatically as she spoke. There was enthusiasm and assurance in her voice and in her eyes the inspired light of a prophet. The whole question lay before her like a map. She knew her way around her conception of it

blindfold. There was something inspiring in her sureness and her unmoved conviction that she was in the right.

On the opposite side of the table from Deborah sat John Lea. She gazed at him as he sat there leaning back in his chair, his eyes fixed on the blotter before him. It was evident that nothing that was said escaped him. Occasionally he would look up at the speaker as though something she had said had attracted his attention and once he leaned forward and scratched a few words on his pad.

The next speaker was an aggressive young woman with a tongue like a thin Damascus blade. Her caustic conversation roused the committeemen. They gazed at her with interest and once or twice interrupted her to ask a question, getting in return replies with a sting that left the questioners discomfited. Lea sometimes smiled at her sallies. Once, a humorous gleam in his eyes, he interrupted her himself, with the exaggerated air of a man about to enter a den of lions.

"Could you tell me," he asked, pleasantly, "how many women in the United States favor woman's suffrage?"

"All of them."

"Every one?"

"Except a few old aunts and antis."

"Naturally," he agreed. "And how many women are enrolled in your organization?"

"Two hundred and fifty thousand. But with five thousand Joshua marched round the city of Jericho and the walls fell."

"Joshua knew the combination," he observed, smiling, and let her go on with her argument.

The questions he asked now and then of the women who spoke were direct and for information. He did not attempt to "rattle" them or confuse their testimony. On the contrary, he was considerate and courteous. Deborah found that her sympathy was with him. It was not sympathy with his side of the question, but sympathy with him as a person. How could she help bring confusion upon the man's cause if she looked with favor on him? But Mrs.

Dobson felt no sympathy for him. Every time he spoke her mouth drew tighter, until it seemed that it could stand the strain but a little while longer. Presently she leaned toward Deborah and said :

" We have just time for one more speaker. I want you to take the stand."

Deborah sat up straighter in her chair. A hot fire of excitement burned in her breast. Her mind and heart were back in her own camp. She had visited the enemy's outpost, so to speak, and now she was ready to fight.

The speaker finished—Mrs. Dobson rose.

" In yielding," she said, " the last few minutes of my time to Miss Carver, I wish to say that she typifies the spirit of the women who are fighting for equal suffrage. Young, attractive, with all the charm that could make any woman lovable, she voluntarily gave up her chance of marriage to follow in our cause and help us fight this great fight. Nothing could be more admirable and touching and forceful than that. I yield to Miss Carver."

A storm of applause burst out in the room. Deborah glanced for a fraction of a second at Lea. A flush had mounted his face. Had he known before what Mrs. Dobson had said? The applause continued. She rose and walked to her place at the head of the table. A hush fell upon the room.

She found that she was as cool as if she were in her own school facing her pupils. She noted the reflection of the lights on the polished table. She saw the pattern of the vest on the ample bosom of the gentleman beside her. Realizing the value of the silence, she did not hurry with her beginning, but when she was comfortably seated, allowed them a moment of expectancy, and then, catching them on the crest of the wave, began to talk.

There was no sound in the room but her clear voice. The voice was not strong, but it had a quality that made every word distinctly audible in the far corners of the chamber. She did not attempt to rise to any height of feeling. Her whole idea was to present a connected argu-

ment, which should carry itself along by its own momentum like a proof in geometry. The arguments she used had all been advanced before again and again. She merely selected and arranged and coördinated them. She presented the whole question from its ethical standpoint—the standpoint of the right of the individual woman to the ballot, without respect to expediency. To her mind this was the strongest phase of the question. Discrimination in the suffrage seemed to her unfair. That was the citadel of her belief. And backed by that conviction, she spoke clearly and impressively. She could feel that she was being listened to.

When she had finished, the room burst into a thunder of applause, in which some of the men round the table, notably the gentleman in the flowered vest, joined. She sat still in her chair, gazing mildly at her white-gloved hands, folded before her. The applause died down. There was a tense silence.

It was broken by John Lea.

"Miss Carver," he said, quietly, "your speech

has been heard with more than usual attention, and I feel that I speak for the whole committee when I say we are all indebted to you for your clear explanation of your case. The question of suffrage for women," he went on, "depends wholly on the women. There are twenty-five million adult women in the United States. There are two hundred and fifty thousand women in your association. We will note the testimony of you and your colleagues, Miss Carver, as the expression of the views of one woman in each one hundred."

A murmur broke loose in the room.

Deborah faced Mr. Lea.

"You must remember," she said, "there are thousands of women not enrolled in our association who favor the suffrage."

"Undoubtedly," returned he, quickly. "I simply call attention to the fact that no evidence as to them has been presented to us."

There was no reply to that.

"It is perhaps unnecessary," Lea continued, "as this is merely a hearing, for me to make a

statement. But I feel that it will perhaps facilitate matters during the remainder of the hearings if I do so. I have made the point of the minority who favor woman's suffrage—I believe it is generally acknowledged to be about one woman in ten—because I feel that it is the pivot of the whole matter. Woman's suffrage is a sweepingly revolutionary measure—it is not a thing to be decided offhand, or by virtue of a theory, or from motives of chivalry. Men and women are different in their bodies, in their functions, in their emotions and in their mental processes. It is for this reason that certain duties of the home have devolved upon the woman and certain duties of breadwinning and government have devolved upon men. This division of responsibilities has been in operation for centuries and under it the world has moved forward to a high state of civilization. In other words, it is efficient. That is the point I wish to make."

He paused. Deborah found her eyes fixed upon him.

"We are now asked to give up an efficient system," he went on, "for one that may be efficient, but has not been proven so; a system whose adoption would only be justifiable in event of its being shown that woman has outgrown the present one. It will be necessary to show that they have outgrown it—not that ten per cent. have outgrown it, but that the whole body of them have; that the terms 'masculine' and 'feminine,' which made male suffrage possible, have grown synonymous, that woman, in the average, is no longer willing to sit peacefully beside the man of her choice without her hand too on the throttle. The relation between the majority of men and women is that of man and wife. That is what is intended in the scheme of the universe. The woman's suffrage movement is made possible by unmarried women, who have attacked the world—from necessity—in a man's way, who labor shoulder to shoulder with men, who try to think as men think. They feel that their sex, instead of being a prerogative, is a handi-

cap to them. They wish to establish a condition for all women to suit their own special case. I make no criticism of this, but I say there are other women to be convinced."

Deborah had listened with no thought of aggression in her. Indignation seized her, when he had finished, that she had no reply to his arraignment of her cause. She had still a minute of her time left. But, instead of arguments martialing themselves in her brain, she found herself instead struck on a sudden rock of doubt. Was it true that her duty as a woman required certain things of her merely by virtue of her being a woman and that her cause was not an attack against an artificial system, but against a deep-rooted fundamental thing—against Providence for having created her a woman?

The idea staggered her. She was not ashamed of being a woman. Her sex was precious to her. In her heart burned a stinging flame—of resentment, of half-formed self-accusation fired by the charge in Lea's words

—the charge against them—against her—of masculinity. Until to-day, she had not thought of it in that way. The question had not been complex to her. She had been actuated merely by a desire to have her own opinion officially recognized. She strove to enter no alien field. Far above everything else—more important than any civil regulation —was her pride in her own womanliness.

In the midst of her absorption, she heard the voice of the gentleman, the wearer of the flowered waistcoat, as if he were speaking from the far distance.

"Miss Carver," he said, "it has been stated as an argument that you are so zealous in this cause that you would rather have the right to vote than have a husband. Is that actually true? It would throw an interesting side-light on this question."

There was a hush in the room. Then Deborah felt herself rising to her feet. The tips of her fingers pressed against the polished wood of the table. Her intention had been to

refuse to answer—to say that the question was too personal and had no bearing on the subject. But an irresistible force moved her, put in her a desire to lay her position accurately before them.

"The action you refer to," she found herself saying, in a low voice, but quite distinctly, "was taken because I thought it would help the cause. It represented no personal preference. I am quite certain, on the contrary," she concluded, the blood rushing to her face, "that I should prefer a husband to the vote."

CHAPTER X

AFTER the first dazed silence, the room broke into an uproar. Mrs. Dobson sat as motionless as if one view of the head of Medusa had turned her to stone.

"I told you beforehand," asserted Deborah, reaching for her muff, "that I would have to be honest."

The other bounced to her feet.

"Oh, I don't blame you," she cried. "But that Lea man. He avoids the issue. He poisons the minds of the congressmen by saying we are only a small minority. Does that affect the righteousness of our cause? If *one* woman came here and proved that equal suffrage was *right*, Congress ought to pass a law and make the other women vote whether they wanted to or not. If the ballot is a woman's right, she ought to be *made* to exercise it."

Deborah presently escaped from a crowd of excited women and came out upon the streets, now lighted with their electric lights. She was tremendously agitated. She did not want it to be considered that she was dissatisfied with her sex. She had no fault to find with the way she had been created. She was proud that she was a woman. This new idea that Providence had endowed man with strength for the purpose of administering the belligerent functions of life and woman with gentleness to deal with children and her home, gave her pause. If this were true, was her revolt against the domination of man, or was it against the decree of heaven? If it were true, did not the doctrine of woman's suffrage become a mere dissatisfaction with sex? It was a dissatisfaction with a woman's restrictions, which were all traceable to the mere fact that she was a woman.

For the first time, doubt crossed her mind. And she felt vaguely that the doubt was there because a new element had entered into her being. She tried to prove to herself that her

passing interest in John Lea was an incidental thing, that she thought of him merely with the same friendly lukewarmness she reserved for Jane. She pretended there was no pursuit, that his interest awakened in her no refreshed pride in her good looks and her personal charms. She pretended, in a word, that her satisfaction that she was a woman was not augmented by his presence on the scene; that no primary emotion stirred in her heart, threatening to drive all other considerations from it. But it was only a thin pretense.

As she walked up Pennsylvania Avenue she felt as if she wanted something to take her mind off the subject that she had been thinking about for the past week. She wanted to fill her head up with anything that would adulterate the strong solution of woman's suffrage that clogged the convolutions of her brain. A bright light burned in the building before her—a bright light that marked the open door to a wonderful land of fancy—a place of magic carpets which whirled one in an instant to the far East and the

far West, to the mysteries of the dimmest past, to the still deeper mysteries of the present. When you say this palace of wonder was nothing but a moving-picture show, you have described it exactly. But you have described the greatest gripping force of our modern civilization; the force that has changed the manners and customs of our people, that has furnished them with a non-toxic outlet for their desire to be passively entertained, that has been mildly diverting, that has stirred their fancy, that has sometimes educated them. It is a relaxer, that sweeps a man's own life out of his brain for a while, and returns him again to earth recreated. Deborah felt that it was a somewhat unintellectual thing to turn her mind over to this anæsthetic, but there was a certain luxury about it on that account. She approached the beautiful female in the glass enclosure with a five cent piece in her hand.

