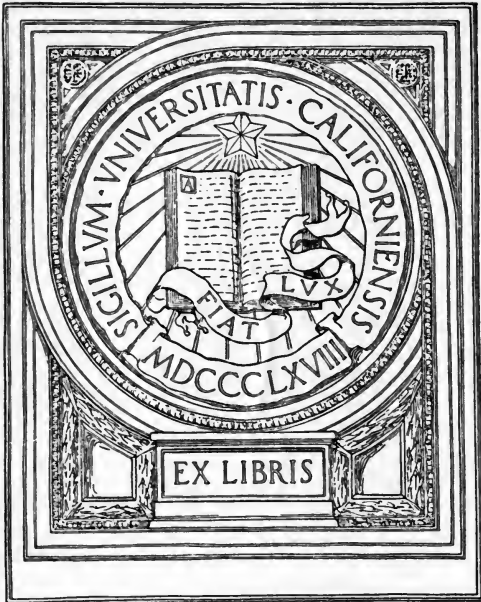


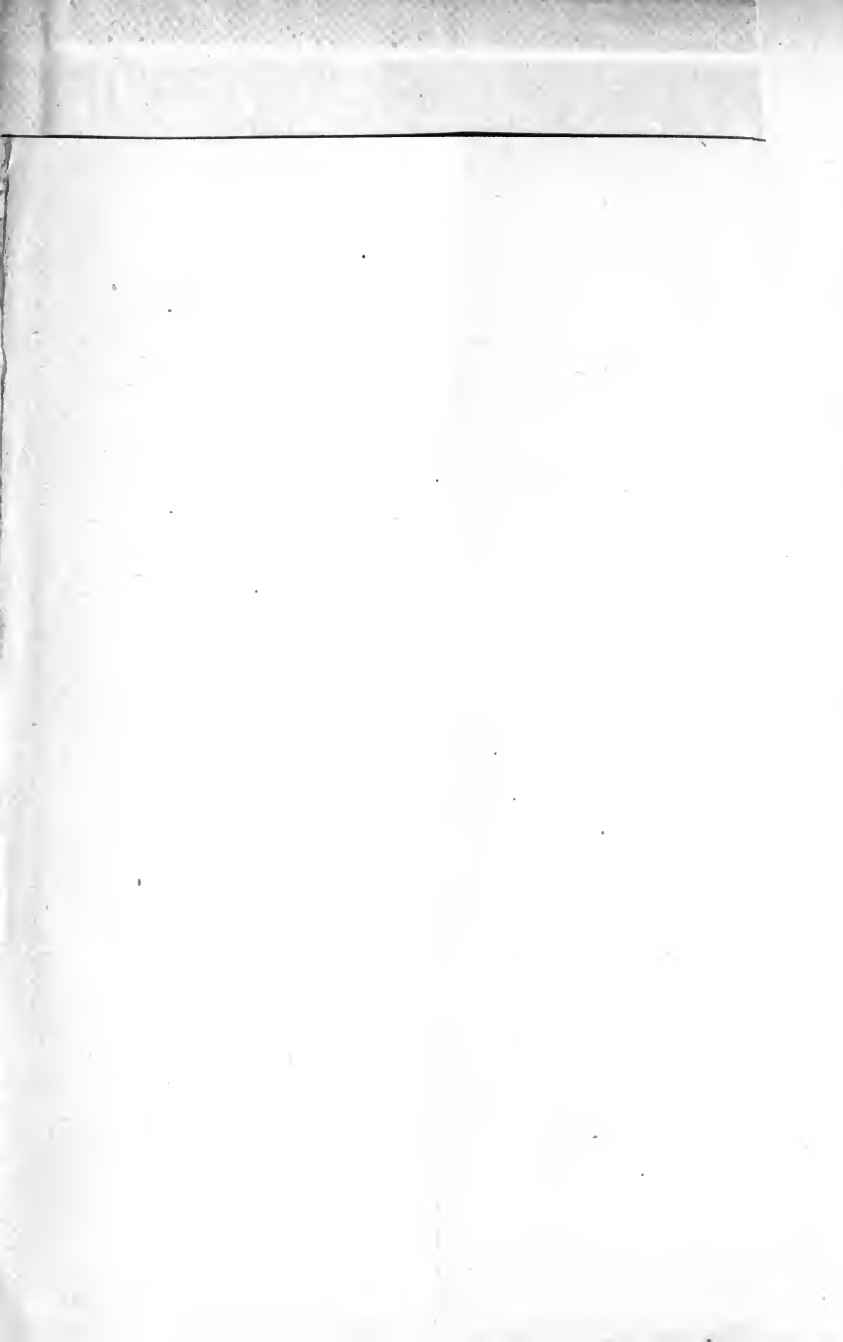
ONE MAN

ROBERT STEELE

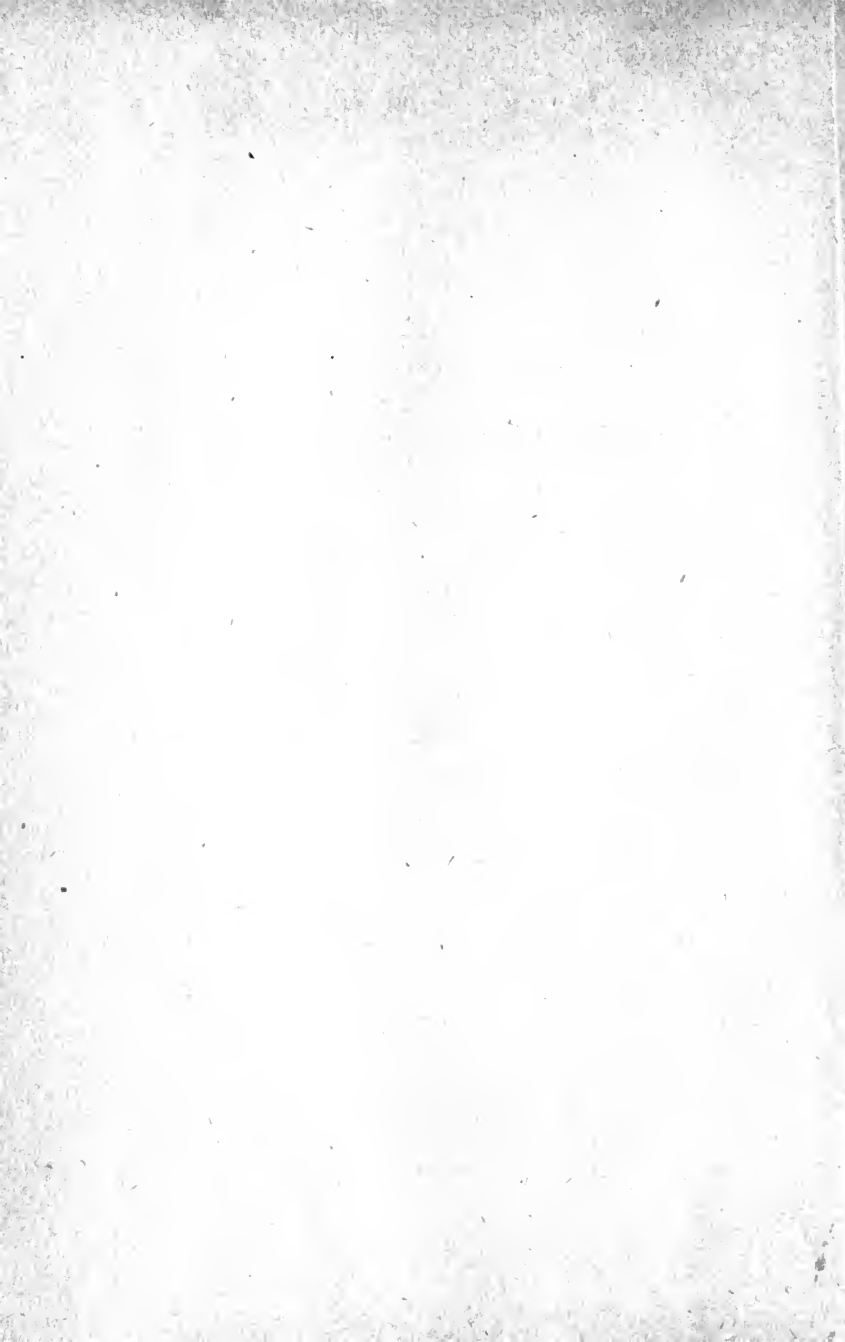


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ONE MAN



ONE MAN

A NOVEL

BY

ROBERT STEELE



UNIVERSITY OF
CALIFORNIA

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ONE MAN

CHAPTER I

ON that September morning when I entered into the world, both my mother and I were very near death. She has often told me of it since, how the family doctor could not be found and they had to send for a young doctor who had recently moved into the neighborhood. Father has never forgiven him for the way he handled the case and to this day curses him when his name is mentioned.

When I look back over these thirty-odd years I wonder sometimes why God let me live that morning. I have brought nothing but sorrow and trouble to them.

My earliest memory of my parents is an incident that happened when I was two and one-half years old. My father and mother were standing on the brow of a hill back of our home watching the dirty waters of the spring flood. Father was holding me in his arms and, stepping to the edge of the water, he swung me out over it as if to throw me in. The fright that his action gave me caused this scene to remain always in my memory. I think that my great fear of him during the next fifteen years began that day.

