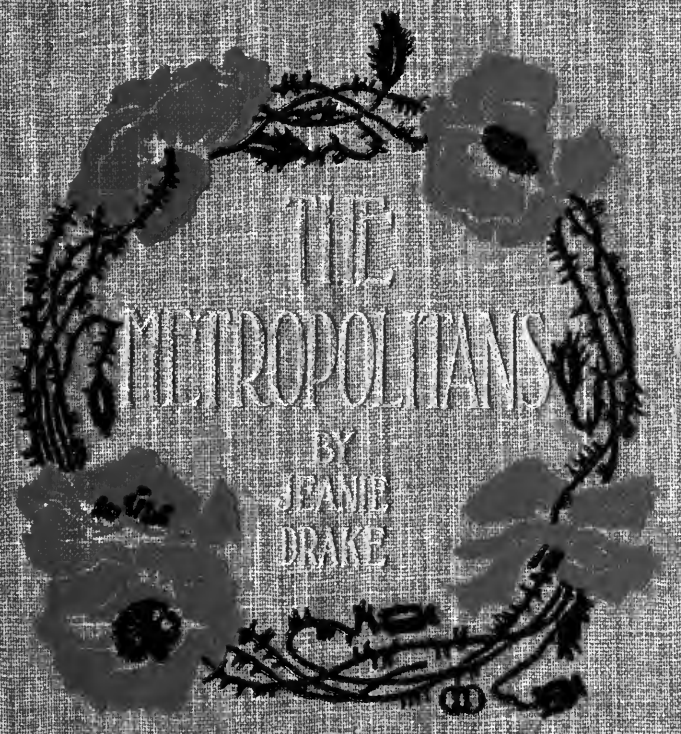
THE
METROPOLITANS
BY
JEANIE
DRAKE

THE METROPOLITANS

THE METROPOLITANS

BY

JEANIE DRAKE

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1896

THE DE VINNE PRESS.

THE METROPOLITANS

THE METROPOLITANS

I

HE full moon, sailing across the sky above Staten Island, in serene indifference to mundane revel, might have perceived that the fifth annual ball of the Hunt Club was nearly at an end. Her light on the hoar-frost made grass and late foliage everywhere sparkle with myriad crystals, hid itself in hollowed wave and umbrageous forest near, and only gave way before long pencils of warmer, rosier rays, which shot forth now and then from the open doorway of a great illuminated building. The brittle earth crackled beneath the hoofs of champing horses waiting outside. Impatient coachmen came and went, flapping their arms together to keep warm, like grotesque birds in livery; finding small comfort in the fitful bursts of music which came from within, but more in visits to the rear premises of the Goldenrod Inn, whence they issued wiping their mouths with the backs of their hands.

"There 's to be another supper after the women goes. I 'm here till mornin', I 'd wager me soul!"

grumbled Mr. Pundit's coachman, with a prodigious yawn.

"Vy don't you bet somethin' large?" responded Lady Mellon's man, disdainfully. "That there yawn, f'r i'stance. I thought you 'd a-swallerred me!"

"No; I ain't takin' bitters in mine," chuckled Denis, restored to good humor by the subtlety of his own retort courteous.

In the new wing of the Goldenrod, the great ball-room resounded to the strains of the Hungarian band hidden in an alcove, from which protruded two artificial heads of horses apparently feeding.

"Is that what you end-of-the-century moderns call realism in decoration, Mr. Penrose?" asked, with a smile, a pleasant-faced old man, directing his neighbor's attention to these bronzed effigies.

"I rather fancy, Mr. de Mansur," said the younger, adjusting his eye-glasses, "that Archie Pundit prides himself especially on that touch. He generally orders matters—and takes the fatal slide from the artistic to the ridiculous. Otherwise, those corn-stalks and sheaves of straw and pumpkins and vines, and the rest of the weeds, are not half bad as a background for the men's pink coats and the women's gowns."

"Why are you not in pink yourself?" asked the elder man, kindly, looking up at his tall, thin companion, whose quite smooth face, with its marked features and very fair coloring, made him noticeable. "I hear that you ride very straight to hounds."

"I am not a club member—only an invited guest."

"Well, *cucullus non facit monachum*. I think I 've heard something of an impromptu leap, was it not?

But now I must find my daughter and go. You young fellows may sit up the rest of the night at your late supper, but I want a few hours' sleep before going back to the city."

He went off with a roll in his walk suggestive of increased avoirdupois. Stephen Penrose, who remained behind, looked as expressionless as usual; but he had noted, with those near-sighted eyes which missed very little, the withdrawal of Miss de Mansur and her last partner into a nook among the vines, where they would not be easily found.

This partner, whose straight, well-knit figure and clear, dark tints went well with his scarlet coat, was leaning over Katherine at the moment, and murmuring:

"The quotation is trite, but cannot be improved, when I say that when you dance with me I wish that you might ever do nothing but that."

"Oh," smiled the slim girl in pale blue and silver, still a little breathless from the last measures of "Santiago," "what a useful career you would sketch out for me in this age of enlightenment, progress, and women's clubs! Even papa, who would not have me a judge, say, or a railroad official, approves of fresh-air societies, hospital missions, and needlework guilds, not to speak of art clubs and Browning societies. Life was a much simpler matter in Perdita's time, you know. Her principal occupation seemed to be picking flowers and paying compliments; but now, in this year of grace, I shall feel that to-night's pleasure calls for some bit of uncomfortable, disagreeable work, by way of equalizing things with my conscience."

"Then the sooner you acquire a conscience like hers the better, I should think," ventured this bold youth. "A woman and a flower, now,—what can they do more useful than just to bloom? And all pretty blossoms should live in sunshine."

"Oh, what an enervating doctrine! And what would become of those without sunlight unless helped to some by the more fortunate? In the mean time" (with a touch of self-accusing humility according well with her gracious maidenhood), "I am afraid these untimely misgivings are only the dash of bitter I wilfully add to make my cup more piquant. I would not appear better than I am." The upward glance of the great clear eyes, which accompanied a little confidential sigh, gave his heart a quick throb.

"Than you are? O Katherine!"

The musicians had left the room; there was a soft flutter and hum of many people passing into the hall; the spicy smell of the evergreens was around them. Her sudden color at his calling her by her first name might have been of good or ill omen; but just here a stately woman in black and gold parted the vines of their alcove, and stood before them.

"Pardon the interruption, my dear Miss de Mansur, but Lord Mellon has just let me know the hour, and I think the women are going. Allan, I want a word with you before leaving, if you can see me to the carriage."

Katherine was already herself. "Indeed, I should find papa, then," she said; "and, Lady Mellon, if you sail to-morrow, I will bid you good-by now, and wish you a safe and pleasant voyage." She had it in her

mind confusedly to add something of regret that American society should lose Lady Mellon to the gain of Europe, but ceased with relief on her father's approach; for, indeed, Lady Mellon was haughtily cold, and the girl hated small social hypocrisies. In the hallway, Mr. Archibald Pundit, monocle and all, stood, as chairman of the committee, speeding the fair departing guests and receiving their compliments.

"Ah, yes, thank you! I think myself, don't you know, that the decorations were fair. Intended to represent a barn, don't you see. Cornelius, if you *will* absent yourself from the little stag supper with which we propose to finish the night, I suppose we must forgive you, for the sake of your fair daughter, one of our stars. Ahem! ah, thank you! I hope it was a success, and that you were not bored, don't you know. No, Van Krippen; I am not alluding to you, though I am aware you tried to dance with Miss de Mansur six times. Ah! good night, Lady Mellon; I shall have the honor of wishing you *bon voyage* on the deck of the *Astoria*. Have an indulgent thought for our little reunions on this side when you are treading the historic halls of the old country. We cannot help, don't you see, getting things a little mixed over here. Though" (lowering his voice a fraction), "if I had my way, my dear madam, you would n't have to meet printers and such fellows, don't you know, at a hunt ball."

"If you mean Stephen Penrose," here interposed Allan Rexford, on whose arm his mother leaned, "you are mistaken, Mr. Pundit. He is a very clever journalist—assistant editor on the daily 'Argus.'"

"You may be right; it's quite the same thing, don't you know. When I was young, you did n't meet tradespeople or any of these fellows anywhere. Why, Lady Mellon" (in a tragic whisper), "I believe that man had on a ready-made tie at the meet yesterday—a thing, don't you know, that stamps a fellow at once, you understand."

Lady Mellon had just time to say to her son, before reaching the carriage, "Come to me at the Battenberg, Allan, a little while before we leave. I want to speak to you."

"I would be there in any case, my dear mother," he answered heartily. "I must have a farewell romp with the boy." Her carriage made way for the De Mansurs', and he had the miraculous good fortune of handing Katherine into hers; and the further luck of reverently detaching a young goddess's lace furbelow from an impertinent hinge. If the sibyl ever raised her white lids to give a votary a swift glance and say, "We shall soon see you in town, of course," no doubt her client interpreted the remark as absolutely favorable to his wishes. Be that as it may, this young man sped gaily through the vestibule again, and up the broad staircase three steps at a time. So radiant was his aspect, indeed, that Penrose hailed him from the group of men gathered outside the supper-room.

"Where has our young Apollo been, that his eyes are as stars and he treads on air? Pursuing a nymph through Staten Island woods? or merely sampling the Goldenrod brand of nectar, otherwise Pommery Sec.?"

"He has n't had a chance at anything half so good," grumbled little Morty van Krippen, puffing at a cigar

much too big for him. "That was beastly stuff at the ladies' supper."

"Then Mr. Pundit showed some sense in that, at least," observed Penrose. "It would be throwing pearls before—angels, who never wear them, to give good wine to women. The dear things, when they 're talking, don't know what they 're drinking—or saying, either, sometimes."

"Oh, come, Penrose," objected Rexford, to whom in his present mood this was profane, "were you born cynical, or have you simply achieved it?"

"I have had it thrust upon me, my dear fellow. Before I lived this time, I was Timon of Athens; and before that Samson, I think. There go the last of the women" (leaning over the balustrade). "Watch old Archie bowing them out!"

> "For Sir Jacob thought he bowed like a Guelf,
> And therefore he bowed to imp and elf,
> And would have made a bow to himself
> Had such a bow been feasible,"

murmured Rexford; but he had the grace to blush when Mr. Pundit, coming up unperceived, laid a sudden hand on his shoulder.

"My dear boy, when your honored mother leaves, you must let me take an interest in you; as your lamented father's friend, don't you know. Your majority comes to-morrow, I think I have heard. You must let me drink your health presently, don't you see."

"I must drink that too," said Penrose, as they followed the old gentleman in. "You 're coming into your kingdom!" This man, reputed very cold, gave

a look of great kindliness to fortune's favorite, young, handsome, and soon to be very wealthy, whom he generously admired as frank, honest, and still unspoiled.

The supper-room resounded already with the buzz of talk among the men, divided into little knots. Footmen, in the club livery, moved swiftly hither and thither. With a surcease of the women's voices and tinkling ripple of laughter, had come a louder, noisier note in the merriment, and a franker abandonment to the pleasures of the table. The talk drifted mainly now on two subjects: the incidents of yesterday's hunt, and some very choice vintages, brought forth by Mr. Pundit's orders.

"This Madeira," he was saying, "is from the South. Picked up there by one of the Barings, you understand. It had been around the Cape two or three times; but something went wrong in the way he treated it, and it turned out badly, you see. I heard of it, and made a special trip to England, and he was very glad, you comprehend, to have me take it off his hands. Nursed it back to health myself, and I think you will say, my dear sir, you have n't tasted anything much finer. I must justify the implicit confidence the club places in my judgment, don't you know" (his monocle gleamed sagaciously); "and you 'll find the Brut Impérial, '63, they serve with the next course, fit for the gods. Yes, Lord Mellon" (to the bald, languid, elderly little man at his right); "yesterday's course was a hard one, but so much the better. Our cross-country riders will improve with such runs. I wish they might have, as I did, a season or two over in your country with the

Royal Hunt. But even then it 's my unalterable conviction, don't you know, that their style will never equal yours."

"An unalterable conviction," commented Penrose, in an undertone, "proclaims, according to Sydney Smith, an unalterable ass."

"Then don't contradict him," said Rexford, in the same key; "for you know the proverb, 'It is a waste of lather to shave an ass.'"

"I wonder," sputtered little Van Krippen, with his mouth full, "if it was his practice with the buck hounds made him come a cropper over that post and rail yesterday. And oh, by Jove! Mr. Penrose, I don't know when I 've laughed as I did when he slipped off at the water jump, and you vaulted on his mare and cleared the brook in such style, and rode her to the finish."

"He is an elderly man, and I did n't come down to ride, and should n't have done it; but I was standing close by when he declined the jump, and I rushed at the gallant little mare's bridle before I thought. I have apologized since, of course," said Penrose, quietly.

"I don't believe he 'll forgive you," laughed Rexford; "but it was good riding, old fellow, and a good joke!"

An echo of his joyous laugh reached the chairman, who raised his glass to him and Van Krippen, pointedly ignoring Penrose. International riding was still the theme at the head of the table, and from out the confusion of tongues Lord Mellon's indifferent drawl could be distinguished:

"I 've heard my father say he saw the jump himself, in the White Hart at Aylesbury, at a steward's dinner.

Over table and all and back again. A nasty risk to take even if a horse will come up-stairs."

"I believe I could bring my roan up now, and make him jump this one," declared Allan Rexford, impetuously. It may have been the Brut Impérial or mere joy in living that made the youth so ready this evening to drink up Esil, eat a crocodile, or perform any such trifling task.

"Don't be rash, lad," said Penrose.

"Why not try it, then?" murmured Lord Mellon, with half-shut eyes. "I would back you to any amount."

Some further animated discussion, and then several of the men accompanied Rexford down to the stable. In a short while their voices and a heavy lumbering noise on the stairs preceded Rexford's return, bringing by the halter his spirited little roan. He led it around the wide room, resting before the great log fire blazing in the huge fireplace. "The jump! the jump!" called many voices. The scarlet-coated lookers-on hastily grouped themselves against the walls here and there, odds being given and taken. The chairs were removed from the table, otherwise left untouched, with fruit and flowers, glasses, decanters, and candelabra, and many wax-lights burning. "My father said it was so on the occasion he spoke of," suggested Lord Mellon, listlessly. Then Rexford, his eyes sparkling and cheeks flushing with the novelty of the enterprise, sprang on the bare-backed roan, struck him with his heel, and sent him over table and appointments, just clearing them; but the animal's hoof catching in the edge of the cloth, pulled it off and broke a few glasses. Upon which, without hesitating, he turned, and, with a cry and blow

on the neck from his right palm, sent him over again in perfect style. There was a storm of applause and congratulations as he dismounted. Archie Pundit ceased strolling excitedly about, to shake his hand and exclaim jerkily, "My dear young friend, my heart was in my mouth, to use a vulgar phrase, until you were over, don't you know. I was telling Lord Mellon that I disapproved—highly disapproved, I may say—of your valuable neck being so endangered: a man who comes to-morrow, don't you know, into such a fortune as yours. Some of these penniless nobodies, now." His glance rested, accidentally perhaps, on Penrose.

"How are you going to get him down again?" the latter asked Rexford. "That 'll be the real difficulty, as I suppose you don't mean to emulate General Putnam."

The roan did, in fact, object to the descent. He went quietly enough along the narrow strip of carpet laid on the polished oak hall floor, but not one step downward could he be induced to take. After repeated efforts had failed, Penrose suggested their leading him to the extreme end of the hall, blindfolding him, then bringing him steadily along without stopping even an instant at the head of the staircase. By this means he took the first steps of the descent without knowing, and, though he stumbled and fell on his knees, scrambled on somehow. Penrose and Rexford, holding him tightly by the head, encouraged and got him down, with no damage except to the balusters.

"Who 's that thin-legged, cold-blooded, sleepy-looking chap?" asked one man of another, as they went out into the nipping air of morning. "Sat next Pundit

at the head of the table, and put Rexford up to the jump."

"That 's his loving stepfather, Lord Mellon," said the other.

The gentleman in question, just then burying his nose in the fur collar of his overcoat, confided to its depths the murmured remark, "Seems a pity, 'pon honor, that young idiot did n't break his neck. It would have saved his mother a deuced unpleasant half-hour or so before we sail."

II

IN the quiet region bordering on Second Avenue in New York, overlooking Stuyvesant Square, and under the shadow of St. George's steeple, there are some fine and stately old houses—family mansions, whose occupants, having dwelt there for several generations, obstinately resist the tide of change and fashion sweeping their neighbors up-town.

"If you really wished it, Katherine dear, we might buy another without its quite ruining us," Cornelius de Mansur would say of one of these houses. "But you see, my father and grandfather were born and died here; and I should like to die here myself, if you don't mind, my dear."

"But I *do* mind, you dreadful papa!" the girl would cry, rumpling his gray hair with her pretty hands. "You have my gracious permission to stay here only on condition that you never die, but just soar upward after a hundred years or so!"

"I will need strong pinions to accomplish that if I keep on getting stouter," he chuckled contentedly, settling down again to his books and papers.

In truth, she was as fond as he of this old library, with its deep bow-windows, from which one saw the trees and

walks of the square, alive with twittering, hopping sparrows. His great writing-table of black oak stood here, with silver inkstand and fittings; and around two sides of the room ran bookcases, filled to overflowing with works of all dates and editions, Mr. de Mansur's great treasure. Most of the heavy old furniture was of the black oak; a few pieces being covered with faded tapestry, worked by his mother and her mother. The walls in crimson tones were hung with a portrait or two, and a fine collection of old colored prints in narrow, unobtrusive frames, among them a few good examples of the lost art of colored stippling in its perfection. And in front of the open fireplace stood a quaint couch with square adjustable ends, Katherine's favorite resting-place. Here she could dream, with her head among the countless pillows, and her feet resting on a tiger's head, whose skin had come all the way from Africa as a present from Mr. de Mansur's nephew, an amateur explorer.

"Reginald never said he shot that tiger," Cornelius would remark, "but he 's just the fellow to shoot a tiger if he could n't get out of its way, and the tiger did n't have first innings. Now that sounds like a pun, which is unworthy of an honest man, eh, Katherine? Well, never mind; it was accidental. Did I tell you that Reginald was very proud of a new idea of his for impressing the ignorant savage with the white man's superiority? He has taken with him an immense number of kid gloves, of which he always wears a pair in any interview with native chiefs. Then, somewhere in the talk, he draws them slowly off, to the awed amazement of the crude African, who naturally con-

cludes that it is the skin of his hands which he can peel off at any time with impunity! He would like to have a patent on the idea, I fancy; but I wrote him I did n't think it so good as my poor friend, Sir Charles Dormer's. He had a glass eye in latter years (I was traveling with him on the Continent when he lost his own), and while he was parleying with Arab chiefs in Egypt, he used coolly to pluck out his eye, twirl it in the air, and put it back; which had, they told me, a very inspiring effect. I might compliment Reginald more; but he 's a youth, as your Mortimer van Krippen would say, who is the better for being sat upon a little. *Not* your Van Krippen? No, my love; I was jesting, of course. I know my Katherine better. We are not such worshipers of the golden calf, either of us, as to offer him such a sacrifice as that! You need not go; you are not in my way at all—if you 'll just keep quiet and not talk so much!"

Katherine smiled; she had spoken just once. She stayed, knowing that the waves of her bright hair showing over the sofa were a delight to her father in the intervals of his scholarly researches; but not knowing that sometimes, as now, the sight was a useful deterrent from some extravagance. He tore up slowly and dropped in the waste-basket a letter just finished, ordering a very costly work newly brought out by his club of clubs, the Grolier. "My Katherine will have such a modest fortune when I go," he thought, "that I am a selfish wretch to spend so much on these things." He frowned at an imaginary greedy, unscrupulous, bibliophile self, in whom others would not have recognized the one parent, guardian, teacher, in-

timate companion Katherine had known since her mother's early death. The scratching of his pen now, the crackling of the burning logs, the rustling leaves of Katherine's book, alone disturbed the silence for a while. Then, "What has my lassie there?" he asked.

"You will smile when I say 'Henry Esmond' again. It ought to be, perhaps, some modern story, dealing with a question of the day, or something realistic, or something with a stern and resolute purpose. But when the great masters hold the mirror up to nature, the picture is so much more vivid and picturesque."

"Athanasius against the world! A maiden free-lance against the professional critics!" said her father, with a twinkle in his eye. "You should read for improvement. And would you really place 'Vanity Fair' or 'Pride and Prejudice' before works of the apostles of realism?"

"I would n't place them at all, but just enjoy them, and let the others alone. You don't know that charming essayist, papa,—but you must know her,—who objects to having an instructive work thrust on her as though it were 'paregoric or a porous plaster,' and thanks Heaven that, 'whatever the eccentricities of fiction writers to come, they cannot take from us the past.'"

"Fiction as a vehicle for preaching is bad art, I am sure," said he; "but" (persisting) "realism, now; I thought Ibsen and some of that school were rather a fad among the younger people."

"Perhaps; among those that would sup on cucumbers and beer to get a nightmare, or visit dissecting-rooms for pleasure! Useful and necessary statistics,

now—essays on social and—" But any deeper plunge into the ethics of the question was prevented by a footman's entrance, announcing, "Miss Lavender and Miss van Krippen."

"We ventured to follow the man, Katherine," said a thin, sweetly childish voice from under the portière, "though we know this is your papa's sanctum. But it is so delightfully quaint!"

The speaker was a girl, small and plump; pink and white as to skin, very blond and fluffy as to hair; daintily picturesque as a Greuze shepherdess. She was still under twenty, but, armed with rare native self-possession, and a lorgnette which she did not need, would have confronted all the monarchs of Europe, including the Emperor William, with the same smiling confidence with which she bearded Cornelius de Mansur in his lair. She preceded a woman many years older and much thinner, with very black eyes and hair, in dress a modified and fairly acceptable fashion-plate.

"I beg you to believe, Mr. de Mansur," said the latter, with some asperity, "that when Miss van Krippen says 'we,' she means herself only. I hope before she leaves me she will allow no impulse to hurry her into unconventionalities."

"You are—ahem!—very welcome, Miss Lavender," said Cornelius. "Take this arm-chair. I can recommend it for comfort. Our—ahem!—intimates frequently drop in here, though it is called my study."

Miss Lavender sat quite erect on the edge of her chair, her bony, neatly gloved hands folded over a card-case.

"Our dear Miss Lavender," said Angelica van Krippen, smiling sweetly, "has been a little ruffled this morning, which, under the circumstances, was quite natural. Katherine and Mr. de Mansur would sympathize, I am sure, Miss Lavender."

"Miss van Krippen alludes to a meeting of the Provincial Matrons which I have been attending, and in which, I am ashamed to say, there was much unseemly excitement displayed. With your lineage, Miss de Mansur" (parenthetically), "I am surprised that you are not a member." Katherine checked a smile at her father's expression of countenance. "You have but little leisure? Ah, well, perhaps it might be better for you to wait now and see the outcome of this—this little difference."

"A very pretty quarrel as it stands," murmured Angelica, who was peering at the engravings through her lorgnette.

"I thought from the beginning," pursued Miss Lavender, "that there was a lack of—shall I say parliamentary courtesy?—in their methods of electing officers. Those in office would just retire for a while, and then come out and report that they had reëlected themselves. But the real trouble began after the election of a new member at the last meeting. They find now that she is not directly descended from the patroon whom she claims as ancestor. We wanted her to go out again peaceably and quietly, and she would n't,—which was not ladylike, to say the least, Mr. de Mansur,—and actually had her lawyers take it up and say that as the society was an incorporated one, being once in she had the right to stay in. I did n't care so much

about that" (with an impartial air), "though it caused scandal, as the vice-president was responsible, and has acted in what I must consider bad taste all along—keeping her own two sisters out on some pretext, and telling Mrs. Crowne Derby that the Derby ancestor, coming from Virginia, which was a penal colony, could not be considered! Then the Royall Worcesters; she detained them here a whole winter from their Egyptian trip, hunting up positive evidence of their descent from Dietrich Knickerbocker, which every one admitted. But" (and here the card-case began to tremble) "it was my own personal difficulty with her which has agitated me somewhat. As you know, Mr. de Mansur, I am a Philadelphian, and, during my honored and wealthy papa's lifetime, little expected ever to be in charge of a young ladies' finishing academy. However, it is a noble mission. But when that Doulton-Minton person presumes to tell me that my revered ancestor, Benjamin Franklin, was too light and gay to be considered as a proper and respectable founder of a family, I confess that only an unswerving habit of decorum restrained me!" She paused to smooth out an unbecoming frown.

"Heavens and earth!" cried Cornelius, with simulated heat, to cover an inappropriate twinkle behind his glasses. "My dear Miss Lavender, Benjamin Franklin too gay or frisky! I should have thought him in all respects a first-class ancestor. It must be a case of pure envy in Mrs. Doulton-Minton."

"Katherine," Miss van Krippen softly interjected here, "you promised to show me that new water-color in the music-room. Excuse us for a few moments."

She drew Katherine away at once. "And now," she exclaimed triumphantly outside, her arm in her friend's, "the next time she objects to my going anywhere without a chaperon at fifty cents an hour, I will say, 'Why, you did not mind my leaving you alone with Mr. de Mansur.' *That* will break her all up. Imagine! she wanted me to apply for admission into those Provincial Matrons!"

"And why did you not?"

"Katherine! you know very well. I might not be such a fool in any case; but in this case, my name's McGregor, my foot is on my native heath, and I propose to keep it there."

"You did not tell her that?"

"Not exactly. I told her simply that the Van Krippens were so very exclusive that they hesitated to join any association for any purpose whatever; and that I had not noticed in the Matrons that repose which stamps the caste of Vere de Vere. My dear, their personalities to each other this afternoon would have made a wooden Indian blush! And if that was their opinion of Benjamin Franklin, I wonder what they would think of John Cripps, who kept a little store in a mining-camp out in Colorado some years ago, and made a fortune which they do sincerely admire."

"If they thought as I do—"

"Oh, you, Katherine!" (with an impulsive embrace). "When they left me here to be finished at Miss Lavender's, and then launched in society, I do believe I should have died of nothing but hardness and worldliness all around me if it had n't been for that lucky visit to the blind woman's place, where I met my

Katherine; so the little bit of charity she lets me do —with a chaperon—had more than its reward. But cheerily, ho, my lads! Let 's not be sentimental. I had a letter from mamma yesterday. She writes, in French, that Anastelle is getting on nicely at school there, and will soon forget all her English, she hopes. Papa, too, is getting over what she calls idioms, and she makes him read French novels day and night. He writes that he hates everything and everybody there, and wishes he was back in Colorado. He loves work, and never read a bit of fiction before in his life, except 'The Children of the Abbey' when he was a boy. That 's how my brother came to be called Mortimer, and I Amanda. Mamma added Angelica, and I insisted on being called that when I was older. Mamma composed the name of Anastelle herself—Anastelle Mauveleen is the whole name. And it was *her* idea to change Cripps into Van Krippen when we moved East. She thought it was more harmonious with the New York atmosphere!"

She broke off her clear-toned, monotonous ripple of talk at this, to join heartily in Katherine's merry laughter. "Miss de Mansur," she resumed, "I feel guilty at being tempted into such reckless revelations. It is only with you, and in confidence, believe me. Will you kindly show me the new aquarelle?" Her manner now was in patent imitation of the respected Miss Lavender's. She added, in an absurdly stilted tone, "Ah! that is a truly delicious bit of color, proving an artistic feeling which is as rare as it is admirable in so young an artist. It adds to the charm of an already charming room."

In point of fact, the room *was* charming. Its cream and gold tints were relieved by water-colors, most of them Katherine's own work; and an old Sheraton cabinet, with a few fine bits of ceramics and Venetian glass, filled a corner opposite to that where the piano stood. The man came in now with a basket of orchids, a card attached with Mr. van Krippen's name.

"How kind your brother is!" said Katherine.

Her friend looked at her earnestly—more earnestly than was her wont—and answered quietly, "Yes; Morty is not always brilliant, but he is always kind, and the best-hearted fellow."

The man interrupted again, bearing just a knot of fragrant violets and a card, on which was penciled, without a name:

> Violets dim,
> But sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes,
> Or Cytherea's breath.

The sender was some one who knew the girl's taste in flowers and verse.

"Mortimer was telling me," Angelica went on, "of some feat of your friend, Mr. Rexford's, at the late supper of the Hunt Club. You heard, perhaps? Some sort of Pegasus performance—flying his horse over the table. Mortimer was so eloquent about the daring of it, and about the club wine, that somehow I" (with malice) "have mixed the two matters up."

"It was daring in the horse, at least, who had had no wine," said Katherine, carelessly.

"By the way, Morty tells me that Mr. Rexford is very musical—composes."

"'*Fanatico per la musica*,' as Italians call it. Here

is a song of which he has just set the words to music. You might like it."

"Your words? or his own, perhaps?"

"Neither; only some I chanced to fancy in a magazine. It is called 'Retribution,' by Stanton, I think." Her voice was a mezzo-soprano of limited compass, but sweetness which gave effect to the minor strain.

"Once, when I was poor,
Love knocked at my door.
'Some sad wretch,' I said, 'who begs,
And my cup drained to the dregs.'
So I cursed him from the light,
Out into the homeless night."

Some one here entered, preventing James from announcing him, and stood beside Angelica, who nodded silently. Katherine sang again:

"Once, with golden store,
I knocked at Love's sweet door.
'Some sad wretch,' he cried, 'whose gold
Would my loving breast enfold!'
So he cursed me from the light,
Out into the homeless night."

"Out into the homeless night—the homeless night—the homeless night!" chimed in vibrant male tones with the plaintive refrain.

"Ah!" cried Angelica, "that is lovely. I am ready to weep! Not at the sentiment, Mr. Rexford; I am impervious to that; it is the music thrills me."

"Thank you, Miss van Krippen; but an emotional crisis brought on by art should not be expressed in tears. It should take the form of cold chills running up and down the spine. Remember that, please,

when you listen to the great Wagner—of whom a humorist remarks that his music is not so bad as it sounds."

Katherine, who had started a little at the unexpected voice, had gone on playing the melody in soft chords.

"I must thank you—" she began now.

"You must rather forgive me for venturing in when I have to leave so hurriedly. My mother sails this afternoon, and I am due at her rooms now, but could not resist coming in for a moment to ask your good wishes. It is my birthday; and I have a sort of superstition about having—my friends' good wishes."

Angelica van Krippen had a shrewd suspicion that the friends whose good wishes were a superstition with this young man were limited to one; but the Dresden-china maiden thought of Morty, and did not move away. "If, as I have heard, your majority was fixed for this, your twenty-fifth birthday," she said, "there is little left for your friends to wish you, Mr. Rexford. With youth, health, and a competence, besides a very pretty talent for music, Prince Fortunatus might be satisfied."

"And yet I am not," he said ardently, with sparkling eyes, "but seem to crave—what is it I *do* want? Oh, yes, just a flower or two." He fixed an appealing glance on Katherine, who faintly colored, selecting a few violets. He must have taken them awkwardly, for they fell on the polished floor, and down he went on his knees, which necessitated turning his back to Miss van Krippen, and permitted him, seen only of Katherine, to press the flowers to his lips before fastening them in his buttonhole. And he was gone, and

a minute later bowling away from the front door in his trimly appointed dog-cart.

"I hear my revered preceptress's voice in the hall now," declared Angelica. "She will have talked your father limp by this time. Let us go to his rescue!"

Miss Lavender was, indeed, awaiting her pupil with a look of lofty displeasure, and she would not hear of waiting until tea was brought in. "The drive to the Park is a long one, as Miss van Krippen is aware," said she, stiffly, "and we shall hardly have time to dress for dinner."

As she followed in her wake to the waiting coupé, Angelica, in allusion to the lady principal's glacial kiss, said demurely, "I hope, Katherine dear, you will not have bronchitis. You had better see now to your poor dear papa."

"'Poor dear papa,' in truth," Katherine said, half laughing; "you do look as though you needed a restorative. Sit down in your own chair again, and I will bring you your tea; and you shall drink it while I sit here at your knee."

"It *was* an ordeal, Katherine," he presently admitted in an exhausted tone, between sips. "I did not know there was a woman alive who could, in my own library, make me listen to anecdotes of Franklin in his boyhood! But how you look, my beauty! Such shining eyes, and so bright and sweet, and smelling of violets. Does the saucy Angelica's talk give all that radiance?"

"Oh! we had other callers and music, you know," said Katherine, hiding pink cheeks against his knee. "But what an imaginative old gentleman! And what a fairy princess you would make of me!"

III

HEN the dog-cart pulled up before the Battenberg, where Lord and Lady Mellon had temporary lodging, his mother had been expecting Rexford for some time. For so self-controlled a woman, there was much restlessness in the way she moved about the garishly appointed hotel room, strewn with evidences of approaching departure; and there was a slight flush on the smooth cheek she offered for his kiss. "You may go now, Stephanie. And, Warren, that will do for the present. Send Roberts here with Lord Cantaloupe."

The door opened in a few moments, and admitted a little fellow of about three, who, toddling in with an exultant crow, made straight for his tall brother, about whom he clung until hoisted, with romping and laughter, to his shoulder.

"You must not make a noise, if I let you stay," said his mother. And the docile child buried his fat little hands in Rexford's hair, and subdued his mirth to small chuckles and infantine whisperings.

"He is growing finely, Allan, rosy and strong."

"I believe you. His heels' tattoo on my chest indicates great vigor; he is like his mother," Allan

laughed, patting the little knee, "and my little Lord Cantaloupe will grow up to be an ornament to the British peerage."

She winced slightly, thinking, perhaps, of Lord Mellon.

"You have failed to visit me, Allan, in these few years I have spent in England; so you cannot tell from observation what a grand old place is Oudenard Hall, this boy's heritage, if—I have brought a picture with me, a large photograph, for you to see."

He glanced carelessly at a picture of a fine and stately castle on a hill, which commanded, on one side, undulating green slopes leading down to a shimmering lake; on the other, forest depths, from which looked forth a deer or two quietly grazing. The spire of the village church just showed above the tree-tops. "It is a beautiful place," he commented quietly, "and with historic associations. That is, I suppose, the morning-room on the east, where Charles the Second supped. I forget how it came to the first lord; but that does not matter. Our boy is only concerned with the present."

"Yes; that concerns him vitally" (putting away the picture). "That is partly why I am here in America on your twenty-fifth anniversary, Allan. Of course you know the affection I bear my first-born, and that my congratulations are yours to-day. My birthday gift I directed Mr. Redtape to present for me."

He was stooping to roll a ball to the child, and answered lightly, "I am quite ashamed; but my engagements at the club and elsewhere with fellows who would congratulate Prince Fortunatus, as they have

chosen to nickname me, made me entirely forget the appointment with Redtape."

"I am sorry that you forgot, as to-day, you know, was fixed by your father for your majority, and Mr. Redtape was to explain to you more precisely the terms of his will. In a codicil, to be produced to-day, you would have found his strong expression of entire trust in my care of you."

He stopped playing, and listened quietly.

"I think your father, Allan, would have found no fault with the way in which I dispensed his means for your benefit during your minority. And only when you were grown did I marry again. I have given you a brother, who is Lord Cantaloupe at present." Her look at him, which had imperceptibly faltered, was again calm and cold and unflinching as ambition's self. "The Queen may be induced to restore a title in abeyance, the Marquisate of Gourdes. In any case, he succeeds to Lord Mellon's titles. But of what use is empty rank? With heavy mortgages encumbering the broad acres and parks of Oudenard, his titles would be a mere burden. As I am left absolute mistress of the American fortune (you were a mere child at your father's death), I have decided to free my younger son's inheritance, and leave the future Lord Mellon wherewithal to support his high rank." She paused a moment, then went on rapidly: "If you are not still Prince Fortunatus by this arrangement, you will yet have control of a handsome income from my own property in the city, which I have made over to you by deed of gift this morning, Allan, and directed Mr. Redtape to tell you."

If Rexford had seemed bewildered for a moment by this most unexpected shock, his bearing was now as gallant as ever, and he confronted her with a steady look, as calm, if not as cold, as her own.

"My dear mother," he began, in an almost unconcerned tone, "if my father trusted you so absolutely, it is my pleasure to do the same. What he left is yours, doubtless, to dispose of as you will. And for the dear little boy—" he stopped suddenly, and laid a hand on the child's curly head.

Some people came in now to make their farewells; Lord Mellon entered, listless as ever; tea was served; and what with these interruptions, the gathering up of impedimenta, and starting for the steamer, there was no chance for another word in private between mother and son.

The lawyer, waiting on the deck for a few more words of instruction, took the opportunity to hand a package to Rexford; in his professional indifference there may have been a grain of pity. The young man received the thing mechanically, moved into the cabin, opened and glanced through it, and penciled a note, which he inclosed again with the document. After a while the noise and shouting of getting ready, the embarking of passengers, the farewells and tears and last words, all came to an end; and Rexford kissed the little man in his nurse's arms, and ran down the gang-plank. And, amid cheering and waving of handkerchiefs, the great ocean greyhound slipped her leash, and went speeding out over the waste of waters.

"What a deuced bore, all this fuss!" said Lord Mellon, starting for the smoking-room. But Lady Mel-

lon, going into her state-room, found there a package with broken red seals. It was the deed of gift to her son, returned with a note.

"My dear Mother," she read: "I am glad the dear little fellow is to profit by my own father's prosperity; but that is no reason I should despoil you; so I return your kind gift, which I must decline. I own, you know, a little house—cottage—what is it?—in Orange, which was my grandmother's, and still have in pocket most of last month's receipts, so shall do very well. Once more, a pleasant voyage.

"A. R."

Lady Mellon's face paled a little; she felt that he would have no favors when rights were disregarded. She shivered, drawing her wrap more closely about her as she went on deck to look at the Statue of Liberty and the wooded islands and the Jersey shores; but Allan's face came between her and the scenery, and his dark, expressive eyes, so like those of the husband of her youth, looked at her, she fancied, reproachfully. Yet she never once thought of altering her ambitious and unjust intentions.

Her son, meanwhile, made his way through the throng to where his dog-cart waited. He took the reins from the groom, who sprang up behind. "I shall sell the trap, of course," he thought, even as they went with smooth swiftness toward the Orchid, a club famous for its chef. What a ready handmaid, what a serviceable slave, is Habit in the great crises of life! Even with the golden castle in which prospective

millionaires abide tumbling about his ears, the noise and dust of its crashing walls confusing his ideas, our youth sat down as coolly as ever at his own particular table; ordered a choice little dinner, of which he hardly tasted; drank Chablis, and exchanged a word or two with Morty van Krippen, who came in with a chrysanthemum almost as large as himself in his buttonhole. And all the while he felt the hurt of a sudden wound dealt by the hand which had directed his childish steps—the hand of a woman who, of all the world, should have refrained. "It seems," he reflected, "that a husband's boundless confidence in his widow's motherly love may be abused." He had not yet learned what an exacting idol Ambition is; how she hardens her votaries into laying all sacred emotions on her altar. But, indeed, the young fellow was dazed; and, with this bitter undercurrent of thought flowing, he heard, unheeding, honest Mortimer's chatter.

"Had the impudence, you know," the latter was saying, "to call me a weak-kneed dude—at the Athletic, it was; and I heard him, and was going for him; and just then your newspaper friend, Penrose, spoke up and said *his* definition of a dude was a man who was better dressed than you. The fellows laughed, and that made me forget to hit him. For he swears those awful plaids of his come from London, you know. I mean to ask him if he got that cudgel of his at Donnybrook Fair; and then perhaps I 'll get a chance."

Mortimer was a famous sparrer for his weight, and frequently astonished grave and dignified strangers

on a first introduction by requesting them to "feel his muscle"—inherited, doubtless, from the erstwhile storekeeper in a Western mining-camp.

"Say, where 're you off to this evening, Rexford? Goin' to the opera? 'Lohengrin,' you know—Eames as *Elsa*. Beastly bore, music; I never listen to a note; but there 's the ballet, and people to talk to."

Elderly, prosperous-looking club members, coming and going, bowed with the same flattering geniality to the two young men—both supposed to be heirs to fortunes large enough to make the fathers of daughters easily accessible. "Their prophetic souls have not yet discerned the fading of my golden halo," thought Rexford, with his first misgiving. "Morty's still shimmers about his sandy curls and tip-tilted nose. Well, he 's a good-hearted little beggar, and Katherine says—oh!"