Within, to her unaccustomed eyes, it was dark as the pit. There was a brass rail somewhere, and then, in the dimness, an aisle. She

groped her way to a seat close to the rear. On the screen was a square of light where people in the moonlight were doing unintelligible things, which she comprehended no more than a conversation of which she might hear the last few words. But there was a soothing quiet here. The darkness was comforting and restful. The tension to which her body and nerves had been put all day relaxed slowly, with a luxurious sense of passing responsibility. She watched the screen idly. Of course she did not care whether the gentleman in evening clothes kissed the lady in the silk dress. But then she did not object to it. It was pleasant to relax thoroughly, amid silence and darkness, and have even the current of her thoughts directed for her.

It was diverting not to have to take sides—not to feel that she must either sympathize or condemn. Therefore when the gentleman in the evening clothes and his silk lady had presently faded away and gone back again into the archives of the gentleman over her head, she was rather pleased than dismayed to find the

title of the next picture was none other than "Stolen for Wedlock." It tasted of melodrama and of emotions delivered to the consumer as the raw product, but that was perfectly satisfactory to her. In fact she was a little disappointed when it turned out not to be painted in the primary colors that the title suggested. It was, instead, one of those painstaking harkings back to the far past that seem to be carried out nowhere so minutely as before the cinematograph. The story was the story of the Sabine women. Costume and setting and the archæology of the subject were treated with an almost too respectful deference—an almost too apparent striving for metallic accuracy that instead of creating an illusion dispelled it. But the romance of the story was there. That is, indeed an indestructible fabric.

There was of course embroidered into it a special love story. There was the one girl, more beautiful, naturally, than all the rest, who escaped the throng of Roman youths who swept down upon them, and hid in an obscure

spot, where they all passed her by. All save one. And this one was a great muscular fellow, of the proportions of an Achilles, who up to this time had found no wife to suit him He discovered her, hiding, and, deciding that she was satisfactory, carried her off with him, holding her lithe, slender body in his sturdy arms as if she were but a child. She was terror-stricken.

"Do you suppose," exclaimed a damsel behind Deborah, suddenly, "I'd let a man carry me off like that? I'd slap him."

Whereupon the Sabine girl, almost as if stung into action by this comment, struggled valiantly for freedom. But the man simply held her firmly in his arms and gazed at her calmly, until she saw the futility of resistance and lay there quiet and exhausted. Then he carried her off.

The sequel of the story was that she lived with him as his wife. She was forced to. His strength left no alternative. But he was kind to her; and, in the end, she learned to love him for his power and for his domination over

her, as well as for his fine character. After the picture was finished, Deborah sat for a few moments. Then she rose and went out upon the street.

"Most women are like that," she said, "especially I myself. I am a true Sabine."

She sat in her room half an hour later. Miss Howell came bustling in, loaded down with an armful of tiny packages, which gave her the appearance of having bought twenty spools of cotton and had them wrapped separately. These packages she set down absently in various obscure places. Her hat and coat and gloves she took off and threw down with perfect abandon. In the morning she would doubtless wonder why one glove would be discovered inside a pillow-case and the other in the bottom bureau drawer. Like a prestidigitator she talked all the time as if with the purpose of distracting your attention from these little feats of legerdemain.

"Oh," she cried, suddenly, "I forgot all about it. How did your hearing come off?"

"Fine," returned Deborah. "Listen to me, Jane. Were these Sabine women you read about in history real people, or was that a fable?"

"What a question. Why, they were real."

"You don't think it was meant as an allegory?" observed the other, thoughtfully. "You know what I mean, typifying the fact that sooner or later some great, big, strong man is coming along for every woman to carry her off."

"I never heard it spoken of that way. What are you driving at anyway, Deborah?"

"I'm striving to get your opinion," returned Deborah, smiling. "You know I have been thinking a great deal about the sphere of woman lately. And sometimes I come to the conclusion that there is only one sphere for woman—and that's to be contented to be a woman."

"Every one is—isn't she?" Miss Howell was a little bewildered.

Deborah shook her head.

"No. I have it dinned into me that woman

is indistinguishable from man, that she must live like him, and have all his privileges. For this some of them even go so far as to say they will be willing to give up the privileges they now possess as women."

"Now, I had a cousin in Michigan——"

Deborah put an arm around her shoulder.

"Just a moment, Jane, before this biography begins. I have something on my mind."

Jane looked at her full in the eyes.

"Deborah, are you in love?"

"It is impossible for me to be in love. I signed a paper saying I wouldn't."

Jane brightened.

"But suppose this great, strong man you say comes into every woman's life comes into yours. What are you going to do?"

The other stretched out her arms.

"That's it. What was the answer to that old problem of an irresistible force meeting an immovable object?"

She looked amusedly at her companion and going over to the closet began to rummage

"ARE YOU IN LOVE"

amidst a terminal moraine composed of Jane's shoe-trees, bedroom slippers, overshoes, polishing outfit, old letters and a score of things that lady had been hunting for for the past week, in search of a pair of pumps.

"What is it that is on your mind?" demanded Jane.

"Nothing, nothing!" replied Deborah, on her knees in the closet. "But did you ever feel, Jane, as though you were going two ways at once?"

"That's one of the symptoms of intoxication, isn't it?" demanded the other, seriously.

Her companion laughed, and dragged out her shoes.

"Not quite," she said, slipping her feet into the soft leather things. "It's the difference between what your mind wants to do and what the atom inside you wants to do. You can figure a thing out very minutely and thoroughly in your mind and decide on the direction you intend to go, but suddenly you find there is something in your nature that holds

your feet to the ground so you cannot take a step. I have been trying to make myself view the world as if I were a man and I find in the end I am a woman."

"Why, Deborah, are you going to turn anti-suffrage?"

Deborah fumbled absently among the things in her bureau drawer.

"I am going to turn nothing," she said. "I intend to go through to the finish as I started out. If there is something stronger in me that takes my own personal interest out of the cause, that is no reason to back water. The cause is the same and I am in it to stay."

Jane looked at her companion with transparent astuteness.

"Do you regret your celibacy pledge?" she asked.

Deborah laughed and took from the drawer a cascade of lace to put at her throat.

"Why should I?" she asked.

Jane glanced at her watch, and forgot the conversation.

"Mercy!" she exclaimed, "if I am going out to-night, I must hurry to dinner. Where is my pocketbook? I have to pay Mrs. Prouty."

"Right there in the waste paper basket, together with the rest of the things you just threw into it," sighed Deborah.

Jane smiled happily and stewed about with an air of great haste, gathering together all the things she thought she might need, like a man preparing for a dash to the Pole. Finally, the door closed behind her, and she seemed to be gone. But that was a mere figment of the imagination. In a moment there she stood again in the doorway. Perhaps it was her astral self projected there by some miraculous piece of metaphysics. But no.

"I have forgotten my pocketbook after all," she said.

It was the real, flesh and blood Jane!

"Do you know, Deborah," she cried, looking in the purse anxiously, "there ought to be six dollars in here instead of five. I'll tell you why. When I bought my green veil yes-

terday—you know the ones we saw in the window for ninety-eight cents—the girl gave me a five dollar bill, three ones, a fifty cent piece, a quarter, two ten cent pieces, a nickel and two pennies. Then I went into Stein's and gave the man a dollar and one of the fifty cent pieces and the change he gave me ——"

Deborah arose quickly.

"If you start to tell me about *all* the change you were given yesterday, Jane dear, you will never get your dinner."

"But I wanted to explain why I ought to have another dollar," objected the other, worried.

"Go get your dinner," counseled Deborah. "It will all come to you as an inspiration."

Finally she was gone. Deborah sat in her chair by the window. She would go to her dinner later. She did not feel that she could listen to the pompous compliments of the Colonel or the idle chatter of Mr. Derry. She would go down when they had gone. It is true that her coffee would be cold then, as would be

the tiny scraps of vegetables in the dishes ; and perhaps the meat would be entirely gone. But sometimes one has to sacrifice bodily comfort to peace of mind. It occurred to her that what she would really like would be a dinner somewhere where there was a stiff white cloth on the table with the folds straight and sharp as a knife edge, candles on the table, music far enough off not to interfere with the pleasure of eating yet audible enough to give the idea of festivity. Perhaps it would be advisable to have them play Shubert's Serenade. Oysters flavored with Shubert have more the feeling of lyrical cry, more that touch of subtle melancholy which is part of the nature of the animal. Then there would be food brought in under great silver covers, preserving the air of mystery as to its identity—the air of uncertainty that piques the palate. If you allow yourself to reflect that the personage masquerading under the alias of the Duke of Filet Mignon Rudesheimer is no one but plain old Mr. Tenderloin, it spoils the whole setting. All this Deborah reflected would be

much more satisfactory than sitting at Mrs. Prouty's table, where the napkin she had used yesterday at dinner lay at her place clutched in a clothes-pin on which was written her name, where on the wall opposite her was a lithograph of a basket of fruit, wrinkled in its frame as if it had been exposed to the weather or defective plumbing pipes, and where her plate careened like a vessel at sea because her place was just at that subtle point where the tables which formed Mrs. Prouty's festive board joined. Perhaps it would be more enjoyable to-night for her to get her dinner at a little restaurant downtown.

She reached for her book, and putting her feet upon the chair before her, in an unladylike but thoroughly comfortable manner, settled herself to read. The glint of the rising moon fell on the window sill. She read no word in the book, but let it lay comfortably in her lap, a treasure-house to be consulted when the spirit moved her. She gazed out upon the white circle in the sky ; and as she looked she saw the

shadow of her own head cast by the gas light on the brick wall opposite. She smiled wondering if a certain gentleman could have recognized her by that silhouette.

Suddenly she sat rigid, still listening.

Of course it could not be a footstep on the roof crunching the pebbles. It would have been impossible for her to have heard such a thing through the thickness of the roof and height of the attic space. Besides, it was quite immaterial to her if it were the crunching of a footstep. If they were the footsteps of Mr. John Lea, he was beyond her horizon. He represented several things she was sailing with all speed away from. Her duty and self-respect—her manhood, she was about to tell herself—required her to put space between her and this man. He was the gulf stream that carried her out of her course. Farewell, Mr. Lea.

She took up her book. There was a strange tapping at the window where she sat. She listened. The tapping continued. She raised the window and there, hanging by a string,

suspended from heaven, was a white piece of paper rolled into a little cylinder and swinging against the glass.

"Dear Miss Carver," it said, "to-night the moon is full."

CHAPTER XI

TO-NIGHT the moon was full!

She held the paper in her hand. She had never seen his handwriting before, with its small upright characters carefully made, and the whole sentence arranged neatly on the sheet. It was an exciting event. But suppose the moon were full?

She rose and went to the palsied table that served her as a desk. With her pencil in her hand she stood irresolute, and her eye wandered to the tightly-closed trap-door over her bureau. She shook her head and leaning over the table wrote beneath his sentence.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she wrote. "I love to sit in this warm spot and watch it."

She fastened this to the dangling string, whereupon it disappeared immediately. She settled herself again in her chair and propped her feet upon the one before her.