Father was a big, powerful, dark-haired man with dark brown eyes and a stern face. I cannot look back and remember his ever having given me any loving pats

or having talked gently with me. He was a so-called self-made man, having worked his way through the University at Chicago and afterward moving West to teach school in a small, country town.

There among his more advanced pupils he met the girl who was to be my mother. She was a slender, little thing with light hair and blue eyes. Mother as a girl was fond of music and dancing. Father became superintendent of schools in the small town where Mother lived and at the age of thirty he married her. She was then seventeen. They moved farther West where my father taught school for the first year. He then *experted* for one of the machine companies for a season and again went back to teaching school.

During the second year of their marriage I was born. They built a home of their own that year and Father was made superintendent of schools.

Two years later my oldest sister, Mary, was born. I cannot remember much about her until she was five years old.

In my own life, one of the earliest things I can remember is a Christmas tree and receiving a drum and a little train of red cars. One of the little cars and the drum hang up in the attic at Mother's home today.

Church and Sunday School are also early memories with me. It seemed as if Sunday was the longest day in the week and I grew to despise it. The folks were great church goers and my little sister and myself had to go with them to each service.

Father and Mother sang in the church choir and also taught classes in the Sunday School. During church services Mary and I sat in the front pew with an old man who was deaf. I can remember so well that he was there every Sunday and I grew to like him because he used to put his arm around me and let me rest my head on his shoulder during the long sermons.

Somehow I was always afraid of my father and I can remember sitting there in the high-backed pew and looking up to where he sat in the choir loft and wishing I was somewhere where he could not look at me.

Mother had a beautiful voice and on those Sundays in my early childhood when she sang the solos, it seemed to me that she was the most beautiful woman on earth. I can remember as if it was only yesterday the musty little room with its little red chairs where we had to sit during Sunday School while some old lady told us about Jesus. We received a little card for every time we attended and I did not miss getting one for many years. The first money I can remember is the pennies my parents gave me for Sunday School.

I never liked Mary, she was always mean and I cannot remember ever having been proud that she was my sister. She tattled on me for every little thing that I did wrong and seemed to think she was my guardian.