Katherine!—how had he not thought of her before since his mother's announcement? How did he stand with her father? What difference would this make? Even if Cornelius de Mansur would match her peerless self and substantial, if not extravagant, income to his—what? Five feet eleven, and empty hands—would self-respect allow? He felt for the moment savagely jealous of unconscious Mortimer, who was still in a position, materially, to woo any one. But he shook this off as unworthy, and said aloud:

"Fate cannot harm me any more to-day; I have dined. Come on, Morty. I 'm for the opera with you, and *vogue la galère*."

"I 'm willing," said Morty, "what*ever* that means," trotting along beside him, with his cane at an angle

warranted to put out somebody's eye sooner or later. But once at the opera-house, though he liked to be seen with Rexford, whom he greatly admired, he wearied presently of his companion's persistent silence during the music, and began a round of visiting through the boxes, where he was received with warmth by the fair occupants, as a small but golden lion, with a very superior roar.

"But why did you not bring Prince Fortunatus?" asked one not insensible to personal charm.

"Because he would n't come," said Morty, with the uncompromising candor of the modern gilded youth, which would have made Sir Philip Sidney shudder.

Rexford, indeed, was in no humor for the unprofitable nothings loudly chattered in the boxes. He was almost tempted to join in the occasional hisses at their noise indulged in by real music-lovers, mostly foreign, in the body of the house. In his feverishly excited mood, with the tide of music surging over him, it seemed as though the great issues of love and life and death forced themselves even into this gorgeously artificial throng. The pale spiritual lights on the stage, the mystic meanings, *Elsa's* sweet, clear notes, excited in him an irritating sense of the incongruousness of the nearest dowager's fat shoulders, generously displayed, or the priceless diamonds, whose sparkling only drew attention to another's spinal vertebræ.

"I did n't see you in the house, Penrose," he said, brushing against an acquaintance when it was over.

"Did n't get here in time for the opera; just for the vaudeville. You are coming? Then let us go

through this door. It leads to the other part of the house."

They left overcoats and sticks in the cloak-room; but kept their hats, to be presently deposited under their chairs. The miniature theater of the Vaudeville Club had a stage about the size of a billiard-table, on which the champion strong man, in scant attire, was now performing marvelous feats. Society women came trooping in; some in full dress, as they had left the opera; some, in demi-toilets, from the theater or "small and early" affairs; some in walking-dress, with hats on; all talking gaily, and grouping themselves about small tables, where the men with them fell to smoking, and ordering light drinks from the waiters gliding about. Our two had a little table to themselves.

"When Sandow has finished," said Penrose, consulting a small program, "there is—let me see—a song and dance. Then the Hindu jugglers, the Leffner family acrobats, a male quartet. I am earlier than I intended. Our theatrical critic is laid up with influenza, and I would n't trust the others to write up what I wanted—a new star. Ah, yes; here she is on the bill: 'First appearance in America—Romany dancer, Jasmina.' What will you have—B. and S.? I saw this dancer abroad once or twice, and think you will like her. Try one of these Perfectos. I brought them from Cuba myself."

The Hindu jugglers, the Leffner acrobats, the male singers, might have been performing solely for their own enjoyment, so uninterruptedly went on the drinking, smoking, chatting, visiting from box to box

and table to table. But now there was some sort of thrill of expectation communicated from one to another in the mysterious way such things are. The women leaned back more comfortably, picking up their lorgnettes; the men, on the contrary, bent forward, eyes fixed with eager expectancy on the dark-red drop-curtain. There was comparative stillness.

The orchestra began the preluding bars of "Anitra's Tanz," a clash of cymbals marking the time, and as the curtain rose a woman, quite young, glowing of color, sinuous of limb, barbarously gorgeous as to hue of dress and glitter of ornaments, stood against the crimson background and began swaying to and fro. Increasing the rapidity of movement, she presently floated hither and thither, bending, gliding, sometimes with dusky hair flowing loosely, sometimes with background of silken skirts blossoming out widely, then folding petal-wise about her. After *Elsa's* exalted spirituality, this was to Rexford from moonlight to glowing firelight. With nerves high-pitched and impressionable, he missed not a note of the music, not a movement of the dance. Was it only his fancy that the dancer's thrilling gaze turned more than once in their direction?

"What are you trying to write there?" he asked the journalist, in an undertone. "To describe those rhythmic Gipsy movements would be to put in words a wild Moskowski rhapsody, or give in prose the swaying of a field of scarlet poppies blown by the wind. You cannot do it."

Penrose, as impenetrable as usual in demeanor, was taking a note or two. "You like her?" he asked.

"She is a beauty," declared Rexford. "Her eyes are stars, her lips crimson flowers! But she is a mere incident of the evening, which is over! Whither away now? It 's only one o'clock. You would n't desert me so soon?"

He spoke at random; and Penrose looked at him attentively, as he had once or twice before during the evening. "I can give you a while longer," said he, "when I send these notes."

He found a messenger, and then they called a hack, and turned in again at a club where high play was the rule. An hour or so later they stood outside.

"What have you been doing?" Penrose asked gravely.

"Just burning my bridges behind me. I had but a few thousand, and they are gone. Sir!" lowering his tone to a mock-dramatic one, "you see before you a disinherited Infortunatus. The little Lord Cantaloupe now wears my robe, and in a short while there will be none so poor to do me reverence. I were no Ancient Mariner to force into reluctant ear the story of my ill fortune, were it not that by the morrow, as sure as you stand there, 't will be a topic of the town. Give me a light, will you?" He pulled himself together. "Don't think me quite a fool, chattering of my own affairs at such short notice. But though I have n't been with you much, old man, when a fellow 's on a strain, you have a sort of way about you—"

"It 's only that I like you," said the other, with an entire absence of demonstration. "And if things are as you say, I wish you 'd see me at my office to-morrow. You might find it amusing to force the world,

with some sort of talent held at its head, to stand and deliver. As for me, I have been a wanderer, and even at times a refugee, in Alsatia, and am no better than I should be. But I find the gospel of work better than none at all, to keep one from going to pieces. Until to-morrow, then." He went down-town toward the huge edifice whose crest, rearing among the stars, looks out over the bay and down upon the Goddess of Liberty, keeping watch in the harbor—a building alive with activity, twinkling with electric lights, where great, untiring engines revolve, sending out the results of thought and enterprise to the ends of the earth.

It was a curious thing that this man of the world, ordinarily quite impassive in bearing, and supposed in the office and the club to be abnormally unemotional, should have been the one to divine, with a great pity, the pangs of wounded trust and reverence and affection which tore his young companion. The revelation kept him sleepless until sunshine lighted the streets again, and awakened life roared and surged once more among the city's marts.

IV

AR up-town, in Central Park West, there is a row of five or six handsome stone villas, which were named collectively by the original owner, an Anglophile, Buckingham Terrace. Among these, the soberest in architecture, quietest in appearance, and most widely bordered with shaven lawn, belonged to Miss Valentia Lavender; which proved that that estimable lady had laid up quite a pretty sum during the years following her lamented father's sudden death in the most respectable street in Philadelphia. He had left her his blessing only, and a choice collection of debts, which influenced her to go to New York and open there a "Fashionable School for Young Ladies." It might be supposed from this that she enjoyed, in addition, that most valuable heritage, a complete and liberal education. But when, thanks to a wide acquaintance in the metropolis, and friendly assistance from Mr. Pundit and others, her school flourished apace, it was as a business woman and financier that Miss Lavender had been a brilliant success. She had a staff of professors, native and foreign, to do the necessary drudgery; and it was a fact that when a new pupil, in some ill-advised moment, pre-

sumed rashly to refer a scientific or literary question to the principal, she was conscious mainly of two things: first, an immediate chill, and soon afterward a calm, but paralyzing, criticism, administered in public, of some special act, or breeding in general. And if she was a girl of ordinary feminine perceptions, she soon learned the connection between these two events, and refrained from further experiments.

But this was a long time ago, and Miss Lavender was now the head of a "finishing academy." That is, she received into her own elegant home a limited number of young girls between sixteen and twenty-one, at some fabulous sum yearly.

"But what is mere dross, Miss Lavender," asked Archibald Pundit, gently waving his monocle, "to the priceless advantages—to the absolutely unique privilege, don't you know—which this raw material enjoys with you, don't you perceive?"

They were pacing sedately the upper terrace, while from the lawn below came subdued calling and laughter of girls playing tennis; and an autumn sunset shed golden colors on the park before them. Through a side entrance masters in elocution, calisthenics, languages, music, the Delsarte method, conversation, the art of using a fan, a lorgnette,—what not?—came and went. Pupils were summoned now and then from the tennis-court; and from behind the window-panes an occasional running of vocal scales made itself heard, or a smothered burst of instrumental pyrotechnics.

"You are always kind, Mr. Pundit," the principal remarked; "but, without wishing to flatter myself,

there is positively no other finishing academy in this city. Of course I don't mean with regard to art or the languages, or any of that useless stuff—learning which is entirely optional with my girls. Those things are very well for people who have to earn a living. But for daughters of the wealthy, who will be matrimonial prizes, complexion, figure, dress, style, ease of manner, intimate acquaintance with the customs of the best society—these are of the utmost importance, and these things I guarantee them; as also to launch them afterward, if desired—with your valuable assistance, Mr. Pundit. Sometimes, in that event, I am obliged to insist on the parents keeping out of the way, if they are quite impossible. For instance, that old Prime Western, who has such a fortune in gas-wells, and sent in his printed card to me with 'P. D. Q. Western' on it. Ah, I see you smile, Mr. Pundit! Well, I may have confused the initials with some foolish play. I saw at once that he would spoil everything unless kept in the background; but I make the daughter call herself Miss Prime-Western, with the hyphen. She is quite stupid and very pretty; so I saw it was perfect nonsense to make her spoil her looks studying all the things he wanted, because he had n't had no early advantages himself.' 'Leave it all to me,' I said; and he is very grateful, and pays for all the extras she does n't learn. But you know, Mr. Pundit, I do not keep a kindergarten. Ah, there is the riding-master."

Six or eight horses had by this time been brought round to the side gate, and several girls were being carefully mounted. Angelica van Krippen, in irre-

proachable London habit and high hat, now came up, and, after saluting Mr. Pundit, asked, "Shall I refer Herr Strebel to you, Miss Lavender? He seems annoyed because I wish to ride during the hour for German. But I told him that uncouth language was ruining the shape of my mouth; and the verb *schrecken einjagen*, on which he is now exercising us, is especially distorting."

"I think you might drop German, Miss van Krippen," said the principal, gravely. "Riding is better for your complexion. But I wish you would practise your French—which I, ahem! believe is fair—with our guests from Paris this evening. And ask Mr. Praneer to bring the class back in an hour's time, as the hair-dresser and manicure will be here before the dressing-bell rings." The cavalcade clattered off into the Park, and she continued to Mr. Pundit, "I insist on full dress every evening. It is a habit which must be firmly implanted, as indispensable under all circumstances. I remember that young Dashington, who was such a lion in society and in Wall street, and is in the penitentiary now, you know—well, he said that after losing his fortune and other people's, and honesty and reputation, he never really lost his self-respect until he ceased to dress for dinner. You will dine with us to-night, Mr. Pundit? A previous engagement? I am sorry. We are to have young De Vaurien and his friend, the chargé d'affaires, Mauvais Sujet. I have a charming letter from his aunt in the Faubourg, begging me to let her nephew admire some of the 'buds in my conservatory before they are exposed to the full glare of society's sun.'"

"Very pretty, very pretty indeed, Miss Lavender—and shrewd too."

"Yes" (bridling); "I thought so. And was annoyed to receive by the same mail a letter from a former pupil, who says rather roughly that she thought it right to warn me that these two young men are said to have come over in search of an American heiress. Their debts are enormous, she says it is reported. But there is always more or less malicious gossip—and poor Milly seems to be embittered. You remember Millicent Ophir, Mr. Pundit? It was you, by the way, who first presented her husband, the Baron Rouge-et-Noir, to her."

"Yes," said Archibald; "a very brilliant match, don't you know, between money and rank. They say, I believe, that Rouge-et-Noir spends all her money gambling, and even, ahem! even beats her. But I don't believe these exaggerated reports, you see, any more than those about the Marquis de Monte Carlo, who married our little protégée, Miss McFlamm."

"Miss van Krippen will be one of next season's débutantes, I think we agreed; but I am willing to have her meet a few partis beforehand. They are simply rolling in wealth, as you know, of course; and the girl is not bad looking. Her mother, a very vulgar woman, by the way, who has actually been seen to put on her gloves in the street, would be pleased if she secured rank."

"It seems rather a pity, don't you know, for all our fortunes to go abroad. And you and I, dear madam, have made such brilliant successes in that line that

we can afford, I think, to marry a few of your charming pupils here."

"She will have opportunities for that too," said Miss Lavender, thoughtfully. "Her brother dines with us occasionally, and also attends our very exclusive dancing-class at Cudworth's with some of his friends."

"Ye-es; but the best thing for such a very rich girl, whose name, you understand, was originally Cripps, would be to find a parti, don't you perceive, willing to exchange family for money. There is young Rexford, say."

"Who has nothing at all now, and refuses his mother's munificent gift, my dear Mr. Pundit! Too erratic, I think."

"I was his father's friend, Miss Lavender, and owe it to his memory, don't you understand, to give the young fellow a lift if it comes in my way. And it would rescue him from that lot of musicians and artists and writers, and such fellows, don't you know, out of whose depths, once well in, there is no redemption."

It occurred to him that the last phrase had a scriptural flavor, and he bowed his head slightly, as he did in church at the responses, and wore a piously disinterested air. He did not mention that this had been a point designedly reached, and that there was in his pocket a letter from Lady Mellon, in which she suggested to the high priest of "form" that his aid in this matter would be valued, and even delicately compensated, by an old acquaintance.

As for the unconscious subject of his charitable

plans, he had let several weeks elapse after Penrose's invitation before accepting it, and without seeing him; for their orbits seldom crossed.

"I have not been idle, however," he averred, when he followed his card, at last, up the little black staircase leading to the assistant editor's office. "On the contrary, I was never so busy before. There were horses and traps to sell; apartment at the Albatross —unlucky name, by the way—to get rid of. Unnecessary? Oh, no; a gilded cobweb holds you by so many fine little meshes that there is no having freedom of limb until one breaks away from it all. And Prince Fortunatus" (laughing) "would like to leave the stage before his audience leaves him. How can I tell that some houses, now hospitable, may not soon be serving me to a dish of cold shoulder! No, no; let me depart with the honors of war, at least."

"Other philosophers have remarked before me," said Penrose, making dots on a bit of paper, "that as long as a man turns a pleasant face to the world, it is glad to see him. It is mostly in one's over-sensitive consciousness that Mr. Worldly Wiseman's slights exist; and you have many things to make you acceptable if you chose to stay where you are. As youth, talent, a face" (smiling kindly at his companion) "and figure not repulsive to most people—no? Then that chapter ends. And for departed glories" (he began walking about the office), "those things pass away like a shadow, and like a post that runneth on. . . . And as a ship that passeth through the waves, whereof, when it is gone by, the trace cannot be found, nor the path of its keel in the waters. . . . Or as when a bird

flieth through the air, of the passage of which no mark can be found, but only the sound of the wings beating the light air and parting it by the force of her flight. . . . Or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known."

"That is fine! that is sonorous!" exclaimed Rexford, his eyes sparkling.

"Yes—you know who quotes Scripture for his own purpose; and mine is to draw you into my world. You will heed the voice of the charmer if he charm melodiously, for I know your special weakness." He assumed a business tone. "You sometimes write the words for your own songs? I had heard so. We occasionally pay for original verse—if it will compare with what we get from other papers without pay. But in the mean time, for steady work, you might take our musical and dramatic critic's place—he is still ill. Your knowledge of music would come in there. And there are odd jobs, such as the foot-ball game to-morrow afternoon—that would be easy for a university man. And—and bring in any matter that presents itself; a fresh touch is often acceptable."

"Well," said Rexford, smiling, but a little flurried, "you give me variety, at least, from poetry to foot-ball. Enter a raw recruit, and here his weapons." He seized a bundle of pens.

"Did you call me?" inquired a flaxen-haired youth, putting his head in at the door.

"I did not," said Penrose, "but as you are in, let me introduce you to Mr. Rexford—Mr. Jenkins, one of ours. Mr. Rexford is joining our ranks."

"Glad to meet you, sir," said Jenkins, who had often admired Rexford at a distance, and marveled at the brilliancy and subsequent eclipse of his fortune. "Finest career in the world," declared Mr. Jenkins, "always" (with a heavy sigh) "excepting art."

"You must know," said Penrose, "that Mr. Jenkins, whose specialty is frequenting the giddy haunts of fashion and describing the ladies' pretty gowns, is discontented because fate will not allow him to attain eminence in music or the drama. He longs for the technic and hair of Paderewski."

"I hope Mr. Rexford knows chaff from wheat," observed the careless Jenkins. But, as he appeared to have some sort of business with his chief, Rexford took his leave a few moments afterward, ran down the narrow stairs whistling, "A Wandering Minstrel I," and laughed when he found himself with one of the pens still in his hand. He thrust it in his pocket, and crossed over to the elevated road, still whistling softly. It was a proof of the soundness of the young fellow's nature that he did not shrink from beginning life again on this other plane, but really felt a certain exhilaration at thought of the conflict to come. His curiosity, too, was newly alert to observe the humors of the traveling crowd about him in the car, from contact with which he had been generally kept hitherto by the possession of a dog-cart and groom.

"Everything is possible 'matter' now," he thought, with the instinct of the budding journalist; and, finding nothing of much interest about him, he took to observing and making mental notes for future use of the flying panorama outside. A man at a fifth-story

window shaving himself, and humming a broken bar or two of a popular song between strokes; a baker's sign, "Muffins and Crumpets"; "Aqui se habla Español"; "Spanknebel, Phrenologist"; a woman hanging out many-colored, fluttering garments to dry on a roof clothes-line; tenements with dilapidated bedding on fire-escapes, and a pitiful bit of black crape hanging at one window; huge wall-posters of the Thingvalla Steamship Line; a soup-kitchen for the very poor, and "The Only Bible Truth Supply" for the same clients; an Italian boarding-house wafting in a smell of garlic when the conductor opened a door; the Lutherisches Pilger-Haus; "Studio for Welsh Rabbits"; "Spook Pictures Developed Cheap"; "Thornbush's Chop-house"; "Deutsche Apotheke"—these and all the other kaleidoscopic signs and sights of the unfashionable quarters of a cosmopolis he passed; and, instead of the indifference with which he would have regarded them not long before, he felt in his heart the stirring of a latent kinship with all humanity. And just after he ran down the steps at his station and started toward Broadway, an accident occurred to arouse him into warmer sympathy. There was a collision between vehicles; some one was knocked down; a throng formed as quickly as such throngs do; and a policeman essayed, with voice and club, to procure a little clear space and air around a motionless figure on the pavement.

"What keeps the ambulance?" asked Rexford, shouldering his way through.

"I dunno" (shortly); "it 's been rung for twice; seems like it ain't a-comin'."

"Why," the young man exclaimed, "the hospital 's only two blocks off! She should have help at once. See here, give her to me; I can carry her easily." The straight-shouldered figure, toughened by polo and other athletics, stooped and picked up the unconscious woman, her cheap, blood-stained gown hanging against his sleeve. "Come on," he said to the policeman, who, taken by surprise, tramped at his side, followed by such of the crowd as had no business or desire of their own to point them; and, turning a corner to the hospital, they ran against Mortimer van Krippen. "Why, hello!" cried he. "What sort of procession is this? It is n't the 17th of March!"

But when the good-hearted little dandy understood, he too trotted along to the hospital door, where Rexford delivered up his wounded charge. "My name? No, certainly not," to a man with a note-book. "Like the spring flowers, it 'has nothing to do with the case.'" He took Morty by the arm and strode off for fear some one might recognize him.

"Now," grumbled Morty, "what do you mean by it —all this hiding out and not letting anybody know where you are? Never at a club, and a strange fellow in your place at the Albatross! Where are you, anyhow, when a chap wants you?"

"Right here, then—for the present only, however, I must tell you," replied Rexford, stopping at a hotel. "But, Van Krippen, you are aware that I 've retired from the giddy vortex, and can't even ask you up just now, as I 've some work on hand."

"Work!" echoed Morty; "well, it's a beastly shame!"

"Pooh!" (loftily) "there are hundreds would be glad

to get it. You must study up social economics." He was eager to get rid of his good-natured companion, and try his not altogether prentice hand at something for the "Argus."

"But see here," persisted Mortimer, "I 'm not going to let you slip entirely. Can't you come to the Orpheus to-morrow? I 've a box, you know. Got Miss Lavender to let my sister out for the night. She 'll be there with Miss de Mansur and her father. There 'll be some other fellows. Benefit performance, you know —sort of *olla podrida*—no, that 's a beastly stuff with oil and garlic, and nearly killed me at a Spanish restaurant once! But you know what I mean, old chappy —new dancer, Paderewski, and that."

As Rexford was music mad, the last name was one to conjure with—especially when Katherine's was added. "I 'm a weak fool," he hastily thought, "but I have n't been near her since; and—why not?" He said aloud carelessly, "Well, I 'll drop in for a while, thank you, Van Krippen. I may have to write the critique on that performance."

V

HOUGH Cornelius de Mansur lifted his voice in protest against many features of modern journalism, the paper which annoyed him least in these matters was usually an accompaniment to his breakfast roll. Carefully avoiding the murders and elaborately worked-up sensations and other feasts of horror prepared for the morbid, as well as the unconsidered trifles snapped up by those who greedily relish personal gossip, it was his amiable habit to glance over the pages, and if anything of interest appeared to pass it over presently to Katherine. And on this morning, after looking at notices of new books, he handed her the page on which were also dramatic reviews and short verses, mostly copied, which treated of birds and butterflies and blossoms and young affections, and such pretty little tiny kickshaws. And among these was one signed "A. R." which Katherine noted with quickening of the pulse and elaborate indifference of manner. It was called "Love's Signal Service," and ran:

When I would know
If balmy airs or stormy winds do blow,
My lady's face I view.
The fine and level-fronting eyebrows dark,
The soft cheek's flaming crimson flag I mark,
Tempestuous days to rue.

Or would I ask
If I in frost must freeze, or warmth may bask,
I seek my lady's eyes.
Should she their light, all careless, turn away,
Or veil them, coldest waves relentless play
On heart that prostrate lies.

But when I find
My heavens clear, my sunshine to my mind,
Harsh frost and storm o'erpast,
What sweetest rose can match her cheek or mouth?
Her glance, that 's softer far than breeze of South,
Makes weather bright at last.

If but my dear
With such fair signs the days would always cheer,
Sigh or smile so,
Blue skies and zephyrs mild throughout the year,
Sweet spring in winter, taste of heaven here,
Then I should know.

In another column was a fairly interesting criticism on last night's opera, signed "A. R." also.

"Nothing but trash there, I suppose?" asked papa, unconscious, lifting his cup. "Remind me, Katherine, of that meeting of the Grolier on the fourth. The coffee is exceptionally good this morning."

He tasted it leisurely and placidly, no more suspecting the quickened emotions behind the clear eyes of the cherished, stately daughter across the table than any of us suspect what is going on in the hearts and minds of our nearest and dearest who walk always at our side and drink of the same cup. And she answered, laughing, "You will not need to be reminded of that meeting, you blessed hypocrite! You will think of nothing else until then."

And with that very crimson flag the writer spoke of

flaming on her cheek, and hotter anger within, she thought, "Has the gentleman, perchance, been flirting with some shrew? Beshrew me if I care!" then scorned herself for using his sometimes playfully stilted phrases; for it was in her pride that she was, after all, most wounded. This young nymph, with a heart accessible to all other kindly and tender emotions, had walked with her head high, defying the eternal Eros. And though no one but herself knew that her step had faltered for a moment, that her glance had drooped, that an appealing meekness had threatened to subdue her, none the less was her resentment. "How dared he look and speak so—with no sequel! After—after everything he has said and done—not to approach us for weeks! Perhaps his mamma—the Lady Mellon—disapproves, and he dutifully acquiesces!" So by evening the varying and not readily controlled emotions of the morning had settled into a cool contempt, to which it might have been well if the heart of the "Love's Signal" observer had not been exposed. It never once occurred to the unworldly spirit of the girl that his altered fortunes would seem to a high-spirited man reason enough for not unduly pressing before the more fortunate ones attracted by her beauty and charm.

A few of these minions of fortune, as young Royall Worcester, Dick Crowne Derby, one of the Ashley Vanderlyns, and others, were in evidence in the box at the Orpheus, grouped about the two girls, when Rexford entered that evening. He was rather buoyant in manner, for, even if it were but a verse or so and an opinion or two, they had been printed—and everything

must have a beginning. He greeted Mr. de Mansur, who responded cordially, "How d' ye do, my dear boy, and where have you been all this while?" Angelica van Krippen looked at him distantly through her lorgnette; then murmured, "Have you a strawberry-mark? No? Then you are—you are my long-lost friend!" and gave him her hand.

"I must not," he thought, "meet *her* eye indecently soon or show my wild gladness;" deferring his bliss for the space of a word with this one or a jest with that one; and lo! when he did meet her glance it was as bright and distant as stars on a frosty night. She said "Good evening," as to a casual acquaintance, and, with Royall Worcester at one shoulder and Morty van Krippen talking over the other, there was small chance of approaching. "But what does it mean?" He forgot that the changes and preoccupations of the past weeks and his absorption in his own affairs were unexplained, expecting, quite humanly, that she would have been awaiting his return with suspended breath and eyes softly luminous. "Of course all the world knows of my altered fortune, and lots of people will be different. But she—Katherine de Mansur—a being noble and spiritual, compact of snow and fire—oh! by heaven!" He winced, and then laughed at something Ashley Vanderlyn said without knowing what it was. He held in his hand some pale roses, with ferns, and when she suggested, with repellent carelessness, "For Paderewski, of course?" he answered, with equally polite indifference, "Should one give flowers to a man?"

"We only needed this worldly old noodle to make the party complete!" he thought, when Archie Pundit

came in; which was unjust to his father's old friend, who was well enough pleased to note his proximity to Angelica van Krippen. He began now to devote himself with feverish assiduity to his fair neighbor, who gave flattering attention to his least remark and paid no heed to the comedy with which the program opened. But Miss van Krippen was a clear-headed damsel, under whose flaxen brows and piquant little nose events might pass exciting special wonder without a sign from her.

Now the great pianist appeared, long and slender, with shock of light-colored hair and features regular and too cold in expression, it would seem, to denote the emotional artistic temperament. He played Schumann's "Papillons" superbly; and when the enthusiasm which followed could be quieted, he gave his own tender and melodious "Chant du Voyageur." A little later it was Liszt's arrangement of "Hark, Hark, the Lark!"

"*Ars longa, vita brevis,*" said Cornelius de Mansur, "which is trite, but true. It makes humanity's futile struggling for this or that seem ignoble, sordid, when these immortal melodies and harmonies soar like that lark to 'heaven's gate' and join the music of the spheres. Yes, and will still resound when our hot hearts and restless minds are dust!"

"True, true, quite true," said Archibald Pundit, who knew no more of music than of Sanskrit, and detested any reference to man's inevitable end as "very bad form, don't you know."

"Thank you, Mr. de Mansur," said Rexford, simply. He had felt both the exaltation and the soothing

consequent on music. Cornelius gave him a friendly glance. Ashley Vanderlyn belonged to a Southern family whose traditions inculcated deference to age; so he had listened to the old gentleman with respect. The others, except Rexford, had not listened at all. Morty was trying to distract Katherine's attention, and Angelica was keeping most of the young men amused by running comments on Mr. Pundit, whom she examined as though he were some rare specimen of beetle. "I love to see him beat time," she murmured; "he always does it in public, and never does it right. He says the opera is primarily a social function, and the artists and listeners are merely incidental. Says how would they be supported if society did n't do it! No money, no opera. Says he shows himself there as a duty to the public, and considers his subscription gives him full right to talk all the time if he wishes. Says it 's very good in society women to give ordinary music-lovers a chance to see their diamonds and gowns, which 'otherwise they would never have, don't you know.'"

"I had n't thought of that," said Royall Worcester.

"He comes to Miss Lavender's evenings sometimes," she continued, "and told me the other night that what I sang was a 'little noisy, but not otherwise disagreeable.' I was delighted, for I suspected then that he might have heard me speak of him as a 'pompous old idiot.' Yes, I know it was horrid, but I meant it to shock Miss Lavender. He is said to be paying his addresses to our Valentia. He is a widower, you know, of attenuated income and expensive habits; and she has money and is a descendant of Poor Richard, if she

is the head of a finishing academy! His coat of arms would look well on her dark-green coupé. But he will never see it there—oh dear, no! She is an excellent business woman, with remarkably level head, and knows when she is well off, I think. Ah, here comes Ignace once more!"

The pianist played again, and then a final encore, and the delight of the audience knew no bounds. Women stood up in the rear to catch a glimpse of him, shouting and waving their handkerchiefs; those in front pressed and crowded to the footlights, taking off their boutonnières to pass them over into his reluctant hands.

"He looks very bored," said Katherine, "as though he might soon insist upon having a body-guard. It must be a penalty of greatness that admirers should overstep the homage due to art, and infringe on the rights of the man. Too bad to have all this noise spoil those last heavenly chords!"

It was the first time she had seemed to address him directly, and Rexford, still under the spell of the music, answered softly, "Yes, it is too bad. I must have him to play for you and your father only in my rooms, if you will."

If he had forgotten for a moment, her look of slight surprise instantly recalled while it chilled him. "Ah, I have reminded her that I am no longer Prince Fortunatus, but a man of no consequence."

He bent to tell Miss van Krippen the name of the new Spanish air the orchestra now played. "Yes, her own name is Jasmina, I believe. There she is."

The dancer wore now a Calabrian peasant dress and

carried castanets, which clicked in time with the odd, rhythmic tread of the bolero. The "bravas" and excited cheers were as on her first appearance, and, as then, the great starry eyes blazed and softened alternately, when, gliding to the front, her mute daring demand for admiration changed into appeal. And suddenly, with hands held straight down at her sides and fingers locked upon the castanets, she came swiftly just below the Van Krippen box, quite near, and stood perfectly still, looking up. The orchestra, astonished, still continued the strain. The party looked down at her.

"She awaits her due," said Rexford, and, gazing down into the dusky eyes upraised, tossed his flowers to her. She caught them before they fell, pressed them with a passionate gesture to her heart, and went on with the dance. When the curtain came down after her last recall, he perceived Penrose standing near the doorway, who beckoned to him. "Not going to stay for the last act of Brummel?" asked Van Krippen. "That ends the bill, you know; and I thought you 'd come to supper afterward."

"Can't this evening, thank you," he answered. He had not seen Katherine shrink and bite her lip when her flowers were thrown to the dancer. "I am late now; I must see one of ours—on business." He made a comprehensive farewell bow, and Katherine's in return had perhaps an extra film of ice.

"Very bad form," said Mr. Pundit, disgusted, "for a man to allude to business in society. Mark my words, that young man is deteriorating, don't you understand."

"I would have come for you," said Penrose, "but saw old Archie there, and would n't affliet him unnecessarily. You 'll lose the treat of seeing him enjoy the 'Beau'; kindred spirits, he thinks; and they tell me he insisted on shaking hands with Mansfield the first time he saw him act the part. Jenkins is here, and will give you notes of the rest to write up, and add to your own of Paddy—*ne vous en déplaise, maestro*—and of Jasmina. By the way, youngster, you distinguished yourself with your flowers, and set a bad example, for I saw Van Krippen throw his sister's down afterward, for which that little lady appeared to rate him soundly. Would you like" (he drew out his watch and glanced at it carelessly)—"you might like to meet Jasmina, whose other name is Madame Vaskarós. I knew her in Paris, and have the entrée to her dressing-room. She said something about wishing to have you presented."

Allan Rexford wondered a little that Penrose had not mentioned this previous acquaintance when they first saw her at the vaudeville. But what did it matter to him? "A lovely creature," he commented, "and as graceful and light as thistle-down. Of course let us go."

They went around to the stage entrance, where Penrose's careless hand-wave reassured the porter; at the end of a dingy little passage they stumbled over some steps leading to the star's room. "*Entrez!*" called the shrill voice of a maid. They went in where Jasmina sat before a dressing-table strewn with the necessaries of a stage toilet—curling-tongs, rouge, India ink, rice powder, perfume, all in confusion. She still wore her Calabrian dress; but the maid had folded

a crimson velvet and fur carriage-wrap about her and was removing an inconveniently high comb from her hair. She gave an impatient movement as they entered, and the dusky crown fell in undulating masses over her shoulders. "It is nothing," she said in French; "leave it so." The lace scarf the maid threw over it was hardly blacker. She did not wait, but rose and advanced to them with a swift glide. "Ah, Stephen, is it you?" Only the accent was foreign. "And your friend, Mr. Raix—oh, the hard name! I have heard Mr. Penrose speak so much of you. The lovely flowers, too." She raised them to her face. Her tables were loaded with others, but these were all she held. "I would ask you both to supper, but I am so tired to-night."

There was something appealing in her wearied tone, and quite softly youthful in her manner. "Ah, you liked it? You are both so kind; some night soon, then. And, Stephen, about to-morrow, when I am to make trial with the manager of the Rosemont—by your interest. Tell me, will you come or will you send some one at twelve o'clock?"

"I cannot come then, Jasmina, at that hour. It is quite a sure thing, your engagement. The press notices have made him eager to see you himself. But Mr. Rexford may be able to go." By this time they were at her carriage door, the maid following. Then she said, seating herself, "It will be for Mr. Raixfore I will dance, then, not for the stupid manager." She raised her flowers once more to her face, leaned out once more until they could see her shining eyes. "Good night! good night!" and she was gone.

"Coquettish, I suppose, as they usually are?" Rexford said tentatively.

His quiet companion paused a few moments, looking straight ahead, and then said deliberately, "No, I should say *not* coquettish—as they usually are. Jasmina is rather unusual, I think."

VI

HEN Rexford jarred the finest chords of Mr. Pundit's nature by turning his back on that gentleman's select circle and casting in his lot with the "Argus," Penrose had suggested, "That 's an inconveniently distant place you stay at now. Why not come down a little nearer the office? There 's a vacant room or two near mine at our place, I think." So he had moved down to Penrose's lodgment, a sort of pigeon-house up among the clouds, and commanding a view of the East River and the Brooklyn Bridge, and having its little nooks filled with all sorts and conditions of fledgelings, who were trying their wings and sharpening their beaks in their more or less venturesome flights.

Our young men's floor was the highest of all—"for the air and the scenery," said Penrose. "Jenkins calls this floor 'Simla'; for he says that in July it 's quite like getting up among the hills from the East Indian heat of the pavements." That ingenuous youth occupied an apartment separated from their rooms by only a narrow passage, and when Rexford awoke on the morning after the Orpheus benefit performance he could hear him declaiming as he performed his toilet. He was, indeed, announcing loudly:

"I was a viking old!
My deeds, though manifold,
No scald in song has told,
No saga taught thee."

"Open the doors," called Rexford, in a sleepy voice, "so that I can hear you." And when the other, deceived, threw open the two doors between, it was narrowly to escape a well-aimed boot-jack. It was hurled back and followed by the stout figure of the elocutionist, whose wiry hair, with the aid of two brushes, was being forced into chevaux-de-frise on each side of his ears.

"What do you mean?" he asked indignantly. "Have you not taste enough to appreciate Longfellow?"

"You look like a comic valentine," responded Rexford, cruelly. "Will you dare to tell me that, fatter and scanter of breath than any Prince of Denmark ever was, you mean to recite 'The Skeleton in Armor' in public!"

"Sir, you may go to—go three! go four, if you will! I would have you to know that I am the bright particular star of our Amateur Dramatic Club, and it is your loss that you have not heard me. I must give you a ticket for the next performance; it 's for a charity, and to be followed by a masquerade." He finished his hair at the glass, then exclaimed, "See here, don't you mean to get up to-day? 'Falsely luxurious,'" he pompously spouted, "'when will man arise, and, springing from his bed of sloth, enjoy the cool, the fragrant, and the solemn hour, to meditation due and sacred song!' also sometimes to one's laundress, when she calls with her little bill; I hear her now

at my door. I will return anon—whenever that is!" He went off humming in falsetto Neidlinger's "Serenade." He was perfectly at home now in his fellow-scribbler's room, having lost his former awe of him as a "tremendous swell," and having become accustomed to his presence in this hive of working bees. But Rexford had that touch of human sympathy, that accessibility to his kind, which made his handsome face and form welcome everywhere, as such happily endowed natures are. With Penrose, uneffusive of demeanor ordinarily, coldly exacting in most things, perfectly reticent as to his past and inscrutable as to present aims or hopes, he grew daily more intimate. Even now there was a fragrant steam arising from the coffee bubbling over the lamp left in readiness for him by the elder on going out—one of many little unprecedented acts of thoughtfulness, which made Jenkins open wider his already rather staring light eyes.

After dressing and taking the cup of coffee—the only breakfast these night-birds needed—Rexford remembered the appointment at the Rosemont. He remembered Katherine, too, as he went quickly through the streets to the theater, but it was with a quickening of resentment which last night's chill of disappointment had brought. "There are Royall Worcester, Crowne Derby, and the rest always at her elbow. They still have fortunes to spend! Or perhaps De Mansur is more mercenary than I thought. Morty is an amiable little fellow, if he is not bright, and has more money than all of them together. His sister is with her constantly. O Katherine, could it be possible!" He ran into some one and apologized hastily. "Katherine, Katherine,"

his thoughts went on. "Well, 'if she be not fair to me'—if of herself she will not love, nothing can make her." He was distracted enough when he stopped at the back door of the stage entrance of the Rosemont, which the ancient Cerberus unbolted and flung open with, "Will ye please to step inside? The manager 's there waitin'."

He went in. The manager greeted him hastily: "Make yourself comfortable anywhere you can, Mr. Rexford. Advertised yesterday for girls for the Dance of Bedouins, you know, and the cry is, 'Still they come!' Can you get through? Don't mind the crowd." He bustled about, himself trying to bring some sort of order out of confusion. Girls had answered the advertisement; not only the hundred required, but twice or thrice that number; and they surged through the narrow hallway and out on the stage—girls and girls galore! Tall and short, stout and thin, fair and dark. They melted away in the shadow of the great stage and emerged again into the open space in front of the footlights. Two arc-lamps, dangling from mysterious heights above, shed a dim light over the scene. Rexford, as soon as might be, made his way through the armies and took refuge in a box.

"Please to form a row," said the manager, marshaling them for their ordeal. A pretty, well-shaped girl stepped timidly to the front and hung her head. After being carefully inspected, he made her a sign of approval, and she retreated smiling. Then another came forward.

"Stand to one side. You will not do."

"What 's the matter?"

"Why, you are scarcely five feet high. Arab women are tall and willowy. Stand aside."

The next accepted with a sigh a sign of dismissal, but Rexford had an uneasy misgiving that she burst into tears after retiring. Suppose she needed the money for an ill or aged father or mother, or some little sisters? He was obliged to harden his heart with the reflection that, even so, the manager could not engage them all. The number required was at last secured, and accepted and rejected were alike shown out again by the gruff doorkeeper, who was really a kind old fellow, with a rough word or two of sympathy and encouragement for the dejected.

"Now that 's over," said the manager. "The men will not come until to-morrow. As for trying Jasmina, that 's a mere form. Between you and me, we are bound to have her at any price. Here she is now."

He left Rexford in the semi-darkness of the proscenium-box to meet the dancer, who advanced to the front, leaving her maid with wraps in the rear of the stage. She nodded quietly to the manager, not appearing to see any one else. Her silken costume, all black, seemed a sheath from which the graceful shoulder and head, clear olive tints and scarlet of cheek and lip, glowed in relief. Her foot, its arched instep defined in the black satin shoe which clung to its perfect mold, tapped the floor for a moment or two in time with the orchestra magically appearing from beneath the stage. "Ver-ry, ver-ry slow," she told them, and began. The manager clapped his hands at the end. "I think, madame, we will contrive to suit each other. If you are willing, the contract may be

signed to-day. We hope for a long run for 'The Pearl of the Bedouins.' Excuse me for a moment; some one is calling." The orchestra suddenly disappeared into the floor again. "Wait for me outside," she told her maid; and then, opening the box door, came down a step and seated herself beside Rexford.