"I shall not take them down," she asserted, "until he has gone from the roof."

She read a page of print—that is, her eyes performed that duty for her. But had there been any great message of truth on that page—as there must be on every page of every really important book, since Mr. H. G. Wells has brought forth the theorem that it is sinful to write a book which amuses people—it was lost upon her; and probably she will never again have a chance to make up that loss. Her mind—whose nimble feet rested on no restraining chair—was on the roof in the moonlight.

A long pause. She heard no sound above as of footsteps retreating. Then again the swinging thing appeared and tapped upon her window pane. She watched it interestedly as it swung there, her hands folded in her lap. After a little while she reached out and took it in her hand.

"Try a coat," said the paper. "Will you come?"

"No," she wrote beneath it and tied it again to the string.

She waited for him to go away. He did not go away. The string descended again.

"Dinner together," it suggested. "I know of a warm place with an artificial moon in the ceiling."

"Thank you, no," she wrote. "I have been brought up to hate artificial moons."

It is impossible to estimate what pangs that reply cost her. Here was her chance to have white table-cloths and Shubert's Serenade with oysters. But her two feet moved not an inch upon the chair before her.

Again the string descended.

"I will wait for you by the street corner," it said. "You may choose your own moon."

She returned it without comment.

His retreating footsteps crunched upon the gravel. He was gone. It rather accentuated the humor of the situation that he should be waiting for her at the street corner. That made it possible for her to exhibit her control by re-

straining her impulses for half an hour longer. It would be too late then to go to dinner. What did that matter? She would do without dinner. She would put temptation behind her.

She kicked off her pumps and unfastened the hooks of her dress, which presently lay in a circle about her feet. It had been many a day since she had been sent to bed without her supper. She thought grimly that it was the best discipline for her.

"If I am dressed for bed," she said, as she hung her clothes in the closet, "I shall certainly meet no man on the street corner to-night."

She thrust her bare feet into slippers and drew on her kimono. She felt safe now.

Mrs. Prouty appears at the door.

"Are you ill, Miss Carver?" she exclaims.

"No."

"You did not come down to your dinner. I am worried about you. You are sure you are not ill?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Though I don't know why you are not ill.

Think of a girl signing a pledge not to get married. I am a plain woman"—this was undoubtedly true, Mrs. Prouty's face not having been designed as a decoration—"but *I* say that a woman's place in life is to marry and have children. All these suffragists, and feminists and old-maidists are not natural. I believe in a woman being advanced in her thoughts, but I say she oughtn't to turn her back on the duties the Lord laid down for her."

"You are not modern enough, Mrs. Prouty. The Lord laid down some duties for some women and other duties for others. I am helping in a great movement for the benefit of all women."

"Don't tell me!" said Mrs. Prouty. "The greatest advantage about the suffrage is the excitement of getting it."

Deborah smiled.

"When my youngest son," went on Mrs. Prouty, "was a boy, he always harped on getting a rocking-horse. Nothing would do but he must have a rocking-horse. It was rocking-

horse, rocking-horse, day and night until he got it. And then he rocked on it a few times and at the end of a week he would have nothing to do with it. That's the way I say the women are going to be with this suffrage question."

Mrs. Prouty at length disappeared, as all Mrs. Proutys will in the course of time. Deborah thought of the man outside. The clock on her bureau said half-past seven. How long would he wait on the street corner? It had been a half hour now since he had left the roof. Surely he would not wait much longer.

Presently one of the other boarders in the house rapped on the door and said some one wanted to speak to her on the telephone. Her heart gave a bound. But he could not be telephoning, for he did not know Mrs. Prouty's name. The telephone was in the dark space at the foot of the stair. She pattered down, her heart full of excitement. But it was not John Lea. Instead it was Bobby Mitchell.

"Listen, Debby," said he, "*what* are you doing?"

There was a caress in every sentence Bobby spoke to a girl. He stroked her with his conversation.

"Principally nothing," responded Deborah, not feeling it advisable to tell him exactly.

"Let's go somewhere."

She laughed.

"I can't," she cried. "I—I haven't had my dinner yet."

This was a good excuse.

"That's me. We'll go together," replied Bobby, promptly.

Deborah gasped.

"Bobby, *one* dinner is enough for you."

"I can get along with it, but two is better for me."

"You're perfectly silly."

"How about that? Is it a go?"

She hesitated.

"I have to eat," she said at length. "Well, all right."

"Bully. I'll be there in thirteen minutes."

Deborah hung up her receiver.

"I *wish* I hadn't done that," she said.

She went up to her room and tore into her clothes. There hung the string dangling beside her window. Why hadn't she gone with *him* when he had asked her? It was her pride. She had been afraid to acknowledge that she was a Sabine. She had been afraid to acknowledge that she had wanted to go with him. That act would not have brought confusion upon the whole suffragist cause. Nor would it have proved what she feared in her heart, that for once she had found a person whose wish she was only too willing to follow.

She turned low her light and stumbled down the dark stairs. It was almost time for Bobby to arrive. She sat on the hall-seat in the dim, religious light.

"I hope he doesn't come," she said.

She went out upon the front steps to look for him. No machine was in sight. The streets to north and south were empty, except —— She stood perfectly rigid on the steps. Beneath the lamp at the street corner, his cane tucked un-

der his arm, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his head bent, paced John Marshall Lea, with true Mohammedan patience, waiting. She stared at him. Her eyes filled. She stood for a moment hesitating—and then ran into the house.

"Mrs. Prouty," she said to that person coming down the stairs, "if Mr. Mitchell comes, tell him—I couldn't wait. I will explain to him later."

She closed the door and ran lightly down the steps. She hurried along the sidewalk to the corner and laying her fingers on the soft woolly fabric of his coat sleeve, said:

"And where shall we go?"

CHAPTER XII

HE turned toward her. An expression of surprised wonder lit up his face. He held out his hand and she felt his slender fingers clasp hers in a firm grip.

"The same moon," he observed, waving his other hand with a smile toward the sky, "that we were speaking of."

She looked up at the circle thoughtfully.

"I thought," she said, "you would have grown tired and be gone by now."

"And peradventure I should," he returned, "in the course of another hour or so."

She glanced at him with an unaccustomed shyness and laughed.

"Your first question to me," he went on, "which I do not as yet seem to have found time to answer, was as to where we should go. Have you any preference?"

"None at all."

A taxicab turned the corner and rolled down the street with an air of uninhabited loneliness. Lea made a sign with his cane and the car stopped at the curb. Deborah stepped in.

"Congress Hall," he said, addressing the driver. "I hope you don't mind," he continued, when he sat beside her, "a hotel away down there on the shores of the Caribbean Sea. They have jolly things to eat."

"I prefer it to be a little secluded. I feel as if I were doing an adventurous thing in appearing coolly in public with you."

"Never mind. I'll wager Molly Pitcher used to meet Lord Cornwallis for a quiet dinner occasionally when no one was looking. All you great women of history have to have your fling."

She smiled.

"You did not tell me," she observed, irrelevantly, "that there was a circle around our moon. It is going to snow."

"Let the blizzard come—now that you are safely here."

"Why did you want to see me?" she asked,

glancing curiously at him out of the corners of her eyes.

"Why, indeed?" he returned. "Isn't a congressman to be allowed sunshine in his life? I had to see you. It was a natural law, like the law of gravitation."

A faint flush came out on her cheeks

"Why was it so imperative—just now?" she murmured.

He looked at her smiling.

"All my life," he said, half to himself, "seems to be just now."

The machine drew up at a porte-cochère.

"The port of entry," he announced, "of the Caribbean Sea."

Within, they sat down at the identical table she had thought about, with folds in the snowy cloth straight and sharp. And when the deferential Ganymede, with his book, bent over Mr. Lea, she was thrilled to hear the exciting mysteries he was directed to write on the sheet.

"I am thoroughly excited," she exclaimed.

"One of the greatest pleasures," he said,

"of being young and twenty-six, is the still-remaining talent you have to give yourself over to high spirits."

"Young and twenty-six," she exclaimed, as though she would call attention to the contrast of the words. But for the first time in a long while she felt the blood in her veins was indeed young.

A clock somewhere was striking eight when the advance guard of their dinner bore down upon them. If it is ill-bred to be hungry, Deborah was in very bad form that night. She confessed to him presently that such a dinner had been the thing she was thinking of when she should have been sitting at Mrs. Prouty's board.

"And when I asked her," he exclaimed, "she cried 'No' as briskly as she could!"

She bent over her plate.

"Don't you know what a woman's 'No' is said to mean?" she murmured, without looking up.

"Until this moment I didn't. But in the fu-

ture I shall remember it. I may need to remember it," he added.

He looked at her steadily. She raised her eyes until they met his.

"But sometimes," she said, smiling sweetly, "it means 'No.'"

"Doubtless—if a fellow could but determine when."

Presently a tall, distinguished gentleman, whose features were strangely familiar to Deborah, perhaps from having seen them reproduced in the papers, rose from a table near them. It was hard to tell in what the distinction of him lay. There was a carelessness about his dress, as though that were one of the smaller things in life he found not quite enough time to care for. The distinction was perhaps in the softness of his eye and the firmness of his mouth. Deborah would have taken him for a great man anywhere.

He glanced about him, and when his eye fell upon her companion, he smiled, with a frank air of pleasure. Deborah's heart beat faster

with a violent pride she could not suppress for the man before her. The distinguished gentleman came to their table, holding out his hand to Lea. When Lea introduced him to her, she found he was indeed the great man she had supposed he was.

"I imagine Mr. Lea is endeavoring to poison your mind against the doctrine of equal suffrage," he said, with a smile that had a frank and boyish sweetness in it.

Her companion answered for her.

"No," he exclaimed, "a long, bitter 'no.'"

"I am of the other persuasion," she said.

"Ah!" returned their visitor, "I sympathize with you. I once said in a speech that women did not need to vote so much as the country needed to have them vote."

"There," cried Deborah, darting her companion a look with an air of triumph she could not help thinking even then was almost conjugal. She did not see the Great Man glance at her keenly, as though he were trying to decide something.

"See, Miss Carver, he's dumb. He has no argument against us. What do you think of it, Lea? Didn't I strike the nail on the head?"

"Not at all," returned Lea, smiling.

The other drew out a chair and sat down.

"You don't agree with me?"

"Your statement is too poetic. It throws a rose-glow over the question, whereas what it really needs is white daylight. The advocates of this cause have something to prove. If they represent it to all women as a duty and a means of obtaining absolute results, they must prove that to them. The test of their case is whether the women themselves support it. Then we can legislate. At present, what data have I as to what the women want when I am asked to vote on an equal suffrage amendment?"

The Great Man smiled. Lea began to laugh.

"There are some things concerning women," he went on, "upon which I think Congress could legislate without such data. They might with propriety pass a law that no woman's gown should have more than twenty-four hooks

and eyes up the back, for most congressmen have to fasten their wives' dresses. All the data in that case is at their finger-tips, so to speak. But not so the suffrage."