As a child I was an angel-faced big baby with long yellow curls. When the boys got to scuffling in Sunday School I would shrink out of the way in deathly fear of getting hurt. I was very fond of sweets.

Father commenced teaching me the letters from a big

chart when I was five years old. He would make me stand up straight in front of the thing and with a long pointer in his hands would designate a certain letter and holler at me to tell him what it was. Failure on my part meant a rap over the head with the pointer. With these methods it did not take me long to learn.

Sunday afternoons Mary and I were given a little candy with the warning not to get it on our clothes.

Two things I hated particularly at this age, baths and those stiffly starched, wide, white collars that I had to wear on Sundays. I was not allowed to play out-of-doors very much and it was considered a terrible thing in our home if either Mary or myself attempted to play with the neighbors' children. We had a big lawn around the house, cut off from the street and neighbors by a brown, picket fence. We were not allowed to play in the grass for fear of our catching cold or spoiling our clothes. Never until I was ten years old did I have any clothes that I dared to roll around in.

When I was about five years old, my mother began to scold a little and it used to hurt me terribly when she would speak crossly to me. She would lose her temper once in a while and slap me. I can remember so well a little switch she kept in the hall that opened off the dining-room. Many and many a time has my heart jumped into my throat when she started for the hall threatening to get the switch.

I believe to this day that my first thoughts of not being loved by my parents were caused by seeing either her or Father stand in front of me and

deliberately strike me with that switch. It didn't seem to me even then, although I was only a child, that any one could hurt anything they loved.

Only two or three times can I remember of her having taken me in her lap or having put her arms around me.

Just before I was sent to school Mother decided to have my curls cut off and I can remember so well the morning Father took me down to Jones's barber shop and told Mr. Jones to cut my curls off. Mr. Jones put a board across the arms of the big chair and lifted me up on to it. Then he took a pair of shears and asked Father if he should take off my ears too. This scared me so that I cried and they had a lot of trouble getting me to let him cut off the curls. Father took home three of the curls and a few years ago while at home I happened to see Mother pinning up a little package. She was crying and when I asked her what was the matter she silently opened the package and showed me the one curl that was left.

At seven I was sent to the public school and Father and Mother both accompanied me on that memorable day. Father had given up his teaching and was working in a bank and at the same time studying law.

That first day at school was a terrible one for me. I began to cry shortly after my parents left and the teacher took me up in her lap and talked to me about being a brave little man.

The lonely feeling wore off in a few days and I began to take an interest in the things going on around

me. It seems that my home training had been very thorough and I made rapid progress that first year. I formed likes and dislikes regarding my studies which stuck to me until the day I left school. There was always a desire to have absolutely correct everything I did. I hated arithmetic, but liked reading, music, writing and drawing.

Along about my third year in school I began to have spells of dreaming while supposed to be studying and many times the teacher would tell me not to stare out of the window but to go on with my studying.

I liked the Fall of the year best of all the seasons and this liking is as strong to-day as then. The days when the sun shone dimly through a haze were my great delight and when a day like this dawned, my spirits were at their best and my studies seemed easier. The Indian Summer days were to me the best of all the year.

Once in a while I would get spells of not wanting to go to school. There was nothing wrong with my appetite but it just seemed as if I could not study. At first Mother petted me a little and let me stay home on one or two occasions, but after Father spoke to her about it, she made me go to school whether I felt like it or not.

I can remember my sister, Mary, as she was at this time. She was dark like my father and was always healthy. She would run to Mother every time I did anything which she thought was naughty and I grew to dislike her very much. Mother made me walk to

school with her and I certainly hated to do it. The boys called me "sissy" and "baby tender" and made life miserable for me on account of her. She was destined to make me a world of trouble in later years.