"It was so good of you to come. Not that I care for the press notices. Stephen scolds me a little because I do not care—says I am too wild and thoughtless about those things; but what does it really matter? The sun will shine just the same; a tambourine makes a good enough orchestra; and bread with liberty, and a little stew now and then, is always possible." She rolled her *r's* a little, not unpleasantly. There was about her a faint atmosphere of some sort of perfume—sandalwood perhaps—Oriental in its suggestiveness. "A firefly, I tell Stephen, lives but for a day and night or so, and needs not much. But I will like to thank you for coming. I was glad to dance for—for some one else than the old manager. And I will not sign a long contract—no; it would suffocate me! I dance at the vaudeville to-night. Will you come, after, to supper with Stephen? Mr.—ah, Mr.—your name is so hard!"

"I have another" (beginning to laugh); "you might call me Allan."

"Allan! Allan! not quite so bad. Say mine. It is more musical—Jasmina."

He could not refuse, still laughing, to say her name over once or twice, to her almost childish pleasure.

"Then you will come?" She touched his hand with her smooth brown fingers, and was gone before the

manager came bustling back with profuse apologies. He was nearly as attentive to the "Argus" representative as hitherto to the fashionable patron.

When the two men were going along the street that night together, Penrose, after being answered at random two or three times, inquired, "*Où est la femme?* I seem to hear the rustle of her garments."

"I beg your pardon—oh! I was not necessarily in that delightful atmosphere. I may have been with Reginald Crofton in Africa, pulling off kid gloves to startle the natives, or up in my room, attempting to make Pegasus trot in time with some of my verselets."

"I beg your pardon—I was intrusive."

"My dear fellow, no. Who has a better right? I suppose I have been doing my work to-day on a perfunctory basis, which your keen sight has noted. I am suffering, in fact, from a disillusionment, which has lately caused me to wear my rue with a difference."

"That," said Penrose, "is, I surmise, a pang you share with many after first youth slips away, which, like charity, believeth and hopeth all things. Maturity mostly spends itself clutching desperately at what fragments are left of that early beautiful faith in humanity. For myself, I never had it. It may, perhaps, have been born with me, but if so I learned my pessimism very soon. I have never been much with people belonging to me, and the world looks very large and unfeeling to the eyes of a small Welsh boy left in a Hungarian forest, with no English-speaking creature near. Well, as I was saying, life comes high, though it seems we must have it. But, my dear lad" (he put a hand on his friend's shoulder, with a smile softening

wonderfully his cold face), "you were never meant for a pessimist, and your own nature will make up all to you—even disillusionment with your ideals. But" (more lightly) "you will like Jasmina, I hope, who is not ideal at all. But she has a heart—yes, Jasmina has a heart, which is not an every-day possession with wandering Romany dancers."

She had a pretty manner too, as she presently proved, greeting them with an unconventional frankness fascinating in its warmth. She took Penrose's two hands in hers as though she would lift them to her lips; and closed the left softly over the one which clasped Rexford's. Advancing to meet them, she had thrown down a guitar among the pile of cushions into which she sank again, taking up the instrument and now and then sweeping a tinkling chord or two. "You know every one, I think?" There were one or two actresses of note, a famous tenor from the opera, an artist who made surreptitious sketches of her when she kept still long enough, and two or three men of fashion—and also of some wit; for Jasmina's requirements began and ended with that. "Life is too short," she said. "I cannot be bored." And there was a story extant that she had told Mortimer van Krippen, "You must not come any more. I am sorry, but you do not amuse me at all. You have no ideas and no ear for music."

Penrose's glance sought an alcove where stood an elongated table with green cloth cover, and in the center a revolving disk with cells alternating red and black and numbered, but motionless just now. "No," she said, "you bad Stephen, no play to-night. I am too tired for late hours this evening, and shall send

you all off after supper." This was brought in while she talked to Rexford. "You will sit beside me," she said. They talked of everything and nothing, and drank Tokay out of tall thin glasses, and broke out into a snatch of chorus around the table every now and then. Suddenly she picked up her guitar, and Rexford was surprised to hear her sing, to a very odd melody:

"When I would know
If balmy airs or stormy winds do blow,
My lady's face I view."

Penrose might have pointed out the words as his friend's; they were in the paper for all to read; but who had set them to this strange melody? She laughed gaily at his look of wonder. "It is a Romany air. I fitted the words to it. They go well, do they not?"

"But I did not know you sang—and such a voice!"

"Oh, yes, my voice was trained when my feet were; but I used them both before that." She dismissed them soon after, but with a pretty, soft apology in her sweetly bewildering good-night glance.

"We have time still," suggested Penrose, "to stop at the Chimes for a 'beer.'"

This was a sort of club to which he had introduced the younger. It was mainly for journalists and others whose late occupations brought with them a nipping and an eager appetite toward the dawn, and it was open only after twelve at night. "Named, I believe," said Penrose, "in honor of the immortal Justice Shallow. A good place, youngster, for you to meet others of the profession, and get as much and give as little news as possible. And you 're certain not to meet

college students there—a blessing to be devoutly thankful for!" This, as they were almost run into by a band of the last-named youths, proving with linked arms the breadth of the pavement, and shouting, that all the town might hear, that they were "sons of a—sons of a—sons of a—sons of a—sons of a gamboleer!" Also that, being rambling rakes of poverty, they took their whisky clear. Perhaps it was for this last purpose that their voices died away in the distance. "Now how pleasant that for sleepers along this route—invalids especially! Somebody ought to be in charge of those boys and keep them from being too offensive."

"Now what do *you* want, Penrose," grumbled Rexford, good-naturedly, "with beer after Tokay, and a pipe after Russian cigarettes, and all that smoke and noisy talk after—Jasmina?"

"I 'm in the habit of going suddenly from country to country. I like violent contrasts, and New York 's the place for that, for we have all countries right here. One may dine in all languages, or breakfast in Germany, lunch in Italy, and dine in France. You have not tried the Malay restaurant in Madison street and scorched your palate with curry and pilau? or been among the Scandinavians down near Castle Garden, drinking Swedish punch and caraway beer? Ah, you thought an occasional Greek or Chinese meal a novelty, but you have n't half explored. Here we are; and just listen to those fellows roar."

They stopped at the doorway of an old house in the neighborhood of Trinity graveyard, and pushed open a second swing-door, from behind which came a mighty tumult of voices. Through the mist of tobacco smoke

a large square room showed, with a stained and faded picture of Cornwallis's surrender over the mantelpiece of carved wood. Walls and ceiling were a sort of chrome yellow, the woodwork dirty red, tables unpainted and unvarnished, and the floor sanded. Orders for chops punctuated the conversation, as also, more frequently, impatient calls for beer, porter, or ale from the wood, quaffed thirstily out of pewter mugs.

"Ha, is 't thou, my gentle youth!" ranted some one in the cloud of smoke. "Come hither; and, boy, bring us *zwei bier*."

"Nay, nay," called another; "I want the gallant Rexford myself."

Jenkins stood nearest to them. He seemed incensed, and held the ruins of a hat on which some considerable amount of avoirdupois had evidently been deposited. "I 'd like to know," he soliloquized loudly, "what fool has been sitting on my hat."

"I cannot tell you," replied Rexford, laughing; "but if the gentleman is in the room, he has had the benefit of a candid opinion at least."

One of the "Argus" book reviewers, a languid young man with a long nose, came in and called out, "Did you know, Rexford, that your Jenkins, my Jenkins, our Jenkins, Jenkins of the 'Argus,' is on the eve of deadly combat? And that with a man who was hobnobbing with him only yesterday at the horse show, under the eyes of a boxful of pretty girls! And compliments flew back and forth between them on the things they write—heaven save the mark! I 've always suspected Jenkins, myself, of being a wild-eyed socialist and a bold, bad man who would shake hands

with a pirate! And now this other fellow has found him out and wants to fight him!"

Jenkins's round red face expanded in a grin. "I know I 'm sanguinary," said he, "and gunpowder 's the only perfume. But I don't send type-written cartels calling names and wanting people to fight duels! I think it 's too late in the century for that. It 's a most entertaining letter. It calls me a cad and other pretty things because I wrote a humorous little skit on an article of his. And when he was so solemnly affable to me at the show, it was because he did n't know I was the one who wrote it. And now he seems so confoundedly mad because I did n't sign my name. He is n't half as sorry as I am that I 'm not allowed to write over my own name. I thought nearly everybody had discovered by this time that newspaper reporters write anonymously. It 's a fact, you know."

"Is it?" came a laughing chorus.

"Of course you will now scrap on the field of honor," said the book reviewer with the long nose. "You must have Rexford as second. He is authority on form; he knows Mr. Pundit."

"I say, Rexford," said Jenkins, his own genial self again, "be sure and come to our dramatic performance next week. It 'll be fine; and for the benefit of the Indigent Dyspeptics—a very worthy charity. I have not asked Penrose. He makes fun of everything in that freezing way of his, and the others don't like him. Dash of cold water, you know."

It would seem that Rexford was as much a favorite in this free-and-easy resort as elsewhere. "All the same," observed a quiet old stock-reporter in the corner,

"he 'll never make a journalist. His heart is not in it. It 's just an odd column or two of matter in his life." Penrose overheard him and winced. "You are a fool," he told himself, roughly. "Did you expect to turn the lad into a scribbler just that you might keep him beside you?"

VII

ORNELIUS DE MANSUR loved his one fair daughter passing well and with a watchful tenderness; still, it was a number of years since he had been young himself and had lost his young wife, and during that interval he had concerned himself more with rare editions and curious bindings than with matters of sentiment. So when it occurred to him one morning that her step was a thought languid, perhaps, and her manner listless, he ascribed it at once to the only ailment he knew much about, a "touch of dyspepsia," for which he always prescribed air and exercise. He proceeded now to catechize her with the magisterial solemnity at which it was her custom to laugh.

"Come here, Katherine."

She sat upon the arm of his chair.

"I can't see you there."

"You can feel me" (with a little squeeze).

"I suppose you have been poking about with your charity work in all sorts of stuffy, unwholesome holes and corners?"

"No more than usual."

"You know I am satisfied to have you give what we

can, but not to have you go about taking risks in infected places, perhaps. You can send what 's needed."

"You know" (gently) "that 's not the same thing."

"Well" (giving up this point for the hundredth time, and tacking), "you have been keeping too late hours. Confound this modern mania for turning night into day! For fear one should go to bed before sensible people are taking breakfast, society must now have a Vaudeville Club!"

"Papa, you know I have only been to it twice."

She leaned her heavy head on the arm resting on the chair-back. Was it not there, that second time, last night, that Allan Rexford had passed her with a bow, not speaking?

"Then," said her father, briskly, as one who has gained an argument, "what you need is fresh air and exercise; and I want you to promise me that every fine morning, after this, you will drive to the Park and stay there an hour. More outdoor life—that is what women need." And with an illustrative wave of his arm toward St. George's steeple, he trotted off to the Grolier —there to shut himself in for the rest of the day and forget his lunch.

Katherine had obeyed him faithfully for a week, when there came a day which no stretch of imagination could possibly describe as fine. A gray sky, with the waves in the harbor whipped into little whitecaps by small sharp gusts; swirls of wind gathering eddies of straw and dust and bits of paper at street corners, and impishly scattering them in the eyes of passers-by; and a raw chill in the air which had some mysterious way of penetrating the warmest wraps and

going straight to the bone. Nature in the Park wore a frowning and discouraging aspect, which would hardly have attracted Katherine if she had not been possessed by a sharp restlessness that would let her settle to no home occupation. So she drove, as usual, up the avenue, passing Mortimer van Krippen and Royall Worcester and half a score of other dandies coming down in the latest style of amble, and trying to look unconscious of the wind's assaults on their tall hats. A cold mist was thickening the atmosphere when she reached the Park; she bade the coachman drive to the Metropolitan Museum, and was soon shut in behind its portals. There were few if any visitors this inclement day, and she seemed to have the collected treasures of art to herself—which might have satisfied a reasonable art lover who had remembered to bring her catalogue. But she was conscious of a feeling of loneliness and depression, and wandered about aimlessly for a while; and instead of admiring in the west gallery the joyous painted nymphs under which she stood, she began idly scribbling on the edge of the leaf which described them; and then, raising her head, perceived near her a gentleman, his back turned, who was also writing in a small note-book. Her heart gave a throb, and at the same instant—oh, wonderful wealth of feminine resource!—her eyes were at once calmly serene, her slim figure erect in graceful indifference, and an artistic, unaffected pleasure in the nymphs overhead seemed to be her dominant feeling.

"Oh—good morning," said the young man, turning. "It is quite a surprise to meet any one here on such a day. I happen to be tracing a certain artist's works

through the galleries for an article. And you, too, are taking notes? Do you not notice" (coming nearer) "how depressingly trivial any remark sounds in this appalling vastness? Is it the absence of people, or the silent presence of all these painted notabilities, or just that the emptiness makes unusual echoes? My voice actually reverberates; excuse me if I whisper." It was his old friendly, half-jesting, half-tender accent; for he was a man and taken unawares by the beloved's unexpected presence! She softened too; she could not help it.

"Good morning, Mr. Rexford. I fancied until I saw you that I was monarch of all I surveyed and that I owned all the pictures."

"And you were criticizing your possessions? Let me see" (taking the catalogue gently from her hand) "what you write of the nymphs. Ah, you quote:

> Alas! they heed not what we say;
> They smile with ardor undiminished;
> But we—we are not always gay.

"Allow me, Miss de Mansur" (playfully), "to criticize your criticism. An art notice should always be objective—never subjective. But you" (changing his tone)—"*you* are always gay?"

A swift coldness punished his presumption.

"Why should I be always gay? Is this a world in which one who thinks or feels can be always gay?"

"But women—most women—have so little to trouble them."

"Women—most women—have so little to distract them from such trouble as they may have."

A hasty retrospect of those changeful last weeks, crowded as they had been with novelty and variety enough almost to deaden the shock of an unexpected blow, seemed to confirm the difference she indicated.

"I think," said she, drawing her furs about her shoulders, "that it grows chillier up here. I must go down. I always" (with a smile) "visit the mummies before leaving. They are so fascinating."

"Permit me." He took her hand in his, preceding her down the stairway. With the touch of her slender gloved fingers, the doubts, suspicion, resentment, everything which had kept him from her, resolved itself into a sudden determination. "If she is calculating, mercenary enough to have changed, I will know it from herself!" The hopeful ardor of his young manhood asserted itself. His eye dwelt on a silken lock which curled behind her ear; the faint perfume of some flowers she wore reached him. He looked down at her tenderly as she kept pace with him. They walked up and down beside the mummy-cases, absolutely alone now, save for a sleepy official, who gave them an indifferent look and went off to a distant window, drawn there by a sudden downpour of rain. Katherine paused beside this case and that, reading the inscriptions. "'Casket of the Lady Taon-Hor, from Thebes. A Lady of the House Arshep. Twentieth Dynasty before Christ, 1275–1100.' 'The Lady of the House Tsa-isi-emmiu.'"

"To think that the silent shell, lying here for curious sight-seers to peer at, should have been, two or three thousand years ago, a being like ourselves, with pride and passion and hope and ambition! Noble she

was; young, perhaps, and beautiful; surrounded with splendor and adulation. And she might have sent us to death then for idle speculations about her, which now she has no power to prevent."

"She—she was laid away" (he repeated),
"From the loving light of day
In the early far-off ages, while yet the Sphinx was young;
And the quiet earth hath kept her
Since they who wailed and wept her
Cried their cry of lamentation in the old Egyptian tongue.
She—she has rested well,
For yet a glance can tell
The latest hands that touched her were loving, longing hands.

"Ah," discontinuing, "what were the flatteries and splendor of the court of Pharaoh, after all, to her, a human creature? Mere incidents, as would have been the coarse garments and reed hut of a Nile fisher's wife. Nothing counted but the love she felt and received!"

"I must go now," she said. The rain dashed against the window-panes. The sleepy official had probably gone to sleep in some corner.

"Wait," he urged, "until this shower is over."

They passed through a doorway into the rotunda near the pictured Emperor Justinian and his councilors; and she slipped and struck her wrist sharply on the iron back of a bench, provoking a little cry. It was surely not hurt enough to force the tears into her eyes, one of which fell on her cheek; and he must have divined this, for in an instant he held her in his arms and passionately kissed that tear away.

"Oh, oh!" she whispered breathlessly, pushing him

from her, a wave of crimson dyeing cheek and throat and little ear.

"I know," he cried, forestalling all reproach, "it was presumptuous, audacious, and everything wrong! But, Katherine, there was no need to tell you that I love you more than life! Sweetest, loveliest, dearest, best! forgive me if I have dared to think you like me just a little!"

"You have not hurried to ask," she answered, still in a whisper, and with an upward misty glance which made him long to repeat his offense.

"And did you not know why?" he said impetuously. "Could I ask your father's daughter to share—I scarcely know what? For I will not take the mess of pottage offered in place of my birthright. I have my own way still to carve, and that is hardly a recommendation to a modern father. O Katherine, it was torment enough to keep away and leave the field to Van Krippens and Worcesters and others not so handicapped as I."

"Let me see," she said softly, herself again, a little smile playing about her lips; "was it of a lady of the house Arshep or De Mansur that some one said that nothing in her life counted but the love she received —and felt?"

The purely Arcadian hours of life come seldom enough; but when they do they are happily independent of circumstance. No previous misgivings, nor chill of surrounding atmosphere, nor the rain that raineth every day, is allowed to interfere. The living picture of Love and Youth seen here far excelled any painted canvas in the hundreds about them. And if

the Emperor Justinian and his councilors had been sentient beings, they might, seeing it, have stepped down from their frame this stormy afternoon, wreathed their heads with roses, and sung "Carpe diem." As it was, they were discreetly unobservant. But these golden moments were winged. The sleepy official wakened after a while to a sense of duty, shown mainly by bustling in and out. And it was at last necessary for Rexford to show Katherine into her carriage and resume his art notes in what was then a mere wilderness—with what success Penrose's comment indicated: "I don't know much about paintings, but it strikes me, Rexford, these remarks are a little mixed."

Katherine looked radiant enough at dinner to justify the credit Mr. de Mansur took to himself for his prescription. "Nothing like it—nothing, I assure you," he repeated. "It is what nine out of ten ailing people need—air and exercise—air and exercise! In good weather, of course—not on a day like this, when it would argue perfect lunacy to take any unnecessary outing." Katherine laughed; she remembered a French jingle:

> Si t'aimer est folie,
> Je serais folle toute la vie.

But she was not yet prepared to confess her lunacy, and only showed her inner gladness by filial attentions and caresses, which Cornelius accepted complacently. And already, in her room that night, the eternal undertone of warning came to give pause to her unreckoning happiness. A little superstitious chill came over her once or twice when she thought of her joy coming to her so near the coffined lady of the Nile. She

dreamed of her that night—tall, dark, and sad-eyed, in her Egyptian robes, with a lotus in her hand. And she said, like Thekla, "I too have lived and loved, and now—"

But the sun burst forth next morning, and shone, as he does shine in New York, with surpassing brilliancy. He sparkled on the waters of the bay, and gilded the tall roofs and steeples, and flooded with light the rooms and the heart of a young woman for whom that day neither guilt nor poverty nor great troubles nor petty vexations existed upon the face of the earth. She walked the avenue with a big dog following her, and a rose in her trim coat; and Jack Doulton-Minton twisted his head to look after her, and said to a chum:

"By Jove! old chappy, that woman gets lovelier every day. She and the new dancer—what 's her name? Jasmina—are the greatest beauties in town. They 're the aborigines—no, I don't mean that!—the antipodes of each other."

And Archibald Pundit exclaimed, "Like Aurora, 'pon my honor, Miss Katherine, like Aurora, don't you know!" He walked some distance with her, confiding to her graciously his idea for rescuing Allan Rexford from the depths to which he must fall. "For, don't you understand, he 's rather dropped out of our set, and is bound to lose prestige; and—and from, don't you know, from lack of association with, ahem! with some of us. If he won't take provision amply made for him, why, don't you perceive, the only thing left to rescue him from that low lot of musicians and all he 's fallen in with is a marriage to such an heiress, say, as your friend, Miss van Krippen. You are so

sensible, Miss Katherine, I know you catch my idea. We will talk of it another time."

The next acquaintance to meet her was the very heiress alluded to; her little head well up in the air, a tiny King Charles at her heels, as also the German teacher (otherwise chaperon), at fifty cents an hour, who was hardly able to keep up with her.

"Excuse me, fräulein," said Angelica, sweetly, "for speaking French, as you do not understand it, but Miss Lavender desires me to practise it whenever I can." So addressing her friend in a rapid flow of that language, she told her that she had been yesterday to a matinée with Miss Lavender. Did n't remember the play; it was stupid; had eaten chocolate caramels until torpid. "But oh, my dear, the loveliest adventure afterward! We went to Del's for an ice; and such an interesting young foreigner there—assistant cashier, somebody said. And he came into our room and picked up my lorgnette, which I let fall, and restored it with such a bow—under her very nose! And, seeing her look at programs lying around of an entertainment for the Indigent Dyspeptics, he said in the friendliest way, 'Madame will, perhaps, attend that? I feel an interest myself, as maybe it is here they will have acquired the dyspepsia or the indigence.' I expected to see him instantly stiffen into a lifeless heap under her glacial gaze; but, instead, he gave me another friendly smile and went off."

"Angelica, a strange employee!"

"My child, foreigners of high rank often fill those humble positions until their remittances arrive." She spoke assuredly, as though acquainted herself with

several continental princes who had, during temporary embarrassment, served in Sherry's or Delmonico's. "I asked a waiter who the gentleman was, for he certainly looks like a gentleman, and he said his name was Federling. Now, Katherine, you need not look shocked. It was amusing to let him do it—with Miss Lavender herself on guard. I like everybody myself who seems jolly and friendly, and so does papa. I wonder how he will like to pay fifty cents an hour to have his daughter tagged after and watched, a thing he never would do himself? Miss Lavender will not go to the Indigent Dyspeptics," she continued; "but, though I am not 'out,' she will let me go with Mrs. Crowne Derby on condition that Morty goes too. That 's because I told her those two Frenchmen whose people she knows would be there. I am to stay at Mrs. Derby's all night. Mrs. Crowne Derby is very attentive to me" (demurely); "I don't know why. Dick will be with us, of course. You come too, Katherine, there 's a love."

Nor would she cease urging, the patient fräulein waiting, until Katherine consented.

When the Crowne Derby carriage stopped at their door that night, she ran lightly down their front steps, to find her way barred for a moment by an organ-grinder who handed her a paper which said:

This is Gibson. He is deaf and dumb. He has music for a small compensation. Please help him. He plays these tunes:

"Down on the Suwanee River."
"Old Dan Tucker."
"Run, Nigger, Run."
"Daddy was a butcher, lives up-town."

Please help him.

She smiled and found a small coin. "Thank you, Miss de Mansur," said Mortimer van Krippen's voice; "this will be a precious souvenir." He whistled for the organ's owner, who came round the corner and took his fee for its use. Then Morty was ready to pull down the collar of his greatcoat and present the grinder, with slouch hat worn for the occasion, and remind Dick Crowne Derby that he had won the bet, which was odds that Miss de Mansur would n't know him. His sister and Mrs. Derby laughed, but Katherine's lip curled as she took her place in the carriage. "If this is all," she thought, "that young men of means can find to occupy their time, the sooner they are poor and go to work the better." Perhaps she was thinking, too, as they rolled along, that to write articles on music and literature and art generally was even finer, if possible, by contrast.

And yet there was Jenkins, of whom she had never heard, who worked at such matters, and, moreover, gave leisure time unselfishly to making himself absurd for the benefit of the Indigent Dyspeptics. He was on the stage when they entered, taking the chief part in a melodrama which he had also written. Border Eagle was his name, and he was to be seen in a rocky pass, breathing hard and overhearing a plot against the whites between three presumably deaf Shoshone Indians in the foreground. These three, with a comic negro and an Irishman, were mixed in inextricable confusion, the only thing clear to the audience being that virtue, in the form of Jenkins aided by a six-shooter and a bowie-knife, was finally successful in rescuing the heroine from a great variety of assorted

dangers amid applause and some concealed laughter. Katherine leaned back with an abstracted smile not, assuredly, inspired by Jenkins.

The young men jested; the matron politely veiled her yawns; Angelica looked about through her lorgnette for Federling. They lingered when it was over for the crowd to decrease; and going out, she actually saw him. Under this great roof of the Square Garden there are many festal halls, and into one of these others, maskers were passing. A Mephistopheles raised his mask and bowed to Angelica; and Katherine marked the contrast between a diabolic, close-fitting suit of red and the frank, smiling blue eyes and blond hair. Angelica, in the amused interest of this meeting, did not notice that Katherine, as they next passed a small supper-room leading to the ball-room, gave a quick start. She saw at supper, with distant strains of music and much jesting, a little party of merry-makers who had laid aside their masks. Chief among them was Rexford, beside a woman all wrapped in black lace, with a face like a flower—for which she vainly searched her memory. She saw Penrose also, whom she knew slightly, before they passed on; and answered lightly some remark of Morty van Krippen's about the group. But she thought: "Was this the engagement which prevented his coming to me this evening? I fancied it was work."

She no longer smiled happily in her dark corner of the carriage going back.

VIII

IT did not consist with Katherine's ideal of living to keep secret anything of importance from the father who had been all the world to her in childhood and young maidenhood. But it was Rexford who had said, "A few days or weeks, perhaps, will not matter, for it to be between just you and me. '*Au jour le jour*,' I am afraid, has been my selfish motto until now. But I mean to become a combination of busy bee and miser for the sake of the sweetest eyes ever were seen. When I have something definite in view I will speak to your father at once."

This was the next Sunday when he came from church with her and lunched at their house; and he had mentioned the masquerade supper to her in a large way men have as being "partly business." Mr. de Mansur accepted his occasional appearance as placidly as he did most things. He was accustomed to have young men about his house, whose presence he affected to consider as due to his own charms. "Nice, pleasant manners, Rexford," he would say, "like his father. The other Allan Rexford was a favorite, too, everywhere; knew an Elzevir when he saw it, and played a fair hand at whist. I 'm afraid the mother has n't treated this lad well."

Katherine atoned for her delayed confidence by extra thoughtfulness for his comfort and an abundance of caresses, which caused the old gentleman to declare to two or three present, "I call you to witness, Mr. van Krippen, Mr. Worcester,—gentlemen all,—that I will not do it, whatever it is; I will not do it! If you should ever be heads of families yourselves you would understand that these alarming accessions of demonstration on the part of a daughter cover some deep-laid design on her father's purse or time or both." He was given these days to many small jests, being unusually happy in the return of his nephew, Reginald Crofton, the African explorer. This broad-shouldered Apollo had brought back with him quite a museum of skins and assagais and shields, and all sorts of interesting barbaric trophies, in which his uncle took great delight. He was, indeed, so genially interested and gay that Katherine had a proportionate shock when he said to her seriously one day, "My dear, I hate to have to say it of an old friend's son, but I hear that Allan Rexford is very different from what he used to be; has grown wild and reckless, and keeps company that—that would have pained his father very much. They are saying at the club and everywhere —well, it is not worth while to repeat scandal; but it might be better not to have him here often, and not to hurt his feelings, but to be just a little distant until I can ascertain more."

Before Katherine collected her ideas to answer he had gone. She reared her head quite haughtily, being alone; a red spot burned on each cheek. "Her Allan! Scandal-hunters must always have noble game to pur-

sue. Papa was not used to listen to them. What an outrage!" She went to her own room and looked at a picture of St. George and the dragon which she had bought because the warrior saint's face and figure bore a resemblance to Rexford's. "If the dragon stands for scandal," the girl thought proudly, "my knight's strength and gallantry will keep his shield spotless. If he still had a fortune, he might be as wicked as—as he is not, and they would think it only amusing!"

In which she may have been right; for society displays a truly Christian forbearance toward a sinner whose millions may endow a church or hospital—or even, with better management, its own daughters.

"Penrose," observed Rexford, the same day, "I want you to answer me a question quite truthfully."

"As it was in haste that King David proclaimed all men liars, perhaps I may. But I decline from the first any of those standard crucial tests of friendship, as to tell what I think of your looks or your verselets, or what are your chief faults of character, or what people say in my hearing about you."

"Try not to be an idiot," said Rexford, gravely. "What I want seriously to know is this: how do you think I progress in journalism?"

If Penrose was ever so little discomposed by this question, he did not show it. "You draw a fair monthly salary now, do you not? Besides that, a variable sum for articles for other papers and magazines. It is n't often beginners can show as good account as that."

"Yes, I know. That is n't what I 'm asking. With your experience in newspaper men and things, should

you think that in the course of a few years I might hold a fairly high place in the profession—be a distinct success, in short?"

Penrose got up and walked about the little office. "I don't know why you ask," he said, giving him a keen look. "At present you are enjoying the independence dear to every manly being; with the precious certainty of being able, without help from any one, to keep yourself in bread and butter, not to say sandwiches and beer."

"I ask because I want to know."

"Well then" (slowly), "since I am bound to controvert King David's hasty proposition, I will tell you that I think you are wasting your time. Your criticisms lately—always excepting those on music—have had a perfunctory, dilettante ring, as of one not taking himself or his subject or his readers seriously."

Rexford winced visibly. He had asked for truth, but, being human, it hurt him.

"Mind you," Penrose added, "this is an individual opinion. No one else has said so. Others may think you improving." Though Rexford's senior by comparatively few years, his self-possessed bearing hid now a pang which a father might feel at wounding a son. "Is truth-telling to cost me as much as it did Gil Blas?"

"Indeed, no." Rexford looked up with his own bright, friendly glance. "Thank you," he added simply. "I feel that you are right; but what is to be done?"

"Do! why, what you do best, man. A hundred other fellows could at a pinch turn out just such arti-

cles as yours, lacking a touch or so. But they could not write that dainty serenade I heard you humming when you were dressing; nor that adagio you were playing last night. They could not set a Hungarian folk-song to music Jasmina is quite wild about. Melody is your Muse, my lad! Leave fooling with the others, and give yourself to her. Come, try your hand at a light tuneful opera; and let me write the libretto. If it 's any good, we have—between us—influence enough with the manager."

"Oh! do you think I really could? I will begin right away!" Hope rekindled in his eyes. His great opera was already written and a success. He saw himself in a moment rich again, and famous, and living with Katherine in a beautiful castle—in Spain. He felt annoyed at sudden roars of laughter from a neighboring apartment where Jenkins was amusing his fellow-reporters with a choice story having a cigar-store Indian for its hero. Then he smiled indulgently. "Life with that fellow," he observed, "is a mere matter of cakes and ale—and a good story. But I must get to work. I know a motif—"

"Yes," said Penrose, dryly. "We, unlike Jenkins, are philosophers. But I would not begin on a motif, if I were you, until I had finished that notice of last night's concert."

Rexford stopped his humming and laughed. He was proof now against a dash of cold water. He settled down to his desk; but loose sheets of paper were decorated with a bit of this or that score, as musical ideas obtruded themselves. He was impatient for morning to pass, that he might lock himself into his

room with the piano; and he sent a second note to Katherine, saying that something important—to be explained later—would prevent his calling that evening.

This would have been unpardonable but for the fact that the corner-stone he was so eager to lay was in an edifice to be dedicated to her. Still, it was no wonder a little creeping doubt presented itself: "Another masquerade, perhaps." She rejected it with generous indignation—as well as Mr. Pundit's suggestive remarks to her father over the card-table: "I won't say, my dear sir, don't you know, with all respect for my noble friend, Lady Mellon, you understand, that he was well treated; but he need not have taken to such wild courses, don't you comprehend. Walking in broad daylight with actors and reporters and such people, whom his friends must pretend not to see, don't you know. And then—" his voice lowered until several words were indistinguishable. Then, louder: "Roulette, I am told, every night. Manipulates the wheel herself! Yes, it 's a pity, don't you know, quite a pity. They say, by the way, that Lady Mellon is having some trouble with his lordship. I never believe all that gossip about a nobleman. It 's just sheer envy, don't you understand."

She should not have heard this, which was not for her, but ought to have been listening instead to her cousin, who had allowed nothing to interfere with his call, and was giving herself and a few others an impromptu lecture on Zululand, stimulated into eloquence by feeling her eyes upon him.

"If I were you," said Angelica van Krippen later,

up in her room (she had come to spend the night), "I should immediately lose my heart to Mr. Crofton. Though I should be sorry for Morty! Morty will not commit suicide, however, no matter how badly you treat him. He is more likely to die at the hands of papa when that dear man finds out about Otto." She cast down her eyes and gave a well-executed sigh.

"Otto?"

"Mr. Federling, you know."

"That man again? O Angelica!"

"My dear, no one alive shall marry me for my money if I can prevent it. And whether I am brought out here, with Miss Lavender, Mr. Pundit, and all the Patriarchs superintending, or mamma arranges a European match for me over yonder, it is all one; my value in cash will be trumpeted. You may not have suspected me of romance, but I am papa's daughter—poor dear papa! with his 'Children of the Abbey.' I mean to marry for love or not at all!" This warlike declaration was in her usual thin, sweet tones, and her eyes looked childlike clear at Katherine—without the lorgnette.

"But, Angelica, a stranger, a foreigner, utterly unknown, in such a position. It is, of course, some adventurer taking advantage of your imprudence."

"Not at all" (triumphantly). "I know plenty about him already. He has told me himself, and I believed him. Perhaps you think, Katherine" (flushing pink under her transparent skin), "that, from my antecedents, I cannot always tell a gentleman, but I can. However, I prudently asked Morty to investigate, as though it were for a possible German teacher for Miss

Lavender, and it was all right. My dear, he is really Von Federling, and a baron, but poor as any barnyard fowl Job ever had before the neighbors stole them. And he was a student at Heidelberg, and then in the army for the usual time; and has a little crooked scar he got in a duel just under his front hair, and he is so proud of it; I don't know why, for it would have shown more sense to have kept out of fights. But the family estate was small, and the daughters have to be provided for; he is the youngest of eleven; the others are all girls; so you can't blame a poor man with ten sisters for coming over to America to try his luck. He hoped for a professorship or something like that, for he is scientific and speaks several languages; but, knowing no one, he did anything he could find to do, and was glad enough to get that place at Del's. Finding out about the title was just accidental, for he has too much sense to use it now. But he is delightfully sentimental, and quotes yards of poetry, which makes me laugh."

"Was it through Mortimer you found out that this was all true?"

"That is the cream of the affair. Morty had no trouble in getting at a lot about him, and was on the point of imparting it to Miss Lavender, as per request, when I diverted her attention. But I was walking in the Park with Fräulein Volmer, the day after the Indigent Dyspeptics' benefit (I always like her for chaperon; she is even more stupid than she looks), when who should appear but Mephisto of the night before. Did n't he look delightfully absurd in that satanic dress, with his curly blond mustache and round rosy

cheeks! He raised his hat to me, then looked at her and stopped. 'Ach, Gott!' she cried, or something to that effect. 'Is it thou, dear Baron Otto?' And it turned out that the fräulein had been governess to half a dozen of his sisters in their beloved native village with the unpronounceable name on the Rhine. So he stayed and talked with us for a while. She has prosed to me before by the hour—at fifty cents—of her past life, and I never listened, for, though I believed her to be truthful, I knew her to be debilitating. But now I make her tell me all about Otto and Castle Schlippenschloppenschlanberg—it 's something like that! If Miss Lavender's policy with her teachers were not so sternly repressive, if she were not a glacier to attempted confidences, the simple soul would tell her too, and all would be lost! As it is, the fräulein treats herself to this little revival of home associations without imagining my special interest. And oh, Katherine, what fun to lunch at Del's with Miss Lavender, and smile at Otto under her nose while she studies the menu with severe propriety!"

Miss van Krippen paused for breath, and Katherine had a chance to ask, "But if your brother discovered nothing to this—this gentleman's discredit, and he is of good birth and education, why not tell Mortimer? Why not write of him to your parents, and have him visit you?"

"Katherine de Mansur! Have you ever met mamma? No, I thought not! When she takes me out of Miss Lavender's and puts poor little Anastelle in my place, her plans for me will be fixed, and not in connection with a disinterested affection."

Katherine could not forbear an expressive look.

"You wonder," cried her friend, "how with a poor man I can be sure he is disinterested! Why, he does not know my name, even. The fräulein calls me Angelica, and I told him it was Cripps. O Katherine, you must know Otto sometime. He is quite learned too, but very fond of sweets, and always keeps bonbons about him and treats the fräulein and me. And she eats them and weeps when he quotes German poetry. You should hear him tell of a friend of his at home who was dying of love for a girl, and there was a favored rival whom he hated. And he came to Otto and said he could bear to give her up to a friend, but not to an enemy, and begged Otto to be presented to her, make love, win her perhaps. At his friend's sighs and groans of despair Otto consented and met the lady. She made no impression on a heart reserved for me, and he was obliged to tell his almost frenzied friend, who thought of suicide, but went away instead to practise microscopy at Stockholm. Otto asked me if it was not a touching poem; and when I inquired if during that time his friend refrained from potato salad, or was noticeably moderate in the matter of beer, he looked at me so reproachfully that—that—" her voice died away into what the poet Keats is pleased to call "a slumbrous tenderness."

But Katherine lay awake a long time afterward, speedily forgetting about Otto to wonder what Mr. Pundit's unheard remarks had been, and why he should wish to malign her Allan; and, subconsciously, to let her mind misgive her as to what unimagined recklessness might keep the latter from her.

He was blamelessly occupied, at the time, looking at the same stars through his window in a mood of elation, for the plot of the opera was well under way between the chief conspirators, and he was planning, incidentally, a sonnet to her as his inspiration.

IX

SHE approved of his absence; she approved of this new work which had detained him; in fine, she approved of him, smiling with sweet, clear, interested eyes, bright with sympathy, across her little tea-table the next afternoon, when fate favored them with a half-hour together.

"Penrose," he told her, "my collaborator, just sketched off the plot of the book in no time. I told him it was impossibly sensational. He said nothing was impossible in life; everything could happen—and did, sometimes; that these incidents had actually occurred. So this is the way it is to be. *Zora* is the Hungarian girl; has two lovers, and is in love with the poor one. Her father, favoring the rich suitor, suggests that the field will be clear for him if he contrives to get the other out of the way. The rich farmer manages this, and the girl, thinking herself deserted by the other, accepts his attentions. At the wedding the groom, drinking healths until he loses all prudence, boasts in her hearing that he has killed his rival. She seizes a knife from the table and springs toward him; her father checks her, rushing between, whereupon she kills herself. At this sight the father,

frenzied, shoots the farmer, who falls dead just as the other suitor appears to hear her dying words, and explain, as well as horror will permit, that no violence had been used to send him to a distance, as the farmer had falsely and foolishly declared, but just a lengthy business errand invented for that purpose."

"And what becomes of him?"

"That we have not settled. As a matter of fact, Penrose says, he became a member of the village band, and did very well until an attack of measles carried him off. But that would hardly do."

"Certainly not! Why not have him die of grief?"

"He would have to expire to the very slowest music composer ever wrote. There is a further complication in the opera, in the shape of the great lady of the village, who takes a fancy to his fine eyes. We might manage his end—well, that will arrange itself. It is not so hard as you might think. There are some delightful chances for melody at the plaza, with the rivals and the love-scenes and the wedding, with Hungarian bride-song and choruses." He passed into the music-room through the archway. "Listen, now; this is the air *Manuel* sings under her window." A few bars were played and sung. "Now this" (with a crash of chords and a descent into the bass, changing the key) "is where the father and farmer are plotting to be rid of *Manuel*. Now then, this little minor is always to be played when *Zora* is coming. Do you like it? O Katherine" (he came back, his eyes aflame), "I mean to work day and night until it is finished. If it is a success—Penrose encourages me—I need not wait any longer to ask your father!" She made a little barri-

cade of the tea equipage between them, which he encompassed in a moment. "Do not insult me with offers of more tea!" he cried, "and as for sweets—" Then, whatever delight he had promised himself when he went on one knee beside her low chair was postponed, as callers entered, and he was on his feet again, saying, with rare presence of mind, "There is your pretty cup quite safe; I think I rescued it very cleverly!"