"Isn't it the duty of Congress, then, to find out about it?" asked the Great Man.

Lea's eyes brightened.

"I think so. I have prepared a bill I shall one day introduce into Congress which provides that women shall once a year vote upon the question of the suffrage. When a majority favors it, the suffrage is to become a law. If no majority favors it after five votes, the matter will be dropped and the people in the country allowed to rest and recuperate."

Deborah laughed.

"He speaks of the question as if it were the great London plague."

Their visitor rose.

"You and I have to smile, Miss Carver, at the way it has undermined his reason. However, upon all other questions I feel he is a remarkable young man."

He shook hands with them both. Then turning to her with a quizzical smile, he said:

"I am sure I shouldn't worry about what he said on the subject of the twenty-four hooks and eyes. I scarcely think he means it."

He bowed gravely and took his departure.

For some reason Deborah blushed red as the flowers before her.

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN they came out upon the pavement it was snowing. The white flakes swirled along the street. The automobiles, drawn up at the curb, were covered with a thin layer of white. In the angle of the wall chauffeurs stood, their fur collars drawn up about their ears. There was in the air the pleasant silence that comes with falling snow. As she looked up the flakes seemed to come suddenly out of nowhere at all.

"We had best go in," said he, "until I can get a machine."

But she ran quickly down the steps.

"Oh, no," she cried. "I want to walk a little."

Out from beneath the shelter of the marquise, the falling flakes dropped upon her upturned face and her hair. Her twenty-six years became

thirteen at the touch of it. Will the memory of that childish ecstasy that was once wont to appear simultaneously with the first fall of snow ever vanish entirely from us?

The white things began industriously to build a superimposed dome upon Lea's hat. Their shoulders and the fronts of their coats were powdered as if they were some baker's products dusted with sugar. As they walked they kicked little storms of snow before them.

The office building of the House, cold and white, with the still whiter high light of the storm on its balustrades and sills, threw a warm yellow light from its windows on the lacy covering that lay without. The Library of Congress, a-sprinkle with lights behind the network of trees, reared its gilt dome indistinctly through the flurrying snow. The myriad of tree branches gathered snow, evergreens thrust their heads solemnly into white cowls, knowing all the while they were no better than just ordinary trees, the homely copings and posts of the Capitol grounds took on a coat of ermine

and stood transformed like the ugly duckling of old.

The whitened terraces of the Capitol were as deserted as if no man's foot had ever trod there. She stood for a moment looking up at the west front. The snow clung here and there in patches to the gray stonework of the end wing, but found no lodgment on the smoothly-painted surfaces of the old centre portion, which shone very white in the diffused light of the hidden moon. The great dome reared itself to impossible heights through the falling flakes until its white-crested statue lost itself against the sky.

"All this," she said, "was built so you might have a seat in there."

He nodded smiling. She stopped by the broad balustrade and wrote:

John Marshall Lea,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

He laughed good-humoredly.

"The snow," he said, "is more truthful. It is beginning already to erase the statement."

She looked at the balustrade.

"Do you often," she asked, "come out and walk on this?"

"I should be afraid."

"I'm not."

She put her hand on his shoulder and raised herself to the broad, flat surface. He held the hand as he would a child's and walked beside her, captivated by her youth. The spirit of it was contagious. The hand carried a not quite understood emotion down to him, as though that contact had completed a circuit that had long been broken.

She smiled at him. It seemed then as if the rest of the world had purposely left them alone there in this place which hundreds of people crowded daily and which now was left solely to them. The Capitol of the United States was their possession for the moment. To him it seemed, in a fine exhilaration, as if the whole world was theirs. She appeared to feel what was in his mind. She stood still, and leaned over, supporting herself with a hand on his shoulder.

"What were you thinking?" she asked, gently.

He caught the hand—both hands—in his own.

"I am thinking now," he said, laughing, "that I am in possession of you."

"Are you?" she asked.

He looked up eagerly.

"Didn't you say a moment ago that the goddess on the dome was lost in the clouds?" he said. "I think she is here."

She smiled down at him.

"I like your conversation," she cried. "I must come down."

She bore her weight on her arms and dropped lightly to the pavement beside him.

"It isn't necessary," she continued, sweetly, looking calmly at him, her face quite near to him, "to hold my hands now."

"It was not necessity," he returned, calmly, "that was the mother of this invention in the first place."

He placed her hands together before her so

that she had the air of Joan of Arc receiving the blessing of the angel, and reluctantly withdrew his own. There was a moment of silence. She stood there unmoving, as if, as she thought to herself presently, she felt to move would destroy the pleasant memory of his touch. When she found herself thinking that, she moved immediately and destroyed the picture.

"Apropos of nothing," he asked, "why did you make that promise?"

She understood perfectly well the promise he referred to. So she said:

"What promise?"

He smiled.

"Had I made such a promise," he asserted, "it would have driven the thought of all other promises I might ever have made forever from my mind."

"Then I think, man-like, you refer to a certain promise I made relative to my marriage. A mere trifle."

She waved her hand with a perfection of nonchalance, but she did not look at him.

"Look at me," he said.

"It is one of my joys," she returned, bowing with a mocking smile.

"Look at me and say again what you said about the promise," he persisted.

She backed up against the balustrade, with a fascinating air of defending herself. The eyes that met his held nothing but impudence.

"I told you once," she observed at length.

"But—I trust you will pardon me—not the truth."

"Sir!"

He laughed.

"Look at me again. Was it true?"

Her elbows rested gently on the balustrade behind her.

"I will look at you forever," she murmured, not doing so, "but I answer no questions."

"None at all?"

With the toe of her shoe she traced a pattern that went impudently close to him as he stood there.

"Absolutely none," she said, presently, looking up.

"I am sorry," he returned, "for I had a very important one to ask."

She took his cane from him and began more designs in the snow. But she did not answer. She did not look up. The snow fell gently, but she was scarcely aware of it. He gazed at her intently.

"I think you know what it is."

"I know what it is?" she asked, studying intently the head of his cane.

"I wish you would look at me," he said, in a low tone.

She tilted her chin up. All the impudence was suddenly gone. She knew too well what his question would have been. A subtle understanding carried the glorious, vibrating chords of the music in his breast to the very vaults of her soul. The mist in her eyes drove all the impudence from them. The red lips, once smiling, now quivered with tears that seemed to rise in her throat.

He stood awed by the force of the storm within him. And then with no word, no futile human word, to express the great gift of Heaven that abode within him, solemn and glorious and wonderful, he closed his arms, like protecting things, about her.

The wind blew the snow across the silent terraces of the Capitol. The noisy, lighted city, lying spread out there at the foot of the hill, made no sound behind the muffling blanket of falling snowflakes. All was quiet. Two living people inhabited the world.

CHAPTER XIV

SHE broke from his embrace like some startled animal and ran excitedly along the terrace toward the steps that led down to the street. Her only idea, quickly formed, was to escape him. She put her wet glove to her face and brushed away impatiently the moisture from her eyes. She ran not from the man behind her but from what was in his heart. But from what was in her own heart she could not escape.

He followed—but leisurely, knowing with his unerring perception what force had broken loose within her. But she ran on, hoping to escape, carrying, as she was, all the trouble with her. Down the long, slippery steps she ran, scarcely touching the iron rail with her hand. Two steps on the landing and down the next flight. At the bottom the world seemed to slip

from under her and she found herself suddenly sitting in the snow—her foot, with electric currents running through it, bent under her.

Walking with much less than her speed behind her, he saw her fall and fear gave wings to his feet. He stood by her side.

"Don't touch me," she cried. "Don't touch me," and burst into tears.

"You're hurt," he said, gently.

"I'm not," she exclaimed, staggering to her feet.

She wavered pathetically and would have fallen had he not caught her. She held to him.

"Just when I want to be miles from you and the sound of your voice," she cried, bitterly, "here I am, a foolish cripple."

He tore off his coat and spread it on the steps.

"Sit on that," he said, with a roughness that gave her confidence. She sat upon it.

He bent over her and touched her ankle tentatively.

"Hurt?" he said.

"No."

"There?"

"No."

"There?"

She winced.

"Yes."

He found his handkerchief and bound it tightly about the place.

"First aid to the injured. Can't make it any worse," he said.

He stood up and gave the situation thought. For a moment she felt the luxurious joy of leaving herself and the conduct of the affair entirely to him. Then her indignation at her helplessness caught up to her and she sat with compressed lips, which he attributed to the pain in her foot. He frowned.

"Must get you away from here," he ruminated, aloud. "Cabs, taxicabs, street cars don't run up these steps, though."

Chagrin, anger at herself, mortification, and a still unquenched tiny fountain of joy that bubbled into the midst of the sombreness within

her, left her silent—sitting there on his coat, rebelling at the submission of her attitude.

"I must carry you," he said, desperately.

She did not reply.

"Please stand up."

She made no move.

"You can't sit here forever," he cried, "like the choragic monument of Lysicrates."

Unexpectedly, she laughed. Then grasping the rail beside her, she stood up.

"Your coat. Put it on. You're cold."

"I'm not. I'm hot with embarrassment."

She laughed again—a clear, silvery, suddenly happy laugh.

"At what?"

"At having to carry a lady who doesn't want me to."

She put her arm gently on his shoulder.

"I do," she whispered.

The touch of him froze her to ice. He carried a limp, heavy burden toward the street. Her lips, so close to his face that he could feel her warm breath, said no word. He set her

down presently on the coping by the gateway; and, putting two fingers to his lips, whistled into the night.

They waited with the tense air of castaways, hoping for a passing ship. Again and again he whistled to the world beyond the falling snow. They were cold now and wet.

"If a man comes by," he said, "I'll send him to telephone."

And then out of the storm, like a full-rigged barkentine coming through a fog, came an ancient but honorable night-liner. It was not much of a cab and it was much less of a horse, but it moved—it felt the breath of life, as it were. Even they, captious critics that they were, could see that it moved; and, being dirigible as well, it was as a gift from heaven.

He carried her across the sidewalk and put her comfortably on the cushions of the musty cabriolet. The door slammed, the driver shook renewed vigor into his steed and they all rumbled into motion.

She sat silent in her corner, disgusted with

herself, hating him, fascinated with him, wondering at the kaleidoscope of emotions that ran through her breast, alternating from cold to fever, siding with him, siding against him, despising herself, encouraging herself, wondering that she should be so happy. The pain in her ankle was but a small part of the ills that disturbed her—so small a part that she was scarcely aware of it.

The lights without moved by, shining on the snow-covered windows. They rode in silence, she with her foot propped up on the opposite seat and her hands clasped tightly in her lap, he with folded arms and clouded brow. Presently without moving, without looking at her, he said:

"I respect your promise. I do not ask you to break it—mere trifle though it is."

She wondered what she could say to him. Her only refuge was in silence. He waited a moment.

"I am in a strange position," he continued, presently. "I want you with all my soul, but I

want you, many times more, to keep your pledge, because that is like all the things in you I love."