While it is not uncommon in a great many families for one child to believe that the other is better beloved, yet it was true in our family. Mary was the pride of the family and as early as I can remember she was brought out in front of assembled guests and made to sing "Poor Bumpy is dead and laid in his grave." I used to wonder if some of the men present liked it as well as they seemed to. Mary had a way of tilting her head and flirting her little pink skirts around her as if to say, "See me. Ain't I great?" Since those days I have heard her sing before audiences of thousands and end her songs with something of that same little peacock strut, but people were usually more intent on applauding the voice than in noticing any little mannerism. But of all the things she ever wore or did or said, I hated worst of all that dinky little string of imitation beads she always wore around her neck. I used to want to tear them off and stamp on them. The folks petted her a great deal, saying she was born with a wonderful voice. They spent considerable money on her in later years and she became a very successful singer.

Both of my parents were very musical. Mother often said that she never should have married but instead should have been a great artist. Father would look at her when she said this in such a strange way

that I used to wonder if he liked to hear her say it.

Mother could sing beautifully, yet she stayed at home and brought us children up. To me her singing always has been and always will be the sweetest on earth. They used to send me to bed early and I would lie awake up in my little room and listen to her and Father singing "The Little German Home Across the Sea." Even when I was only a child that song would go straight to my heart. The blending of their voices was something way above and beyond all earthly things to me and in the days when I came to believe that I was despised and hated by them, this old song coming up through the long dark hall at night would many times cause me to say to myself, "I guess they do love me some to-night or else they couldn't sing like that."

Up to my tenth year I was a fairly well-behaved child, though very self-conscious and bashful. Father did not make very much money up until this time. He would give me a penny for spending money once in a while although I had no chance to spend it until Mother would take me down town with her, but I always had to ask for it and I hated to do it. I was always afraid of Dad and never dared to call him anything but "Papa." When I wanted to ask him anything I would sort of slink up to him and ask him in a very timid voice. He never reached out and pulled me into his lap and explained things. I can remember his taking me for walks into the woods on an occasional Sunday, and on one of these trips he made me a willow whistle that I kept for years afterwards, long after it ceased to work.

I can look back to those days and I wonder sometimes what I would have turned out to be had my dad made me a pal of his and had my mother been gentle and sweet tempered with me. God, but it makes my heart ache to think of it even now. After all these years of sorrow and deviltry I have learned to be strong in my own right and I can hew my own way with God's help, but oh, how different it would all have been! They did the best they knew how but how little they knew. And the thousands and the hundreds of thousands of parents to-day who bring the little ones forth and who know so little and who think so little of the child's first years! This story is of only one, just one of these little ones, and it only shows how one man child can bring either sorrow or joy to many men and women in his later years and so much of this a direct result of his early bringing-up.

Thank God for one thing, that through the crucial years of my life, between twenty and thirty, I was strong enough to imagine at least that I, and I alone, was responsible for my life, its success or its failure, but these last few years have shown me that after all some one else was responsible to a certain degree.

CHAPTER II

IN the Spring of my tenth year, while a few of the neighbors' boys were building a dam in a little stream that flowed under a bridge near our house, they found a few old coins in the mud. The news spread through the neighborhood and excited me so that I sneaked out of the house the following day, which was Saturday, and went down to "dig up the treasure."

The other boys had already thoroughly dug up the place where the first coins were found, so Bill, the boy from across the street, and I started our digging further up stream. We finally found about two dozen coins. We divided them up according to number and while we were engaged in this a man came along and saw us. He was particularly interested in a big yellow coin I had among my dozen and offered me a dollar for it. I gave him the yellow one and, putting the dollar in my pocket, ran home with the rest of my share of the coins. Something prompted me not to say anything there about the dollar which I had received, so I hung on to it and hid it in the woodshed, waiting for a chance to get it changed. The rest of the coins I gave to Father and he sold the lot for fifteen dollars, putting the money in my bank.

No one could ever explain how the coins came to be buried in the stream. An old kettle containing a few more pieces was found near the same spot a few days later.