Miss Lavender's unpremeditated interruption hardly justified the instant wild hatred he felt, though her excessively cold greeting might have excited his wonder if he had noticed it, and if Angelica van Krippen had not taken it on herself to supply all missing cordiality. Miss Lavender, deceived by Katherine's look of interest, began to murmur into her ear further confidences connected with the scandalous treatment accorded by the very unparliamentary Provincial Matrons to a descendant, collaterally, of Poor Richard. "They will regret it, I fancy, when they find themselves in court. If Franklin Hall needed an advertisement," added the business woman, "it would have it just through Mrs. Doulton-Minton's machinations against its principal!" She shrugged her thin shoulders. "As it is, my dear, applications come in shoals; especially since De Vaurien and Mauvais Sujet are so constantly at my Wednesdays. And my friend and ex-pupil, the marquis's aunt by marriage, writes me the sweetest letters in praise of these young noblemen. With domestic anxieties of her own, as I hear, it is charming in her to take such unselfish interest in others."

"Devilish unselfish," said Mortimer, in an aside,

closing the eye near Rexford; "like the interest the fox, once caught in a trap, took in his fellows' brushes. Oh, say, you 're not going yet! A chap never gets a chance to talk to you now, you 're running so much with Penrose and that lot. Saw him at a supper the other night—Harvard foot-ball team. Good spread, too—and he called me Dugald Dalgetty. Who 's Dalgetty, anyhow? I don't believe I 've ever met him. Say" (in a whisper), "I hear you 've had better luck with the Jasmina than I did. Did n't seem to like me; shows her bad taste!" The good-natured little fellow grinned. "Well, if you *will* go!"

Though Rexford was in too exalted a state of mind to perceive that Morty's friendliness was not shared by Katherine's cousin, now mounting guard at the tea-table, still he did not fancy seeing him and half a dozen of the unemployed rich keeping him from her; so presently he took his leave.

"Of course," said Miss Lavender to Archibald Pundit, "that young man is out of the question, matrimonially. I have given that hint to my girls, in case they meet him anywhere. The fact that he has nothing forces me, in spite of my respect for Lord and Lady Mellon, to frown on—on such goings on as have been hinted to me. If he had De Vaurien's rank or Royall Worcester's money it would be different. A few eccentricities might easily be overlooked. But as it is—"

"My dear lady," Mr. Pundit answered, with a ponderous sigh, "I am afraid you are right. I have written his mother to the effect that I have been able to do nothing as regards Miss van Krippen, don't you

know. In fact, I hardly ever see him now, and I fear that if his dissipation and low associations continue, society will have to cut him entirely, you understand." He drew his portly figure up and straightened his shoulders to show how society looked at times.

"Miss van Krippen," said Miss Lavender, "is quite young yet, and until her parents approve, no match will be arranged positively for her. My girls are brought up, you know, quite on the European plan. No reckless, ill-regulated American independence. They are, I flatter myself, better guarded and chaperoned than any in New York. They have hardly a thought without my supervision."

Archibald Pundit's eyes gleamed as he reflected how handsomely this watchfulness at Franklin Hall was paid for. Their tea-cups drew closer together as their voices sank to a confidential undertone.

The weeks following this were a rush of work and excitement to Rexford. He furnished only musical reviews to the "Argus" now, the rest of his time being given to composing, polishing, altering, transposing melodies and harmonies, as the words and situations in "Zora" necessitated. Jenkins, though a melomaniac himself, threatened to leave "Simla" permanently. "After all, however," he relented, "it is, to quote the famous Frenchman, a not disagreeable noise; and you would fail if I left you, for I know I am your inspiration." He was more or less useful as a lay-figure, to be hustled and poked into corners as points in the play needed illustration, or to hum an occasional falsetto in the part of the cold and haughty soprano. The kindly fellow was as eager for Rex-

ford's success as could be, and when the work was finally in a friendly manager's hands, he was secretly as anxious for good news as the collaborators themselves.

And if in all this hurry and pressure and absorption the hours with Katherine were few, they were all the sweeter, and their infrequency was generously overlooked by her for the cause. It was to her that the tidings of an acceptance first came, the note buried in flowers; and her congratulations were the first he received. "Now, dear, my life, my love," he wrote, "if it only proves a success, I can tell your father boldly that I am able to take care of the dearest and sweetest—" and all the rest of the lover's little phrases. Her heart sang within her, and when they dined out that night, she smiled with equal indulgence on Morty's little stories and her cousin's devotion, and even Mr. Pundit's struggles when he stuck on "conversation's burs." It was over the coffee that some one mentioned the forthcoming opera by Rexford and Penrose.

"Penrose!" repeated Mr. Pundit, contemptuously, "that 's natural enough. But for Allan Rexford—son of one of ourselves, don't you know—to run to music, in company with that sort of person! It quite stupefies me, don't you understand."

"Oh, is it that, Mr. Pundit?" Katherine asked, with dangerous sweetness. "I did not know the cause. And why should he not?"

"To please his friends,—a little song now and then, —very well, don't you perceive. But not for money—"

"There are so many easier and meaner things he may do for money," Katherine began, with a fire which

made her father look at her in mild surprise. Some of the younger men fell to discussing the probable dramatis personæ to be selected by Menu, the manager, and the authors.

"Only one I 've heard of," drawled Crowne Derby, "is Jasmina."

"It is n't a ballet, my dear fellow."

"N-no. Dancing enough in it, though, I hear. Principal part 's a contralto or mezzo-soprano. Didn't even know she sang, 'pon my honor."

"Rexford did, evidently," said Royall Worcester. The "miching mallecho" of this remark was not lost on Katherine, who listened, however, with a lady's trained calmness.

"What you don't know, my dear fellow," chirped Morty, with cheerful impertinence, "would fill volumes." He was aware that Crowne Derby as well as himself had failed to find favor in Jasmina's lovely eyes.

If, after the women had withdrawn, the men's talk over their wine was quite damnatory in its entire tolerance of Rexford's late reckless and daring follies, most of them apocryphal, Morty's friendly and uneasy protests and Crofton's fastidious withdrawal with his uncle from the conversation made very little difference.

It made very little difference, Rexford himself would have thought, as he went hither and thither and interviewed manager and underlings, and arranged and rearranged scores, and approved or objected to those assigned to certain rôles, and attended rehearsals, and had his soul vexed within him by stupidities and ob-

stinacies and delays and disappointments innumerable. The only one who gave him no trouble, whose part fitted her as though it were herself, who sang perfectly without any apparent practice, who danced as no one else could, who seemed almost to carry the opera through triumphantly by herself, was Jasmina. And he would never have thought of her if Penrose had not said negligently:

"You will find *Zora's* part difficult to fill. She must dance as well as she sings. If Jasmina were willing, now; you have heard her hum a little, but perhaps you do not know she is a graduate of the Paris Conservatory, and did not go on the operatic stage simply because she has a wild fancy for only singing when she chooses—like a bird, she says."

It came into Rexford's mind to wonder, as several times before, when Penrose, in his vagrant career, had come across Jasmina; but that was not his present concern, which was to find a *Zora* satisfactory to M. Menu and himself.

"But, certainly," she said, "I will be *Zora*—if I can. I must have a part in your success."

"But your contract with the manager of the Rosemont?"

"That is nothing" (gaily); "I will break it. I have done that before. It is only a money forfeit."

He had no further scruples after seeing her in the part. She was the pivot on which all turned. And besides, meeting her at the daily rehearsals, what more natural than that he should drop in at her pretty apartment afternoon or evening, to consult, to advise, to talk over this or that connected with the affair of

paramount interest? She had a gift for soothing, encouraging, cheering, beyond, he thought,—and reproached himself for thinking,—any woman he knew.

"Jasmina," said Penrose, casually, "is, I need hardly say, no ordinary variety actress; with youth, beauty, fascination, and her profession hardly ever goes such savage rectitude as hers. When merely a child she was married to a sort of brute; but in a short while the man—one of her own people—died. I do not know" (slowly) "that the code of her race, morally, is high; but she is untamable as a wild lark, and has never cared for any one—before."

Rexford did not remark this "before"; he was humming under his breath a passage which did not quite go to please him. In the mean time his name, neglected in brilliant circles for a while, was once more a topic of interest in clubs. Various pranks of the utmost recklessness were attributed to him. While Mr. Pundit frowned and Cornelius de Mansur looked grave, and club-men jested and dandies admired, Katherine was forced in many a great lady's room to listen to a thousand stories which derived their picturesqueness mainly from the fact of truth's abashed withdrawal to her well. When she hinted to her lover that he was ill spoken of, he only laughed. "Dearest love," he protested lightly, "what do these people matter to us? I am no such roaring, ranting blade. All my world is full of melody just now." He wished to speak to her father after the hoped-for success. And the latter, after securing, as a sort of duty to an old friend's son, a box for the first night of "Zora," commented thus:

"I hope the young man's artistic career may be prosperous, I am sure; but I am glad you have taken my suggestion, and that he comes but seldom now. The sooner we sever the acquaintance the better."

"Papa, you—you did not use to listen to scandal. I—I like Mr. Rexford."

"My information about him seemed reliable," said the old man; but he spoke wearily and with a certain lack of interest which made a new anxiety check the rush of words to his daughter's lips. Cornelius's strength had seemed suddenly to lessen lately, perhaps from persistent burrowing in dark, ill-ventilated library rooms. Katherine teased him lovingly about not using the remedies of air and exercise which he urged on others, and the doctor ordered gentle horseback riding. But, with some jesting excuse as to his claim to the title of "Old-Man-Afraid-of-his-Horse," he drifted on from day to day in his long-settled habits.

X

EVEN the society maids and matrons who had cherished a double grudge against Rexford—first, that he should, though innocently, have so suddenly lost prestige as a matrimonial prize; next, that he should have carelessly dropped them before they had a chance to drop him—felt a keenly curious interest in "Allan Rexford's opera." Of his songs—old rhymes set to melodious strains—several were already much liked among music-lovers; and his "Go, Lovely Rose," especially was widely popular. Hosts of his parents' friends came, even from semi-retirement, to judge of his work; old acquaintances of his own dropped in by scores; club-men galore, whose recent much-relished stories of his wild excesses and extravagances were a distinct advertisement, in their way. When to these were added the usual first-nighters, the critics, the general public, wrought up to intense anticipatory interest by judicious manipulation of the "Argus" and other allied powers, a house greeted the raising of the curtain on the first act of "Zora" which, in point of numbers, was encouraging to behold. The composer sat well out of sight, in a proscenium-box, with curtains half drawn, and with him Penrose, whose perfect cool-

ness contrasted with his own repressed excitement. The first scene showed the pains, never spared in modern days, to secure an exact reproduction of the picturesque mountain village. The overture and opening chorus of villagers had been received with an acclaim which sounded perfunctory; the duo between the rich farmer and *Zora's* father with something like apathy—or so it seemed to the author, to whom Penrose's confidence should have been reassuring, as well as the buoyant hopefulness of Jenkins, who sat with them by special request of Rexford, and was immensely pleased at the compliment.

"I wish they 'd quit that harmonious wrangling," the latter said, "and let *Zora* come on."

Penrose said nothing, being busy surveying the house unconcernedly through his glass. He noted the crowds of gilded youth, some of whom requested admission to their box, which the ushers were strictly directed to refuse. He had seen Miss de Mansur before Rexford perceived her, surrounded by father and friends; he had even remarked a blond foreigner near the De Mansur box, who looked often at Miss van Krippen and whose face somehow seemed familiar, though he did not connect him with the famous restaurant. Mortimer had obtained from Miss Lavender permission for Angelica's presence, "though a little irregular before her coming out," on the principal's being told that De Vaurien and Mauvais Sujet would also be there. Among the literary and artistic sets Penrose's glance found numbers known to him professionally; for of social life—outside the Chimes—this busy, absorbed man permitted himself little. It

rested longest, however, returning again and again, upon Katherine, whose shining brown eyes and delicate tints showed nothing of the eager interest she felt.

"These daughters of the gods," he thought, "they are so fair. But have they hearts? Now, my poor Jasmina!" There was a sudden clash of cymbals.

"There goes that minor. She 's coming!" muttered Jenkins. And slowly, out from the dusk shades of the forest where she had been straying with the minstrel lover, came *Zora*, a glowing vision.

Even to Rexford, who knew her beauty, this seemed something new. Guessing the cause of her father's difference with the rich villager, she advances, glides from recitation into song, argues, persuades, entreats, cajoles. The first outbreak of spontaneous applause shook the house, and was stilled again as she and the farmer sang together, with occasional foreboding strains from *Manuel*, already jealous. Then, with a passionate glance for him, and waving her graceful arms to all, "Come," she sings, "we celebrate the treaty. Are we not all Hungarians? A czardas—come!" Night has crept on, the camp-fires are lit, old crones hang the pots over the blaze; but a space is cleared, the depths of the forest are lit up with torches kindled at the glowing embers, and the swarthy musicians of the tribe group themselves at one side, with cymbals and tambourines. "Come!" cries *Zora*, marking time with her castanets. They dance the czardas to a measure of broken, barbaric rhythm and wild melody, slow to dreaminess at first.

"That is fine, very fine," said Penrose; "that air 's an inspiration."

Rexford himself leaned forward with quickened pulse as *Zora* bent and swayed to the music, which went fast and faster and still faster, to giddiness.

"If they don't rise to that!" said Jenkins. But they did, almost literally. The silence which held them during the first fascinating bars gave way to tumultuous admiration of the odd, bewildering Gipsy melody. Before the last note sounded roars of applause went up, echoed and reëchoed. It must be played, it must be danced, every bar, again. Rexford leaned back, contented. Penrose said quietly, "We 're all right now." Jenkins beat time softly on the cushioned ledge, a broad grin expanding his features. From that time there was hardly a moment's surcease of enthusiasm. Through the scene of the great lady's advances to *Manuel*, his serenade under the castle wall, the tuneful duets of love and jealousy, Gipsy dances, and *Zora's* fortune-telling, the father and rich rival's plotting, the joyful trumpet tones of the wedding music, and the plaintive strains of the tragic end, went outbursts of appreciation. *Zora* and the tenor were recalled again and again after each scene, and showered with tribute blossoms. When the curtain went down finally, there were loud cries of "Author! author!" The manager came bustling in to know why no one responded, but found only Penrose, who positively refused to do more than bow from the front of the box. "Rexford! Rexford!" the cry increased in volume. He had stepped round to the wings for a moment to thank Jasmina for her share in his success. Her eyes glowed under their dark fringes; she held, of all her flowers, only the bunch

of red roses he had sent her. "Come on! come on!" cried M. Menu; "don't you hear them?" She took his hand in her little brown one, and drew him on before the lights until they stood there together.

"A deuced handsome pair," said Royall Worcester, in the De Mansur box.

"A perfectly lovely opera," chattered Angelica, mechanically, intent on seeing what had become of Federling. Their party moved slowly outward, and Katherine heard some one in the throng remark, "The little dancer 's bound in decency to help him with his opera, if it 's only to pay back what she wins from him every night at roulette."

And Jasmina, in her dressing-room, was talking to Penrose and Rexford. "It is a success!" she kept repeating exultantly. She laid both hands on the younger man's shoulders. "Thank you so much for letting me sing—dance—the beautiful part! I am wild, intoxicated! I shall not sleep for a week! You will both come to supper?—for us to congratulate each other."

"Certainly," Rexford replied, radiant. "I will follow you." He ran round to the front entrance; he hoped for a word with Katherine, but she was gone, and his triumph lacked the one little touch which most earthly triumphs do to make them happiness.

When Cornelius de Mansur and his daughter reached home that night he drew her into the library, where only a shaded lamp still burned and the open fire sent a rosy glow about.

"I was glad of to-night's success," he said thoughtfully; "work may still be that young fellow's salvation

—and I was fond of his father. I am not very harsh, I hope" (gently stroking her head at his knee), "but there is too much leniency shown to what they euphemistically call the sowing of wild oats. There is high authority for saying, 'Be not deceived; what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap'!"

"But we need not believe all we hear," said Katherine, "and every one is entitled to his defense." She had risen, and stood with an arm around his neck; then added bravely, despite a sudden vision presenting itself of her lover standing at the footlights beside that beautiful creature, "You will give Mr. Rexford a hearing when he comes to you, papa?"

He looked up at her, mystified, and she saw that his face was drawn and weary. "I wish you would get me a glass of wine," he said, in a tired way. She went quickly and brought him this refreshment. He sipped it absently. "What was it I was saying? Oh, yes; I like the rest of that: 'And in doing good let us not fail: for in due time we shall reap, not failing.' Go to bed now, my darling; it is late, and I still have a note to write."

After a tender good night she turned at the door to look again at his beloved gray head bending over the writing-table. Here was affection, sure, unselfish, lavish, hers beyond a doubt—hers since she could remember, with no shadow of uncertainty or misgiving. She could not resist turning back to give him another embrace. He smiled up at her. His color was brighter, the wine having dispelled the look of exhaustion which had before distressed her; and she went away, hoping all things of the morrow.

And, while the first sparrows were twittering on the bare boughs of the trees in the square and slanting sun-rays gilded the steeple of St. George's, a maid with frightened face came knocking at her door; the butler must see her immediately. In wrapper and slippers she confronted him, with the group of domestics huddled about him in the upper hall. The old man explained, as well as his stammering tongue would let him, that his master was ill—very ill. When he had gone, as usual, to open the library, he had stumbled over Mr. de Mansur's prostrate form between the fireplace and writing-desk, where he must have lain all night. They had carried him to his room, and the doctor was sent for; "and, dear Miss Katherine" (as she would have hurried past him), "he will not know you."

He did not know her or any one, but lay breathing heavily. The doctor's face held no encouragement after his careful examination. "He may recover consciousness," he said, "after a while." In view of which event a priest of the church of which Cornelius de Mansur was a devoted adherent was at his side when his eyelids were first raised to show awakening intelligence. A little while with him, the last rites administered, and the gentle old man whispered brokenly to his darling, "My Katherine—be good,—as you have been,—and I leave you in His care;" then lapsed into a silence henceforth unbroken. The letter which he had sat up to write was to Reginald Crofton's mother, his only sister, written, in view of his late uncertain health, to commend his child to her tenderness. She was at a distance, but came hurrying by train when

he was gone. Her son was here, but could not see Katherine yet awhile; no one could see her—not even Allan Rexford, shocked unspeakably by the news awaiting him at her threshold when he presented himself there. It was much later than he had meant to come, but one does not bring out a first opera every night; not every night, either, was Jasmina just so proudly joyful. Then, though she had always—the voice of scandal notwithstanding—withheld him, with a thousand pretty arts, from roulette, this night she laughingly challenged him to try his luck, saying that fortune smiled upon him. It seemed so, for, with her at his elbow, he won and won again; and it was quite morning before he turned in to his room; the newsboys were already shouting, his name was prominently displayed in the papers, and his opera was soon a topic at hundreds of breakfast-tables. And it was at about this hour that Cornelius de Mansur's man, horror-struck, was gently raising the unconscious gray head of his master.

Rexford called, morning and afternoon, for three or four days after this, at the closed De Mansur house; to have his flowers taken by servants; to suffer a pang of envy in seeing Reginald Crofton performing all needful offices as the dead man's son; to leave a note of passionate sympathy for Katherine, passed into the darkened room where she and Sorrow sat, answered by a faint, penciled line: "I cannot answer. You must wait." Learning that the interment was delayed some days for the expected arrival of Mrs. Crofton, he arranged with Penrose to run over to a neighboring city to arrange for the production of "Zora" there;

and, the manager detaining him for one reason or another, ill fate decreed that the funeral took place before his return. On a very cold, clear, bright day the shell of Cornelius de Mansur, from which the *animula, vagula, blandula* had flown, was laid away with the elements to which it belonged. And the honor, love, and troops of friends which should accompany old age went with him so far, but could not go one step farther. And religion, in the person of her white-robed priest, stood near him, believing and hoping all things, but humbly confessing that from this side of the grave she saw but through a glass, darkly. And the poor and the aged and the friendless to whom he had been a friend stood about and prayed with tears that in that hereafter in which would be no sun nor moon nor stars there would also be no pang of severed hearts, nor the bitterness of disillusions or disappointed hopes from which the dead, being human, must have suffered. And Penrose's set features confessed nothing of fulfilled desires, nor yet of failures, as he noted the absence of the slim figure of the dead man's daughter; and, again, the striking contrast with the character of the scene which his nephew's stalwart form made, the very incarnation of strength and life and vigorous young manhood, standing by the grave with uncovered head, while the cold wind blew the thick-waved locks about his bronzed forehead.

And Katherine, at home, endured her first stroke from him who has been called the best of man's friends. But he wears a grisly front and tears asunder with relentless hand those who would fain cling together a little longer, and it is easy to mistake him

for a cruel enemy. Of the one who should have stayed her sinking spirit there was no present sign or token. For her aunt, in affectionate attempt to screen the suffering girl, mentioned no visitors' names to her, receiving all herself; and likewise answered all notes and letters now. Among these was one from Archibald Pundit, absent when his friend was taken:

"The vacation which I needed sorely from the strain of constant social leadership has been restful and most interesting. But the intelligence of the death of Cornelius de Mansur, devoted father, polished gentleman, and trusted friend, comes to me with a thrilling tenderness, and has saddened my heart. Beloved by every one for his manly virtues, as well as for the noblest graces of head and heart, his loss to society is irreparable. In his death has society sustained its first decisive blow this winter. Always on the right side, he aided, by his conservatism, to still the angry waters of debate, thus imparting strength and dignity to argument. It will be long before we look upon his like again. I am pained beyond expression at my enforced absence from New York at such a time. What a denial not to have had the mournful privilege of joining hands with you at his open grave, and mingling my tears, hot tears, with yours at that sacred spot! A mysterious Providence has willed otherwise, yet He doeth all things well. I trust, however, to be with you ere long, and then in fitting terms to speak to you of the merit of my treasured friend in a way that my overburdened heart will not permit now. In all sincerity and esteem, I beg leave to remain, yours devotedly."

"He means well," said Mrs. Crofton to her son, "but until our Katherine is stronger I am glad to save her from these letters."

"It is very kind in him to patronize Providence," said Reginald, dryly, who did not admire Mr. Pundit, "but he is a platitudinous ass, all the same." Which opinion, as we know, was shared by Miss van Krippen and others. The young man was not as much softened as his mother by their common grief. When she commented on the sincere feeling shown by young Rexford at his call, when only she had seen him, he remarked that Mr. Rexford had absented himself from the funeral of his father's friend, and that, since his disappointment about his father's fortune, he had rather taken to wildness and kept all sorts of company and hours, and was an undesirable visitor. He was exceptional himself in withstanding the temptation which wealth and leisure bring with them, devoting much time and money to scientific research and exploration; but this superiority had the unfortunate effect of making him harsh in judgment. He would gladly, in going from Jerusalem to Jericho, have paid the wounded man's bill at the inn; but he would not himself have tended him, for fear the wounds had been received in some discreditable affray.

When, after a month's seclusion, Katherine came out into the family circle—so different, alas! and yet with echoes everywhere of the dear lost voice telling her to lift up her eyes and live her life, as she must, courageously—he strove, with his mother, to interest her. But he talked mainly, and well, of travel by land and sea, and not of the matter nearer home of

which she longed to hear. He did once mention, with a slight lifting of the brow, the marvelous popularity of "Zora," and that Rexford had been, on such a date, to arrange for its production elsewhere. And it came to Katherine, with a shock, that that was the time of her father's funeral.

XI

HEN Penrose first came to New York he had chanced into a stationer and engraver's in Sixth Avenue to have some repairing done. It was not a large shop, but handsome and tasteful in all its appointments, and the proprietor, an elderly man with fine and delicate features, old-fashioned courtesy of manner, and a pleasant old-world burr in his speech that appealed favorably to the Welshman, served him in person. The order filled, Penrose would have thought of it no more, but, happening to be in that quarter a year or two later and needing more of the same work, he looked for the sign and missed it. Trusting to an excellent memory for locality, he went in where he thought the engraver had been; and, behold, he was still there, but with his sign in a quiet corner, and a bookseller's name and wares occupying the space which had formerly been his. He came forward with just the same manner and gentle simplicity as of old; but his delicate features and frame were thinner, and his clothing, though scrupulously neat, bore marks of long and conscientious brushing. There was a certain patient dignity in his quietude which would have curbed a stranger's curiosity; but

when out again on the sidewalk Penrose, an experienced observer, thought, "Ah, I know that look; it is written all over him. The hurts which weaklings get under the juggernaut wheels of a great city are not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but they serve; they are slight, but daily. The old fellow has commenced that *facilis descensus* which leads to the poorhouse or hospital—unless the cemetery claims him first."

He might have applauded his own perception if he had cared to, some three years later, when he went into the same place and asked for Becker. "Becker?" repeated the fat little man, bustling about. "Don't know such a person. Oh, yes; let 's see; the old engraver—used to stay here long ago. Ask three doors above." And three doors above they sent him down the steps in front into a basement, where the old man now occupied a tiny corner. He was much bent, and shuffled in his walk, but that might have been from advancing years. His slippers were frayed and broken, his clothes quite green now with age, and there were many patches, a very large one of different stuff showing on the left elbow of his coat. He was as quietly polite as ever, a curious pathetic tone sounding in his gentle voice; but he made no ostensible appeal against the hard conditions of a life which shoves the feeble to the wall. He thanked Penrose for an order, and was just a trifle confused when the latter noticed letter-boxes fixed to the wall above and alphabetically labeled. "A little sort of private post-office," he explained; "people bring their letters and leave them until called for. It brings a trifle of rent; and times

are so hard, and business dull. I ask no questions, but I hope" (with a faint flush) "I am not helping on burglaries or things of the sort." He had misunderstood Penrose's smile, who had been merely thinking that this would be convenient for Jasmina. Only yesterday she had told him, with charming pettishness, "I am sure Marie opens my notes and letters; they come before I am awake always."

So now he told her of Becker, where she might leave or call for notes herself when out driving, or taking the long daily ramble alone which was the delight of this child of the plains and the forest. And this gave Penrose an excuse for occasional descents on the old engraver, whom he had vowed to rescue before the last stage. "Not," he declared to himself, cynically, "that I care a straw, but just for the pleasure of cheating the old hag who plays Atropos for him." He found a note awaiting him one morning in his pigeonhole at Becker's, which said: "Come to me, Stephen. I am so very unhappy. Your JASMINA." He did what he would have done for no one else—put aside all other engagements and went to her pretty rooms, where he found her trailing her long, silken, clinging skirts up and down the floor, the loose knot of her dusk hair falling low on her neck. "Stephen, Stephen," she said, in an agitated whisper, both hands on his shoulders, "is it true? Tell me, is it true?"

"What is it you wish to hear, Jasmina?"

"You know—you know, I shall die if he does not—love me! And a man last night, when he was not here, said something of an affair, an attachment once

talked of. I wanted to strike him! But I was your good Jasmina. I clenched my fingers into my palms and just listened. How dared they say it! It is not true. You will tell me, Stephen. You will know; you will help me."

He looked at her glowing, tremulous face very tenderly, led her to a low chair, stroked her hair soothingly. "Be quiet, Jasmina. I cannot tell you surely; there are things a man does not always confide to his nearest friend. But we are together much of our time; I would probably have known something of it. There was a girl of his own class whom he did admire. He has not spoken of her lately; did not even make an effort to attend her father's funeral. It was when he was called Prince Fortunatus; things have changed since then." A fleeting remembrance of Katherine's fine, spiritual face rebuked him. "At any rate, if fortune smiles on him now it is with *Zora's* features."

But the excited creature beside him had caught at one phrase. "Of his own class! Stephen—Stephen—would that hinder? He is one of us now, and there is nothing in my past to bar! For Anton's death—was I to blame? You know—none so well—oh! forgive me—"

His face had not changed in the least. "You need not say a word, Jasmina. Whatever I have done for you I would do again to-morrow. What you desire now you shall have if I can help you. But, remember, we are in another country, among other people."

"Tell me, who was that woman of his own class?"

"What does it matter, if it is all off now? Her name is Miss de Mansur. She is tall and fair."

"Ouf! like a white camellia, cold and colorless. No fragrance—no spirit—no heart—no life!"

He did not answer. "Miss de Mansur," she repeated.

"Do not trouble your little head any more." He touched the dark waves caressingly. "*Zora* had better have a refreshing sleep, to be ready for all that will happen to her in the play." He half smiled, going out from her luxurious surroundings, with their Oriental air and perfume of sandalwood, into the New York streets. "The child is a care to me," he thought, "but even her passionate, untamed nature might find something conventionally sobering in these formal, ugly streets. In her own forests, now—" A vision flashed on him of swarthy, low-browed men, angry and muttering together, their knives drawn. His forehead contracted. "I fancy she is all right here." As soon as he left she had sent her maid for a directory, had copied an address on a card, slipped it into her case, and, assuming her quietest street-dress, had then gone out alone.

When Katherine, remembering wistfully her father's simple rules of right living, began gathering up the loosened threads of her life, she thought, with an inexpressible pang, "I am free now—to do as I like. There is no one whose approval I must seek." And then she knew that it was not only her father's misgivings which had weighed on her in this matter of Rexford; they had but distracted her from her own doubts. The evening of the masquerade came back to her; Mr. Pundit's whispers; the disturbing vision of that lovely woman beside him again; the voice in

the crowd; his seeming want of sympathy in her grief, and his absence at first—for she had not been told how often he called, and could not ask of him without exciting wonder. But hers was too proud a nature to give room long to suspicion. "We must at least give him a hearing," she said, as though still speaking to her father. And Rexford had the few lines without which Penrose's companionship and the theater's plaudits and Jenkins's chaff and Jasmina's smiles had alike been as sounding brass. "I will see you," she wrote, "this afternoon." But before the time appointed another visitor was announced. "A lady, who did not give her name," the man said.

"Tell my aunt."

"Mrs. Crofton is out, Miss de Mansur."

She sighed, but it was perhaps one of the committee on this or that charity, and she had begun to interest herself again in this duty. She would not stay long. "To see you particularly," the man added; "something important."

She went languidly down to where her caller waited, her slim figure looking taller for the somber draperies trailing after her. Her visitor was also young and graceful, and clad in black likewise; but a black which, in cut and style, spoke not of bereavement, but of the pride and joy of life. She rose, bowed slightly in a manner altogether foreign, and reseated herself. Katherine's various interests brought her in contact with many strangers, and now she was too forlornly incurious to wonder who her visitor might be. For a few moments the caller was quite silent; then Katherine broke the stillness: "I beg your par-

don. I was told you wished to see me, but I did not hear your name."

Jasmina's flashing glance had been noting the pure, proud outlines of the head and face in their dark setting, the paling of tints, and the desolate expression, and she was thinking exultantly, "Just as I said! No warmth—no life! An iceberg—cold—hard!" Just at that moment Katherine's eye, growing accustomed to the half-darkness of the room, recognized the dancer with a sudden shock of surprise.

"My name," said Jasmina, "is Madame Vaskarós." There was again a pregnant silence of a few moments. "I do not call on many ladies here," she went on; "I have no time from my art; I have no wish." She spoke slowly, her accent marking how carefully she chose her words. "If I take your time now, mademoiselle, it is only for a short while—a moment—if, of your kindness, you answer a question. My friends come to me sometimes. One of them is Mr. Raixfore. It is of him I will ask you."

Katherine said not a word, nor moved; only one hand tightened over the other until the rings pressed deep into the white flesh.

"I am—perhaps you know—the *Zora* of his opera. He is an artist, but I have heard that he has ties in the great world, not the world of art; ties that would kill his art. I do not believe what they say,—now less than ever" (her scarlet lip curled, showing a gleam of teeth),—"but thought I would ask you."

"Ask *me!*" Katherine's voice sounded unnatural in her own ears.

"It was your name they mentioned."

"Oh!" said Katherine, rising to her feet. The dancer rose too and took a few steps nearer the window, from which a glancing light disclosed the eager, dusky eyes and warmly tinted, mobile features. The pride that spoke in the other girl's silent look stung Jasmina for the first time out of the studied quiet she had so far maintained.

"Mademoiselle would know, doubtless," she said mockingly, "how I have right to ask questions! He is my very dear, good friend. He has other good friends who love and admire him. We would be sorry to hand him over to those who pick him up and put him down as fortune favors and unfavors!" In the continued shock of an event which her senses hardly persuaded her to believe, Katherine wore on her fair features the look of a young St. Michael confronting the power of evil. "Mademoiselle," continued the Hungarian, "will then say nothing?"

"Nothing," she answered clearly; "it is humiliation enough that my name should have been mentioned in your rooms." A rush of crimson surged over Jasmina's cheeks and little ears; her eyes flashed, but she restrained herself. She picked up the little wrap, thrown on a chair-back, and put it about her graceful shoulders, while Katherine, with cold fingers, touched the bell mechanically. "I have found here, then, no news, mademoiselle. The woman he loves will have pride and joy to proclaim it. *Au plaisir!*" She waved her hand and followed the footman out.

When Katherine, with slow steps, mounted the stairs to her own room, it was mechanically to do what she had fallen into the habit of doing lately that the piteous

signs of grief might not distress others. But the eyes were quite dry which she bathed now with perfumed water, and she even smiled at herself when pressing the towel to them afterward. Indeed, her spirit was stung to the point of bewilderment by what she considered the ineffaceable insult of this unexpected happening. Joined with what had gone before,—the whispered rumors that had come to her, her family's censure of him, the two occasions when she had seen him with Jasmina, his seeming forgetfulness of herself in trouble,—this last shock made a damning whole. "What can he be when a dancer of unknown past dares to call him friend—to come to Cornelius de Mansur's house—to question Katherine de Mansur!" Her proud head, lowered in the softening of grief, reared itself once more. Scorn for a time trampled her love underfoot. Her large, shining eyes, fixed on her father's portrait, seemed to say, "Perhaps you were right." When, in all this exaltation of wounded pride, she had finished a note to him, she went, in her black robes, to a church, and sat there, her heart like a stone, unable even to pray.

It was well, perhaps, she could not see him mount to her door with buoyant step and ardent eyes, his mien changing to utter bewilderment at the stolid "Not at home, sir." He took the note left for him mechanically, and when he had a chance to open it, it said:

"I feel that I have done you an injustice in not telling you before that what we spoke of formerly is impossible. I had not secured my dear father's ap-

proval, and now I have not even my own. It was all a mistake. I feel that we were never suited to each other. And, though I wish you all success, I think you will agree with me that it is better we should not meet again. "K. DE M."

He read it over three or four times in utter amazement. "What can she mean? It is impossible—no reason given—it sounds like delirium!" When he could collect his senses he replied:

"I do not understand. I am not used to making out enigmas. To throw me over with no cause assigned—you, Katherine! It would be too unworthy. If we are not suited to each other now,—we once thought we were,—will you not at least tell me why?
"A. R."

She answered: "I had not meant to write again, but you force me to say what I did not wish. All that I hear of your life and friends proves to me how unsuited we are. This must be final."

"Final! No, by Heaven!" declared Rexford to himself. "I will see her. She must explain!" He rushed off to her house next afternoon, leaving a musical critique half done, to be finished in a hurry—and badly—by Jenkins, and was met by James's calm announcement that Miss de Mansur had gone into the country. "Did not know for how long. It was his [James's] opinion that Miss Katherine had failed sadly since the master's death. The change would do her good. Mr. Reginald thought so too."

"Damn Mr. Reginald," Rexford had nearly said, though it was not his habit to swear. He felt for the moment a savage hatred against those relatives who, being near her, seemed a barrier between him and her. Even the unconscious James came in, at the moment, for a share of his resentment; which that domestic, with a secret weakness for Rexford's virile beauty and broad shoulders, generously repaid by volunteering that "all letters and notes was to be forwarded from house, as instructions was sent. No, sir; could n't give address, as they 'll be movin' about."

"Ah, very well," said Rexford, marching off. He did, in fact, send to the house in a few days these lines: "A lady's word must, I suppose, be accepted as final. Yet, as I have failed to see you or obtain an explanation, I will say that a faith at the mercy of rumor's breath is not invaluable." (He knew nothing of Jasmina's visit.) "It is better it should fail me now than later, when I might have learned to depend utterly upon it. Good-by, then, since you will it so."

But after this his indignation soon burned itself out and left dull embers of pain.

He worked harder than ever both at the office and at home, where he was engaged upon a new opera. "Zora," the season's success, was being brought out now in distant cities. Jasmina saw him seldomer now, though the pretty creature's soft chatter and music were as restful to him as stroking a kitten; but he stayed later when he went, and did not always refrain from roulette, even at her request. Penrose gave no sign that he had quickly remarked his friend's pale and haggard looks. He knew that no remonstrance, how-

ever well intended, would prevent a man's overworking himself if he so elected. But he studied him quietly, and remarked casually, "'Zora' will run for a long time yet. There is no hurry for the new thing, even if Jenkins does yearn to see his name on a libretto." This was one afternoon when Van Krippen had lent them his yacht, and, the first prophetic mildness of the spring being in the air, they talked, stretched out on her deck, while she dived and skimmed and dipped in and out of coves and windings of the river like some great, white-winged bird uncertain of her mind. Rexford might have borrowed half a dozen yachts at a time if he would, for since "Zora"—and Jasmina—had loomed on the horizon he was more than ever an object of envious admiration among young plutocrats. But Morty, to do him justice, was a loyal little fellow, who stuck to those he liked, successful or not—a trait inherited from the former miner, John Cripps.

Rexford pushed back the cap he wore, that the crisp breeze might blow refreshingly on his head—a little hot and feverish. He did not answer, but presently, taking the short pipe from his mouth, he said, with a laugh, "Did I show you the letter I had from Archibald Pundit? He could not delay another moment—the old worldling!—his hearty felicitations, and the rest of it, to my father's son, and the pride of my mother's heart (I did have a cablegram, you know, from Lady Mellon). Pundit regrets, so he writes, not to meet me oftener in those hospitable halls which I formerly adorned. Somebody told me he said I was unfit for them, and a disgrace generally, don't you understand, to my family. He says now that Reginald

Crofton and I are two young men of whom New York is justly proud. Bah! what does it matter?" (with another laugh, still drearier. His success, even his art, had been to him lately as ashes in the mouth.) "I had half a mind to answer the old gentleman, 'Shall windy words have no end? Or is it any trouble to thee to speak?'"

Penrose appeared not to notice the tone of bitterness. He looked out over the farther banks and overhanging clouds, and blew rings of smoke. "I can quote from that same old moralist myself: 'One man dieth strong and hale, rich and happy; but another in bitterness of soul, without any riches; and yet they shall sleep together in the dust.' Which, after all, is poor consolation, while still alive, for meager dinners." He noticed the dark shadows under his companion's eyes, and remembered, irrelevantly, that some one had said that Miss de Mansur had gone away. Then his thoughts became subjective again, and took a wide leap across the ocean; and he seemed to see a little lad, playing by the side of a Welsh stream, start and tremble when a harsh voice called, "Stephen!" He blew another ring of smoke, and went on: "I also have had 'empty months,' and have numbered to myself 'wearisome nights'! Let us quit Job now, and his eloquently impatient patience, and talk of Jasmina."

His voice softened, dwelling on her name.