Tears stung her eyes. But indignation at them overpowered every other emotion in her.

"You need have no fears," she said, shortly, "concerning my ability to keep my promise."

"I have none at all—that you will dishonor your ideals," he exclaimed, "but—at the same time——"

He stopped. She looked at him wonderingly. He met her eyes.

"I shall fight till I get you," he said.

She turned her gaze again out through the snow-obscured panes.

"You will waste your efforts," she observed, coldly. "I could not break my promise under any circumstances. It would be published all over the country. And one Benedict Arnold would do more harm than a thousand supporters could repair. I would rather die than do it."

He disregarded the frigidity in her tone.

"I understand," he said. "I ask no favors. But I find that when I need a thing very badly a lever is put into my hands. I shall come and *take* you—as if you were a Sabine—a mere Sabine."

CHAPTER XV

THE whole story of how and where Deborah sprained her ankle, who the man was that brought her home, how he—whoever he was—discovered her, whether she had ever seen him before or would know him again if she saw him and a thousand other tantalizing details that the unenlightened members of Mrs. Prouty's boarding-house thirsted to know—was never given out to the public. The only information that the curious obtained was Mrs. Prouty's statement—a quite insufficient thing. All Mrs. Prouty could say was that on that night about half-past ten—or maybe it *was* eleven—there came a ring at the door and a very distinguished gentleman—very distinguished—explained that he had found Miss Carver with a sprained ankle and had brought her home. Mrs. Prouty was *that* excited she

had run out in the snow in her second-best dress that spotted if you looked at it. And in front of her very eyes didn't the gentleman lift Miss Carver from the carriage and carry her up the steps into the house and then right on up to her room, the flustered landlady following after. The gentleman was very polite—quite the gentleman all the time. He put Miss Carver, wet shoes and all, down on the bed on the coverlet, and then, asking her who her physician was, stepped to the telephone and told him to come—leaving a five-cent piece on the table to pay for the call. Then he said good-night with all the dignity of a United States Senator. And the next day a huge box of roses came, and the only thing that was on the card was, "From an admirer." After that every time any one at Mrs. Prouty's table discovered a picture of a senator or a cabinet officer or a foreign ambassador, he showed it to Mrs. Prouty and asked her if it looked like the man.

But as time passed and no one was ever

identified and Miss Carver's recovery and consequent reappearance at the table prevented discussion on the subject, interest began to turn to other things. Jane Howell was greatly distressed that Deborah had not confided in her, but as she felt that it would be useless to try to pry the secret from her, she did not attempt to do so.

One evening in the early weeks of December, Jane burst into the room. Deborah, whose instructions were to be careful of her ankle, had been staying in all the afternoon.

"Deborah," cried Jane, "the bill for the Equal Suffrage amendment was reported to the House this afternoon without recommendation. Every one hoped that the committee would report it favorably."

"Without recommendation, you say?" demanded Deborah.

"Yes. Now, don't you think that was strange?" cried Jane, earnestly. She provided in her mind for Congress and governors and presidents and cabinet officers a sort of super-

etherial code of conduct, based upon the convictions that grew in her brain ; and when any one of these powers, for some complex reason of expediency, failed to coincide with the course she laid down for him, she knew that it was due to a wilful and culpable perversity. In this case she felt that the congressional committee could very easily have reported favorably upon the bill, but they just happened not to be in the humor.

"You know, I don't see how they have the face to do such a thing," she went on. "Here are all these women throughout the country waiting—and praying, some of them—I actually heard of a case in Ohio of a woman who took her husband out on the back lawn and prayed with him all night long for woman's suffrage ; and they both caught cold—I should think they would, wouldn't you, just in their night-clothes —and nearly died. I should think when Congress knows people want the vote as much as that, they would be ashamed not to endorse the bill with all their body and soul. I should

think they would praise the Lord for the opportunity."

"Perhaps they conscientiously feel ——"

"But you know this isn't conscience. They just don't want to bother with it. I think they don't like to pass bills in Congress unless they happen to think of them of their own accord. They're jealous. They're just afraid that somebody else will get the credit of inventing the bill—so they don't pass it at all. I know this because the bookkeeper at our office, who has made a great study of politics—he knows all the congressmen and the states they come from and their first names—told me about it in confidence."

"Did your source of information state, Jane," asked her companion, "when the bill was to be voted on?"

"My source of information was the evening paper—I heard the boys calling, 'All about the Suffrage bill,' so I just had to buy a paper, although usually when they say *all* about anything there is only a word or two about it.

But it really did have a long account of the thing to-night—I meant to bring the paper home with me, but I happened to leave it at the milliner's when I went in to buy a paper of pins. I left the paper of pins at the post-office while I was writing to Aunt Caroline—I knew I simply must write to her on her seventy-third birthday—she has been so good to me, sent me that lovely pair of gilt shoe-trees last Christmas. But I don't care. I didn't need the pins anyway—I just thought they would be nice to have."

"Did the paper say anything about when the vote would be taken?"

"Oh, yes, that was what I started to tell you. Why, yes, the paper said that an agreement had been reached whereby the bill was to come up for final reading and vote a week from to-day. They just had to do it, you know. Pressure has been brought upon them from all over the country. They couldn't afford to delay; public opinion is aroused."

"Did your bookkeeper say that?"

"Yes. He said the congressmen were in a delicate position; they didn't want to vote for the suffrage; it was inadvisable to vote against it, unless they justified their position; and they did not dare delay."

Mrs. Prouty knocked on the door.

"Some one to see you," she announced, and ushered in Mrs. Dobson without further formality, in the same way she would have handed in a package of laundry. Deborah greeted her visitor with enthusiasm.

"Mercy me," cried Jane. "I had a dinner engagement at six, and it is now a quarter past."

She rushed to the bed, gathered up her coat, Deborah's umbrella, one glove and her pocketbook and dashed from the room.

"Goodness," cried Mrs. Dobson, who had been fidgeting about standing on one foot, "I am glad I have more repose of manner than that."

"What do you think," asked Deborah, "about the action of the committee?"

Mrs. Dobson sputtered.

"It's infamous—downright infamous and dishonorable—that's what I think. I have given out interviews to the papers to-day saying that's what I think. The congressmen will not enjoy the interviews either. In addition to that I have sent out circular letters to every Equal Suffrage organization in the United States urging them to pass resolutions censuring the committee for their action. The plain duty of that committee was to report the bill favorably."

"That won't put Congress in a very pleasant frame of mind, will it?"

"We are not trying to. We are not asking favors. We are demanding our rights. The only diplomacy we propose to use is a great big club."

"I don't understand the policy of antagonizing them all just now. If it is coming to a vote in a week, I should think you would want to rub them the right way."

Mrs. Dobson rose from her chair and stood up before the fireplace.

"The whole thing," she said, "is all fixed. We have found out all about it."

"They are going to amend it to death?"

"No, not that. They have decided that would not be advisable. The bill is coming up for the vote just as it stands. But, as I say, it is all fixed. The members will want something to hide behind when they vote against the bill —some very impressive, spectacular justification for their action. They wish to keep under cover until the last minute, run out and vote, and then point righteously to a string of balderdash and say, 'There is my justification.' The balderdash is to be furnished in the shape of a fireworks oration on the floor of the House—and the orator is to be John Marshall Lea."

Deborah looked fixedly at a spot on the rug and said nothing. Mrs. Dobson thrust her glasses up into the region of her hair.

"This rascal Lea," she continued, "knows just how to frame such a speech. I can hear him now calling the attention of the House to the blessed and divine function of woman, the

sanctity of her presence, the glory of her motherhood, the inscrutable wonder of the plan God in His heaven has laid down for her. And he will caution this distinguished assembly that the hem of her robe must not be dragged in the mire of politics as the result of the action of the House of Representatives. I can first see him. He is a finished orator. There will not be a dry eye in the House. The very ink-wells will weep. The press gallery will be a cohort of frenzied gloom. The linotype machines of their papers back home will shake with sobs. And the evening extras with two-inch high headlines will bring tears to every fireside in the country. In the wake of that the members can point without nervousness to the fact that they killed the bill."

Deborah looked helplessly at her companion. She should have risen to the same heights of indignation where dwelt Mrs. Dobson. But no irresistible force carried her there. Instead, the thought of this compelling speech aroused in her a thrill of enthusiasm. It was the same

thrill, she told herself, that she used to feel when she read of the great orations of the old statesmen.

Mrs. Dobson paced the floor.

"Something must be done," she said, soliloquizing. "We must win. We must spring a surprise. We must beat them."

"But how?"

"There is only one way. I have tried to think of another. But there is no other."

Deborah looked at her keenly.

"What is the way?" she demanded, faintly.

Mrs. Dobson sank on the bed.

"We must get rid of Mr. Lea." Her eyes bored into Deborah. "On that day we must kidnap him."

There was a silence in the room. An unexpected wave of hostility against Mrs. Dobson swept over the girl. She felt an impulse to exclaim indignantly against the other's scheme. But she held herself in hand.

"But," she said, for the sake of saying something, "they would only postpone the vote."

"They can't. They have agreed to vote a week from to-day. They have promised the country. They will have to do it. Without John Marshall Lea there will be no speech. The wavering members will have nothing to hide behind. Driven out in the open they will vote with us."

Deborah sought for a reply but found none.

"Well," cried her companion, "what do you think of it?"

"Isn't kidnapping a man difficult?"

"Nothing is difficult. Nothing is impossible. Nothing is even improbable in a good cause."

"But," cried Deborah, incredulously, "will you simply hit him on the head with a sandbag and drag him off?"

Mrs. Dobson laughed comfortably.

"Oh, no. Finesse, my dear. There are a thousand ways. This is one. Listen. On the night before the vote, it happens that Mrs. Thingumbob—I never can remember these social women's names—is giving a reception at her country home. Mr. Lea is going—in a

taxicab. You see what a system I have. I know everything. What is to hinder us, under cover of night on a country road, from whisking him off to a quiet place of retirement?"

"Where, for instance?" asked Deborah, dully.

"Don't ask me details, child. I don't know. Yes, I do too," she contradicted, suddenly. "Mrs. Devine has a country house somewhere there in Maryland. It is unoccupied. It would make an ideal place for the incarceration of this rascal."

She rose and paced the floor. Presently she paused and stared fixedly at Deborah. The color rushed to the girl's face. Why was Mrs. Dobson telling her of these plans? That lady did not usually take others into her confidence to no purpose.

"What we need," said the older lady, firmly, "is some one to carry this scheme through—some young person whose wits work quickly."

Deborah was hot all over. She could feel the flush of a miserable embarrassment sting-

ing her face. She wondered what Mrs. Dobson was thinking.

"Yes," she said, meeting the other's eyes with an effort.

"This," said Mrs. Dobson, "is the most important single act in the history of our whole movement. It is the chance of a lifetime for some one to make history—to write her name down as the one who—almost single-handed—made woman's suffrage possible."

Deborah felt the keen eyes upon her.