This, I think, is the first bad thing I can remember having done. The feeling of unholy joy and fear in having in my possession secretly that first big dollar was to be repeated later on in life, time after time, when hundreds of dollars came to me unlawfully.

One morning I got the grocery driver to change the dollar. Then Bill, whose folks let him "run wild," would buy candy for me and sneak it through the back fence to me, when Mother wasn't looking. He usually took his share before giving me the bag. I had no chance to buy anything on the way to and from school, as Mary was always tagging along.

While I yet had part of this dollar, Father took me down town with him one Saturday morning and let me come home alone. On the way home I bought candy and gum. After this trip I was frequently sent to town alone on errands and had a chance to spend money.

Soon my dollar was gone and wanting money to spend secretly I began to fish coins out of my bank and spend them. Mother caught me fooling with the bank one day and locked it up. I can remember even now how she looked at me, so hurt and surprised, and how she took me in her lap and cried for a long time. That night when I kneeled at her knee to say my prayers, she told me to ask God to help me always to be honest. Usually all the prayer I said was the simple

little "Now I lay me down to sleep." This incident affected me considerably and I went without candy for several days.

Finally during that year the craving for buying things became so strong that I looked around the house for money. On a little tray on Mother's dressing table was a little gold dollar with a hole punched in it. She had formerly worn this coin on a little gold chain around her neck, but for some reason had laid it to one side. I was several days getting up nerve enough to take it and I have never forgotten the feeling of fear and also exultation that came over me when I finally grabbed it. It was my first real theft, the first of a chain of thousands of similar actions, extending through nearly my whole life, each one to exact its toll of regret and sorrow in later years.

It was on a Saturday morning that I stole this keepsake of Mother's and I took it down town and sold it for seventy-five cents to a man who kept a candy store. I spent a few cents of the money and took the rest home and hid it in the usual hiding place in the woodshed, where I had kept the change from the dollar I had obtained for the yellow buried coin.

It being vacation time, I went down town on Monday afternoon and bought a dozen bananas. I could not eat them all so I took what was left home, telling Mother that a man had given them to me. She became suspicious and asked me where I got the money to buy them. She kept at me and finally I confessed. She cried terribly about it and after having dressed me up

in my Sunday clothes, took me down to Father's office.

I can remember now how he looked as he sat at the big, flat-topped desk, which was littered with legal papers, his big notarial seal standing on a big law book. I hid behind Mother's skirts while she told him the whole story. He got up out of his chair and coming over to me, pulled me up to his desk. He stood there with his hand grasping my shoulder, looking at me for what seemed to be hours. Then he started to talk to me and question me and I could see he was growing angrier every minute.

There is only one thing he said that I can remember, but that sentence rang in my ears for years afterwards. He had grasped me by both shoulders and shaken me considerably when he said, "You dog! You would steal the pennies from off your dead mother's eyes." Then he threw me away from him into the corner. I lay there on the floor screaming until Mother picked me up and quieted me.

At last Father put on his hat and took me down to the candy store, where he gave the man a dollar and got back the keepsake. After supper that night I was soundly whipped and sent to bed.

I lay there a long time brooding over what had happened that day. It was not the whipping that hurt, it was what Father had said. I could see my mother laid out in her coffin with the pennies on her eyes, to keep them shut, but in no way could I imagine how anyone, no matter how bad, could steal those pennies. (It

seemed to me that he had put me with all the other wholly bad things to stay there forever; that he would not forgive me. He treated me in such a way that it did not seem possible that he could ever forgive me or even give me the measure of notice — slight though it was — which he had accorded me up to that time.

In this hour began my journey downward into the depths of hell. I felt that all hope was lost and that no one cared for me.

I had never looked up to Father as a model, for I was afraid of him. I had no pattern to go by, no one to imitate or follow, for somehow I did not want to be busy and cross like he was.