"How well she sang the first solo in your new 'Lotus-eaters' at last night's rehearsal! I never dreamed that woodland bird could be even so much tamed. I can remember her, almost a baby, with little face that seemed all eyes, sitting on the ground in a

far Hungarian forest, trilling measures improvised or caught up somewhere. She could hardly walk when her small feet were flying over the grass in unison with castanet or tambourine. Poor child! a Gipsy camp is a rough school, as I know, and she lost her mother so soon—a kind woman, and intelligent in her way. Would you believe it, Rexford? that uneducated woman cared for me when we were both deserted, and my pinched, childish features must have reminded her of one who had cruelly ill treated her. Many Christians would have thought it a small matter to leave his son, as he had done himself. Well" (sending up a great puff of smoke), "when he had gone to his account, and I had found my way back to Wales, and received—no thanks to him—my small patrimony, I would have helped her; but she had died, and there was only Jasmina. She learned to read and write from me, and solely to please me. The foolish child had been persuaded into a marriage with one of the tribe —a brute—before I could save her. But he was—removed—so quickly that he must be but a bad dream to her. Then she could be sent to Vienna and Paris for music and dancing. She came out on the stage there, and now here—with success, as you know; with high character and untouched heart, as I know. Indeed, her charm is so great and her nature so faithful that" (very slowly, and with gaze intent on some far-off point) "I have sometimes thought the man would be fortunate whom she could fancy. With her soft adaptability, the part of great lady would fit her well —if it should come."

He shook the ashes out of his pipe, and put it in his

pocket. Rexford had never, even indirectly, sought to question the reticent man of his past, but broke out now, with a return of impulsiveness, "I had imagined you passing your boyhood in Wales."

"The earliest part, yes; but my mother died in my babyhood, and my father took me about with him on the Continent into all manner of out-of-the-way parts. I was a forlorn little chap of only ten when he left me, without a word, in Hungary. I never saw him again, as he was dead when I made my way back to the little Welsh place among the hills. I did not miss him; all I remember of him is, by my troth, some very bitter words and a hard blow now and then. The sole kindness I ever had was from that poor Gipsy woman; and the Lord do so unto me, and more also —well, a Gipsy tribe is a mighty interesting one to travel with."

"I believe you. It must have given you valuable dots in writing the book of 'Zora.'"

"Yes," Penrose assented, as though weary of the subject. They were nearing shore now, and he was listening cynically to the varied blasphemy being exchanged between the crew of two coal-barges which had nearly run into each other. It did not occur to Rexford, who wore a more interested expression now, that his friend had broken through a fixed habit of reserve for this very purpose and reward.

XII

P at Miss Lavender's, as elsewhere, the early spring was making a fitful and uncertain appearance, young and most untender; for it came over Central Park with a nipping east wind, and took a spiteful pleasure in coaxing out a stray narcissus or snowdrop in sheltered nooks here and there, only to blight it again with a sudden sprinkle of snow or frosty blast. The east wind seemed also to have touched with acidity the lady principal's temper this March day, as well as given a tinge of red to her classic nose; for she spoke with extreme asperity to her coachman on stepping into her coupé, and while she was rolled along past some very pleasant glimpses of lawn and foliage saw nothing, evidently, but gave herself to thought, accompanied by a clouded brow and sharp, impatient tapping of thin, gloved finger against the glass.

First of all, Miss Lavender had expected to escape this weather in the balmy air of Florida, where friends, lounging on the verandas of the great hotels, even now expected her. And there that foolish third Miss Goslin must make a point of taking the mumps at the fash-

ionable dancing academy her girls attended. Mumps! the very name was plebeian, and seemed intended for factory-workers and tenement-houses. What could Cudworth have been thinking of to let such a thing into his exclusive classes! If Miss Goslin must be ill, and communicate illness to others of the pupils,—it was just like her,—why could she not have pneumonia or nervous prostration, or something that would be a little less repugnant to speak or write about? How make it possible for the chief to take her trip, with the chance of the household and staff being attacked? If that elegant Frenchwoman, Madame Bonair, were to be depended upon—but all she could do in this crisis was to shrug her shoulders with a little shriek of horror, and cry, "Juste ciel! qu'on est affreux, comme cela! Ne m'en parlez plus!" Fräulein Volmer would have taken a sentimental interest in each sufferer if admitted to her, and gladly read the "Sorrows of Werther" aloud, or otherwise ministered; but she was not very practical. No; clearly, Miss Lavender must remain; and the Lenten consolations of the Ponce de Leon brightened as they took their flight.

Still, it might have been worse. Her protégés, De Vaurien and Mauvais Sujet, had had many opportunities of inspecting this garden of girls before the serpent—the vulgar serpent of mumps—had made his appearance. She had had the pleasure of transmitting to the parents of Miss van Krippen and another—Miss Kilmansegg—formal proposals for the hands of those young ladies, and had no doubt of favorable responses. She had already written hopefully to the aunt in the Faubourg; and various tailors and other tradesmen

of Paris were feeding fat their hopes of getting back a little of their money when their illustrious and impecunious patrons should wed American heiresses.

But Miss Lavender frowned once more, turning over the package of letters which had been handed to her on leaving. The European plan, on which her girls were brought up, included by rights an inspection of correspondence, but "one must allow a little for American prejudices; after all, it is not a kindergarten." So, though surprisingly well acquainted with the subject-matter of their letters, she had never been actually known to open them. One among these, however, she held some time in her hand, turning it over and over as if undecided. It was in Archibald Pundit's well-known handwriting, and addressed to Miss van Krippen. What could he possibly have to write about that he might not first discuss with herself? She remembered that, on one or two occasions recently, his attentions had not been exclusively her own, as formerly, nor even general; but that he had contrived to sit and talk with Angelica. "A self-willed, pert, and troublesome young woman," decided Miss Lavender, tartly. "I shall be glad when I get her off my hands with éclat." It was on a shopping tour that the principal was bound this afternoon; and it was soon concluded; for her orders, though large, were well considered, gave little trouble, and were promptly paid. Then the coupé turned through Twentieth street and upward along Sixth Avenue, and here, to her surprise, coming out from what seemed a tiny book-stall in a basement shop, were Miss van Krippen and Fräulein Volmer, supposed to be

walking in the Park. It was, in fact, Becker's little post-office, where Angelica had just pocketed, after reading, a poetic epistle from Otto; the soft-hearted but injudicious fräulein being bribed to countenance this by occasional verses addressed to herself, descriptive of the fatherland, the Rhine, edelweiss, first love, or such impersonal topics, together with a caress and a soft, "Ah, dearest fräulein! when you were a girl did you have a Miss Lavender to freeze you up and read your letters?" The sentimental spinster thought of a bursch she had once known, with a long pipe and a toy cap perched amid his frowzy hair, who had given her a spray of forget-me-nots. She had them, dry and pressed, still, and with a sigh she gave in at once; and it must be admitted that she did not, as chaperon, earn that fifty cents an hour which went into Miss Lavender's exchequer.

That lady took no notice of her now, but, instantly stopping the coupé, drew up beside Angelica, calling to her.

"If you are quite through your shopping, kindly get in with me. I will drive you home."

"There is a cab waiting," said the unabashed Angelica.

"Dismiss it, please."

"No, thank you" (with a touch of indignation); "the fräulein is not to go home in a car." She actually kept Miss Lavender waiting until she saw Fräulein Volmer safely into the cab, with a fee to the driver for extra care of the bewildered passenger.

"May I ask, Miss van Krippen," said Miss Lavender, then, "what you are doing so far down-town?"

"I changed my mind" (sweetly) "about the Park, and came for some shopping instead."

"I would rather you would tell me your exact plans when you go out," said the baffled Miss Lavender. They were now in Fifth Avenue, which caused her to add, "It was my intention to stop at the Provincial Matrons' club-room, but I can postpone it, taking this opportunity for a little private talk. I think—I am sure—you will be flattered when I tell you that the Vicomte de Vaurien made, last week, proposals for your hand, which I have already referred to your parents, knowing that you have received with me the polish fitting you for his exalted station. I make no doubt they will be delighted with such brilliant prospects."

"To my parents! It is mamma, then, whom he wishes to commit bigamy?"

Miss Lavender was a picture of dignified reproof. "You may not have had opportunities for knowing, Miss van Krippen, that it is the European custom to first approach a young lady's parents on the subject of an alliance."

"But we are American," said Angelica, innocently, "and, my dear Miss Lavender, how awkward for him to obtain the family blessing, and then have me say no!"

"Do I understand that you could think of declining so eligible a match?"

"I could think of it easily," replied Angelica, dreamily. She was watching through the glass the continuous stream of gay and varied pedestrians, with whose draperies and hats the wind was playing antics.

"Is it his uncle, or which of the family, who ill treats his wife so shamefully? But that is not to the point. What I was really thinking was, how interesting mamma's mail will be this week!"

Miss Lavender looked helplessly at her, opened her lips and shut them. She knew enough of this pupil not to force her hand. She might better consult Mr. Pundit as to how to obtain the desired end. Which thought reminded her: "Here is a letter for you by this afternoon's post." Angelica, permission obtained, opened and read the missive; smiled, pretended to hesitate, and then tendered it, remarking suavely, "If it is good form to refer these matters to authority, Miss Lavender, then it must be right to show you this." The lady read, with a keen pang of slighted vanity, what the erstwhile devoted Archibald had written to her pupil.

"My dear Miss van Krippen: So carefully guarded, so discreetly chaperoned are the fair wards of the estimable and worthy Miss Lavender that I have long sought in vain an opportunity of avowing to you verbally my great admiration. Thus I am forced to indite my sentiments instead. Will you permit me to lay at your feet the homage of a heart—elderly, it is true; long widowed, alas! but yearning to give and receive warm, earnest, disinterested affection. [Miss Lavender's lip curled.] How can I tell you the impression your charms have made on one who, though your senior in years, is susceptible of a youthful ardor and freshness of feeling unknown to a cold and calculating generation! and who can offer you—I say it

with modest pride—his position as an arbiter of fashion, an oracle of good form, in this our city. One word from you—one glance of encouragement from those celestial orbs—and I hasten to kneel before you.

"Your admiring and devoted servant,

"ARCHIBALD PUNDIT."

"Can this be the reason, Miss van Krippen—this—this preposterous proposal—that you think of declining the brilliant De Vaurien connection?"

"Mr. Pundit," murmured Angelica, casting down her eyes, "is an elderly man, certainly; but he is no titled foreign adventurer. He is an American born and bred, and, as such, comprehensible at least. Knowing my early lack of advantages, dear Miss Lavender, you can imagine that the restfulness of having such an undoubted model of form for a lifelong guide, philosopher, and friend might be attractive to an untaught creature like myself. But I do not wish to be hasty. I have not decided to accept either, but will hear arguments on both sides."

Her preceptress, who knew something of girls, looked at her, completely puzzled. But Angelica had the amusement of seeing her, after this, mount guard herself during Mr. Pundit's visits, when that gentleman would fain have discussed in person Miss van Krippen's non-committal reply to his note. And her venerable suitor gave the girl further sport by his evident dread lest Miss Lavender should make premature discovery of his defection. She found no sport, however, in the redoubling of Miss Lavender's smooth and incessant eloquence in behalf of the Vicomte de Vaurien; nor

in her connivance at what speedily became a persecution on the part of the young French roué, whose debts were pressing. Fräulein Volmer was surprised one day by Angelica's bursting out vehemently, "I am just tired of it! I wish Katherine would come back! Of course I have you, you kind, soft thing" (embracing her), "but I need my Katherine." It was that very day she slipped out, took a cab to Becker's, where a note awaited her, was absent yet awhile longer, and came back without her absence being remarked—which Miss Lavender stoutly maintained was a thing impossible in her well-regulated establishment.

And, if Angelica had known it, Katherine was even then near her; for she had not found in a change of scene the hoped-for oblivion. By shadowy river-bank or sunny hillside there went with her Black Care, who sits on the rider's crupper or dogs the pedestrian's footsteps with equal tenacity. "I might be better at home, with some work to do," she told her aunt, with a wistful look which went to that kind lady's heart. So they turned their heads homeward; and she found some relief from anxiety at her niece's altered looks in commenting on the pitiful inefficiency of men—young men—who could devise no means of bringing back the hue of happiness to that cheek and light to those eyes. "And such eyes, and such a voice, and such grace and sweetness!" Indeed, the elder woman never tired of sounding the praises of this young relative, whom she had not seen since childhood. Reginald laughed when his mother waxed eloquent. "What does this portend, little mother? Have you dreaded so much that in my African wanderings I should fall

in love with a complexion the shadowed livery of the burnished sun; that I should take some savage woman who should rear my dusky brood?"

"Stuff!" said his mother, irrelevantly; "Katherine would not look at you." Which she felt to be almost blasphemy, so goodly a sight she herself thought him. He would have been very willing to have Katherine look at him with other than the frank, serenely kind, cousinly glances she now gave him.

"What a comrade she would make!" he thought. "How strong and gentle and bright and sympathetic! Always helping a man, never hindering. What a rare, fair creature she looks among all these little, chattering, giggling society girls, with their petty views of life!" He began to picture her in a palanquin, borne through the tropical virgin forest, he tramping beside her, their hopes and interests the same.

The "little, chattering, giggling society girls" they ran across repaid his flattering estimate by taking an intense interest in what struck them as the great suitability of the cousins to each other. "They looked so tall and handsome, my dear, standing together on the deck of the river steamer, and were always talking about books and travel and lion-hunting and that sort of thing. He 's very rich, you know, and he could n't take his eyes off her, and I believe they 're engaged." Not being interested in books and travel and lion-hunting and that sort of thing themselves, they were excellent disseminators of gossip, and Katherine was little aware how widely the report of her approaching marriage to Mr. Crofton was circulated and believed. It came out in the "Magpie," an impertinent little sheet

which prints all manner of gossip and scandal and insolent untruths. Jenkins happened to purchase the copy containing an authoritative statement concerning Miss de Mansur and Mr. Crofton, and had it in his hand when he came into Rexford's room one evening before dinner. He waved it about as he rambled on in his usual style:

"Well, I went to the opening of that new Women Bachelors' Club last night. Promised to recite something in first part of program. All very kind about it, complimented me, and that. One of the Bachelors walked herself in at the very last, just before supper—pert-looking little girl, with a lot of rumpled hair, but pretty enough. She answered the toast to 'Men.' Here are her remarks (I took notes): 'Men—lovely men—God bless them! They double our cares, they divide our joys. How generously and unstintingly they give us advice! How boldly they stand in solid phalanx to shield us from the crowds around the ballot-box! How gladly they protect us from the contaminating influences of the court-room! How tenderly they have drawn us from the coils of equal education, and how carefully pointed out to us the pitfalls in the paths which lead to fortune! At what cost, at what sacrifice, they erect before our admiring eyes their beautiful club-houses! How they must sit, day after day, deprived of the presence of her who alone brings light into their lives! No ministering angel to hand the cup of solace. No fair divinity to warm the slippers for their weary feet. All done for us—for example's sake. How unflinchingly they pose for our benefit! We may imagine with what longing they

look forward to the time when we, in twin club-houses, like Egypt's men and women, shall stand by their side. As fathers they are indispensable; as brothers they are open to criticism; as lovers they are irreproachable; as husbands we have nothing better; as men we can only say, with all their faults, we love them still!'"

Rexford smiled appreciatively.

"Oh, yes; it was good enough," said Jenkins, "and there was plenty of applause. But, to show you her impudence: I had myself presented after supper, meaning to say something nice about her speech; and she could n't have caught my name, for she said presently, looking over the program, 'I came late on purpose. There was some recitation in the first part. I hate to hear grown men speak pieces. Tell me' (pointing to my poem on the bill), 'has that creature done his elocution act yet?' 'He finished some time ago,' said I. 'How bad was it?' she asked. 'Oh, about the average.' 'Thank Heaven, I escaped it!' she breathed piously. 'You don't think he is likely to break out again?' 'No,' I told her; 'I can assure you he shall not repeat the offense—for I am the man.' Some little balm in Gilead there was in the expression of her face" (he grinned despite himself); "but I don't go to the Women Bachelors' any more. Here, I 'll leave this 'Magpie' here; when you 're through dressing you can revel in it. I know you 're devoted to scandal. You know Crofton, by the way, the African explorer. There 's something about him."

Reginald Crofton was not the rose, but at least he had lived near her. Rexford picked up the paper after

a while, and glanced over it. A messenger ran into Jenkins that night, when he was in Penrose's office, with a note.

"'The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!'" declaimed Jenkins, glancing at the paper. The astonished boy retreated rapidly.

"What 's the matter?" asked Penrose from his desk.

"It 's Rexford—confound him! He 's asked me to do a lot of his work for him to-morrow; and I 've plenty of my own. He 'll be out of town for a week. Why does n't he stick to it or give it up? I 'll have to be more positive with him about these odd jobs."

An east wind was still blowing, but with something of soft relenting in its breath, when Angelica came in to Miss de Mansur's pretty room, an irrepressible joyousness in her eye and lightness in her step. "Oh, I am so glad to have you back, my Katherine; but why, why did you stay so long? I might have been so much better a girl if you had been here."

"What is it? What have you been doing?" queried Katherine, expecting to hear of saucy tricks with Miss Lavender.

"I have been changing my name," she replied, with affected demureness, casting down her eyes. While Katherine stared at her, incredulous, she fell down on her knees, taking care not to disarrange her stylish draperies, and clasped her small hands dramatically. "I will not arise until I have your forgiveness and your blessing for my Otto and myself!"

"Angelica! Angelica! get up. What do you mean by this nonsense! You have not been doing anything foolish?"

"Certainly not, my dear" (rising and smoothing down her skirts); "only, to adapt a French rhyme,

Si t'aimer est folie,
Je serais folle toute la vie.

Katherine, do not look as if you saw me led to execution! Even if I have, in your absence, arranged my own life and become Mrs. Federling, I shall probably escape with twenty years in the penitentiary. Katherine dear" (a serious and wistful note came into her voice), "you don't know how one who has heard nothing but money from her birth craves to be loved for herself; and truly, truly, when you know my Otto, you will find that he is the kindest, dearest, and most genuine of men, who cares only about me myself. I took pains to have him misinformed about my means. He is the most absurd creature about poetry and sentiment and that—you should hear the fräulein and him" (breaking into laughter through her tears). "Well, I do not understand their Goethe and Heine, but I am not such a bad judge of men."

"Oh!" exclaimed Katherine, still aghast, "Miss Lavender—your parents! What will they say!"

"Miss Lavender, my dear! she is blue with indignation, and has dismissed Fräulein Volmer as an accessory before the fact—which the fräulein was not. Still, it is a paler blue than it would have been if Mr. Pundit, her undervalued property, had not, in perfect form, attempted to transfer the title-deeds to me. You can understand that, between that bore, her resentment, and her determination to assist the repulsive De Vaurien in his offensive addresses, life at Franklin Hall was just unbearable. So I wrote to a girl I used

to know out West, now in Germany, to get her brother to find out if the fräulein's account of the Federlings and Otto was correct; and it turned out all right."

"If you had written to your mother to inquire—"

"You don't know mamma. She was in Paris, exchanging compliments with the De Vaurien family. If she had found me disengaged, she would have managed that alliance one way or another. So I wrote that, as I knew she had adopted European modes, I hereby served her with the customary *trois 'sommations respectueuses.'*"

"In one letter?"

"Oh, yes" (placidly); "time pressed. I put the last two in postscripts, and told her that, as she was already on the Continent, she might cross the Rhine and make friends with the Federlings, as I would be one of them before she could answer. Why did she leave me in that mill of feminine eligibles? I informed papa, and have his forgiveness already—by cable; by cable, as I begged him. Is not that original?"

Katherine looked at her helplessly. "And is Mr.—Mr. Federling still at Delmonico's?"

"Certainly not. He will now have time to find the professorship that will suit him, or what he chooses. He hates idleness, and is very learned and studious. We have a charming apartment, where you will come and see us."

"My dear, it is all very wrong, you know; but I hope your judgment of men is correct, and that you are going to be very happy."

"Of course it was wrong, and Mr. Pundit will say much worse. 'Bad form, don't you know. In the

worst possible taste, you understand.' But just wait, wait until you know my Otto. He is down-stairs now."

"Then let me wish him joy," said Katherine. She found the suddenly made bridegroom a fresh-faced young Teuton, whose frank, yet modest, manner made a favorable impression. He beamed on his wife's friend with a look of bliss, somewhat modified by a sense of guilt in the circumstances of their hasty union. He quoted verse freely, in praise of his "blond angel" (whom his eyes sought incessantly), as the best excuse for what looked like rashness. He admitted the dereliction as regarded the "venerated and respect-worthy" parents on both sides, and had no excuse to offer beyond the tyranny of the eternal Eros. But Katherine divined that, had chivalrous loyalty permitted, he might have pleaded his "blond angel's" habit of arranging matters herself.

But there was an unwonted appeal for sympathy in Angelica's usually careless demeanor which touched her; and she watched the young couple saunter across the square, all absorbed in each other, with a half-pleased interest which lightened for the moment her heavy heart. And if there is an undue proportion of wooing and matrimony in this chapter, the fact that it was in the springtime, when young blossoms were showing their pretty heads through the grass, and little birds inspected the first green sprouts on the trees, and formulated, amid much hopping and twittering, an "Artis Amatoriæ" of their own, must excuse it.

XIII

REXFORD'S week of absence had stretched into three, and Jenkins was still acting as musical critic in his place, when, coming into his room at dusk one evening, his friendly substitute encountered him stepping from the elevator.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Jenkins, "it is really good of you to come back at all. And where have you been lying low all this time and chuckling over the blunders in my reviews? I have n't been to all the musical events, I tell you frankly, but just took the amateur ones on faith; which proved a little awkward once or twice, when they altered the program without my knowledge. However, that 's all one now; for not a day longer am I going to do double chores, and wear away with overwork pounds of my valuable avoirdupois. I suppose the brilliant composer of 'Zora' has begun to think himself above the duties of a humble reviewer."

The light from an open doorway fell on his companion's face.

"Well," he continued, "I should not say your vacation had done you much good; you look used up."

"No wonder," replied Rexford. "Now that you

stop for breath, I may tell you that it is 'The Miller of Dee' which has worn me out—the utterly impossible words of that libretto, which I would know for yours in farthest Ind. I finished the scores, however."

"Finished them? That was quick work, most noble collaborator. Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah!" he solemnly chanted.

Penrose came to his door. "What is the howling about? Ha, youngster, back again? I am glad." A whole volume of welcome was compressed into two or three simple words. He was in his shirt-sleeves, struggling with a troublesome collar-button, but moved aside in mute invitation for his friend to enter, while Jenkins passed in at his own door.

His opinion of Rexford's looks was, in effect, the same as Jenkins's. He scanned him as, appearing wholly occupied at the mirror with his button, he remarked, "Turkish bath and dinner will brace you up all right. Fancy you 've been traveling in an overheated Pullman."

Rexford took no notice. He sat on the edge of a lounge absently punching one of the pillows.

"Would you have minded much," he asked abruptly, "if I had n't done 'The Lotus-eaters'? It was a fearful pull to finish it, and I had more than half a mind to leave it. I was busy in the daytime; had to grind at it at night."

"Do you mean to say that you finished 'The Lotus-eaters' while you were away—besides, as I judge from Jenkins's whoops, polishing off 'The Miller'? You must have gone into retirement in the country."

"I was in Washington, rushing around, but took

my evenings. You can have Menu try the scores to-night, or when you will; he can overlook the choruses too."

"Why not yourself?"

"I shall have all I can attend to now, getting my outfit ready for the expedition."

Penrose had by this time inducted himself into his dinner coat. He drew a long breath, looking hard at Rexford, but said, even more quietly, "This dialogue begins to remind me of the faithful steward in 'The Way to Tell Bad News.' Let us leave our pribbles and our prabbles, and get to the heart of the matter. Are you intending—just after 'Zora's' success, and before bringing out yourself 'The Lotus-eaters' and 'The Miller of Dee'—to leave New York definitely for some time?"

"For just as long a time as possible."

"Would it be exceeding friendship's privilege to ask your reasons, most excellent—"

"'Fool,' you would finish. Do not hesitate. We are all fools together, we mortals, and there is not always a reason to be found among us. My dear fellow, a man must have some sort of interest in living, so he keeps on making experiments with himself. The three great human passions are, you have heard, love, war, and money-making. In these end-of-the-century days, with arbitration imminent, I may not have the excitement of carving my natural enemies—not even Lord Mellon, or—or—" He broke off with a dismal sort of laugh; and Penrose noted anew the weary recklessness of his attitude, and the tired look about eyes and brow, where limp little locks of damp hair

clung. "Money-making," he resumed, "is a necessary evil for some of us, when a little Lord Cantaloupe appears upon the stage; but when we have enough to feel secure of bread and butter, and even occasional canvasback and Burgundy rose, the occupation begins to pall."

"Perhaps because you use work as a means, not an end. Work keeps a man erect; it is fatally easy to sink down into mere animalism. But you were saying—"

"Oh" (with some vehemence), "that I begin to hate it all! The crowds and the applause, and the young noodles that come up to compliment and don't know one note from another, and—I beg your pardon—the papers, with their effusive paragraphs, and—and everything."

"If this were mere pampered vanity," said Penrose, keenly, "as it might be, I should simply say, my good fellow, you are badly spoiled—by your reverses. But I think I discern something else. If I am intrusive, let me know. But the first great human interest you have not touched upon. If you have been giving divided worship to your art, she will undoubtedly fail you."

"Oh, my art, my art!" cried Rexford. "I would not blaspheme that divine consoler! But yes, then" (like one tired of bearing pain alone), "there *is* another idol, but one who will have none of my worship—who cares less for votaries of melody than for men of thews and sinews, mighty hunters who lay the trophies of their chase at her feet!" Suddenly the paragraph about Miss de Mansur and Reginald Crofton, which he

also had seen, came into Penrose's mind. He looked gravely at the haggard young face—and remembered Jasmina.

"Hearsay is a poor guide of conduct," he said at last.

"Oh" (laughing harshly), "I did not depend wholly upon that. I have had notes returned unopened since then."

Jenkins, who had been whistling shrilly in his room, broke now into a snatch of song, "There are other eyes in Spain," and Penrose closed the door softly.

"It is not easy for most men to leave an idol's shrine."

"It is impossible for me to stay near this one."

"And where, then, will you go?"

"You have heard of the Ritler arctic trip, to be made this summer? The 'Argus' has had sporadic paragraphs about it. It is sent by a wealthy scientist, too old to go himself, but with this hobby. It is not to find an impracticable northwest passage, nor yet to go farther north than any previous party. It is just to settle certain geographical and scientific questions; and I judge it will be safe enough, and comparatively unexciting, for the professor in charge, Dr. Ritler, is going to take his wife. I saw him in Washington, and found him willing enough to have me as volunteer, for I know something of his specialties and am a fair shot. Their party goes on this week to St. John's, and I join them there next week."

Penrose thought vaguely that he would have time enough after next week to suffer for the cheery companionship and joyous looks which had so brightened his last year or two. He only asked:

"And 'Zora,' and the new ones?"

"Oh" (indifferently), "the managers have accepted them. I leave the rest in your hands."

"And—and Jasmina?"

"For that matter"—he was passing into his own room now)—"for that matter, it is you who have always had most interest in our Gipsy star."

For days following he was as one driven in his haste to complete preparations for getting away. A list had been furnished him by Dr. Ritler and others of the party, glad to have as a recruit this frank and fearless spirit, with well-trained muscles and superb health to make him valuable. The pemmican, dog food, lime-juice, and such things as he had vaguely connected, from reading, with circumpolar wanderings, came not within his province, he was laughingly told, but merely the personal belongings indicated. Penrose, heavy-hearted, but externally unmoved, watched him preparing to quit the orbit in which, on one plane or other, he had taken pleasure in his brilliant revolutions.

"I have seen Menu and the others," Rexford told him. "'Zora' will soon be sent into the provinces, and make way for 'The Lotus-eaters.' That is to be on a grand scale, Menu tells me; but I leave my prestige in your hands, old chap. Jenkins, the great, the only Jenkins, will look after 'The Miller' at the Gaiety, as the book is his. And, Jenkins, if I don't come back, you may claim the music too."

"What larks, Pip!" cried Jenkins, not as cheerily as usual. "If you insist on being frozen stiff, why not go up and sit awhile with Miss Lavender? I was with her for a half-hour yesterday to get notes for an article on 'Finishing Academies,' and my teeth chattered

in my head when I left." In truth, the good fellow was very loath to have this favorite of his leave so early in their new partnership; nor could he understand, ease-loving himself, how a sane man could give up the comforts of civilization for any cause whatever. "If he dislikes the eastern exposure in 'Simla,' I would have given him my room," he thought ruefully.

The Van Krippens, the Doulton-Mintons, the Crowne Derbys, the Royall Worcesters, and all the rest of the dandies were likewise filled with surprise. That a handsome man, connected with the English nobility, a composer at present the rage (could they not, each one, hum an air or two from "Zora"?), sure of adulation from society, which had evidently made a mistake during the short while she hid her face from him—that he should leave all these splendors for certain hardship! "Was n't there an old great-aunt or somebody in the family that was eccentric? Yes, that 's it; he 's off, by Jove!"

"Hum—ha—my dear boy," said Archibald Pundit, meeting him, "what 's this I hear? Our brilliant young artist leaving us? We can't spare you, don't you know. And Lady Mellon will hardly approve, don't you perceive."

"I think I perceive," said Rexford, "that Lord Mellon's pranks are absorbing most of Lady Mellon's time and attention just now. I hardly approve of them myself, don't you know."

"I was sorry in an instant," he told Penrose afterward, "for the disrespect. He had nothing to say, for I know he has heard all those hideous stories about Lord Mellon, that descendant of the great Henry,

Marquis of Gourdes. Still, I had no right to abash the old fellow, worldling as he is. He did not use to irritate me so; but oh, Penrose, I am sick of everything! '*Grattez le moderne, vous trouvez le sauvage.*' I long to be far away, where the aurora takes the place of the electric light and the sledge is the only transit, rapid or slow. Do you remember our reading last year of the arctic squadron landing in Iceland, and how full of wonder seemed their adventures to us? And I had never a presentiment that, this very next year, I should be going myself on a similar expedition." And in all this *sæva indignatio* and feverish hurry to be gone was a throbbing consciousness that he would give up this scheme too, as one of utter futility, if Katherine said but the word. He just missed meeting her face to face one afternoon, when the church door had but closed on her as he passed by, where she had come, with stricken heart, to offer a petition—for him, indeed. It was after her cousin's mentioning at home this addition to the arctic party.

"I begin to feel a little more respect for him," he said. "It looks as though he might find some better use for his brain than composing jingles for street boys to whistle."

"Oh, *you*, Reginald!" laughed his mother; "your one idea of the whole duty of man is to go about poking and prying into the dark corners of the earth. But I am glad Mr. Rexford withdraws himself from the temptations of theatrical success. I hope" (kindly) "he will come to no harm."

"Oh," said her son, carelessly, "this is an easy and safe trip, I hear, as far as prudent and reasonable fore-

sight can make it. A very practical scheme, and throws no sort of glamour of mysterious danger over the party. Dr. Ritler's wife will go. He thinks arctic perils have been much overrated."

"There have been a good many lives lost," said his mother, dubiously. "People will hardly go the length of dying just to win a little romantic interest—dying slowly and painfully."

Katherine said nothing, but presently slipped away to where she was in the habit of carrying her troubles.

During this time Jasmina, as *Zora*, danced and sang as usual, and had begun to look over her new part in the rehearsals of "The Lotus-Eaters." As for the "Mayde who followed the Man who followed the Miller of Dee," that light rôle was acceptably filled by a noted soubrette. Penrose had reason to know that Jasmina had fretted restively during the young composer's absence, and delayed telling her of his proposed departure now. So it chanced that she first learned of it through a paper, where some head-line attracted her careless eye. "'List of Members of Expedition,'" she repeated. "What Raixfore is this he means? It says 'Allan!'" (with incredulous disdain). "Some foolish blunder—a canard. He leave the city—leave *Zora*" (softly) "for these snowbanks? Absurd! See, Stephen" (on his coming in), "what these ridiculous papers write one day, only to contradict the next. How did they get his name?"

"My dear child," he answered seriously, "it may be true. I have heard something of it."

"Stephen! Stephen!" (voice and hands appealing) "it is *not* true; say it is not true."

"I am afraid it *is* true."

Her white teeth closed on the lower scarlet lip; her breath came in quick gasps; her slender fingers clasped his arm.

"Oh," she cried, in piteous, childlike appeal, "I would die then. You will not let me die; you have done everything in my life for me, Stephen. Do this now: keep him here."

"Jasmina," he said, almost in a whisper, "you know it kills me to refuse you anything, but this I cannot do. He will not stay for any reason that I have to offer."

She gave him a look from her great eyes like a deer's that is hurt. "If it is true, then—when does he go?"

"In about ten days."

"Will he be here to-night?"

"I heard him say he had another engagement."

She walked up and down the room with her free, graceful step, then looked again at the paper; something in the paragraph held her attention. Suddenly she said, "I shall not sing this evening; my throat is sore."

"Your manager will rage."

"I can get him a doctor's certificate. I should give my understudy a chance; she has wished for it long."

Penrose sighed when outside again—perhaps with relief that the scene had been less painful than he dreaded. "Poor child! poor little impulsive girl! To have given me single-minded affection all this time, only to save a wealth of savage loyalty for Rexford, who goes away unknowing and unheeding!"

The ill wind which took away from the audience that night the popular idol in "Zora" blew a long-looked-for chance to an ambitious understudy; but alas! there was no dreamed-of round of applause. Her hearers were but politely tolerant, and showed their sense of injury in losing Jasmina, who was denied to every caller that evening on the same plea of illness; to the regret of Rexford, who missed, with all his preoccupation, the warm, scented room where, with joyous chatter and soothing music, he had found in recent bitterness the sympathy so essential to his nature. That she was denied to him caused Penrose wonderment, who knew her ailment to be feigned, and found, besides, at Becker's two or three little notes which begged her dear Stephen not to be at all anxious at her seclusion, which was merely on account of her being particularly engaged just now. "I shall feel better satisfied," he reflected, "when she is in harness again with 'The Lotus-eaters.'"

But it was another sort of harness Jasmina was seeking when, leaving her maid on guard at her apartment, she had gone quietly over to Washington. There she found the address she wanted, and went near there in a cab, which was left in waiting while she walked a block farther and up the steps of a house. There she inquired for Mrs. Ritler. "I saw," said she to the strong, capable-looking wife of the scientist, who came to her, "that madame was to accompany her husband on his voyage; also that the maid had fallen ill who was to go with her. If madame still desires an attendant, it is I who would like to go with her."

Mrs. Ritler scrutinized the new applicant. In spite

of plain, dark attire, there was something too brilliant about her; and yet the time was so short, no one else seemed eager to volunteer, this one was younger than the maid who had failed her, therefore more serviceable; Dr. Ritler made such a point of her having another woman with her, as he might be absent frequently. "Some reference would be necessary," at last she said hesitatingly; "I do not know you at all."

"The best of references," said Jasmina, promptly. "Dr. Ritler shall have them. See, madame," with a pleading gesture of the little brown hands, "not many will desire to go with you to such a place; but me—I have great wish to see the wonderland!" This with odd emphasis and ineffable expression. The charm of her voice and manner began to tell on Mrs. Ritler. "See, now; I do not know much, but I am so willing. Let me go with you to St. John's to-morrow; I will give references in New York. Write to this address at once. The answer will come to St. John's, and if it is not right you can still leave me there."

"Wait until Dr. Ritler comes in," said his wife, then.

Penrose had next morning a note from her, asking information as to her new companion. By the same mail Jasmina had written:

"Say what you can or invent to satisfy the scruples of madame. For, Stephen, mark you, I am determined to go. And if she leaves me, I swear to you I will kill myself. If he goes to cold or starvation, I go too; and, Stephen, I trust you to keep from him and every one the slightest hint of my presence here. He shall not

know until we have started. The public and managers may think what they please of the sudden disappearance of *Zora*. But will you look after the few things in my rooms, and pay the maid and dismiss? If I did not give you trouble, you would not know it was

"Your

"JASMINA."

Penrose was stunned, but, knowing well her passionate and wilful nature, did not for a moment hesitate. In consideration of the extortionate fee the maid asked in place of warning, he borrowed, without scruple, her name for the credentials inclosed, with some words of his own, to Dr. Ritler, to whom the "Argus's" assistant editor was known by reputation. And not a line in his pale face betrayed emotion when Rexford, himself much moved, bade him farewell.

"I am more than sorry that Jasmina continues ill. It seems almost ungrateful not to thank my star—my only inspiration lately—for all her goodness. I grieve not to see her before leaving. Besides you and her, who is there" (bitterly) "cares for my going? Oh, yes; there is Jenkins! There is always Jenkins!" That good fellow did, indeed, drink a bumper to the prosperous voyage and return of his friend and collaborator. It was only in a half-hearted way that he went about his part in the bringing out of "The Miller of Dee" in the approaching season. He would have gone with a host of friends and admirers to see Rexford off, but the latter objected to any "confounded fuss." Only Penrose knew exactly when he did get

off. Like any other hurt animal, he shrank from observation, and in his morbidness was unlike the gallant young fellow whom Katherine de Mansur had favored and whom nothing but her supposed will could have induced to leave her to another. Yet when the girl read or heard any notice of his going, all her wounded pride could not keep her from breathing a fervent "God be with him, if we never meet again." If he were all her soul had feared, he was at least turning his back now on the mad whirl and riotous living of the great city; that, too, at a moment of brilliant success. He was adventuring something which required strength and courage and manly self-denial. He seemed to her fancy to be sailing away from confusion and sound and fury up into higher, purer altitudes. But alas! it was away from her, too, and her sore heart felt that, in spite of rumor and eyesight believed, and even that fatal visit, one last appeal might have melted her; but it did not come.

The *Meteor*, the expedition steamer, was already at St. John's, but was detained there some days after arriving by a delay of part of the equipment. Rexford, after reporting to Dr. Ritler, wandered about the town, then back to his room at the hotel. He had been reflecting on his long separation from his mother, and softened toward her now. Cold and unjust as she seemed, she could hardly find the glittering social triumphs of London, nor even her lofty ambitions for a baby boy, compensation for slights and all domestic infelicity. "It is a long trip," he wrote her, "that I meditate; and, as it is our last chance for the present to send a mail, I want to leave with you across the

ocean my best wishes for your health and content. For myself, I have lost a hope which I think you guessed at before leaving America; so mere life is worth nothing to me, and I seek now distraction of thought," with a few more lines, which he sealed and addressed. Then for a long time he gazed from the hotel window. He could see, over the waters of the bay, the little steamer *Newfoundland*, which had brought him, and the *Meteor* swinging at anchor off Queen's Wharf. It would be there some days yet, owing to this delay. With sudden decision, he sat down again and wrote a note to Katherine, which he inclosed in one to Penrose addressed in care of Becker. When the latter, in New York, opened it, he read: "There is still time to retreat honorably, and I am in no sense indispensable. Dr. Ritler sails to-morrow for Uppernivik, but I am to wait here with the photographer for some instruments not yet arrived. Penrose, if she would call me back! I have been thinking I have been too easily content without more definite explanation; but one cannot persecute a woman! Still, I inclose a note which I trust you to place in her hand; not sending by regular mail, as she may not understand there is no time for delay."

Jasmina wrote at the same time: "Stephen, I have been careful that he should not see me until we start from Uppernivik, where we go ahead of him and those waiting here, who are to follow us in the steam-launch. Be careful at your end, for it is with my life I trust you. I will not survive parting with him."

Penrose felt as though invisible hands drew him in opposite directions. He shrugged his shoulders. "I

will do just nothing," he muttered; "things must go as they will." He locked into some private receptacle the note inclosed from Rexford; answered him, "I wish you forgetfulness and a safe home-coming from the far North," and resolutely put from him, with that fatalism which was a part of him, the thought of an unfulfilled commission hurtful to Jasmina; while Rexford tore to pieces and threw overboard the line containing, he supposed, the implied destruction of all hope.

One hour afterward the little steamer was passing the majestic cliffs through the narrows of St. John's, and upward into the ice-pack bordering the Greenland coast, and there plunging into a fog which retarded progress and hid from them the glacial mountains towering high along the desolate coast. It was only when this curtain rolled back before the wind, after they had been lying for many hours before Uppernivik, that the native pilot could take them safely in. Here, in this little cove, lay the *Meteor* awaiting them.