"I suppose, Mrs. Dobson," she said, presently, "you mean me?"

"Yes, I do."

The girl gazed at her folded hands in her lap.

"What do you wish me to do?"

"I want you to work out a plan of kidnapping him—and then do it. You can have all the assistance and money and everything else you need."

Deborah's handkerchief was rolled up in a tight ball in her hands. The palms of those hands were moist and nervously clenched. She

would have liked to flee from the room and leave Mrs. Dobson and her schemes. She would have liked to run away from the thing inside her, all aflame, that she knew was conscience. It was this conscience that assured her of her own iniquity. Her wrong-doing loomed up mountain high before her. Was she sliding backward, was she failing to keep faith, in her heart, with Mrs. Dobson and all her inspired crusade?

Perhaps she felt that before her lay the old, old, irresistible pathway of every woman, the way that God had laid out for her, the way that led to a man that she loved. Perhaps for a moment that mirage eclipsed everything, made the crusade for suffrage seem like something afar off. But it was only for a moment.

She would not backslide. There was no real earnest fibre in her that urged that. What if she did proceed against a man whose memory was a rosy picture, and whose companionship was pleasant—nay, exciting—to her? What if she did attempt to thwart him? They were on

equal terms. If he must do his duty, she must also do hers. It seemed like a Spartan remedy, but ——

She arose and threw her crumpled handkerchief on the bed.

"Very well, Mrs. Dobson," she said. "I will help."

CHAPTER XVI

SIX days later. It was seven o'clock in the evening. To-morrow was the date of the vote upon the Equal Suffrage amendment. The papers had worked the people up to a state of expectation and excitement over the question. It was being discussed on the street corners, in the shops, everywhere. Even the sudden death of old Senator Hemmingway, one of the foremost figures in public life for many years, failed to furnish a change of topic.

Deborah was more than excited. She could scarcely wait for the hours to go by. If the thing were only done and over with! She knew she feared that at the crucial moment, if it required quick thought and quick action, her sympathies would be on the wrong side; and if the plans miscarried, she would always blame herself for it. She went into the telephone booth at the drug store. Her nerves by this

time were on edge, so that the slamming of the door startled her.

"Mrs. Dobson," she said, presently, when she got that lady on the telephone, "are you sure about this man?"

She could feel the very tension in her voice.

"Just as sure as I am of the existence of the moon."

"He knows the proper place?"

"Knows it backward, sidewise and frontward. Don't worry about him. He will carry it off."

"What does he look like?"

"Red-headed Irishman."

"Has he his badge?"

"Yes, he has it. Good luck to you. Don't lose your nerve."

Deborah laughed nervously. She called up Mrs. Devine and asked her an all-important question.

"Robert will be there at eight o'clock, my dear," Mrs. Devine assured her, "without fail."

Deborah answered vaguely, and hung up the

receiver. She sat irresolute before the instrument, hesitating like one about to plunge into cold water. Then with a feverish haste she took off the receiver and gave a number.

"Taxicab company?" she asked, in a moment. She could hear her heart beating.

"Yes."

She caught her breath.

"Representative Lea," she began, "has ordered a taxi for to-night and ——"

"Just a moment." There was a pause. "Yes, to-night at eight."

"Owing to a change in plans," Deborah went on, with cool deliberation, "we wish that countermanded. Will that be satisfactory?"

"Perfectly," returned the voice, sweetly. "We are always willing to make a change if the service is not needed."

"Then you will cancel it?"

"Certainly. Very glad to do so, Mrs. Lea."

Deborah drew a long breath.

"Thank you," she said, not referring to the title by which she had been addressed.

She went back to her room and, with the feeling of a man about to be executed, laid out her only evening gown upon the bed. With it she put her best underclothing and a pair of silk stockings. When Jane bustled into the room fifteen minutes later, she found her roommate, rosy from a lukewarm bath of the usual Prouty temperature, clad in the silk stockings and pumps and a bewildering blaze of lace and ribbons, just preparing to dive through the skirt of her gown.

"Mercy, Deborah, where are you going?"

Deborah smiled with inscrutable mystery.

"Sporting," she said.

"With a man?"

"What a question! I am a professional old maid."

"You didn't tell me you were going out."

"Didn't I?"

"Are you going on the street cars?"

"No."

"Where are you going?"

"I wish I knew."

"Deborah, you've gone crazy."

"That," said Deborah, "is certainly true. Please hook me up in the back."

She was finally dressed. She threw a cloak over her shoulders and running across to the drug store once more, again imprisoned herself in the telephone booth. This time there was no jauntiness at all in her manner. Her heart beat with sickening intensity. She could feel the red-hot flush that flooded her from her face down to her very toes. She threw off her cloak, and hunted, with fingers that trembled, for the number in the book. She hurried, yet she was in no haste. There was the number. She gazed at it blankly. She drove herself to lift the receiver from its hook. She gave the number in a strange voice that did not seem her own. A long pause, during which the moan of furies sang on the wire. Presently a voice—a clear, sympathetic voice—answered her. She wanted to hang up the receiver and fly from that place. But she caught the telephone instrument in a grip of steel.

"Representative Lea?" she asked, with a sharpness that surprised her.

"Yes." The voice was brisk, but pleasantly deep.

She set her teeth.

"Taxicab company," she said. "We promised you a cab to-night."

"Yes. What's the matter?"

He could not have recognized her. Nervousness and excitement had made her inflections cold as steel.

"We are short of machines," she replied. "A lady is very anxious to go to Mrs. Meddows' to-night—it is almost imperative. Would you mind her going in your machine? We are sending a touring car—she could sit with the chauffeur."

"Not at all," returned the voice on the wire. "That is perfectly satisfactory. Of course she must not sit with the chauffeur. I will do that."

Her hand against her face was icy cold.

"Thank you, Mr. Lea. We are deeply in-

debted to you. Our machine will stop for the lady first."

She hung up the receiver and covered her face with her hands.

"I am no conspirator," she said. "I feel as though I had been stretched on the rack for days."

Twenty minutes later, Mrs. Devine's machine, driven by Robert, her chauffeur, drew up at Mrs. Prouty's door.

"You understand everything," said Deborah to him. "Mrs. Devine has explained it."

The man nodded.

"Yes, Miss Carver. I understand."

The whole thing seemed ridiculously melodramatic and improbable. She took her seat in the corner of the tonneau, feeling as if she ought to have a black mask and a revolver. Robert drove around the square and drew up presently before the house in which John Lea lived. He stepped down and rang the bell. The engine purred softly. A person answered the bell, and promised to inform Mr. Lea. Presently Mr. Lea

appeared. Deborah would have given a thousand dollars for the privilege of hiding then under the seat.

She kept her nerve. She was not one to turn back, once her hand was on the plough. He came to the edge of the pavement. She broke into a merry laugh.

Lea looked at her.

"By the heavens!" he cried. "You!"

She held out her hand.

"I never knew anything so ridiculous. I simply had to go—and we made this arrangement"—she burst into a laugh—"I never knew anything so embarrassing."

"Bless your dear heart," he cried, "I'm glad."

"What can you think of me?"

"You know very well," he said, gravely, "what I think of you."

The blood raced in her veins, but she did not dare to let her mind rest on him. From now on he was simply her legitimate quarry. He, being an exalted thing called man, could take

care of himself. Let him. He knew which side she was on. She would play the game.

The car started. She leaned back against the cushions. He gazed at her intently, noting the fine flush of excitement on her cheek, but not guessing its cause. She turned her face full upon him and smiled with easy impudence. The car hurried on, weaving a tortuous course through the city, passing out of the busier whirl of down-town to the quiet of the residential district, and then to the dim and silent fringe of the city.

"There is about three hours difference in time between here and down-town," said Lea, thoughtfully. "There the evening was just beginning. Here the good folk are ready for bed."

"Their day's work is over. Ours is starting."

He laughed.

"What is the matter?" he said. "Not in a very festive humor to-night, are you?"

"Of course I am."

"Why didn't you tell me you were coming,

instead of trying to make it all alone—like a society reporter?"

She smiled.

"Sh-h-h," she said.

"You're not really doing—that kind of work?" he demanded, quickly.

"Why else should I have come to a party alone?"

"I'm sure I don't know." He ruminated a moment. "Some day you won't have to do that sort of thing."

"What makes you think I shan't?"

He looked at her calmly.

"I'm not going to let you," he said, firmly.

A bantering reply came to her lips, but she found she did not want to utter it.

They stopped presently to put up the top, for the wind had begun to blow and there were flakes of snow in the air.

"When I am with you," he said, "it usually snows."

"I hope," she said, idly, "it brings us good luck."

"As it did before."

She made no reply. They were out on macadam roads now, flying along in the dark. Their search-light cast a long white finger ahead of them. At a fork in the road the chauffeur turned to the left.

"You should have kept right on," said Lea.

"Fixing the road down there, sir," replied Robert, briskly. "We have to make this detour."

"The road isn't very good."

"Won't last long, sir."

It was a dark, narrow road lined with trees. They went on and on. After some fifteen minutes of rough riding they came out again on macadam.

"This doesn't look right to me," observed Lea.

Robert touched his hat.

"It's a very long way 'round, sir."

"You had better put on all the speed you have then. We are a little late now."

In response, the machine shot forward. It

seemed as though they were gliding through the darkness without touching the ground. Nothing was visible save the white glare of the search-light. By shutting her eyes, Deborah could imagine they were in an aeroplane shooting speedily through space. It seemed once that they passed a man on a bicycle, but he slipped by so quickly it was impossible to tell. Presently they began to slow down.

"Don't stop!" cried Lea. "It's nine o'clock now."

Robert made no reply. Just then they heard, indeed, the chug of the motorcycle they had passed. The chauffeur threw off his power and presently the man drew up beside them.

"Stop the car," he called, briskly.

The light fell on the man. He had red hair and spoke with a slight brogue. He threw open his coat and showed his shining badge.

"You were exceeding the speed limit," said he; "drive down the road. There is a justice of the peace here."

"We can't stop now," exclaimed Lea. "Give

them your name, chauffeur, and appear in the morning."

"Against the rules of the county. And you are responsible, sir."

"But this is a hired car."

"Did you give instructions to go faster?"

"I did. Yes."

"You are responsible then. We will keep you no longer than is necessary for our purpose."

Deborah thought those words were aptly chosen. She lay back in the corner, not moving a muscle. She watched the tight lips of John Lea. His eyes shot lightning, but he controlled himself splendidly.

"All right. Go ahead," he said, shortly.

The man rode on. Robert followed with the car. They drove half a mile and turned in at the gateway of a dark, uncertain place. The drive on which they ran led up to a dark house. The search-light reflected on the windows. Under the porte-cochère the machine stopped. A maid opened the door at the red-haired

man's ring. The maid was Mrs. Devine's maid. Within, the hall was lighted and the maid switched on lights on the porch.

"Is the squire in?"

The woman did not move a muscle.

"He is in the house yonder. I'll telephone for him."