"I have used my week well," said Dr. Ritler, greeting Rexford. "The boots and skin suits are all in, the dogs and drivers secured. There is small temptation to linger in this bleak spot, though they tell me that in fourteen years it has never been so green. But what a scanty patch of vegetation, and what a barren, desolate spot! The fog kept you, I suppose? Well, you must see from high ground that wonderful Augpadlarsok ice-fiord, with its immense glacier front, sending out its thousands of icebergs. But we start as soon as possible. I am impatient to be off; madame almost as much so. She is quite well, yes. Her com-

panion has kept a little close; not accustomed to the water, perhaps; she soon will be."

At midnight, for it was now the season of perpetual daylight in this region, they were speeding onward through the sea, the bergs becoming more numerous in their path. Rexford, at the bow, the frosty air tingling in his cheeks, looked at the novel scene. The sun, in all its brilliancy, sparkled on a few delicate cirrus clouds alone appearing overhead. The neighboring coasts were sharp, clear, and distinct through the pure thin atmosphere, and their outlines were reflected in the glassy water. The light pouring from above glorified all, shining especially on highlands to the east, where in a ravine a torrent came plunging downward over fourteen hundred feet through a cleft in the solid rock. He drew a long breath. "We are sailing away," he said, in continuance of remarks to Mrs. Ritler, "into a new world of enchantment." But the sighting of a polar bear on a berg had drawn that lady to the side, where a boat was being lowered for pursuit. It was not her rather nasal tones, but instead a familiar, softly musical voice which answered:

"Yes; and it is not very cold, do you think?"

He turned, and, to his stupefaction, there stood Jasmina, her glowing tints made more vivid by this crisp air, and the great friendly dark eyes, into which looked his own bewildered, were widened by an expression of resolution and soft deprecation commingled.

XIV

"AFTER all, Katherine, you need not look so serious whenever I allude to my having married myself off. Of course it was outrageous and shocking for me to have even seen that so humble an individual as Otto was alive, when I might have been Madame la Vicomtesse de Vaurien, or else been trotted out, on approval, by the Lavender-Pundit Trust Company, or, perhaps, been hawked about the Continent by mamma. Ah! the idea was detestable. No, dearest; of course you could not mean that. It was not dutiful, but if you had been tried like me! And I did know something of Otto, remember. Did I tell you that mamma has actually gone to inspect the Federlings, and dined with the ten sisters and the herr papa at Castle Schlippenschloppenschlanberg—you need not laugh; it is that. She finds the place very ancient and picturesque, but damp and abounding in rats, and would not advise me to live there. But on finding that I may have 'baroness' on my card if I choose, she has relented and forgives and blesses Otto. She cannot come over, however, on account of Anastelle, for whom she trusts there is something lofty in prospect. I hope it is no wretched De Vaurien—the poor child would marry the Shah of Persia if mamma

ordered her (she is the most obedient of daughters, the postscript says, which is the only reflection the letter contains on my misconduct). Papa will be over on the next steamer to see me and interview Otto. He is not at all afraid; he thinks it will be interesting to talk with a mining expert like papa. We may go back with him, but we mean to be Americans; for Otto promises to make his career where he has found his wife, and he will be distinguished here, I know."

Indeed, her faith in her husband was very pretty, and natural enough, Katherine considered. For the pleasant-faced young German was studious and thorough, and really learned in his specialties, with great simplicity of manner and frank demonstration tinged with sentiment, which insured a half-amused liking; and her interest in this young pair was a welcome distraction from the heavy thoughts which followed every stray word coming to her concerning polar voyages, and one voyage in particular. "A line of farewell, for old acquaintance' sake, would have been natural," was a secret, inconsistent thought.

Said Mortimer to his sister (he had accepted her astounding escapade with his usual philosophy), "Why don't you get Miss Katherine to go abroad with you when you go, and then I might join you."

Angelica shook her flaxen head thoughtfully. With all her joyous chatter and bird-like flutterings in and out, she had discovered that things were not well with her friend.

"But Katherine will grieve always for her father; she is of that faithful nature. I wonder if that distinguished-looking cousin—"

The distinguished-looking cousin wondered a little himself. Katherine had a way of parrying love passages and discoursing on things impersonal which was baffling to a degree; and she wore at times an air of weary coldness, as if she had already lived a century, and cared for nothing more.

"It is her mourning," he decided sagely. "They adored each other, my uncle and she." And forthwith he began planning another trip for his mother and the girl, with himself as escort.

The town began to wear now, in certain regions, a deserted and desolate look, with windows shuttered, front doors barricaded, no one in the houses but caretakers. Even the churches in this quarter, with few exceptions, were closed for the season, these being folds into which only sheep with golden fleece were gathered; and when these scattered for a summer's pleasant grazing, why should not the shepherds do likewise, leaving others to concern themselves for the poor who are always with us? In short, as Mr. Pundit said, "The city is quite empty now, don't you know. Society is either at Newport or in the hills or gone abroad. Very large New York contingent went over for the season, so I 'm told, you understand. By the way, Miss Lavender, I see Mr. van Krippen's and Mr. and Mrs. Federling's names among passengers on the last steamer going out."

"Her father called on me before leaving, and was—ahem!—most gentlemanly about the extra expense and annoyance and possible detriment to the material interests of Franklin Hall caused by that ungrateful girl's imprudent step. Otherwise, Mr. Pundit" (with

a gleam of vindictiveness in her eyes), "I should have refused even to notice her again. I promise you, no sentimental Fräulein Volmer chaperons my young ladies after this."

"I hear," said the gentleman, thoughtfully, rubbing a bald spot near the temples, "that her father dowers Mrs. Federling magnificently—quite magnificently." He allowed a sigh to escape, which Miss Lavender heard with cold disdain. "Well" (more briskly), "I shall be running down to Newport myself next week. Shall I meet you there, my dear lady, this season?"

"I think so" (demurely). "I need a change after the shock of the Van Krippen affair; and I shall leave Madame Bonair in charge at the Hall. Miss Kilmansegg's people—she is, you know, to marry the Marquis de Mauvais Sujet, who will be there—have taken a cottage for us. I will chaperon her and arrange for the wedding. Her father is quite unpresentable, and had better stay in Oshkosh. He pays all expenses, of course—very liberally."

"I will be down about Thursday," said Mr. Pundit. "There will absolutely be no one in town after this week."

Which might have surprised the thousands swarming in and out and through and about the vast city if they knew, or cared to know, what Mr. Pundit said. The sun's beams grew hotter, and the long days longer, and the baking streets dustier and more stifling; and the occupants of the human hive hummed and buzzed and knocked against one another in the struggle for mere life, which in the aged and weak and little ones died out with appalling frequency in the narrow ovens

which they call homes. And none of them missed a dainty toilet here and there, or a well-appointed trap which had disappeared for a while from up-town streets. Only out on the waters of the bay or river, or up in the verdant, lovely Park, could it be guessed how nature had once smiled here for man, until her face had been covered and hidden by humanity's toil and misery and incessant, carking care.

Penrose and Jenkins were among the summer workers who snatched but an occasional hour or two for refreshing sail or saunter. "But we have always 'Simla,'" the latter boasted, leaning in shirt-sleeves from the lofty window of his apartment. "If not in the hills, I may dream of them." Penrose, walking now much alone these hot afternoons in the Park alleys or the shaded galleries of the museum, found his thoughts wander sometimes to a note locked away in his desk. "I wonder where they are now, and what will happen when—if they come back. Ah! things arrange themselves in life." The few people near saw a tall, thin, worn-looking man, with keen eyes, veiled by glasses, strolling among the mummy-cases, and even reading idly the inscriptions to the ladies of the houses Taon-Hor and Arshep, while his mind, instead of conjuring up the Sphinx and burning sands of Egypt, could only see polar solitudes. He little thought what had once happened to his friend in this very place. The De Mansur house was closed when he afterward passed it. "Family gone to the Yellowstone," somebody had said.

"The Lotus-eaters" and "The Miller of Dee" were to appear simultaneously at two city theaters in the first of the coming season, which meant that he and

Jenkins had more than enough, with regular duties, to attend to. "I believe the music and book will carry us through, Mr. Penrose," said Menu; "but it was the devil's own luck to have Jasmina swallowed up just now. Such a card as that girl was! I wonder what struck her? I suppose she 'll turn up again sometime." He had raged as much over her sudden disappearance as the public had speculated. But time pressed; the inefficient understudy was relegated to a minor part, and a French singer, just arrived, was tried and secured for "The Lotus-eaters." There is no leisure in this hurrying, bustling world to bewail a loss; it must be supplied, more or less fully.

So the long, torrid days and unrestful nights dragged themselves along, and an occasional puff of wind from the bay would bring a longed-for promise of coolness. Then a stray leaf here and there began to drop, and then faster and faster; and by and by battalions of sweepers were kept busy gathering them up; and stragglers, returning from their summer outing, reappeared on the streets; and though many of Mr. Pundit's friends still shrank from the sight of the beautiful slender white spires of the cathedral, and lingered elsewhere until Christmas, on the whole, society was slowly returning.

To crowds at the theaters the two new Rexford operas were brought out successfully. The cheery, the stout, the florid Jenkins awoke to find himself, as a librettist, effulgent with the reflected glory of the absent composer. He ordered beers all round to celebrate the event at the Chimes, and pretended to be overcome with emotion at the tumultuous ovation

greeting him there. "Tears, idle tears," he quavered, with a large handkerchief pressed to his twinkling eyes; "nay, worse than idle, since these briny drops would flatten beer already thin enough. Boy, another flagon. Gentlemen, I thank you for this loud applause. I know I have done well, but it is uncommon clever in the fool public to have found it out. You understand, my good friends all, that this remark is strictly confidential; nor, should I ever see it with mine eyes in print, shall I scruple to deny the allegation, and to kick the allegator. Only a small share of the glory, did you say? Nay, my good lord, a word in your ear: *les absents ont toujours tort.* I wrote the music too!"

"How much beer did you have before you came?" asked Penrose.

"Beer, forsooth! Is that the nectar you had in Lotus-eaters' Land? The *Miller* and all his procession fared better than that. Bring still more drink, my lad; and base the slave who pays for that or anything while I am here!"

With all this flood of nonsense, Penrose knew the good fellow heartily regretted that Rexford was not present to claim a lion's share of the triumph. For himself, success was better than failure certainly, but, having done the best he could with the book, he took events as they came, without much excitement.

"It might have been damned as easily," he told his neighbor; "it depends very much on the mood of what Jenkins calls the 'fool public.' That very clever English impersonator that was here, you know, and those delightful French pantomimists—they had no success. Anything subtle is wasted on an audience

over here." His neighbor remembered that Penrose was not an American, and resented the criticism accordingly.

Among the club dandies the appearance of the French singer revived talk about Jasmina's sudden vanishing.

"Good enough voice," said Morty van Krippen, "but not in it with Jasmina—not a patch on her. Want to do the little thing justice, though she was n't particularly stuck on me. Poor taste, eh?"

"Ya-as," came a languid chorus. "You 're not half bad, Morty."

"But what became of her, old chappies? That 's the question. Nobody seems to know a deuced thing, by Jove!"

"Well," said Doulton-Minton, slowly pulling at his mustache and affecting to look modest, "a fellow does n't tell everything he knows; but—but town 's deadly flat without her, and I mean to cut it myself pretty soon, and run over to Paris." This hint was received with mingled envy and admiration by the group.

"Devil of a fellow—Jack Doulton-Minton," muttered Morty.

"Something of a liar too," said Ashley Vanderlyn, in an undertone; "everybody knew the Hungarian was wild about Rexford."

"Think she 's killed herself in some quiet corner 'cause he 's gone away?" drawled his hearer. "See here, what does that newspaper fellow mean—that Penrose—by listenin' and glarin' at a man when he passes? Somebody ought to hit him."

"Might not be a soft snap," suggested Morty. "Nobody knows much about that man; shady past, they say; knocked about all over the globe. Killed his man in Kamchatka, or somewhere."

"Did he?" said Royall Worcester, with a fleeting interest. "I don't blame him; I wish somebody 'd kill mine; he 's so deuced stupid."

"Oh, come now," said Ashley Vanderlyn, "that 's cribbed from one of the comic weeklies; you know it is."

In fine, none of the gilded youth who had wildly applauded the beautiful dancer's every movement, and lurked at the stage door to watch for her, and sent her masses of flowers, and hinted to their fellows that they were favored in her smiles,—not even the few admitted to the charming apartments and gay little suppers,—cared in the least what had become of her. If she was weak enough to have more heart and feeling than their precious selves, so much the worse for her; and whether she lay ill in a Paris attic, or even cold in death, there was always the new Mademoiselle Pas-Volants, more accessible to fatuous admiration, and "no little, half-savage, stand-off Gipsy, by Jove!"

In the mean time the music of "The Lotus-eaters," and even the more lightsome strains of "The Miller," became almost as popular as "Zora." The box receipts showed this in substantial form; and Jenkins, with humor as mild as that of Mr. Peter Magnus, added B. C. after his name, which meant Bloated Capitalist, though cruelly misinterpreted as alluding to the date of his birth. Katherine, coming back from the Pacific coast, and the Federlings, gaily returning from their

tour abroad, heard the melodies chanted and strummed and tinkled and whistled in opera-house, concert hall, Vaudeville Club, drawing-room, on the street—everywhere. It was at a private exhibition of paintings by a foreign artist with a wonderful name that Penrose first saw Miss de Mansur on her return. He had paused to look at a gory and painfully realistic head of Holofernes when he observed Katherine near by, her cousin in attendance. She seemed to him taller and paler, and took but a perfunctory interest in the works of art.

"This is the most bloody object yet," said Mr. Crofton, with strong disapproval, "where all is carnage. Why, it is worse than a Matabele skirmish!"

"You should feel at home, then; but cheer up; there are only fifteen more by the catalogue."

"Fifteen more nightmares! Let us go; these horrors cannot be good for you."

Penrose divined that the young man would have liked to keep from her all manner of unpleasantness. He was familiar with the report which asserted positively that he had been given the right. The journalist's lip smiled cynically. "My nut-brown maid's warm heart and loyalty are worth a thousand of these great ladies whose love is fatal." The cousins turned to go, and Miss de Mansur saw Penrose, whom she knew very slightly. She stopped now.

"How do you do, Mr. Penrose? I find, after my absence, your name on all lips. Let me congratulate you on the success of 'The Lotus-eaters.'"

"Thank you" (briefly). "The librettist, however, can hardly claim a large share of credit in an opera.

You may remark that the orchestra here, now playing a part of it, gets on very successfully without the words."

"That—that is a very striking melody; I do not know the words."

"It is 'The House of Clay.' The words are not mine; they are some I fancied, and interpolated as in harmony with the spirit of the score. It is good of you to take so much interest."

"Not at all" (with an access of coldness). "I delight in all talent, and I used to know your collaborator, Mr. Rexford. He is quite—well? You hear often? Oh, of course not; how could you from that distance?" A few more polite trivialities in a sweet, even, unconcerned tone, and she went away slowly, moving her graceful head from side to side, down the lane of pictures.

"I thank Heaven," he muttered, "for my small acquaintance with these daughters of the gods. They chill a man, even when he regards them least. The frank give-and-take that loves for a day, a week, a year, I have known; but the best of sweethearts is one's pipe. Yale Mixture is good enough for me!" He stared at Holofernes's ghastly head, and saw in its place a sudden wearisome panorama of a boyhood in Wales, embittered with harsh words and blows; dragged later hither and thither in travels where he was neglected and misused; and then cruelly abandoned, and kept in life only through a Gipsy's pity. "I might have been different if fate— Yes, they chill one."

"Hello, Penrose!" called an acquaintance, "you look as if you had seen a ghost. No wonder, if you persist in admiring that hideous Judith."

And this girl of manner so chilling was in a tumult of feeling going homeward, while she mechanically answered her cousin's remarks. "No," she told herself; "no, no, no! I will not buy his opera. If I hear those melodies it shall be by chance. I will punish myself that way, at least, that I was so eager to hear his name—that I would stop to speak to a slight acquaintance on the mere chance of hearing some news of him—of him, who has perhaps forgotten me. And this good man—devoted—at my side, why must I deny him for—a mere memory?"

The Federlings came in that evening, with something of the freshness on them of their flight overseas. Angelica, after first greetings, began at once, with gay complacency:

"My dear, you will be delighted to hear that papa and Otto are the greatest of chums. They talk chemistry and mining and such stuff until I am bored to death. But mamma—well, Miss Lavender is summer heat to the way she tried to freeze him, and only thawed when she found he did n't mind at all. That 's the most delightful moldy old ruin of a place on the Rhine, with ivy and beetles all over it; and inside the ten little fräuleins, so kind and so friendly, and such good musicians and cooks! I think they were rather shocked at my Worth gowns and command of pocket-money. I mean to have some of the dear creatures over here sometime; but they will not like it. And Anastelle! I gave that poor child some hints which may save her from any prowling De Vauriens. The Venetian glass? Oh, yes, I am glad you liked it."

Otto, who had been placidly awaiting his opportu-

nity, approached Katherine with a flat package. "It is nothing foreign," he said; "only the music of the new opera, bound, which is now out in Paris and London. There was nothing new more melodious, and my Angelica said you both knew the composer." She had not bought nor sought this music, though the melancholy minor strain of "The House of Clay" had been pursuing her since yesterday. He placed the book in the music-rack, and opened at that very place. "You will try this for me, will you not?" It would be ungracious to refuse. She struck the opening chords mechanically. "It is against my will," she thought, and sang:

"There was a House—a House of Clay,
Wherein the inmate sang all day,
Merry and poor.
For Hope sat, likewise, heart to heart,
Vowing he never would depart;
Till, all at once, he changed his mind:
'Sweetheart, good-by.' He slipped away
And shut the door.

"But Love came past, and, looking in
With smiles that pierced like sunshine thin
Through wall, roof, floor,
Stood, in the midst of that poor room,
Grand and fair, grand and fair,
Making a glory out of gloom;
Till at the window mocked old Care.
Love sighed: 'All lose, and nothing win?'
He shut the door."

She had sung steadily through this with clear voice, but it sank away on these last words. "You are too tired!" cried Angelica. "Otto" (reproachfully), "when

you reach that point of ecstasy over music that you stand with your mouth open, you would let a singer wear herself to death without noticing."

"I am not so weak as that," said Katherine, forcing a smile, and continuing:

> "Then o'er the barrèd House of Clay
> Kind jessamine and roses gay
> Grew evermore.
> And bees hummed merrily outside
> Loud and strong, loud and strong,
> The inner silentness to hide,
> The steadfast silence all day long;
> Till evening touched, with finger gray,
> The close-shut door."

But Angelica was now looking over her shoulder. "You must not sing the last verse," she said with decision. "It is quite too sad, though the air is lovely. Otto, find something more cheerful. Katherine," she confided to Mr. Crofton, "is not looking as well as she ought, after all that travel. She is still grieving, I am afraid."

"She will soon feel the good effect of your cheerful society," said Mr. Crofton, politely, with whom Angelica was not a favorite.

"I don't know," she said abstractedly; but Katherine had summoned a smile, and was playing something spirited; but her fingers were cold, and she hardly knew when the Federlings took their leave. For all these words, words, words suddenly seemed so idle when, even now, the long arctic darkness was closing around some one—some one; and a breath from that frozen region seemed to blow upon her as she sat there.

It was not well for Reginald Crofton that he should have chosen just this time for the pressing of his suit. "Forgive me! forgive me that I cannot!" she pleaded quite piteously for the usually self-possessed maiden that he knew. "It was wicked even to think for a moment, as I confess I have done, of marrying you without a heart to give."

"If I am satisfied—"

"No, no! take my word that it can never be."

"Never is a long day. But, Katherine, it is my last time of asking, for I am weary now of hanging about this dull town. If my patient months of waiting and serving are to count for nothing—" There was something grimly resentful in the regular lines of his handsome mouth, for he had grown restive in the suspense of the last year.

"Oh, dear Reginald, forgive me," was all she could find to say. And less than a month after he was on his way to Matabeleland, and his mother was listening to Archibald Pundit, who murmured sympathetically:

"Ah, yes, my dear madam, these young men little know, don't you understand, what their restless love of wandering inflicts on those to whom they are dear. I feel, don't you know, with all my heart for your loneliness. Ah! sometimes," he said, with a glance at unconscious Katherine, "cruel beauty is to blame in these matters." (Her aunt gave the girl the first cold look she had ever encountered from those mild eyes.) "There is Allan Rexford too, don't you remember—of course you do—'Lotus-eaters' and that, don't you know. The rage, I believe, though I don't understand

music and all that; but a fine fellow, that I always liked and praised everywhere; but would n't listen to a word against going off on some wild-goose chase, don't you know, among the icebergs. And nobody knows where he is, just when his mother most needs him; for it was only yesterday, my dear madam, I had the duty of writing a letter of condolence to her on the unexpected demise of the nobleman, her husband." (He cast down his eyes decorously. It was not necessary, and besides would be disrespectful to the British peerage, to relate to a lady the circumstances attending that nobleman's sudden taking off.) "I hope my letter may prove some small comfort to her. I have had lately a little experience in literary work."

It was a fact that he condescended to furnish to the "Argus" some weekly obiter dicta on matters of form, which Penrose, on another page of the same great journal, ridiculed so subtly that most people took it for praise.

"Do you mean to say that we are going to print these solemn platitudes regularly?" asked Jenkins of his chief.

"Where is wisdom and the place of understanding? Not in the depth, nor in the sea, nor yet in the great mass of newspaper readers. Mr. Pundit has many admirers, and he owes me the small revenge of watching him write himself down an ass," said he, and continued to print Mr. Pundit's mental wanderings with hebdomadal regularity.

In the meanwhile that gentleman's letter, which spoke of Lord Mellon's demise as a loss to the English

nobility, and consequently to the civilized world, and suggested him as a model for the youth of his country, found and left the widow quite dry-eyed down in the seclusion of Oudenarde. She had, indeed, been alone there for many months before the lamentable event which caused the coming down from London of a special funeral train; when, with solemn pageant of woe, the body of Frederick, Lord Mellon, was laid away with his forefathers, who could not rise up to protest, nor yet to accept him as a weak copy, with modern limitations, of the brilliant, dashing, venal, and unscrupulous founder of the family. His long absence had been a sensible relief to Lady Mellon, absorbed in her little son, on whom her ambitions were staked; and she was scornfully aware that the stroke which ended him came while he drove in Hyde Park under the lace parasol of a chorus-girl. "How horrid!" the latter said, when told that her escort was quite dead. "He might 'a' taken me 'ome first!" But she made a duty of composing herself before the evening operetta.

And Lady Mellon, calm, stately, and unmoved, gave her approval to a Latin inscription to be placed in the village church, which celebrated the virtues and noble deeds of the "warrior, statesman, husband, father, and friend." The list of his recent debts was handed her later, and, though she had had much experience in this line, it amazed even her. The long—some said purposely—delayed letters from the Queen, confirming renewal of the title of Marquis of Gourdes to the little heir, coming now, made her heart swell with pride.

But the child had grown very delicate in the last year or two, and was but a fragile little reed on which to lean such weighty hopes. If she thought at all of the strong arm and warm heart of the other son, wandering on distant ice-fields, she gave no sign.

XV

UP in the great frozen, silent North this son walked now in perpetual snows. The haunting care which had dogged his steps in city streets was doubtless at his elbow here, or lay in wait across each crackling ice-waste or behind each shimmering berg to mock at his heartache; but the outside world was so dazzling in its strangeness, so novel in its magnificence, that it must, perforce, distract the outer sense, and almost convince one that the planet was left behind where weakness and passion cloud the air, and one attained where all was fine and pure and clear.

That is, Rexford amended the thought, if one might be alone with nature. But after a long sledging tour over the lakes, or a tramp on snow-shoes through the drifts, the wings of exaltation would be suddenly clipped, and he knew he was on earth by finding the Eskimo driver quarreling over his share of seal meat; or Dr. Ritler, good fellow as he was, disposed to find fault with things unavoidable. The little party was now ensconced in winter quarters; a carefully constructed house of fair dimensions, near the frozen fiord, and sheltered as far as might be by immense cliffs to the north. Through a break in these had

Rexford returned only yesterday from a long sledge journey. This was to be the last long trip until the sun should return to them, for on this October day he would leave them for all the dark winter. Rexford, restless on this last day of light, had left the station and climbed the hills at some distance for a better view. It was cloudy, but through a rift here and there broke gleams which gilded the high snow-peaks, while the low-lying valleys lay in deep shadow. Then a wind sprang up which tossed and tumbled the clouds hither and thither, and gave a dissolving view of a crag or hilltop here, and again of the harbor and the outer bay there; and the sun painted them in strange and varying and fitful colors, as the wind and the clouds would let him. The snow crackled under a light footfall behind Rexford, and he let his eyes wander for a moment from these marvels to Jasmina stopping beside him. She was not in the least breathless from the climb, but the exertion had brought a deeper tint into her olive cheek, that was a little less round, perhaps, than it had been, and her bright dark eyes had a wistfulness now and then which it might have hurt the absent Penrose to notice. She wore her short crimson blanket skirt, tanned top-boots, sealskin jacket, hood, and mittens with the same distinction with which she had formerly borne her silk attire. Indeed, her hand rested on the cartridge-belt and revolver at her waist with an ease bespeaking delight at escaping from civilization's restraints. But alas for the Romany girl that it was to these ice-fields rather than her native greenwood that her heart had led her!

Some shadowy thought of the kind must have crossed

Rexford's mind in looking at her now, for he said abruptly, "It is as much a surprise to me each time as it was the first to see you here, Jasmina—as though I should meet a humming-bird perched on a floe, or find a field of passion-flowers in the north valley."

"Yes," she answered simply, "it is strange to be here in all this whiteness and barrenness and coldness; but I am glad I came."

"You are not homesick?"

"Oh, homesick! I never had any special home. The home is where the heart—well, you know. Dr. and Mrs. Ritler are so kind. I should tell them who I am, but what does it matter, if I too love adventure like them? I do my share of work."

"Indeed you do" (warmly). "You certainly earn your share in such glory as any of us is likely to get up here, and in the little cubbyhole each one calls his own indoors. I don't see how Mrs. Ritler could have done without you at all; but she must think us very good friends on very short notice."

She gave him a long look which he did not see, as he was once more observing the magnificent panorama before him. A patch of yellow sunlight on a cliff across the bay drew his attention to a moving object there. "Is it a fox," he asked, "or a white hare?"

"More likely a little brent-goose or an ivory gull; they have not all gone south yet. That light mist floating about magnifies things so. The pack of wolves that came visiting us while you were gone, why, they seemed musk-oxen at least for size."

"Ah, yes; I am told you distinguished yourself then, Jasmina, being the only light-foot that succeeded in

getting near enough for a shot; but they should not have let you try. I hear there were twenty—gaunt, hungry-looking brutes at that."

"Oh" (lightly), "there was no risk; they ran away, so that we only got the body of the one I wounded after chasing him for ever so far. If they had been walruses, now" (roguishly).

He smiled too, but more gravely, not liking to remember the peril the two women had been in. It was he and the Eskimo who had taken her and Mrs. Ritler out in a kayak before the harbor ice was firm, and had harpooned a walrus which had dragged the boat through the new ice into a whole school of the monsters. It was something to put away for use as a nightmare, that memory of the swarming huge heads and grinding tusks and glaring, fierce eyes of the hundred and more furious brutes; and the smoke of the incessant crack of the guns which the women steadily loaded and passed to them; and the tilting boat which the whirling, plunging mass of driving beasts threatened every moment to sink.

The pearl-gray cloud-masses sundered, showing colors of vivid orange and gorgeous red; then slowly rolled back, curtain-wise, and over the grand arctic scene burst the crimson sunshine, rosing mountains, cliffs, and bay for the last time this year. They were silent and breathless until the red faded into yellow, and that into light gray once more.

"See," then cried Rexford, "my fox or hare has turned into a bird, as you said. It is coming this way." He unslung his rifle as the bird flew through the sharp air toward them.

"No, no," she said, her hand on his arm; "let it go."

"As you say" (somewhat surprised), "but I thought you would like a shot yourself. It may be the last for some time. In the twilight that has come their white winter uniform makes bird and beast invisible."

"To think," she said, with soft impressiveness, "that a month ago we shot those ptarmigans in brown and black feathers, and now they have put on a spotless white plumage."

"We are in a wonderful white country up here," he answered lightly. "Perhaps all the dusky plumes of our past will slip away from us too, and our souls take on snowy pinions like the birds, to match the universal whiteness." At the same moment he remembered calling Katherine once "the wings of his soul," and knew that in coming hither to escape poignant regrets he had done a vain thing.

And Jasmina thought suddenly of a camp-fire and clashing cymbals, and angry words and oaths and shouts, and the flash of knives and a downward blow —and stillness! And then of orchestral strains that stirred the blood, and glancing feet, and wild applause, and wealth of blossoms and warm-scented bowers. But she had no regrets, and said quite simply, "I am not sure I have a soul. But it is no matter; I have a heart to feel with."

"But not much light to see with," he said, with forced jesting. For now the pale yellow had given place everywhere to a light gray, and that to one deeper and darker of hue. "The arctic night has come. Let us go down. Give me your hand, Jasmina. In the half-light it is easy to fall on these slopes."

Across the hills came Dr. Ritler and his wife, who, from a farther height, had also watched the going of the sun. "Your companion, my dear," he said, at sight of Jasmina, "grows prettier and more girlish every day. One a trifle older and plainer would have suited our purpose as well. Do you, perhaps, spoil her a little?"

"It will not hurt," said his strong, capable, sensible wife. "She is a great help, with all her prettiness. There was no rush of older, plainer applicants." She went into the house with Jasmina.

"You should have been with us, Mr. Rexford," called the professor. "Our point overlooked the bay, and before the light went we saw gamboling and snorting about the ice-cakes forty or more white whales—the last of the season, I fancy."

"I had my gun; I wish I 'd been with you," said Rexford, with unmistakable regret, which seemed to remove a misgiving of the professor's. "And look there! I appear to have missed everything!"

The eager young college graduate who had come with them as astronomer and photographer had been out in a kayak with Jens to paddle. They were coming now from the other side, excited over something, which was presently seen to be a reindeer, and the sound of shots came through the clear air. The animal was wounded,—killed perhaps,—for, after struggling along the ice-foot, it fell, half in, half out, of the water. They approached it, taking extraordinary pains not to lose game so late in the season. Down below Jasmina came out of the house, and, taking a horn hanging there, blew a blast to recall wanderers; and the

sound, thrown from cliff to cliff, echoed and reëchoed until it sank into silence. Then, awaiting them, she took a broom and swept off the few steps leading from indoors. Her movements were as graceful in this as they had ever been before the footlights; and the shed and supports of the lean-to made a frame for the slight, crimson-clad figure. The surgeon, also a botanist, came from the rear of the house, the tin case over his shoulder filled with the specimens he had been collecting in the valley. Her clear laugh at some jest of his reached faintly and pleasantly to where they stood.

"Our maid," said Dr. Ritler, "is unusual in every way. Mrs. Ritler reports her very helpful, but quite indifferent as to compensation present or future. If we had had more time I might have doubted the wisdom of bringing her. Is n't it rather extraordinary that a young and beautiful girl should be attracted by the hardships of polar adventure?"

"Women prefer to do unusual things at this end of the century," said Rexford, shortly. "I am not young enough to pretend to understand them." The hardness in his tone was evoked by quite another than Jasmina. As for her, after his first shock of unpleased surprise at this unexpected link with the life he had desired to leave quite behind him, he had taken her presence very much as a matter of course. "Well," he resumed more pleasantly, "if she does not freeze up here, fragile as she looks, she will always be company for Mrs. Ritler when we are away; and when we get down to scant rations she will keep up the spirits of the youngsters."

"No fear of that," cried the professor, cheerily.

"There is ample provision for our comfort until the ship comes for us in the spring. Our high thinking is to be done on high living."

As they approached the house the kayak had been beached, and the Eskimo and the boys were bringing the carcass of the deer up the path. Again Jasmina, laughing, sounded the horn. "These delays must be frowned on," said Mrs. Ritler, as they all came trooping in. "I have been indulgent in the beginning, but mean to enforce strict attention to meal-time for the sake of Mina's culinary triumphs and my own." She surveyed the little table in the common dining- and living-room with pardonable pride; for it was quite homelike with unbleached table-cloth and napkins, and gay with the arctic poppies the surgeon had brought Jasmina.

"You will have us with you more than you wish, perhaps," said her husband, "now that the sun has gone."

"I believe you," laughed Mrs. Ritler, "for needs must."

XVI

IN the living-room, within doors, a great Rochester lamp shed its needed rays over the little group busily occupied in their daytime labors.

"I think," said Dr. Ritler, standing back to admire the effect of the last piece of red blanketing tacked up to form ceiling and wall covering, "that our tapestry is something as unique as pleasantly warm in tone. I envy no monarch his palace or its hangings, now that this last heavy snowfall has given us such a comfortable thatch. We need not desire a cozier home." The photographer, arranging some negatives at a table, looked up and smiled approvingly. "Now," continued he, "here are some weeks of the longest, darkest days away, and they have seemed as bright—as bright as our Mina, for instance." He beamed paternally on that graceful creature's opportune appearance, broom in hand, to clear up the litter he had made. She helped him skilfully to hang up the flags, with which, on this white arctic Christmas eve, the walls were to be further decorated.

"Is it a wild songster of the woods or a foreign bird of Paradise that we have tamed into a household joy?" he had asked his wife once or twice lately. "Both,

perhaps," she had answered lightly, without imagining that she spoke the truth. She had been won from the first by the girl's charm, and to this little band, so far from conventionalities, Jasmina's lightness of hand and foot, and deftness in household tasks, and pleasant voice and smile were treasures in sunless days and long arctic evenings.

"Come out," called the professor, now, tapping on the partition from behind which came appetizing odors. "Leave Mina there and come with me to the dogs' igloo. It is time to feed them, and Jens is at the fox-traps. Rexford and the boys should be in now with the sledge with the ice, for the water is nearly out." He and his wife passed out toward the dogs' snow house, where the animals might soon have been heard growling and fighting over their food, and indoors the photographer and Jasmina pursued their avocation; but presently Jens thrust in his shaggy head and called to the former. He went out at once, closing this and the outer door, but through them came to Jasmina a great hubbub of voices. Her unreasoning heart leaped to the conclusion that some one—Rexford, perhaps—had returned hurt from cutting ice. There was no time for the usual outdoor toilet; she caught up a great fur robe and, wrapping it round her, ran out in the snow. Instinct took her along the beaten path for a while, but, though it should have been a moon-lit day, the sky was heavily overclouded and she could not see a step in advance. In the direction of the dogs' house there was the sound of barking, and far down the path, past the Eskimo igloo in which lived Jens, two or three lanterns glimmered and moved to and fro with the group there,

whose voices came to her. She directed her course, as she thought, toward them, but in her haste swerved to the left, and then, with a misstep, stumbled and rolled down the snow-bank, coming with force upon the ice-foot. Stunned at first, she found herself unable to cry out and became very weak. Then the group passed along on the pathway above, their lanterns swinging, and she could hear them laughing and speaking of a white fox caught in Jens's trap, which had been the cause of his excitement. She distinguished Rexford's vibrant tones saying, "Best time yet to bring in a load of ice from the two-mile berg. Doctor, you and I are the record-breakers; it is just noon."

"How can you tell," some one asked, "until we get in to the lamp? You cannot see the face of your watch at noon now, and your lantern 's out. Jens, get on; that 's a fierce gust blowing up." After that she remembered nothing.

The men were all busied for a while removing outdoor wraps, and it was not until Mrs. Ritler had heated the stew again and was about to place it on the lunch-table that she suddenly exclaimed, "And where is Mina all this time?"

"I left her here," said the photographer.

The professor promptly went out, and after calling once or twice tramped to Jens's igloo, from which he came to say she had not been there. The wind was now howling and hurtling against the outer wall which formed a protected passage around the house.

"We must look for her," exclaimed Rexford. He and the surgeon were already pulling on the snow-wet

outer furs just discarded. The latter was the first out, lantern in hand, and Rexford close behind him. They went hither and thither, knee-deep in snow, about the house, which, with its superincumbent load, looked like a great snow-hill, with the lower white mounds of the igloos close beside. When they met each other on the foot-path the surgeon's face looked wild and anxious under his hood. "Mina! Mina!" he tried to shout, but in this boisterous wind his voice reached but a few paces.

"She may have gone down the foot-path and fallen," shouted Rexford. He went ahead, flashing his lantern over every foot of snow, and at last observed where it was beaten down on one side, where she had stumbled and slipped. Scrambling down the embankment, he saw her form outstretched. He waved his lantern to the surgeon, then spoke to her, and, receiving no answer, stooped and picked her up. The surgeon reached them breathless, having fallen once or twice in his haste. "Give her to me," he said abruptly.

"Let 's get her in first," replied Rexford, as shortly. "Take my light too. There 's the bank to climb."

Up this they went, breasting the wind and snow. On the pathway she opened her eyes, saw Rexford's face close to hers, and murmured, "You were not hurt, then? I was frightened. I ran out to see." The surgeon did not hear her words, but he saw her smile at her bearer before she closed her eyes again, and he ground his teeth. So strangely rough was his manner to Rexford, in some few necessary directions about the patient on entering, that even the professor was struck by it.

"Shall we have a little drama of love and jealousy up here in the frozen zone?" he asked his wife, jocosely.

"I hope," she answered severely, "that we have left all that nonsense behind us." She had suffered as keen anxiety as he for the safety of their pretty Hungarian, but her nerves began to feel the reaction—and the ptarmigan stew had again grown cold. She was heartily glad the girl was not seriously hurt, but she steeled herself against the grateful look in Jasmina's great soft eyes when she closed them like a tired, bruised child after her ministrations. "I shall keep her busier than ever," she resolved sternly, "and the spring will soon be back." But when the long afternoon and night's rest restored Jasmina, and with the coming of Christmas morning she was herself again, moving at her side all sympathy and warm helpfulness, she thought no more of these perplexities, but was glad of such deft aid in perfecting their little festive arrangements. Late in rising, the two women were yet first in moving about softly in the morning of the holiday, decking as prettily as possible the table for the noonday breakfast, at which the little party exchanged their merry greetings. Dr. Andersen had brought all the way from Uppernivik a little box of holly, carefully waxed and kept, and Jasmina, accepting it, placed a spray in her bodice and her dark hair and watched for its effect on Rexford, whose eyes, indeed, were with his thoughts this festive day, and that was far away. To haul ice, help train the dogs, hunt, do anything conducive to dreamless sleep, was well enough, but these holidays were trying. He gave a sort of groan when breakfast was at length over, hastening then to

thank Mrs. Ritler for a pretty card, the only possible exchange of gifts up here. Jasmina's to him was wrapped in tissue-paper; it contained her own picture, smiling and glowing in *Zora's* Gipsy dress. His heart smote him, remembering her aid in his success. "Good Lord!" he thought bitterly, "by what spite of human nature is it that a man should let the unattainable always spoil the present? Why cannot I make better return for these women's friendliness than by a gloomy face?" He kissed her hand under Mrs. Ritler's eyes.

"That was a famous triumph for us both, and I still owe you much for my share."

She laughed happily, and turned with her old soft daring to Mrs. Ritler. "He flatters," she said. "I was the prima donna, but another could have done as much with that music, he knows very well."

Mrs. Ritler looked from one to the other bewildered; but she had almost expected something like this.

"She sings, and has never sung for us at all!"

Jasmina flushed. She had waited for Rexford to ask her, fancying, without knowing why, that he and music were at odds. "I will tell you all about it soon," she said to Mrs. Ritler.

"The table looks very nice. All may go now for a tramp. It will give you appetites."

Outside the walking party started for their tramp on snow-shoes. A clear moon lighted the midday sky. The two lads, going ahead, called back that they would best keep to the beaten track, the snow-drifts being so deep. Dr. Ritler kept his big pipe glowing and smoking between his teeth as he strode on. "How heavenly

fair the cliffs and bergs and all this whiteness show in the silvery light!" muttered the big man, to whom poetry and tobacco were the breath of life. The wonderful landscape was nothing to Dr. Andersen. He knelt in the snow, pretending to find something wrong with his ski, so that he might linger until Rexford and Jasmina came up. But the path was narrow for three, and she was too joyously decided as to who her companion should be to make the manœuver worth while. He went on in sullenness, and answered at random the professor's stray remarks, while the crisp air brought back to him, as if in mockery, the youngsters' roars of laughter and scraps of college songs. A line or two of "The Son of a Gambolier" recalled to Rexford a night in New York, with a noisy troop of students shouting along the pavement, and Penrose standing beside him.