"Very good." The red-headed man turned to Lea. "Will you and the lady step into the squire's study for a moment?"

Lea looked at the man intently.

"Now, don't fuss," said Deborah.

He turned his back on the man and strode up the steps. At the end of the hall was an open door.

"This way," said the maid, leading them toward it.

Lea walked past her. In that moment the maid just ahead of Deborah held up a card behind her back. Deborah read on it this sentence:

"Rescue party will be here soon."

She smiled contentedly.

She and Lea entered the room. The door closed behind them. There was conversation in the hall, under cloak of which Deborah heard them turn the key of the door.

John Marshall Lea was her prisoner.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN the key had turned with a barely distinguishable click and the noise of conversation in the hall had ceased and at length the muffled thud of the front door told of the supposed departure of one or more of them for the promised justice of the peace, Lea, assuming a sudden air of calmness, gazed about him with a spark of interest in his surroundings. It was a low-ceilinged, beamed room with a fireplace at one end. Along the walls of the main part of the room were shelves of books.

Pulling aside the heavy drapery at the windows, he looked out through sturdily wrought iron grilles into the snow of the night. The clouded-over moon cast a faint glow of light over the world and in it he could see the thickly falling flakes swirled past the window by the rising wind. Already the ground was white.

The curtain fell.

"Snowing!" he asserted pleasantly.

"Is it?" she said, smiling, from her rigid seat in a straight-backed chair.

He glanced at a row of books.

"Let's see what the justice enjoys in the way of literature. Peter Ibbottson, 'The Mill on the Floss,' 'Sherlock Holmes.' Ah! True to form. Detective stories! The proper relaxation for the legal mind."

He stopped by the door through which they had entered—the only door to the room—and examined its physical appearance carefully. But somewhat to her surprise he did not try the knob. Instead, he walked away and seated himself in a leather-covered chair under the light on the table. He picked up a paper knife made in some fantastic design and examined it idly. His calm disconcerted her.

"You do not converse readily, do you?" she asserted, solemnly.

He bowed.

"You compliment me," he returned. "All

my life people have assured me that I had an unfortunate sufficiency of conversation."

"That's just soliloquizing—thinking out loud—like Hamlet. I mean conversation."

"It takes two to accomplish it. And you are very quiet to-night." He looked across the table at her. "What's the matter? Something on your mind?" he asked.

She started. She felt like Lady Macbeth at the knocking on the gate. But she smiled.

"No," she said, pleasantly.

The little clock on the mantle struck ten.

"Old justice," observed Lea, "must be in the midst of an exciting game of checkers with the storekeeper."

The wind whistled as it rounded the corner. He raised the hangings of the window again and looked out at the roaring storm. The snow had piled up with incredible rapidity and the wind was carrying it with such force that the falling flakes and the drifting snow merged in the swirling clouds that swept by.

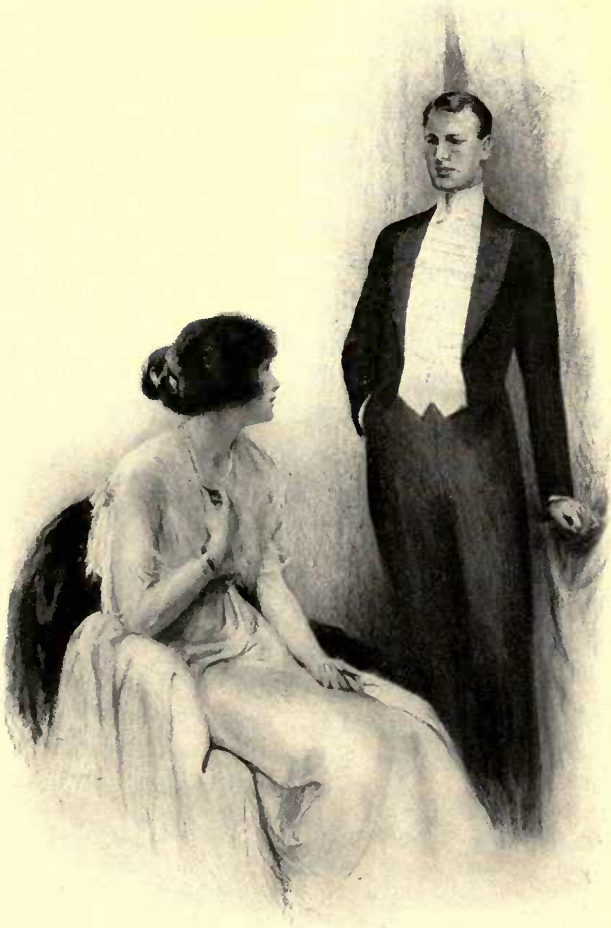
"'St. Agnes' eve. Ah, bitter chill it was,'"

he muttered. "'The owl for all his feathers was a-cold.'"

She leaned forward in her chair.

"Say some more of it," she said.

He let the curtain fall in surprise and faced about with a smile. Without a word he leaned against the trim of the window and throwing back his head repeated the whole wonderful wintry poem—not to her, for his eyes rested on the ceiling; but just with the simple pleasure of a person humming an old song. She had never known him to be more wonderful. He made the music of it throb with a new, living, personal reality—as of a master 'celloist who lets forth the wonders of some glorious intermezzo. She forgot the room, the house, the eternal cause and the rescue party that had not come. She thought only of him. It was as if he were admitting her to the inner mansion of his soul. And when he had finished, there was a silence in the room as marvelous and strange as if a celestial procession had passed through it. They did not look at each other.



SHE THOUGHT ONLY OF HIM

"And that," he said, presently, "was just such a night as this."

He pushed aside the curtain again.

"Rough driving out there," he asserted. "It is very wild. I wouldn't trust any chauffeur to keep to the road a night like this."

She followed him to the window.

"This ought not to keep"—she checked herself—"to keep us from going, ought it?"

"Nothing will stop me to-night," he observed, enigmatically.

She looked at him hard. Then she laughed.

"Old cock-sure!" she said, but there was a touch of tenderness in her voice.

She sank down into a chair—the comfortable one he had been sitting in. He made the circuit of the room again, eyeing the furnishings and fastenings of the room with an air that was pleasantly curious. There were three windows and one door. The ornamental wrought iron grilles that barred the windows were let into the masonry and leaded into place. The door was of solid oak. Lea noted all these details

with interest and returned to a seat by the lamp.

Deborah, who had been watching the clock while his back was turned, was too much excited and perturbed now to trust herself to conversation. She seized a magazine at random and pretended to read. Old campaigner that he was, and but too well schooled in the paramount value of patience, he glanced over the books on the table and, selecting one, began actually to read. The clock, viewing this domestic scene, struck eleven in a peremptory and disapproving manner.

The next hour was not more than usually long to Lea. He had nothing to worry about —he was following that luxurious idea of letting events take their course. To Deborah it was months long, expecting as she did the arrival momentarily of a rescue party from Washington. She read not a word. Her eye was on the nearly stationary hand of the clock. At the end of the several months mentioned, the hands at last dragged themselves up to the

zenith like two spent explorers crawling to the pole, and the clock struck twelve.

"Goodness!" exclaimed Lea, closing his book. "Midnight."

There was a scarcely audible tap at the door. Deborah sat up rigidly. She knew the rescue party had not come, for they would have made a tumult of noise. The rap sounded again.

"Miss Carver," said a voice, "how long is you going to sit up?"

There was silence in the room, complete and absolute. She rose, however, with easy dignity.

"What did you want, Martha?" she asked.

"Did you want me to stay up any longer?"

All pretense of concealment was useless now.

"Is there any sign of the other people?"

"No, Miss Carver."

Deborah ruminated.

"Wait half an hour more," she said, at length.

CHAPTER XVIII

THEY heard the footsteps of the maid retreating down the hall. Lea looked at her with keen eyes.

"Now what?" he asked.

"I suppose," she returned, "I had better tell you the whole story."

"Why, yes. It has been gradually dawning on me," he said, "during the past three hours. I suppose I have been kidnapped?"

"That's it," she replied, not looking at him.

"How long is this—incarceration—to last?"

"We don't want you to be at the House to-morrow, when the vote is taken. You are such an important factor," she said, smiling, "that we felt it best to have you out of the way."

"I feel the compliment deeply," he replied.

"A party of seven or eight are on their way now to get me and to care for you the rest of the night and to-morrow."

She strove to say this casually, as though

there were no doubt in the world as to the arrival of the party.

"Ah, yes," he said, "and if the party does not come?"

"I shall make other arrangements."

He nodded.

"What made you suspect," she went on, changing the subject quickly, "that you were being—that I was running off with you?"

He laughed.

"First of all," he said, "I took the precaution to look at the book-plate in several of those novels, and when I found they all bore a rather prominent woman's suffrage name, I began to see it was not for speeding I had been clapped into this strong-box."

"You have been very mild about it," she said, wonderingly. "I hoped you would rave about and tear your hair."

"Not yet," he returned, smiling. "You see, the game has just begun."

She met his eyes then. He returned her gaze with a pleasant steadiness. That exchange of

glances each felt was like the preliminary touch of swords. She waited, studying him carefully. The clock ticked on methodically, the only audible thing in the room. She decided on her course. She rose and held out her hand with every appearance of graciousness.

"Good-night," she said, with a radiant smile.

He rose too, looking at her in surprise.

"Going?" he asked, mildly.

"Yes."

"How shall you get out?"

"I will ring for the maid to unlock the door."

"Splendid idea," he agreed, unexpectedly. "I will go with you."

She paused.

"You are not to go," she said, slowly.

He laughed easily.

"I shall have to be restrained by force then. I fear that the seven or eight in your party of reinforcements could have overwhelmed me. But under the present circumstances, I shall be compelled to take advantage of—the non-arrival of Blucher, so to speak."

She bit her lip.

"But I can't stay here. It is an impossible situation. Surely you wouldn't think of ——"

"Not at all. I think your suggestion of having the maid unlock the door is best. It will relieve the impossibility of the situation."

She clasped her hands behind her and squared her shoulders.

"I do not propose to let you go," she cried.

He opened and shut the pocket-knife that lay in his hand.

"Ah, there spoke Boadicea!" he said.

"What good will it do you to leave the room? You don't know where you are."

"But I do. This is Mrs. Devine's house. I know the country about here quite well. An old college friend of mine, a certain Reverend Richard Dinsmore, lives not more than half a mile away. I should rouse him up in the dead of the night, and in the morning he would see that I reached Washington. You see I am not without resources."

The blood slowly mounted to her cheeks.

"But you cannot keep me here—in the room with you."

"I leave that to you."

"In twenty-four hours gossip will have carried it everywhere. Surely you cannot let that happen to—any woman."

He stood with his back to the fireplace.

"I suggest," he said, evenly, "that you call the maid."

Anger rose in her breast. Her eyes flashed.

"Once," she cried, indignantly, "you told me you loved me. If that were true, you would not be willing to submit me to this indignity."

He strode across the room and grasped both her wrists. Instead of breaking away from him she looked up at him, round-eyed with wonder. He gazed down at her, his lips firmly drawn.