"I beg your pardon; I was not listening."

"I was only saying," Jasmina laughed, "that you might smoke if you liked." She looked like a small bundle of furs, so enveloped was she in her long *kooletah;* but her bright face peeped out from the fur hood, little chin and rosy lips pursed up, and great eyes dancing.

"Take care!" He held out a fur-mittened hand as she slipped. She laid hers on it a moment, then withdrew it. "No, I am not going to take help. Dr. Ritler tells me I am improving wonderfully in snow-shoe walking."

"Is there anything those light, clever little feet cannot do?"

She laughed again, a tinkling, silvery laugh on the

frosty air, with a wistful note which came from the heart's great yearning for a word of tenderness rather than compliment. They went on for a few moments in silence.

"It seems a long time," she said then, hesitatingly, "since I have danced, and none of us sing any more."

He did not tell her that he had shrunk from all reminders of that art, his mistress, only less fair and adored than one other with whom he connected her. But something in her tone touched him and recalled Penrose once more.

"Why should you not sing and dance sometimes? You will electrify the doctor and Mrs. Ritler; the boys will be quite wild with delighted wonder; as for the Norwegian surgeon, his case will be past praying for."

"Oh! Dr. Andersen" (shrugging her shoulders as well as she could under the furs). "Would *you* like it?"

"Jasmina," he answered gently, "when one has a little comrade like you, who has helped him gallantly on occasion, he likes whatever she chooses to do."

They met the others now at the foot of the hill, and the racing, shouting, laughing, and talking were general on the way back. "Upon my word," cried Mrs. Ritler, as they came in on her, full of Christmas merriment and rosy from the cold air, "I might have believed, from the uproar, that it was a band of wild revelers rather than one little white company!" She was in her best black silk to receive them, and wore a smile of housewifely complacency, justified by the profuse compliments paid her.

"You look lovely, my dear," said her husband, with enthusiasm, "and so does the table."

"Hear, hear!" cried the young men, who presently did full justice to this Christmas feast, for which she had exhausted the resources of her arctic larder.

Rexford, to whom the Christmas mood had not come, found himself wondering at the light-heartedness of the two youngest men, now playing tricks of legerdemain with the wine-glasses. He noticed indifferently that Jasmina had not, like Mrs. Ritler, paid them the compliment of a special toilet, though she still wore in bodice and hair the holly the surgeon had given her; and he thought of the radiant creature, as he had so often seen her, in full dress at evening functions such as this, but in civilized confines. Yet her early life, from stray bits of information accorded by herself or Penrose, had been more unconventional than this until she had burst into full splendor. And now, after such varied and final brilliancy of career, to be trying once more her Gipsy skill in cooking for the little group up here under the polar moon—it was like the fabric of a vision.

"Will you kindly pass the nut-crackers, Rexford," said Dr. Ritler, "unless you want all the nuts yourself?"

"Certainly; they were of no use to me with the special nut on which I was engaged."

"Drop it, then," counseled Mrs. Ritler, with a half-meaning. She was of opinion, this practical, clear-headed woman, that singleness of purpose, and no sentimental complications, best suited the purpose of the Ritler expedition. And Rexford, filling his pipe

and puffing great volumes of smoke, did not know that while Mrs. Ritler was clearing the table and laying out the wine and tobacco Jasmina had disappeared. Dr. Ritler came in, stamping the snow off in the outer passage. "Ha! this is cozy," he declared. "Jens is fed, and so are the dogs. Nothing to do for the evening but smoke and talk. To think that it marks fifty below zero outside! Rexford, have you been tampering with my pet pipe? I thought you would hardly be so mean—in this latitude. Why—Mina!"

The others stared without a word, except the astronomer's muttered "By Jove!" Jasmina advanced into a clear space where the big lamp's luminous rays fell full upon her black hair, hanging down in two long braids, crowned with a carelessly knotted scarlet handkerchief. Her dress was *Zora's* Hungarian costume. Her eyes glowed like coals; she smiled, swaying slightly from side to side, her upraised fingers clicking castanets. She hummed the opening bars of *Zora's* first song. Rexford winced; not even when off hunting, with no one but Jens or quite alone, covering with the swift snowshoe trackless wastes, with moon-lit noon sky overhead, had he ventured to recall these melodies, interwoven as they were with hopes laid low. Now, meeting an anxious look from Jasmina's eyes, he thought, "This is a mere weakness," and picked up the ineffective guitar which the young astronomer had been ill treating and had dropped on the girl's appearance. He gave the strings a bold sweep, while its owner called, "Lightly, old boy," and *Zora* stood, poised, expectant.

Then, with no orchestra but this and the beating of the wind and snow outside, and no background of

scenery but the red color of the blanket hangings brought out by the lamp-glow, the slow, undulating measure of the czardas was paced. The tune grew faster and faster, and the fantastic and barbarically attractive strains kept growing more rapid with her flying feet. So perfect was her art and the charm of the melody that a vision of the woods and tents, camp-fires with old crones in attendance, nimble-footed girls dancing to clashing cymbals, swarthy men playing cards and quarreling, and love-making seemed to come over them. Suddenly the dancer stopped and stood quite still, her arms straight down at her sides, her bosom heaving, her lips still smiling. It had been so great a surprise to every one but Rexford that only he spoke now, saying simply, "That was very lovely, and we thank you."

"Lovely!" cried Dr. Ritler, finding his voice; "it is fine, superb, wonderful!"

"Lovely," said his wife. She was still bewildered. Dr. Andersen, enraptured, called "*Brava! bravissima!*" leading a volley of applause. But Jasmina had remarked the shade of reserve in Mrs. Ritler's tone, and ran to her now, taking her hand.

"See, now; if you do not like it I will not do it. I only care for you—for a few people—to love me. I thought only it was a holiday; it might amuse you all."

"My dear," said the elder woman, touched, "it was beautiful. I was only wondering where you could have learned to dance so perfectly as that."

She laughed. "Where do the birds learn to sing? But I will not deny some help from the conservatory too. Mr. Raixfore will tell you."

He was softly tuning and tinkling on the guitar strings, but rose at once and, bowing, said, "Permit me to introduce Madame Jasmina Vaskarós—of the world, I imagine. Certainly the star of an opera which I had the honor of presenting to the public, and whose success was largely due to her!" There was a great clapping of hands, in which the Norwegian did not join, but looked with frowning brow at Rexford. "Now the wedding-dance," called the latter. His blood stirred to the music; a certain excitement replaced the gloom of the earlier day. He leaned on the partition, well in the shadow, playing the opening bars. Again she glided and swayed and glanced here and there—the appealing, delighted look of a child in the eyes which had gazed indifferently on brilliant audiences.

"I am so glad you all like it," she said, with her pretty accent. She need be no longer on the defensive against heartless adulation or insolent homage. This was a friendly little group. The spiritual nature, of which she was unconscious, poor child! seemed to soften and grow. If only Stephen were here too!

Rexford twanged the guitar, humming a refrain from "The Lotus-eaters." With breath recovered, she took it up and joined in the duet.

"That you should not both have sung before!" cried Dr. Ritler. "Now our winter will be short indeed."

Jasmina had sat down; her hands folded in her lap, her long braids hanging to the floor, the glow still on her cheeks. But the languor of reaction was in her manner. She hummed suggestively,

"There was a House—a House of Clay,"

looking at Rexford, and he played the opening chords, and the minor strains rose sweet and full.

The quiet that had fallen on them with her spell of woven paces and of waving hands was even deeper now. The wind had fallen, and the dogs slept in their snow igloo, with an occasional sharp bark in their dreams. Illimitable wastes of snow and ice surrounded them outside, while within was the circle of rosy light in which the singer's figure showed in relief against dark shadows as she sang,

> "For Hope sat, likewise, heart to heart,"

and then,

> "'Sweetheart, good-by.' He slipped away
> And shut the door.

Not the last verse on Christmas night," she said, stopping there.

"It is sad," said Rexford, and laid down the guitar.

The Norwegian had hardly spoken all evening, but, frowning, tugged at his fair mustache. "It is your opera," he asked, "which madame used to sing?"

"Madame did me that honor" (coolly).

"Oh, no madame here," cried the girl. "Every one, every one," stretching out her arms and laughing, "may call me Jasmina."

"And as we have come back to earth," said the professor, "we will drink your health by that name in egg-nog."

"It is my part, then, to beat the eggs," she cried, hastening to assist Mrs. Ritler, and the evening closed in a joyous clatter and confusion.

"Christmas is over," said Mrs. Ritler, as the tiny

clock on the improvised book-shelf struck midnight; "and soon winter will be over; and the *Meteor* will be here again for us, and we shall sail home again."

"As for me," declared Jasmina, the soft flush still burning in her cheek, "I like it up here; I should love to stay always."

XVII

ANOTHER Lenten season had come and gone in New York, and Mr. Jenkins gravely assured his friends that a slight decrease perceptible in his flesh was due to a too rigorous observance of its rules. "Perhaps it was over-zealous in me," he admitted, "to take tonics to increase my appetite and then mortify it by starving. But we society men are like that" (with affected languor)—"always in extremes."

"If beer and ale are tonics," growled the stock-reporter, "I saw you take them to an unlimited extent; but I didn't notice the fasting afterward."

"My good man, do I live at the Chimes?"

"Between there and your tenement, wherever it is. Oh, I forgot. 'The Miller' must have brought you in a trifle. Perhaps you have a castle up the Hudson."

"Do you bite your thumb at me, sir?" (haughtily).

"Talking of society men," interrupted Penrose, "I wish, Jenkins, you would go up and interview Mr. Pundit before he starts."

Jenkins followed him into his office with a stare and frown which might have been more effective but for pale-blue eyes and flaxen brows.

"Why should I go? Let one of the youngsters see

him. They 're good enough for old Archie. Suppose he asks who wrote that article in which he was alluded to as a living contradiction to the law anent nature's abhorring a vacuum? It was on the opposite page from his weekly maunderings, and must have stared him in the face when he read them over, as of course he does."

"Oh, tell him that in a paper as large as ours you can't keep up with every one's news; that you 'll inquire and have the author called down; tell him anything."

"Very well," said Jenkins, lapsing into indifferent whistling as he clapped his hat on the back of his head before descending.

"An invaluable man in his way," reflected Penrose, sorting his papers methodically; "but very weak to let these stupid paragraphers make his work as uneven as it has been lately."

His eye fell on the file of exchanges, in which he remembered such lines as these: "It is quite time the *Meteor* was heard from. If unable from any cause to send reassuring messages, she should return in time for another relief vessel to start." "There is no cause for anxiety, as some suppose, about the Ritler expedition. It was clearly understood before the departure of Dr. Ritler that he was provisioned for one winter only; but there are said to be large caches in his neighborhood, though he is unlikely to need them with the relief vessel already on its way."

"Jenkins lets these croakings of uninformed scribblers disquiet him unduly." The keen-eyed editor went on with his work.

And Jenkins whistled in the elevator on his way to Mr. Pundit's apartment, which was a rash thing to do

in this elegant and rigidly correct atmosphere, and called Mr. Pundit to his door with a look of strong protest on his countenance. He softened somewhat when Jenkins, note-book in hand, and an air of rapt attention, was seated opposite him.

"Yes, yes; I go abroad this week—by the *Elmira*, you may say. I have not visited Europe in two years now, and there are certain distinguished attentions paid me from the other side—social debts, you understand—which should be acknowledged in person, don't you perceive. Yes, yes; as you say, it will be a little hard for our set to spare me. But I have been down to Newport for the last ten days, you see, making up the season's program. By this arrangement, don't you know, they may be able to do without me for a short while. A touch of hereditary gout forces me to try Carlsbad for a time. I hope, my dear young man" (with condescension), "that you may never have that reason for travel."

"I have that down," said Mr. Jenkins, innocently.

"No, no," coloring slightly; "that was merely a reflection by the way, don't you perceive."

"Until August?"

"Not" (composing himself afresh in a stately attitude and twirling his monocle) "at Carlsbad all that time, though the waters are most highly commended. I am told that the Duke of Wellington once tried them; and they are honored at present by many of the princes and princesses of Europe drinking them. The Prince of Wales himself, don't you know, has expressed his august approval of their value. Lady Mellon writes me that she intends trying the waters

for the little Marquis of Gourdes. So, you see, I am safe as to society, you perceive. There was a little matter I intended mentioning to the editor himself, had he called." Mr. Pundit's tone implied that a slight had been put upon him by Jenkins's presence instead, but the latter still smiled blandly. "Instead of my usual weekly article, I thought of letting the 'Argus' have, from on board (I am fortunate in immunity from seasickness)—"

"I should think so," murmured Jenkins, admiringly.

"Letting the 'Argus' have a trifle—a poem, let us say—inspired by the ocean voyage, and written in pterodactyls."

"In pterodactyls?" repeated Jenkins, doubtfully.

"Certainly, sir" (sharply); "that is what I said—in pterodactyls. It is a measure I prefer, you understand."

The reporter asked Mr. Pundit how to spell the word, and wrote it down carefully, muttering, "Can such things be, and overcome us like a summer cloud?" The spirit of malice now gamboling unchecked within him further incited him, on taking leave, to lay upon the table a card which had been thrust into his own hand on the street below, with the remark, "As you are parting from your friends for a time, Mr. Pundit, this may be of interest to you." It was a photographer's card, with a hideous tintype attached, bearing the legend: "This is what we aim at. We pose you in picture, or write you in song, for five cents, in five minutes."

"Adams," said Mr. Pundit, with deep disgust, after ringing for his man, "take that thing away. And,

Adams, you might open a window for a while. I wonder why the 'Argus' sends such persons here. I shall mention it to the editor."

A highly embellished account of the interview appeared under the heading, "Pundit in Pterodactyls." "But you will find it a boomerang, just the same," prophesied Penrose. And, indeed, it did dampen Mr. Jenkins's delight a little to find the other papers declaring that it was the "Argus," and not Mr. Pundit, who did not know any better.

About the time society was suffering an eclipse of that distinguished writer's countenance Katherine de Mansur was talking quietly to her aunt by the fireside in her little morning-room. "It is not your fault, dear aunt," she told her, gently, "that your heart draws you away. It is but natural that you should long for a sight of your only daughter; and if Clara cannot come to you, why, you must just cross the continent to her. I feel very selfish that I should have kept you from her all this time."

"My dear," said the elder woman, "my duty was with you in your trouble. How could I leave you—if only—" She stopped. It was an unacknowledged barrier between them, the girl's rejection of the son of whom his mother was so proud. "That her blindness or coldness should drive my boy away from me again—among those savages!" "And it is not fair to blame me," Katherine thought. So that a constraint, fast becoming painful, had sprung up. Their silence now was broken by James's announcement of "Mrs. Federling." If Angelica's complexion and high spirits in girlhood were attributable, as she maintained, to

her always having her own way, this recipe was evidently still in successful operation. She brought a feeling of sunshine into the darkened room with her buoyant step and clear, high tones, and seemed to regard it as highly amusing that she should trip over a footstool which her lorgnette overlooked.

"It is a trifle dark in here, but what a pretty fire! I have sent Otto off to drive by himself for half an hour or so in the Park. I insist on his doing it once a week, so that he may have quiet and solitude to reflect on how grateful he should be for me. And, do you know, the dear, delightful goose brought me back a poem he wrote, the last time, addressed to me. Luckily it was in German, and I did not feel equal to reading it."

"The compliment was the same," suggested Mrs. Crofton, who did not consider this flippant young person entirely good form.

"Her marriage, you know, Katherine, was in the worst imaginable taste," she had once observed. "It must take large fortunes to make these crude Westerners possible." "Mr. Pundit is said to have approved her," Katherine had replied demurely. Her aunt's social canons were much narrower than her father's had been.

"Yes," assented Angelica now, indifferently. "Katherine, do you know that mamma has begun to write the most affectionate letters to Otto, addressing him as 'von.' She goes down to Cowes next week, where the Squadron will be. All sorts of flattering possibilities for little Anastelle. In the mean time they have become English for the present, visiting at

country houses in Kent. She makes papa go to church twice on Sundays, and he writes me confidentially that he expects the fate dreaded by some English divine, 'to be preached to death by wild curates.' Also that he shocked the portly Bishop of Titheton almost into loss of appetite at dinner by telling him he agreed with some one who said that 'Job knew a thing or two if he did have boils.' Mamma did not get over it for a week. Poor papa! if he had no sense of humor he 'd get on better over there. Who, do you think, came to see me yesterday? Miss Lavender. She was quite friendly, and alluded delicately to 'our little misunderstanding,' asking me why I had not confided in her. As if she would n't have had me under lock and key that day, and mamma cabled for! She talked the fräulein over into promising to give German lessons. She can get her cheaper than any one else. I had to be firm, or she would have persuaded her back entirely—though not as chaperon."

"I should have liked Fräulein Volmer's company myself," said Katherine. "Auntie is pining for her daughter out in San Francisco, and I mean to let her go after her heart."

"I thought you looked like a pair of conspirators when I came in," cried Angelica. "But, Katherine, the very thing! If you will have me—Otto is no trouble, and devoted to you—why should we not keep house together until, some day, you go to another's? You would not like a stranger with you."

"Would you like it?" asked Katherine, taking her friend's hand. Her eyelids and lips drooped a little, for, with all her courageous composure, an almost in-

tolerable sense of loneliness had been intensified by knowledge of her aunt's slight estrangement.

"Like it! It would be just heavenly. Then it is settled?"

"Should you not first consult your husband?" asked Mrs. Crofton, to whom the scheme did not appear so roseate.

"Oh, I arrange all those matters," said the young American matron; "but Otto adores Katherine—next to me, of course." He was, in fact, a trifle bewildered at this new plan when she presently mentioned it to him in the coupé, but entirely willing if it pleased his blond angel. "To the 'Gilder Rooms,'" she told the coachman.

"I do not think the brother is always delighted with these impromptu visits, my treasure."

"Oh well, that is because the last once or twice I found him playing cards in bed. Morty is always glad to see me; his heart 's all right. Now you stay in the carriage. I 'll be back in a minute. Mr. van Krippen taking breakfast? Then I 'll see him," she told the man. "Yes, it 's I, Mortimer. Nice time for you to be at breakfast! Why don't you wait until dark? I want to speak to you a moment. No, nothing wrong —and I had my breakfast ages ago." The man dismissed, she took her brother by the lapels of his coat and looked solemnly in his wondering face. "Listen to me. Otto and I are going to live with Katherine. Her aunt 's going away, and I won't have her with nobody but a strange companion. But if you think, Mortimer van Krippen, that coming there oftener to see me will give you more chances for love-making,

you are mistaken. I want you to give me your promise that you will be only a friend; for I will not have our being there the occasion for the slightest embarrassment or restraint to Katherine!"

"If that 's all," he cried ruefully, turning away from the gleam of his sister's lorgnette, "you might have spared yourself the trouble. Fellows at the club are chaffin' me now. Say nobody 'll listen to me since Jasmina hoodooed me. Wonder what became of that woman? All sorts of wild stories about her. As for Katherine, 't ain't likely I 'll take advantage of your being there to worry her. I 'm a gentleman, I hope, and her friend anyhow. And you know, Angelica" (hedging a little), "if there 's a chance any time you can tell me."

"Mortimer, you're all right," said his sister, warmly, bestowing, much to his discomfiture, an unwonted kiss before releasing his coat.

"If you won't have somethin' to eat," he grumbled, "I 'll take mine, for it 's gettin' cold."

So, Mrs. Crofton having departed with tears,—for, after all, was it not her dead brother's only child she was leaving?—Katherine found herself with friends who, in no way abridging her perfect independence, supplied a delicate and warm sympathy. "What is it, then, my Angelica?" asked Federling, after they had been together some time. "Is it that the so beautiful friend is always a mourner? Others have mourned a father, but they find new affection after a while. She will smile at music and many things, but the eyes are sad. They look like Marguerite's when she will say:

Meine Ruh ist hin,
Mein Herz ist schwer.

And what is it, then?"

"Am I a witch that I can tell?" replied his wife. "Her days are very full and busy, but she is alone in the world. It was a good thought of yours, Otto, to have the Thursdays again, with talk and music. That will brighten her, perhaps. Some of the young fellows who come are well enough to look at, and rich enough, but no one fit for my Katherine. She is just a queen," averred this fiery partizan, "and shall take her own time to choose among her subjects. But you must not imagine things about her, Otto."

The warm weather came on apace, and Katherine said, "We have surely had enough wandering about for a while, you and I, Angelica. Would it be selfish if I begged you not to travel this summer? Would you find it dull if we took a little place on the water somewhere in the country, but not too far from town?"

"That is just what we should like," Angelica promptly replied for both, "and Otto will see about it at once." So they found a pretty cottage up the river, where Otto, when not picking cherries or reading Schiller or Heine, could run into the city to discuss the latest discovery or invention at his club of scientists; and Katherine could overlook her poor people from there; and friends, detained in town for one cause or another, could come out in the warm afternoons to eat strawberries under the trees. Morty van Krippen and Royall Worcester were even suspected of foregoing the delights of Newport or an ocean trip that they might take Katherine out on the river.

"I suppose you don't go down," Angelica said to them, flippantly, "because Mr. Pundit is not there."

"That is why," said Royall Worcester. "I am not quite in despair, however: I hear of Archie sometimes. He is still at Carlsbad, paying devoted attention to the widowed Lady Mellon, who hardly notices him or any one; for that idolized child of hers, his little lordship, is failing fast—likely to die soon, they say, though she will not believe it."

This was one of the times when Katherine slipped away alone to the boat-house, and rowed herself out on the stream, where her lithe figure, in black serge, with wide collar and cuffs, was soon a familiar sight to the residents along the banks. "I call that mean in you, Miss Katherine," grumbled Morty, when she came back, a little paler, with the shining locks around her fair temples blown about by the wind under her boating-cap. "What 's the use of the Athletic Club here assembled, but to row you across—the herring-pond if you say so."

"And if she does n't say so to keep still," said his sister, snubbing him remorselessly.

"Presumptuous little devil, Morty," was the other men's mental comment.

"You hardly had time to miss me," said Katherine, gently; "and we may all go rowing later if you wish." But, even with Otto to lead in German student and boating songs, for which the others supplied an echoing chorus, this was not the refuge she so often sought. What she liked best was to have the green meadows and sloping, verdant terraces glide past, the water parting under her swift oar strokes; alone, her eye

seeing little of the surrounding beauty of the sky and land, which nevertheless helped to soothe the imagination tormenting her with dismal possibilities of days to come whose dire hopelessness might count these happy. "If I could only hear of him—but a word!" And another inner voice, in shrill reproof, would answer, "Of one who is nothing to you now—who left you without a word!" When it seemed quite intolerable she could tire herself rowing faster and faster. Was there not always Morty, to whom no wrong would be done, as to Reginald and others? For he did not dream of ideals, and would be content with very little. But she only mocked at her own pain with this thought, regarding Mortimer gratefully as her loyal friend.

She had occasion to go down to the city a few days later, and after attending to her special errand went into a publisher's of music to order a new supply. A tall, thin man whose back was turned to her was talking with the proprietor, and an occasional word reached her of "scores," the "book," and the like. It was not until she had completed her purchase and was leaving that she recognized him as Penrose, who raised his hat on seeing her. She hesitated, stopped, and held out her hand with the dignified simplicity peculiarly hers.

"Mr. Penrose! it is a long time since I have seen you."

"We toilers seldom have the privilege of wandering in the rose-fields which are your country."

"That would seem to call us others butterflies." She smiled slightly, meeting the gaze through his glasses which she had before remarked as singularly intent, though not unpleasant.

"I am afraid," he answered, "that I shall appear to assent to that view if I express my surprise at having this pleasure in July."

"I was tired of summer travel. We are now—Mrs. Federling and I—up at a cottage in Witchwood." She spoke on a sudden impulse. "If you have time for trifling, we receive our friends there on Thursday afternoons, or, indeed,—if you row,—they come to us in that pleasant way any afternoon, informally."

"If I may—if you will do me the honor of receiving me—I will certainly make time for that." His pale cheek had a slight color.

"We shall be glad to see you," she repeated.

After she had moved away he drew a long breath. "She may be heartless," he reflected, "but while New York held that woman, for a man to risk his life in the arctic zone! Lord, 'what fools we mortals be!'"

Katherine's thoughts were also busy in the train and the pony carriage afterward. "Aunt Crofton would never approve of stepping outside one's circle in this way. But what harm can it do? His face is very plain, but clever, I think. He must be interesting." But the relentless, assured voice, which was that of her pride, said scornfully, "He can only interest you in one subject. It is in that hope you ask him." "Well, yes, then" (in passionate assent), "I must—I must hear something."

So it was that Stephen Penrose, after his first ceremonious call, got into the way of rowing up the river in the afternoons and stopping an hour or so at the pretty landing at Witchwood. To the other men lying round on the grass or flourishing tennis-rackets, who

wondered to meet an outsider in Katherine's exclusive circle, he paid small heed. He had no care to form intimacies with the club dandies; and at his evident indifference they began to say, "Clever beggar, I 'm told. No money or family, but a power in journalism. Good deal talked about in clubs."

"I should say so," another would answer; "all sorts of tales about him. Say he used to be a bandit in Transylvania—wherever that is. Kind that cut off people's ears and noses, you know, and send them home to their folks to hurry up the ransom. Queer idea, is n't it, a light-haired bandit, with eye-glasses?"

"Good Lord," cried Ashley Vanderlyn, "what rot! The man 's a Welshman, and looks like a university fellow. We meet him at the clubs; I put Morty van Krippen on his trail myself, on account of Miss de Mansur's receiving him, and there 's no such shady past. Wild lot, some of the journalists; but this fellow 's a worker. His manner 's quiet enough—better than yours, Dicky."

Penrose was rather silent in their company, and gravely polite when he spoke. He liked to draw them out about their prowess in polo or coaching. "Tut, tut, my friend," said Otto Federling, observing this habit, "you expect too much. It is only in German colleges men go to study. Here it is all foot-ball, you see; and one must not be too hard." It was all one to the amiable Federling what they talked about, as long as Angelica and Katherine were entertained. He liked to see their figures scattered about the lawn, while he lay in the hammock with his favorite poems. He would read these aloud, sometimes. Then, the others being

absent, Penrose had joined them; and Federling was overjoyed to find that this last auditor understood perfectly his native tongue.

> "Und hurre, hurre, hopp, hopp, hopp,
> Ging 's fort in sausendem Galopp.

Is not that wonderfully fine!" he would exclaim. "Can you not hear the horse—his hoofs clattering over the bridge?"

"Very fine," would Angelica reply, drowsily. "A little more and I shall be asleep."

But whether he read Bürger, or gave them selections from Shakspere, pronounced in a manner which must at least have moved that poet's bones and so incurred the threatened malediction, Penrose was equally at liberty, from his low station on the grass with cap tilted over his eyes, to watch, fascinated, the two fair women moving gracefully about the lawn tea-table, or playing with soft-colored embroidery silks—as an excuse, maybe, for vagrant fancies which the bard of Avon, weirdly disguised, could not hold. With daughters of the gods, he had once said, his earlier lines had never fallen. This might excuse the rapt gaze which included in one harmonious, satisfying whole the beauty of the soft, sailing clouds overhead, the swift-flowing river, the fluttering little flags of the boat-house, and the foliage which cast flickering shadows over a slender, maidenly figure and head bent down over some bit of work.

Otto was making wilder work than usual of one of the minor dramas, which owed its interest less to grandeur of form than to its dealing with the eternal

theme of which the varying chords and cadences ring down through the centuries with never-failing music. Katherine raised her head, and the light fell through the branches on the waving chestnut tresses, and touched the white brow and delicate mouth. "I think," she interrupted softly, "that must be the finest thing on earth—that close friendship between two men, passing the love of women. The only thing, perhaps" (with a note of wistful inquiry in her tone as she looked at the two men), "which is quite unselfish and strong and enduring."

Otto burst into a poetic vindication of Eros's superior power, which made his wife laugh tolerantly. Penrose, plucking and throwing away blades of grass, was silent awhile. Her words had conjured up an instant remembrance of a tall, broad-shouldered figure, with dark, clustering hair and frank, fearless gaze, who seemed to lay a hand on his shoulder.

"In this very play, Miss de Mansur," he said then, slowly, "there is treacherous breach of faith between sworn friends."

"I was not thinking of this so much, which is pure fiction, but of cases given us from history and tradition." He looked up at her now, and she met his gaze quite directly, not knowing that he guessed at her wish to have him speak of one who had been near to both.

"I cannot answer for history, which is as much fiction as anything else," he said, deliberately drawing his long, thin form into position to rise; "but we have the omniscient poet's word for this:

O gentle Proteus! Love 's a mighty lord.

Well, I must be off now, or the office will be neglected. Work 's a mighty lord likewise. What does some other rhymester say about that?

> Work's worth is bread in hand—aye, and sweet rest!

Sweet rest, you see, independent of love or friendship, or any of those uncertain quantities. Good wages, Miss de Mansur!"

"I believe," she said, looking across the river, "that I was not thinking of any wages or profit whatever, but just which was highest and finest and most unselfish and most enduring."

XVIII

HE boat went cityward slowly under Penrose's handling, for he was in no hurry to dine this evening, with his thoughts revolving around the girl's unconscious suggestions. The twinkling lights, breaking out here or there from this height or that as he passed along, had always seemed very pretty to him, and the way they thickened into sparkling electric constellations the nearer and nearer he drew to the great, shining, illusive city. But he saw nothing, unless it was a pure and virginal and gently proud face; and now another, darker and deeper of hue, with eyes looking unsuspiciously into his, of one who had been dear to him—nay, who was, after all, dearer to him than aught else in the world. His pulse throbbed.

O gentle Proteus! Love 's a mighty lord.

Of green-room dallyings or vagrant wayside fancies, so slight that they left not a rack behind, there had been a plenty; but now, at this first dawning of something exquisite and divine in which he had not before believed, it was hard luck that loyalty—loyalty? He set his teeth hard. "Come, my fine fellow! You have

never been a self-deceiver. Put things plainly. We will admit that the emotion you feel for the bright comrade of a year ago is still a near and vital thing—that you would make some slight sacrifice for him. But do not plume yourself on this one, for the strongest temptation is not yours. It is not your image which dwells in this girl's heart—yes, and speaks in her eyes and voice. My only distinction from the crowd of Morty van Krippens and the like is that I could speak of him an I would. If he never comes back—then indeed! Ah, poor little Jasmina! Life owed you something too."

He stayed out on the water long, forgetting his dinner and the crowd awaiting him, as usual, at the office. Jenkins was there, flushed and excited.

"You 're late," he blurted out at once. "Have you heard latest from Newfoundland? Officers and crew of the *Meteor* made their way back there in small boats. Ship caught in an ice-nip and crushed to pieces. Just had time to save themselves. Say they left note and provisions in cache. But great heavens! they were late enough in going, and now to come back without making more of an effort to find the party! You know they were only provisioned for winter, and the season 's well advanced."

"Another ship will probably sail," said Penrose, settling down at his desk.

Jenkins looked at his impassive chief and growled out, "You make me think, Mr. Penrose, of a field I once saw, with savage barbed-wire fence all around, and it was carefully placarded besides, 'No thoroughfare.'"

"I will ask you for an explanation of your parable

sometime when I am not so busy," said Penrose, coolly. A messenger came in just now with a cablegram from Carlsbad, and it read, "The young Marquis of Gourdes, heir to the vast Mellon estates, died here this day at noon."

"So that the lady's air-castles are quite, quite low," observed Penrose, pushing it toward Jenkins.

"Idolized the boy, I 've heard," said the kindly Jenkins. "Our friend will surely be her heir now if—when he comes back."

"'If—when he comes back' I must tell him how cheering you always were. Will you work up a little this paragraph about destruction of relief vessel?"

"I 'll pass it on to one of the others," said Jenkins, gloomily. "Give me that about the boy. Besides the news there 'll be a lot of stuff concerning the previous lords and their titles and honors and dishonors, and some *sic transit gloria mundi* reflections. Pundit would be good for that. You 'll hear from him now."

Indeed, the office had an epistle by the very next steamer from that gentleman; and, besides his weekly stint of prosing, there was, to Penrose's surprise, a personal letter to himself, whom he knew to be unfavored of Mr. Pundit. "Aware of your intimacy with Mr. Allan Rexford," he wrote, "I apply to you rather than the editor officially for any news of him. His bereaved mother, of whose loss in the death of the young Marquis of Gourdes your paper has been cabled, is utterly prostrated. Informed by her physician that there was grave cause for anxiety, I recommended to him a mention of her remaining son's name, which was followed, happily, by a relieving burst of tears. I hope

now, through your services, to be able to afford her information of his whereabouts, etc., knowing that it will be to you, as to myself, a profound gratification to be of service to the distinguished widow of the late Lord Mellon and mother of the late Marquis of Gourdes," etc.

"The plot thickens," said Penrose, with grim irony. "If a man disappears, hurt by the slings and arrows of those who owed him better things, then every one wants him. The mother who was so cruelly unjust; the sweetheart—well, that is a mystery." He prepared himself the account of the loss of the *Meteor*—dispassionately enough, though with a comment on the large proportion of their stores it had been deemed necessary to bring back for so short and comparatively safe a voyage. "They might be surprised to learn," he thought, on finishing, "that I too have a stake in this—my only interest in life a few short years ago." They were hurrying him for copy on the matter of the mill strikes; for on this subject the subeditor's large and just views were daily looked for. As for the freezing or starving of a few people up at the pole, that was naturally less interesting to the public. They were not obliged to go, and, in Rexford's case especially, it was a foolhardy thing. One paper remarked jestingly the next day that, in view of the recent hot wave, it would be more seasonable in the arctic explorers to send relief to those south of them instead of requiring it.

It was this one Katherine held in her hand when she came across the lawn, tall and white-robed, to meet Penrose on his next visit. It was the first time he had

chanced to be alone with her, and she began at once, forcing a smile: "It is encouraging to Mr. Rexford's friends—to you, I am sure, Mr. Penrose—to find that matters are bright enough with the Ritler expedition to make jests about. Is it true that another boat will go to their relief—that it is almost certain to bring them back soon?"

"Arrangements are being made, I understand," he answered evasively. "You are looking a little tired, if you will permit me to say so—the heat, perhaps. Will you let me take you out on the water? You can steer, and we will drift about in the shade."

"Yes, I should like that. Mr. Penrose," she went on, when out on the stream, her white draperies settled about her and the tiller-rope in her hand, "would you mind—you are so kind—letting me know, now and then, about—this expedition? Your information would be late and reliable." She was not conscious, in the effort of speaking composedly, of the pathetic contraction of her brow.

"It is a small matter that you ask; certainly I will tell you as soon as I know, but that will not be long before the published account."

"I shall like to know what you really think yourself, who care more than the public."

"Then you shall, of course, though I shall only possess the facts known to all."

She wondered afterward when she heard Mr. Penrose spoken of as a cold, repellent man, remembering how restful had been his companionship on this afternoon when she felt so listless and weary. It seemed that he sympathized with her disinclination for words,

with no obtrusive sense that the long silences were unusual. When he helped her to land, behind the indifferent quiet of his face, with her hand in his, was a thought: "I am so sorry for her. I was never so sorry for a woman before—but once—and then I was savagely angry."

The first russet leaves had begun to mar this velvety lawn, and with the waning summer the little party had gone back to town when he next saw her alone. He called in Stuyvesant Square one afternoon, and she came down at once.

"You remember my promise to give you all news of the Ritler expedition. The government will not fit out another vessel. They say it is too late in the season. But we need not be too anxious about our friends."

"You remember," she said clearly, "they were only provisioned for one winter, and another is coming."

"There will be the caches and game, doubtless."

"I read your article which said from the large share brought back from the *Meteor* there could be but little."

He bit his lip. "An editor is not infallible, you know." There was a few moments' silence. "I must write to Mr. Pundit of this, but hope he will not alarm Lady Mellon unnecessarily."

"That would be a pity," Katherine managed to say with trembling lips. He was shocked at her pale cheeks when he saw her again in a day or two. "I 'm not happy myself," he reflected, "but her type will torture itself with distressing imaginings."

"Katherine suffers from headache," said Angelica. "Otto persists that music is good for it, and would, I

believe, sing the whole of 'The Lotus-eaters' every day for her if I would let him." Her concern for her friend, with whom she was most gentle, took the form of a sharpness bewildering to her husband and her brother. "Mortimer, if one is not quite as rosy as usual your one idea is going for the doctor. A change from country to city air is apt to affect the complexion. You might get her some orchids."

"Did n't know, you know, that orchids were good for the complexion. But of course, Angelica, if you say so. Glad to be of use." Which, indeed, he was heartily. Otto too was distressed that his well-meant attempt to soothe the girl's pain had been pronounced futile. Penrose could not forget how cold had been the slim hand, lying for a moment in his, on his last call. He went about his duties more quietly than ever, and irritated Jenkins unspeakably by refusing to become excited over important matters, such as the lame and impotent conclusion of the great strike, and other absorbing copy that came in. He worked one night until morning without rest; then went up to Lenox and had a long interview with the generous and learned man who had fitted out the *Meteor*. "I am quite willing to help to the extent of my modest resources," Penrose told him.

"Not at all necessary," said the former; "you may be giving up your place in going."

"They may keep it open for me. In any case, I do not care. We should hardly like to feel responsible for their deaths."

"I might feel so," answered the millionaire scientist. "I cannot see how you would be accountable. Well,

the sooner a vessel is obtained and provisioned the better; for if they are in distress each day will count."

"Thank you," said Penrose, abstractedly. Going back to the city, he made a Turkish bath take the place of a deferred rest; then went straight to Stuyvesant Square. It was the eve of a church holiday, and Katherine, in spite of Angelica's protest that she looked ill, had gone to her church, where she knelt in front of the high altar and raised her eyes to the cross; but she seemed too dumbly wretched to find words for her prayer. The choir was rehearsing for the next day. "Kyrie eleïson! Kyrie eleïson!" they chanted again and again. "Have mercy! have mercy!" something anguished, repeated within her, though the outline of her pure, proud features was not moved by a whisper. It was late when she came out; still later when she ascended her steps again. "A letter for you, Miss Katherine," said James, presenting it; "and Mr. Penrose has been waiting a long time." She took the letter without looking at it, and passed at once to the drawing-room. Life was too nearly at a crisis with him to be given to mere formalities. "I came to tell you," he said without prelude, "that another ship is sailing. I shall go with it. It is late, but we will find them and bring them back."

"Oh!" she said, drawing a deep breath.

"I shall not see you again before I go," he went on hurriedly. "You have no message, if we meet them?"

She cast down her eyes, and they fell for the first time on the address of the letter in her hand. She gave a great start and, exclaiming again, broke it open.

"Shall I leave you to read your letter?"

"No, no" (breathlessly), "if you will allow me." She drew closer to the window, catching the faint afternoon light on the paper, and not seeing the long, devouring gaze with which he watched for the last time the fair face beneath the wide black hat.

"Oh," she panted at last, "it is—it is from him—written months ago. Delayed—I can't tell how. But if I had—had it in time, he should never have gone."

"Is that the message, then?"

"Yes" (raising her limpid gaze directly to his); "and that I am waiting for him."

"That will bring him," cried Penrose; "never fear. From the gates of Paradise he would venture for such merchandise. Good-by, then, for I must be gone."

"Good-by, Mr. Penrose; and I will pray for your success—and for you too."

"Have I ever had a woman pray for me before?" he asked himself, outside the house. "I trow not. The women I have known best did not pray much. I feel a little light-headed, I think." He took off his hat in the street and waved it toward the house. "Good-by, Katherine," he said half aloud. "I would not choose those clear eyes to look into mine after you knew who had delayed your note, abusing a friend's trust." His substitute had already assumed his duties at the office; but he had a busy day otherwise, and it was not until evening had brought them together in "Simla" that Jenkins had a chance to speak to him.