"You have pitted your reputation," he said, quietly, "against my reputation—your honor as a woman, which I respect as heaven itself because I do love you, against what I feel is my honor and duty as a member of the Congress of these United States. That is something you, if

you cared for me one slight atom, would not ask me to recede from."

She slowly raised her eyes to his.

"Would you have me recede?" he asked.

"No," she whispered.

Suddenly his arms went about her and held her motionless. She did not resist, but lay for a moment in his embrace. Then she raised her head and pushed him away from her.

"You are still, however," she announced, "my prisoner."

"I always have been," he replied, quietly.

"And I have no intention of letting you go."

"Please heaven, no."

She smiled.

"You are speaking in allegories," she said. "I am severely literal. My duty to hold you here is as imperative as your duty to go." She made a step forward and held his wrists between her thumbs and forefingers. "Would you have me recede?" she asked, severely.

He caught her tightly to him.

"A hundred times no!" he exclaimed.

"What are we to do then?" she asked, quietly.

He knitted his brows.

"You will not let me go?"

"No," she whispered.

"And I will not let you go."

"According to the rules, then," he went on, "we should both go on a hunger and thirst strike."

She broke away from him.

"You are not serious," she cried.

He followed her and stood above her chair.

"I am very serious now," he said, gravely. "I have a tremendous suggestion to make."

She leaned forward eagerly.

"What is it?" she asked.

He seized both her hands and held them in his.

"You must marry me, Deborah. Now."

She caught her breath. The blood ran hot and cold in her. She forced a laugh.

"You don't know what you are saying," she said, faintly.

He leaned over and took her face in his hands.

"You cannot stay with me otherwise," he told her, "and I will not let you leave."

"But," she whispered, turning her flushed face up to him, "I have promised. I cannot do it."

He strode up and down the room.

"My dearest Deborah"—it was the second time he had used her name—"something has to break. You won't let me go out of this room. I won't let you go. You can't stay—unless you marry me. And you say you can't marry me."

She buried her face in her hands.

"What can I do?" she exclaimed.

"You have two evils to choose from. You have either to let me go—or marry me. Choose the least."

It was a long five minutes that passed. She leaned forward with her elbows on the arms of the chair and her fingers interlaced. There was no necessity of choosing. She had chosen

long ago. She wanted him. As far as her heart was concerned she would have let him carry her off then wherever he wished and marry her. But there were other considerations. She raised her shoulders presently with the air of dismissing the whole subject. He noted the gesture.

She glanced at him and caught the seriousness in his eyes. She reached up and took the lapels of his coat in her hands.

"Well, Sir Fixit," she said, gently, "how could two people be married in the midst of such a night?"

"Why did Providence," he cried, "provide me with my dear friend, Rev. Richard Dinsmore, but for this identical purpose? You know," he went on, presently, "this place to which you have carried me is in the very heart of the Gretna Green district, so to speak."

"You wretch!" she exclaimed.

"Of course, I understand that nothing was further from your thoughts than ——"

She bent a look of great severity upon him.

"Now I shall never marry you," she announced.

She stood for a long while by the fireplace with her foot on the fender.

"We have been talking foolishness," she said, quietly. "You know why I could not marry you under any circumstances."

He strode over to her—and played his last and biggest card.

"You promised not to marry, for the purpose of helping woman's suffrage. You are holding me here, for the purpose of helping woman's suffrage. Which is the more important?"

"How can I decide?"

"There is a telephone in this house. Call up your headquarters, or your general-in-chief, and find out."

She started. A light of relief broke upon her face. It seemed to be the way out.

A knock sounded upon the door.

"Half hour is up, Miss Carver," said the maid.

"Just a moment, Martha." Deborah rose

and turned to Lea. "You are coming with me?"

He nodded.

"Do you promise to come back with me, if necessary?"

"I do," he replied.

She swept across the room.

"Unlock the door, Martha," she said.

CHAPTER XIX

NO one could have known, from watching Lea's calm face, the tremendous importance to him of the outcome of that interview. He sat upon the sofa in the hall idly fingering his watch-fob and following with his eye the moulded plaster pattern on the ceiling. But each time Deborah cried once more, "Hello," patiently waiting to get Mrs. Dobson, he glanced across at her expectantly. Finally Deborah said:

"Is this Mrs. Dobson?"

Pause. He watched her face keenly.

"This," said Deborah, "is Deborah Carver. . . . . Quite safe . . . . Yes . . . . He is here. That's you," she observed, putting her hand over the transmitter. There was a long pause. "You say they did lose their way . . . . Can't get any one to come out until the morning.

. . . . But, Mrs. Dobson, you can see the position it puts me in."

There was another long pause. At length Deborah said:

"Mrs. Dobson, I can't stay here. I must either let him go or——" She hesitated. There was the buzz in the receiver of some one talking. She listened. "I know. It would spoil the whole undertaking . . . . I understand its importance but . . . . Yes, I have another scheme . . . . I could do it . . . . Alone . . . . Yes . . . . Then listen—— How shall I say this?" she broke off, turning her flushed face to him.

"Just tell her."

"Hello, Mrs. Dobson. The scheme is—to marry him. Marry—M-a-r-r-y——" Deborah turned to Lea. "She says it doesn't sound like anything but 'marry' to her." She spoke again in the receiver. "That's what I mean . . . . Exactly."

Lea stood up like a man about to receive the verdict of a jury. Deborah spoke again.

"Yes . . . . It *is* a sacrifice. But I cannot stay with him otherwise . . . . I put the question up to you—shall I let him go to appear in the House to-morrow—or shall I break my promise as to marrying?"

Lea waited. He stood behind her, his hands tightly clenched.

"Is this what you said," asked Deborah, in a second, "Keep him here at any cost?" Pause. "I understand. I will keep him here at any cost."

He leaned over and kissed her hair. And when she stood up, her knees shook.

"Hold me tight. Tight," she cried. "I'm frightened."

He held her. The maid sitting in the corner by the stairs made no difference.

"If you do not want me——" he began.

She put her hand over his mouth.

"You are the only thing I want. Hurry," she exclaimed.

He turned to the maid.

"Miss Carver and I," he said, with a calm-

ness he did not feel, "are to be married here in half an hour or so."

The maid leaped to her feet. Lea seized the telephone.

"Dick Dinsmore," he said, into that instrument, after a month of delay. "This is John Lea. Please come over here and marry me. Right away . . . . Bring a license clerk . . . . Think of Peary in the arctic zone, man, and this wind will be but the breath of spring . . . . Ride a horse, walk, fly on your angel wings . . . . Did you ever hear the story of the good Samaritan . . . . Here is your chance . . . . I am waiting for you by the wayside . . . . Many thanks. If you knew how glorious a moment this was for me you would not blame me for making this test of your friendship."

It was a strange wedding ceremony that married Deborah Carver—not like the orange-blossom event she had dreamed about a thousand times—no thought-over dress to preserve with tender memories, nothing old carefully selected, nothing new, nothing borrowed, nothing blue;

no friend of her childhood to pin back her veil, no organ, no guests, no friend at all save the man she was to marry. But he was church and choir for her, and in his heart she knew was music more sonorous than wedding marches. That simple ceremony with the deep-voiced friend of John Lea's college days reading the service, his eye not on the open book, with only the maid and the license clerk as guests and witnesses, with the man who was to be her husband saying his responses in a firm, strong, happy voice, she could not look upon with anything save pleasure, and wonder and an all-compelling gratitude.

In a short time it was all over and on her finger was John Lea's seal ring—a strange wedding sign, but becoming on her long, slender finger. They found that Martha had set a wedding breakfast in the dining-room with candles on the table and all Mrs. Devine's best linen and silver. It was not an elaborate menu such as might have been published with effect in the papers, but one of quite substantial foods which

were more than welcome to Deborah and Lea, who, at half-past one in the morning, were famished from their long fast.

The license clerk, a certain Mr. Dobbs, sat very stiffly at the board and shot back his cuffs at intervals, blinking at the light like an owl, and never opening his mouth save for the purpose of eating or to yawn covertly behind his hand. A cross section through his brain would probably have disclosed the word "sleep," blazoned in large letters upon it. He was not what might be called an ideal wedding guest, but at least he had the virtue of being sincere.

At length Mr. Dinsmore, feeling that the occasion was drawing to a close, or else having compassion on Mr. Dobbs, rose from the table.

"I am sorry," he said to Deborah, "that you have no bouquet to throw. Mr. Dobbs would enjoy catching it. For though he dispenses marriage licenses daily by the thousand, he is thoroughly single; starving as it were in the midst of plenty."

Mr. Dobbs blushed fiery red, as if he had

swallowed something down the wrong throat, and had to shoot back his cuffs two or three times to regain his composure.

Deborah smiled at him—with something approaching affection; for was he not the only guest at her wedding? Mr. Dobbs assumed an attitude of a little more ease and murmured something about the pleasantness of the occasion.

"Good-night, Mrs. Lea," cried Dinsmore, noting the embarrassment the unexpected title caused her. "I have known John many years," he said, seriously, "and I know of no gentler, sturdier, more comforting soul than is he. I trust you will both be happy."

And then to her surprise and confusion, he kissed her. Mr. Dobbs did not kiss her, but shook hands with her with one straight motion like a man shifting the gear lever of an automobile, and then walked after Mr. Dinsmore, his shoes squeaking impressively. Deborah and Lea, through the window, watched them mount their horses and ride off in the snow.

The maid was standing in the hallway.

"Did the chauffeur that brought us and the red-headed man try to go back?" Lea asked her as he turned the key in the big lock of the front door.

Martha said they did.

"I hope they didn't run into trouble."

The maid disappeared, leaving them alone. Deborah, across the hall, stood looking at him.

"Tired?" he asked.

She nodded.

He strode to her and she dropped contentedly into his arms.

"Fighting for the suffrage," he said, gently, "is fatiguing."

"The suffrage." She smiled. "Think of fighting for that when there was this," putting her hand over his heart, "to fight for."

He held her tightly to him. She buried the point of her chin in his shoulder.

"I shall be happy," she said, seriously, "if the women win their fight for the suffrage to-

morrow, because they have worked for it. But I shall never be reconciled to having kept my—my husband," she cried, gripping him tightly, "out of the fight when he wanted to be in the thick of it."

He did not look at her.

"You are a glorious person," he said, huskily. "But you need not worry on that score."

She caught his chin and turned his face toward her.

"Why?" she asked, imperiously.

"Because," he said, gravely, "when the House convenes to-morrow they will immediately take a recess for the day out of respect to the memory of Senator Hemmingway, who was once Speaker of the House. This is not generally known. It was decided just before I left the Capitol."

She lay perfectly motionless in his arms. Her surprised eyes gazed at him as if her whole intelligence refused absolutely to comprehend the meaning of his words. Then gradually her mouth broke into a smile and she laughed

aloud. She raised her head and kissed him upon the lips.

"The reason I love you," she said, "is because I can't *beat* you."