"What 's this I hear!" said that easily moved young man. "That you are going after Rexford? At this season, too! Then you have n't given him up? Then

you think we will see him again? It 's like the libretto, though, isn't it?" He began to whistle the refrain:

> "He followed the Man, who followed the Mayde,
> Who followed the Miller of Dee,"

but broke down. "I say, Penrose," he jerked out, "I 've been misjudging you—thought you were too cold-blooded to care whether that fine fellow we 've worked and played with came back or not; and all the while you were getting ready to go after him! Now, too, when it 's dangerous!"

"I don't know what you are talking about," said Penrose, coldly. "You 're too excitable, Jenkins. I 've been pegging away at that office until I need a change somewhere, and if I choose to take it that way it 's nothing to any one. If we find him we 'll bring him back; if not—we can't help it!" He shrugged his shoulders. Jenkins stared at him, discomfited; then turned on his heel, muttering, "He must be better than he makes out, but talks like an unfeeling brute."

The papers recorded, in due course, the leaving of a second relief party after the Ritler expedition. And the "Argus" blazoned in head-lines that it was under the leadership of a prominent member of their staff, and spoke quite severely of such contemporaries as made light of human life and thought that too much time and attention were given to this handful of people, who might very well get along until next spring. And Katherine eagerly gathered every word she could learn on the subject; and, if it had not been for a certain feverish restlessness, Angelica might have thought all well with her again; for there was a fitful light in her

eyes and a spring in her step since she knew Pennrose's mission and held, besides, the precious certainty that her lover had not left her uncaring. The pride that had made her, with merely circumstantial—nay, inferential—evidence, cast him off seemed now a thing of naught in the great fear that he might never come back to her. "Why did I not see him at least—speak to him?" she thought humbly. "Ah, I cared more then for Katherine de Mansur and her dignity than anything else! And he—he loved me always; I feel it now," laying her hand on the paper which she ever carried with her, and whose unfortunate delay she could not in any way explain.

One day, early in this present suspense, she had a note from Lady Mellon, just arrived, asking her to come to her. It was hard to recognize in this pale, mourning figure the brilliant, haughty woman Katherine remembered. She took the girl's hand in hers and drew her to a low seat.

"I have not been able to see any one before," she said; "but I am a little stronger now, and I must talk to you. You know, perhaps, that all my hopes and joys are dead—but one, but one! And that one, too—who can tell?"

It was not possible to meet these hollow eyes, from which dropped slow tears, with the keen resentment Katherine had always felt for her treatment of Allan. She was silent.

"I know," said the elder, taking her hand again, "that I have no right to send for you—to ask you such a question; but I thought once that my son—now absent—cared for you?"

Katherine flushed crimson; there was a pause then, for to such regret as she divined here much might be allowed.

"He did," she answered, her fair head held erect. "He does, I hope and think. We were betrothed, though now parted."

"I was ambitious always," said his mother, hurriedly, "too ambitious, for my—my children. I see now that love is best; and any parent should be satisfied with such a daughter as you. Oh, if in the humblest home one could only keep the loved ones! And now he too may not come back!" The girl found herself with protecting arms about the once unbending form, and with the sobbing head bowed on her younger, stronger shoulder.

"Then, if you think and hope as you say," went on Lady Mellon, with recovered composure, "that brings me to what I want. Why should you and I stay here, counting the slow hours? News will come first to St. John's. Why not go there at our leisure, you and I, and wait? It is so much nearer. Mr. Pundit, who has kindly advised me in business matters and escorted me back, thinks the idea rash. But I do not mind. I should not think of asking him, at his age, to go there in cold weather."

"O Lady Mellon!" cried Katherine, flushing and paling, and flushing again; "yes, then; I will go if you care to have me."

"Angelica," she said, on her return home, "will you mind if I leave you and Mr. Federling to keep house without me for a while? I am going to St. John's with Lady Mellon, until we hear from her son. I am

engaged to him, and if I have not told you before it was because—because—"

"I understand perfectly," said Angelica, never to be taken by surprise. "You meant to tell me on his return. My dearest girl, I hope it will be soon!" "And, Mortimer" (later), "I will not have you show the slightest feeling which might pain Katherine."

"I suppose you think it 's the thing, when a fellow 's lost a girl, to go the pace and give champagne suppers in honor of the event!" But this mood did not last long with the good-hearted little fellow. "Miss Katherine," he said quite humbly, "I hear that you and Lady Mellon are going to make a—ahem!—a very cold trip. Now maybe if I went along to look after the baggage and that, you know, I might be of use."

"It is so good of you," said Katherine, gratefully; "but Lady Mellon has declined Mr. Pundit's help and thinks we shall get on very well. But it is just as kind of you."

With this he was fain to be content, and with Mr. Pundit's confidential comments at the club that evening:

"Idiotic scheme, I call it, don't you know. Why can't they stay at home and wait, you understand. Suppose the party is all dead, no use to hurry to meet bad news. Beastly place, St. John's; get your nose frost-bitten. If Rexford must go to a pole, why did n't he go down to the antarctic, in the south, where it would be warm, don't you know. Lady Mellon seems a trifle obstinate. Between ourselves, my dear young friend, very few women have any sense. I am still looking for one of that kind, myself." His mind re-

verted to the recent very evident appreciation shown him by Miss Lavender, which had been soothing after Lady Mellon's patent indifference. He went to see her the next afternoon, and came away looking as if he might allow that there still existed one woman of sense.

As for Mortimer, after seeing Katherine's party off with a pretense of light-heartedness, he went in for champagne and baccarat to an extent which came to his sister's ears and gave him a bad quarter of an hour with her, finally.

XIX

R. RITLER and his wife walked briskly up and down the beaten track in front of their arctic home.

"It was a piece of work," said the professor, "to clear our path again. The snow was lying on it thirty inches deep. The new drifts are taller than I am."

"Ah, but what a pleasure to be in the air once more," said his wife, "and to hope that the storm has exhausted itself in these eight wild days. How the wind screamed and wailed last night, and dashed the snow against the roof! It seemed that it must burst in. It did find its way through every crack and crevice in the outer wall, and sprinkled our indoor promenade between the walls."

"We have been so busy with our sledge and ski carpentering, and you with your cooking and serving, that the long confinement has not irked so much. I had a chance to revise all our scientific observations, but had to thaw the frozen ink pretty often. Never mind; it is clear now, and the shortest day well in the past. Why, to-day I could distinguish at noon the hands of my watch held to the south. Pretty soon we

shall have twilight every day, and then his majesty, the sun, once more!"

Afar off the sky over the glacier had been one shifting, dazzling splendor. Arches of light, pale pink deepening into crimson, changed and melted here and there into curved ribbons of every shade from primrose yellow to deep orange; and then again stretched onward to the horizon in long, slender, pointed streamers which showed in lilac and softest green; and all these whirling and twisting and interchanging shape and color in bewildering magnificence.

"It is," she admitted, "a gorgeous sight."

"Why, then, when the heavens are telling the glory of the Lord, do you give so divided an attention to the grandest spectacular display imaginable? What are you thinking of so seriously?"

"Of my complexion, perhaps, which they tell me will be, after this long night of months, as yellow as the pumpkins of my dear native State."

Some others of the household had now come out to view the aurora. It was Rexford's voice they heard, and from the slighter, smaller hooded figure proceeded Jasmina's clear, fresh tones. A second bulkier form, which came out shortly afterward and stood near them, did not speak; so, by this light, Dr. Ritler could only guess at its identity.

"See here, my dear," he resumed, more earnestly, "I may be too optimistic, as you sometimes tell me; but this seems a case where you are crossing the bridge without having reached it. The night is nearly gone, and I can still find work for my assistants near me or out of doors, as you have been so clever in doing for

Jasmina. Then there are only the evenings; but we are all together then, and the little witch uses her charms and graces for us all alike. How pretty she looked last night in 'Anitra's Tanz'! She keeps up the spirits of the whole party with her music and her charming ways. The spring will soon be here now, and then the men will be off on sledging parties."

She opened her lips to answer, "And with one of your few helpers developing so much ill will, what sort of harmony is to be expected in your explorations?" but refrained.

"Come in now," she said; "my skirt is hard as a board half-way up, and the *kamiks* are, I do believe, frozen to the stockings." She would not have the chief, whose responsibility was heavy, too much disturbed. Yet to her woman's fancy it appeared more than a minor annoyance that the Norwegian, ever since the night Jasmina first sang and danced, had missed no chance to show her an attention, which the girl carelessly ignored, and to the others—and Rexford especially—a sullenness and temper unsuspected at first.

"I think not much of that," said Jasmina, "that he tries to devote himself. Men have that way. It is nothing. I shall not care about it."

"But it may hinder Dr. Ritler's plans," said the wife, "not to have good feelings in so small a party."

"That would be bad," commented the girl, thoughtfully. "But what must I do? I stay much with you now."

"You do indeed, and are such a comfort. But" (flushing a little) "if you did not show—not seem—so

friendly to Mr. Rexford. It makes Dr. Andersen disagreeable, I think."

Jasmina flushed not at all. "See, then," she answered quietly; "I cannot do that. Mr. Raixfore is my friend, and I do not like the surgeon at all, since he is so cross. It is a pity that he came. But never mind; it will be all right." She stroked in her caressing way the sleeve of the matron, who was devoted to her. "And now only a half-mile back!" The two were taking a snow-shoe tramp. "How well we get on!"

From that date the days lengthened apace. Now Mrs. Ritler could not keep Jasmina so constantly at her side, for all the great whiteness outside of ice-cliffs and frozen wastes was silvered with returning daylight in which no sun was yet visible. And one would cry, "Let us go to the berg. We can do it now without skis." Or Dr. Ritler would arrange that all should climb to the ice-cap and see the sun appear, which now cast a glow on the western sky. And Mrs. Ritler would wander away with him to view the enchantingly novel effect of sunlight on bay and hill, and would return to find the Norwegian, with lowering brow, listening in sullen silence to Jasmina's prattle to Rexford. On this last occasion, as they were descending from the summit in single file, Rexford, observing the girl slip once or twice, endeavored to pass that he might give her his hand; but Dr. Andersen pushed roughly before him and said huskily, "Turn about is fair play. A chance, if you please." Rexford stared, frowning, but Mrs. Ritler slipped her arm through his.

"What 's the matter with that fellow," he asked, half amused again, "that he glares so? That 's the way the

Norwegians looked, I suppose, when they drank from their enemies' skulls. Very bad manners, has n't he? If he gets impossible I 'll have to dip him in the bay when the ice breaks."

"Oh," she said nervously, "he means no offense to you. It 's just that he admires Jasmina, and she 's able to take care of herself."

"Yes" (with a sort of careless friendliness she wondered at); "but she 's been so good to all of us that we must n't let him persecute her; that is, if she does n't like him." She looked at him thoughtfully once or twice going down the hill. "What should we have done without you both," he returned, "all the dark winter? It was a good plan of Dr. Ritler's to bring you with us."

"He did not specially design to bring Jasmina."

"No; that, I suppose, was a freak of that wayward child of the sun. It is certainly a far cry from Hungary to the north pole by way of New York. But perhaps she counts it but an incident in an adventurous career—by which," he added gravely, "I mean nothing disloyal to our little queen, abdicating for a while to serve and cheer a band of arctic travelers."

"It is like a brilliant comet," said the practical New England woman, surprised into a thought of poetry, "flashing in our midst and as suddenly disappearing."

"Ah, that must not happen with our helpful little comrade. We could ill spare Jasmina!" He spoke warmly, but there was a lack of something which made her sigh to herself. He did not notice, being intent on the sky tints. The air was soft and balmy, though the sun was gone almost as soon as it appeared this

first time. As they went down toward the valley's twilight soon another aurora illumined the landscape. They all stood near the entrance to the great snow mound covering the house watching it awhile. It was in slender lances of white light, tipped with yellow; at the side a pillar of rose red stood, changing after into orange. "Those golden spears," commented Dr. Ritler, "might be arms of the celestial hosts standing in battle array."

"It is bright enough to cast a shadow," said his wife, more practically. "They call that polychromatic foundation of restless, quivering curves, from which the auroral streamers all proceed, the merry dancers."

"Oh, do they?" cried Jasmina. "That is a challenge I will not refuse." She detached herself a little from the group, and, even in moccasins and outdoor furs, commenced some fantastic evolutions, in which her shadow went bending and gliding with her over the trodden snow, to her own whistling of some wild Gipsy strain. It was oddly attractive, and they all watched her pleased and laughing. "The gambols of a little brown bear," cried Dr. Ritler.

"Come in now, Ursa Minor," said his wife, "and help me with the supper."

The girl was flushed and radiant as she emerged from her sealskin *kooletah*. She chatted merry nonsense while moving about the table, and teased the Norwegian, letting him, to his delight, wait on her, which he did very awkwardly. Later, her mood changing, she took up the guitar, and began to sing:

"Once, when I was poor,
Love knocked at my door."

Rexford started and turned quite pale. "Do not sing that, Jasmina; I do not like it any more. I did not know any one had the music."

"I play it from ear. I heard you sing it once. But I will not if you do not like."

"By God," muttered the Norwegian, into his beard, "that 's too much! Is Mr. Rexford," he asked, "composer, manager, and censor in one? That was too pretty to stop short."

"It *is* pretty," she said hastily and sweetly, "but I do not know it very well; I will sing something else." She smiled on him in bewildering fashion. She had never talked to him so much before as on this evening.

The sun now paid them longer visits daily, and the men were much absent at the ice-hills and looking for stray deer or ptarmigan, while Jens spent his time watching patiently for hours beside the seal-holes. He stayed with the women when, after long preparation, the men, full of excitement and anticipation, set off on their long sledge trip.

"We will keep busy until they return," said Mrs. Ritler, "and the time will not be so long; and then the ship, and home—home again!"

"It will seem long, long until they come back," said Jasmina; "but for home in the hard, noisy world—well, there is one there I should like to see. *You* will not mind, perhaps, the long shutting in. You will have lived much in towns. You have never slept under a tree with the stars over you. They would gather the children, when I was little, where they were rolling in the ashes of the camp-fire, and take them under shelter. But I—I would hide. I liked it better outside. We

did not have much to eat sometimes, but it was free, and we went and we came. See now, dear madame," she said another time, when they sat in the firelight; "I must tell your fortune. You know it is a Romany gift. You cross my palm with a bit of gold—and here, let me see. Dr. Ritler comes back safe, successful. You will both go South again and prosper, and live long and happy."

Mrs. Ritler had a feeling that she ought to protest against this heathenish practice and preach a little, instead of which she merely said, "And your own, Mina?"

"Not by the hand—I cannot; but by the cards." She went for the boys' well-thumbed pack, and shuffled, and knit her fine black brows, and pondered, and shuffled again; then, of a sudden, threw the pack on the table. "There 's nothing to be seen but snow and snow and snow," she cried petulantly, "and that has no sense! But what will happen will happen, and now I will sing! You like 'The House of Clay'?"

So well she beguiled Mrs. Ritler's solitude that time passed swiftly enough to have the sledge party's return almost surprise her. The leader was enthusiastic over their prosperous journey and splendid success in scientific discovery and exploration. But when they were alone together, she asked quietly, "What was the trouble?"

"Oh, that stupid Andersen was perverse and wearing. Only for Rexford's cool self-command I should have had much annoyance. I thanked him and begged him not to notice the fellow's ill nature, as it would soon be over now. He may be a little 'off,' you know.

The long polar winter is said to affect the brain in certain cases. He is indispensable as surgeon, too, confound it! Well, we have seen no deer to bring back, and I am sorry you had to use seal meat, but you have both kept up on the other things. What are you looking at, Jasmina?"

She was in the doorway, both hands shading her eyes, looking upward. "What birds are those?" she said.

"Those black ones? Oh, ravens."

"Ah, I do not like them. I am glad they are going."

"Come" (laughing good-naturedly), "you must not be superstitious or morbid. You are thinner since we have been away. We must take you boating and amuse you now."

"I will like that," she said, with her pretty smile. And very soon she was her bright self once more, and the life of their little excursion, laughing and clapping her hands with childish delight to see the banks yellow with poppies and gay with anemones, the water flowing free again, the ice-foot nearly gone, and the beautiful green fields sprinkled with myriad blossoms. On one of these occasions she had gone out with the younger men in the boat and rocked idly in the cove while waiting their return from where they had gone inland with their guns in hope of game. Playing with the tips of her fingers in the still freezing water, and dreaming happily, she hardly noticed when a storm-blast swept down the bay and a few large drops of rain fell. Rexford came hurrying, followed by the others.

"The sooner we get you back the better," he said,

looking upward at the lowering clouds. They were stowed in the boat again in marvelously quick time and heading for home. But once out from the sheltering cove the gale came full upon them, with sheets of rain and dashing and roaring of waves. The wind was in their favor, and they sped on through the turmoil, with great dislodged bergs rushing out of the bay and tottering and striking against one another in perilous proximity to them. Clouds overhead cast a threatening gloom, in which the huge glaciers reared themselves spectral and awesome, while the blast and the overtopping waves came swooping down upon the little party in the boat as though to snatch a prey. There was hardly a word spoken, but, with faces grim and teeth set, the men worked their sometimes slow and toilsome and sometimes flying way; but when at last the keel grated on the longed-for beach Rexford picked up the silent Jasmina in his arms and held her for a moment before setting her down.

"I thank Heaven for your sake," said he.

"Thank you," she replied, with a breathless little laugh, closing her arms about his neck, and the next moment was fighting her way through the wind toward the house. The Norwegian stepped out after her, and no one could tell exactly how it happened, but suddenly his gun went off and a bullet pierced Rexford's fur hood close to his head.

"It caught in my sleeve," Andersen said hastily. "I did not know it was cocked."

Rexford looked him straight in the face. "If you handle a gun so carelessly you should not be trusted with one," said he, turning on his heel.

Now, day after day, some one mounted the hill overlooking the bay that they might have the first sight of the relief vessel steaming in. But the month wore away without its appearance, and Dr. Ritler would always say, "To-morrow, very likely." At last he said to his wife, "Rexford and I have talked it over, and we agree that the boat may have been delayed, or perhaps cannot reach us through the thick ice which still prevails, we have seen, below us in the sound. It is a late spring, after all. If we go to meet them through the open water up here, it saves time. And—and you know our provisions were for only one winter. We can reach, in any case, one or two caches while waiting; and there seems to be no game about here now."

"There is a good deal of seal meat still, and a few auks and guillemots."

He shook his head. "Not enough for another winter. Another winter, too, with the Norwegian shut up in the same house with Rexford! Do you think that was an accident with his gun?"

"Jasmina and I need not keep you back," she said then firmly. "We are accustomed now to life here and can stand a tramp."

All began energetically to pack the small amount allowed in the boats. They would not admit, even to themselves, that it could be anything but a slight delay of the steamer. It was but a short time before the boats were well down the bay, coasting where they could, and with propitious weather making good distance at first. Then it snowed steadily, and the ice in the passage thickened, and it was harder and harder to get through, and in one place Dr. Ritler stopped in

dismay, for here towered in their way tremendous floe-bergs, with no outlet around them. "This one is split!" called Rexford, excitedly, standing up in the boat. "I believe we may go through!" And they made the wonderful passage through a split berg, the lane of water being but twelve feet wide, though one hundred feet long, with perpendicular ice-wall fifty feet high on each side. Beyond this again the ice-foot, loosening, presented the constant danger of grinding their boats. But just as they first began to look doubtfully at one another matters mended. They found the ice melted in a fairly safe though narrow strip along the western shore, and Dr. Ritler decided to haul the boats up on it, and with the rubber tent-cloths form a temporary resting-place.

"They will easily find us here," he told Rexford, hopefully, "and the women are much exhausted. I must appeal to them for everything. That is a woman's panacea—to find others dependent on her for cheering."

Indeed, it was wonderful how Mrs. Ritler and the fragile-looking Jasmina alike ministered to the others. Jens went out in his kayak to look for walrus; for their fare was scant, and the young photographer confided to him that it was "a queer feeling to be always hungry." The younger hunters both came back badly frost-bitten and were laid up. In two or three days the professor said to Rexford, abruptly, "There ought to be a cache in the direction I have marked on this map, and it would be a most helpful addition to the little we have left. Could you go with Andersen? The youngsters are helpless just now, and, though they need the doctor, I do not like to leave him in charge of the

women; he has been acting so strangely, Jasmina tells me, and frightened her once or twice. Two must go. You would be armed, of course, and, I think, able to take care of him."

"Certainly," said Rexford, indifferently; "he would be necessary with the sledge."

The surgeon said nothing on receiving his orders, and looked no more morose than usual. They started early in the morning, Jasmina coming from the tents where the boys lay to watch them out of sight. "I saw that distressful raven again this morning," she told Dr. Ritler. "Why does he follow us?"

"We may have to eat him," said Mrs. Ritler, trying to make a jest of their wretched plight.

"I wish he would go away," repeated Jasmina.

It was understood that the two absent would be back next day, and she languidly and abstractedly discharged her duties. The second day passed, however, without their return, and she could fix her mind on nothing else.

When Rexford started on his journey he was agreeably surprised to find his companion, though silent, not obstructive in any way; on the contrary, he made a suggestion now and then helpful enough and to the point. After some searching they found the cache about where Dr. Ritler had supposed it to be, but the supplies were spoiled. His companion shrugged his shoulders and said,—his first evidence of strangeness,—"It makes no difference." After the night in sleeping-bags they started on the return journey; and Rexford, climbing a small ice-hill the better to survey the shore on that side, slipped and fell, and rose again and

walked on immediately, but presently felt his ankle swollen and painful. After some further steps he was unable to stand on it at all, and sank down on the sledge he was helping to draw.

"This is a bad business, Dr. Andersen," he said. "Perhaps you are strong enough to haul the load with me added. If not, go on to the tents and bring help back."

"No," said the Norwegian, very quietly; but something in his tone drew Rexford's attention, and he looked up at him and saw the gleam in his eyes which had frightened Jasmina. "It is not worth while," he continued. "I did not intend you to go back. One way will do just as well as another, and it will save me trouble now to leave you here. There is a heavy snow coming, and I will say you fell from the cliff; and when they come to look the snow will have hidden you safely away."

Rexford's hand went to his belt, but the other was too quick for him. He snatched the revolver from his grasp and sent it whirling through the snow.

"It is not worth while," he said again, "or I would shoot you. It is a pity I cannot stay for the end of the fine gentleman that held his head so high and laughed and mocked, and cared nothing at all for the pretty creature's love that better men than he would have died to gain; but the snow is coming and I will not waste time; for I am going back to her, and very soon she will forget you, and I shall have my chance."

Rexford watched him going off with uneven, wandering steps, still talking to himself and waving his arms. This seemed to be the end, here in the ice des-

ert with snow now falling, and alone. He tried again to stand, but found it impossible; so, making himself as comfortable as possible, just waited. He had heard that one slept from cold and died so, but surely not with an ankle aching this way. Meanwhile the snow fell more and more thickly in a blinding white sheet. At the end of two or three hours the fatigue and privation of the journey began to tell on him in an increasing drowsiness. "This will not do," he thought, and commenced to recite any song or poem he could remember, clapping his mittened hands together; then, as the words mixed and tripped one another upon his heavy tongue, he suddenly began to shout. Was it only a continuation of confused fancies, or did a distant voice faintly answer him? He called again and again. Had his enemy relented and come back? No; for, now that the response was nearer, the Eskimo's tones were unmistakable.

Presently through the encompassing snow came Jens drawing a sledge, from which a little figure rose and drew near, bending over him. Jasmina, who, unknown to the others, had come in search of him, asked no questions, seeing that from exhaustion he was nearly unconscious; she quickly gave him some brandy. "We must get him on the sledge, Jens." The Eskimo grinned vacantly, his one mode of expressing emotion. It was, perhaps, in some of the wild and whirling fancies that had beset him that Rexford felt her, in stooping to help, press a kiss on his forehead. Her little mittened hands tucked the fur covering more securely about him, and then he remembered no more.

"I am going to help you draw," she told the Eskimo. "It is not far, and every moment is precious until we get him there."

By this time the snow was thick to density, but they had a sort of glimmer of light from the midnight sun beyond, and Jens could find a way over trackless wastes. From utter fatigue she would stop drawing sometimes and walk panting beside the sledge; and then, thinking time lost, take her place again with Jens, desperately striving to hurry him. It was about two in the morning when they reached the tents, where Dr. Ritler was anxiously looking for them.

"He is not dead, and I have brought him back," she said proudly, with white lips.

"Oh, my dear child, go to Mrs. Ritler at once." And while his wife gave the girl some hot drink and made her lie down, he, with Jens's help, tended Rexford. The latter came to himself in a little while enough to give information.

"Well," said the professor, "he had better not come back; and it is not likely that he will through this storm and his wits in disorder. He will have wandered off among the snow-drifts and never be heard of again. Unfortunate wretch! But keep still now and do not talk." Outside he said to himself, "So our physician is gone when most needed. Well, it matters little; for it is only a question of time with us all, I think." His own knowledge of the simpler remedies helped Rexford's vigorous constitution to throw off in a few days the effects of the exposure; and the hurt to his ankle, proving to be but a severe strain, was yielding to treatment. The youngsters

too, recovered from their injuries, were about again, helping weakly.

"By heavens!" said the photographer to Rexford, "that was a fine thing for that girl to do."

When Mrs. Ritler next came from her tent on a visit to the convalescent he asked, "How is it Jasmina has never been in to see me?"

"It was a trying experience for her," said Mrs. Ritler, evasively, "and I am making her keep quite still."

Rexford made no reply, but a few days later said to the professor, "I have been sitting up to-day, Dr. Ritler, and can now walk a few steps with a stick. My strength has pretty well returned. If Jasmina is ill, why do you not tell me?"

"Well then, ill she is—very ill, we fear. I have done what I knew, but—but it may be pneumonia; and here we are without a doctor, thanks to that animal's madness!"

Rexford was silent for a minute; then said abruptly, "Why should the rest of us touch the little tea and pemmican left? We are well enough to do with seal meat. She will need the other things for nourishment."

"Yes," said the professor, huskily; "but the ship must be here soon."

The younger men still went out every day with their guns, though no game had been seen. Rexford the morning after this limped out on his stick with them. The photographer made a hasty gesture outside to keep him back. "You 'd better not try the ankle." But Rexford went past him, listening to a weak strain of melody which smote on his heart and which all heard from the women's tent. It was Jasmina's voice,

though changed by illness. She sang that verse of "The House of Clay" which before she would not:

"Most like the next that passes by
Will be the angel whose calm eye
Marks rich, marks poor;
Who, pausing not at any gate,
Stands and calls, stands and calls—

Why does he call?" she broke off petulantly. "I would not wish to receive him. I do not know any angels." She resumed presently:

"Whom, ere the crumbling clay house falls,
He takes in kind arms, silently,
And shuts the door.

Ah, I like that. That is pleasant and warm." Another moment's pause, and she commenced talking rapidly and excitedly in an unknown tongue. The young photographer's face was working. "Come on," he said gruffly to the astronomer. "We shall not shoot much standing here." Rexford remained where they left him in the dazzling sunlight. The creaking and groaning of broken ice in the bay went on, and the yellow glare of the endless snow seemed mocking him. Mrs. Ritler came outside her tent for a moment. She had been weeping. He beckoned to her and she came.

"I wish," he said, "that I might have thanked her while she knew."

"She may be conscious soon," said Mrs. Ritler, with a sob, "but my husband thinks the end is near. I will call you if—if she knows any one again."

She hurried back. Jens was out in his kayak; the

hunters were still away. Rexford sat in and out of his tent for several hours, scarcely thinking. Then Dr. Ritler called him:

"She will know you now."

So sudden and acute had been this attack that she was hardly wasted. When he approached her low couch of skins there was a gleam of pleasure in her eyes again. He clasped her hand in both of his, but she whispered first, brokenly, "How glad I am—and proud—that I went for you! Now you know why I came up here in the snow."

"Jasmina dear, I was not worth the price of your warm, bright life!"

"I think so; but I am so tired." She lay awhile silent, her hand in his, Dr. and Mrs. Ritler coming and going quietly. Then the long dark lashes lifted once more from the olive cheek, and the great, soft, dark eyes looked longingly into his. "You might," she breathed, "kiss me good night." He bent over her, and presently Jasmina went to sleep for the last time.

XX

THEY laid her reverently under the snow at the foot of the nearest cliff; and it seemed as though in the little white mound were put away what light and warmth had kept up their courage until now. Their small stock of provisions grew more and more scanty; their hollow cheeks showed the ever-present craving which distressed them. The men resolutely set aside certain articles from their miserable supply for Mrs. Ritler, and even now she would resort to touching stratagem to share these portions with her husband and the others. They were too weak to think of moving farther southward, even if the boats had not been gradually broken up for firewood. And another misfortune came to them when poor, devoted Jens, venturing too far among the broken ice after walrus, was capsized and seen no more. The little party of five kept up but a hollow pretense of bravery now, as time went on without succor; and the glass falling and the snow drifting into the tents showed them the flight of summer; and the cold, which hunger made them feel more keenly, increased.

One night they had all been unable to sleep for the storm, which threatened to snatch their wretched

shelter from overhead, and the spray from the inlet and even waves rolled in, wetting and freezing. With the morning came calm and the possibility of a little heat to warm their few mouthfuls. "I am quite sure," said Dr. Ritler to Rexford, "we are abandoned for this year—which means forever."

"I still think," said Rexford, calmly, "that they will come—perhaps because I do not care much, except for you and the others." He took his gun, from force of habit, and dragged himself up the hill overlooking the bay before turning in for needful rest. His eyes, like those of his companions, had been somewhat affected by the snow-glare, and he did not wholly trust them; but surely it was smoke that he saw rising faintly from the open water far below—the smoke of a vessel; and surely that was her whistle now. He shouted with all the strength left him; he raised his gun above his head and waved it. They saw him,—dark against the ice-cliffs,—heard him, and shouted and whistled again in return. He went back to the tents and met Dr. Ritler coming out.

"They have come for us," he told him. "Your wife is saved." She heard him from inside, and, overcome after long suspense, became unconscious.

"It does not matter," said the professor, brokenly, tending her. "Joy will not kill."

There was soon the rush of sympathizing, ministering officers from the boat. But Rexford had eyes for only one; a tall, thin figure, a light-haired man with eye-glasses, who came swiftly over the crackling snow and seized his hands and looked into his eyes and threw his arms around him.

"Penrose!" cried Rexford, stupefied.

"Lad, lad!" said his comrade of the past, "I began to fear we should not find you!" Then he looked toward the only female figure, about whom the little crowd clustered. "Jasmina?"

The little snow mound, with flag as headstone, was in bright yellow light. Rexford drew him apart and motioned to it.

"Ah!" He shrank as from a blow; then walked slowly to the mound and looked down on it for a few moments.

"Mrs. Ritler will tell you," muttered Rexford; "I cannot."

The tender, enlightened care they received, the quiet and assured safety which was their portion as passengers on the sturdy vessel forcing its way toward home through the stubborn ice, soon restored calmness and strength to those who, happily, had not reached the lowest ebb. As a time and place of preparation before too sudden a transition to the different world this voyage was invaluable. Beyond an unusual spareness of form and a slight limp, Rexford had recovered some of his old-time appearance before they steamed into St. John's again. "The captain tells me," he said to Penrose, "that he shall stay in harbor a few days; but if we prefer to hurry we may return by the steamer we shall meet as we go in."

"And which will you choose?"

"Whichever you do, of course. Penrose, the officers have just told me what I might have known. Instead of merely accompanying this relief party it is practically yours, instituted and carried out through your

idea and energy, when otherwise there was not a chance for us. And you think, after that, that we could go back in any way but together!"

It was the older man that might now have been mistaken for the rescued instead of the rescuer, a certain melancholy gravity having settled upon him, and an inscrutable expression which would have puzzled Rexford but that he was watching the outgoing steamer's approach. He presently went forward, leaving Penrose; for, as the others of the exploring party left by this boat, there was much to be said, after all they had undergone together, to the Ritlers and the young men —promises of continued interest, pledges of future meetings; and all knew too well the uncertainty of life and human affairs to count very much on what they said.

He was still calling and waving to them when a bundle of mail was tossed from the deck of their vessel. He did not observe, as he gazed after the receding forms of his friends, that the captain, passing him, handed a letter to Penrose. It was to the latter an unknown hand, and opening it he looked, as one does, at the signature first, which was "Frances, Lady Mellon." She wrote to him: "You will see, dear Mr. Penrose, that this is dated from St. John's, where for many weary weeks we have been waiting for some sign of you. And that you should come in at last, having fulfilled your noble promise and been his savior! I must wait to see you before I can tell you what thanks are in my heart. I have with me my son's betrothed, Miss de Mansur, but, as we have no particulars of his rescue beyond his being alive, we will not venture

among the welcoming crowd that will meet you at the wharf, fearing that it might agitate him if much enfeebled. We have strained our eyes many hours watching for the steamer, and now wait your coming in our rooms at the Queen's Hotel. You will tell him, please, and believe me, your most grateful," etc.

There was a postscript at the foot of this: "May God reward you, Mr. Penrose," signed "K. DE M." He smiled drearily, looking out over the water. "Perhaps He has—in taking from me the one creature on whom I had a rightful claim." He detached the postscript from the rest of the writing and placed it carefully in his note-book, and tore up and threw away the rest.

The receding steamer was far out on the bay now, and the town was assuming shape and outlines. They had the after part of the deck to themselves, the others crowding forward. There was to be some delay in getting in; they did not inquire into the cause.

"Do you know, Penrose, I am more than loath to return to civilization? What can it give me? I was so tired of it when I went north!"

"Will you break loose again, then" (mockingly), "and come with me?"

"Where? when?"

> "If any man turns ass,
> Leaving his wealth and ease
> A stubborn will to please,
> There shall he see
> Gross fools as he—

I beg your pardon, my dear fellow" (relapsing into his habitual gravity); "I was convinced that you left

behind you the last time most that makes life worth living."

Rexford looked at him, questioning.

"It is in the snow," said Penrose, calmly, "that *I* have left my nearest." His companion continued to look at him. Penrose laid his hand on the rail, gazing at the softly lapping waves. "Jasmina was my sister, you know; or perhaps I never told you."

"No."

"Well, yes. The same father. And when he went off and left her Gipsy mother—and me too—quite friendless, that kind creature saved me from much ill treatment—when she might have hated me, too; for I was said to look like him. Well, the least I could do was to befriend the little daughter when the mother died; and afterward, when I came back and found her—still a child—married to a brute of her tribe, I would n't leave her, but stood between her and his violence as much as I could. The end came abruptly one day. She was really too soft and slight a thing for him to be so cruel; I killed him when he drew a knife." There was a pause for a moment or two. "After that it was better to go and take her away from all of them. I had her taught, and with her beauty and gifts success was an easy matter. I was very fond of her."

"If my life could have saved hers!" said Rexford, very low.

"She was the only being I cared for—until I met you, lad. To lose both—but I will not have you; you shall not come with me. There is your mother, you know."

"Yes" (dryly); "she is a long way off."

"Not so far as you think. She crossed to New York to seek for news of you."

"Ah" (softening a little), "you did not tell me."

"No. I am giving you home news as they gave you food at first—little by little, not to shock the system. What should you say if she were waiting for you in the town here—eagerly waiting?"

Rexford flushed. There would, after all, be some one of his own to welcome him back to life! His mood became daring. "Tell me," he cried, going close to Penrose, "of other friends too."

"Of Miss de Mansur, do you mean? I saw her before leaving. She bade me tell you she was waiting for you."

Rexford turned his back to walk the length of the deck. He returned with crest upreared almost as of old.

"Are you quite, quite sure?"

"As sure as that your world begins afresh. I am fairly sure of one thing more—that she waits for you in the town here with your mother."

Again Rexford turned his back. The ship was nearing shore rapidly now. It seemed to the captain and others that Mr. Rexford might restrain his impatience a little better. His mother was in St. John's?—oh! that was different. How wonderfully well that young fellow looked after all he 'd been through! Arctic privation must have made him handsomer. Surprising that people should leave comforts and luxuries to get into danger and hardship. Now when one did it for a living,—as he himself did,—but this young man was very rich, he heard, and a famous composer. The bluff,

voluble man did not notice that Mr. Penrose's face was quite gray and that he appeared not to hear what was said to him.

At last the steamer was in, and the crowd's attention, rightfully belonging to the whole arctic party, was concentrated on its sole representative. "You will not," he cried to Penrose, "let me run this gantlet alone on the wharf; you 'll come with me. No? Then to dinner, of course; my mother will certainly expect you."

"Not to-night," said Penrose. Something in his tone struck Rexford, who turned and looked at him. Penrose put his arm once more around his friend's shoulder. "Good-by, my dear lad. I have cared for you too; good-by."

"Until to-morrow, then," called Rexford, running down the gang-plank. He bowed and smiled pleasantly right and left to the cheering crowd, but was glad to take refuge from the shouts in a cab, which presently brought him to his hotel. And his heart beat high as he sprang up the staircase to meet again the mother against whom he felt he had cherished some bitterness. Her sitting-room door was already opened expectantly. She drew him within, closing it, and fell upon his shoulder. "My dear, dear mother!" he cried, his heart melting at once at her aspect and mourning robes.

"My only son!" she said, with sobs. "If a mother might acknowledge injustice—might ask pardon—"

"No, no," he interrupted.

"Then if suspense can atone—I have suffered so much. But I have a gift of great value—of priceless

worth—to make restitution with. It will repay for all." Even now he winced at this. Could she speak of atoning materially for the hurt inflicted? "Let me kiss you and bless you, my own son, before making this gift." Indeed, she was all mother now, and it was with a pang of renunciation indescribable that, after embracing him, she withdrew herself. She opened a door and went in. "Katherine!" she called. In a moment she came back, leading the girl with her. "See, now," she said, "this is full reparation," and left him. Katherine advanced toward him, while he stood motionless, transfixed. Tall of figure, robed in something soft and white, her eyes shining, she stood a few paces away. Even so had he often dreamed in arctic snows. But this was no vision.

"Welcome back, my own," said her soft voice, "to life and me!" Then he held her clasped in his arms, and their lips met. "Oh!" she cried; "no more; you —almost—frighten me."

"You must not rebuke me," he answered masterfully. "I have waited long, fasting." And he lifted her quite up in his arms and kissed her hair and cheek again. "My dear, brave, beautiful darling! My dainty sweet! To have come away up here to meet me! It repays for all—even for your letting me go." There was some confused remembrance on this of rumors, of a strange visit, of a letter delayed; but there was a golden future stretching ahead in which would be ample time for explanations. All that was needed now was to know that her dear and only love stood again at her side.

"Indeed, I knew you had forgotten me," smiled his

mother when he brought Katherine to her. She had carefully removed all traces of the bitter tears which came at the thought, "I have lost this one too," and she could smile as she said, "She has been my daughter already all these weeks. She is a birthday present to you, my Allan; it is your anniversary."

"Much has happened," said he, when she left them again, "since my majority at twenty-five, two years ago. But now I enter into my kingdom!" He turned and clasped once more his fondly yielding, gracious sweetheart.

It was to him that a note came next day.

"You will receive this," it said, "when I am far away from you; for I have hired a boat to overtake the steamer already started. No one wishes you both more happiness than I, but you will not see me again. The few years spent in New York have satisfied me. The price was too heavy. I cannot tell where I may pitch my tent next, being naturally a rover. You may know by this time that you need not have been parted so long but for me. Ah well! as I brought you back, perhaps your beautiful friend may forget that. It was poor little Jasmina whose stakes were too high; but life hardly treated her quite fairly, poor child Tell Miss de Mansur I have a talisman which will keep me safe for a while. Beyond that I cannot say, but one road or another is much the same. Perhaps, if I chance upon Jasmina's people, they may remember to exact vendetta. It is all one. But I have cared for you, believe me.

"STEPHEN PENROSE."

Rexford crumpled this in his hand. "I think I had counted on him assuredly in my life," he said slowly; then went to the window and looked abstractedly far over the waters of the bay. He saw in thought, a little white mound at the foot of a distant snow-cliff in the remote northern waste; and it was pure fancy that from the twisted note a scent of sandalwood breathed in his face.

"I wonder what talisman he carries," Katherine said softly. But her lover did not answer; so she went and laid her head on his shoulder.