I could not see how my own father could say such a thing to me. It made me believe that he did not love me and from that day and until I was past twenty-five, I never looked for any love from him. That remark of his killed something in me; something which never came back to me in all these years. Of course, he was shocked and angry to think that his own flesh and blood would do such a thing as steal. Yet if he had taken me that day and talked to me and appealed to my childish sense of manliness which existed even then to a small degree, the results would have been so different. If he had made a pal of me in those next few years and had put me on my own honor to do right and to be manly, my life would have been different.

But never in my later years did I ever take refuge in any such thoughts as an excuse for my devilishness.

From the day Mother discovered this, my first real

theft, until the penitentiary doors opened to receive me, I felt that my parents did not love me and did not have any faith in me.

CHAPTER III

IN the beginning of my thirteenth year, a friend of the family gave me a little camera. Learning to operate it and finish my own work gave me a great deal of pleasure. It took up my spare time after school and my early evenings. In the Fall Father gave me permission to carry papers and earn a little spending money, but when the snow got deep he made me quit.

The lesson learned from stealing the gold dollar had sort of worn away by this time and I took to stealing small sums from Mother's pocketbook. I would sneak up into her bedroom and look for the pocketbook. Never will I forget how my heart would beat and my hands tremble when I grabbed it and opened it quietly so that the coins would not rattle. To see a dozen coins in there would make me feel safe in taking one. In my childish ignorance I did not think any one would remember just how much they had when there were so many coins. Mother never caught me at this trick, but she became very suspicious and hid her pocketbook so I quit it.

Next door to us lived a married couple who were quite wealthy and their only son had a big glass bank nearly full of coins. He used to invite me over to his

house Saturdays and nights after school. One day I asked him if he had ever counted his money and he said "No." So he asked his mother if we could count it and she gave him the key to the bank and told us we could. It had over sixty dollars in it and when we had finished counting it, I had over a dollar in my pocket. This was a new way for me to get money. So I helped him count it frequently during the Winter, always getting something out of it.

One day while I was alone in their sitting-room, I noticed a pocketbook on a shelf. I opened it and found three five-dollar bills. I took one of them and put the purse back on the shelf. This was in the morning and right after lunch Mrs. T—— came over and told Mother she had lost five dollars and Mother asked me if I knew anything about it. I denied it and she went home.

She was one of Mother's best friends and after she had gone Mother sat there looking at me. Suddenly she reached out and grabbed me, holding me with one hand she went through my pockets with the other and found the five-dollar bill. I had kept it in my pocket instead of hiding it. She began to cry and after locking me in a room went over to Mrs. T——'s and told her I had taken the money. Then she came home and made me take the five-dollar bill back to Mrs. T——'s and tell her I was sorry. That night Father whipped me so hard that I had to stay in bed for two days.

About this time I began to read dime novels. I kept them hid in the woodshed and carried them back and

forth inside of my shirt. We boys used to go over to Bill's barn and sneak up into the hay mow where we could read in safety. We traded novels with each other and kept a good supply on hand.

During this year I had to return to the schoolhouse one night after school with a note from Mother to the music teacher who was a member of Mother's musical club. While going through the empty hall, I noticed several of the teachers' cloaks hanging in one of the ward rooms. It seems that the teachers were attending some meeting in the assembly room upstairs. I took a look around and then went through the pockets of the cloaks. I got eleven dollars out of the pocket-books, in each case taking only a part of the contents. Then I skipped out without delivering the note, telling Mother that Miss A—— was not at the schoolhouse. Somehow I was sly enough to figure that if I had not been seen around there, they could not suspect me.

I was getting careless about what I did these days. It seemed that I naturally turned to thieving as I sincerely believed I was of no account to my folks and that they were disgusted with me and actually hated me. Was I predestined to be a thief? No. I don't believe it. I naturally turned to something abnormal, believing as I did that I was to be denied the usual and normal things in life.

At this time Mother began to prophesy terrible things for me and among them, the Reform School. But the worst of all came one bright, spring morning. She was ironing out in the kitchen and I can see her

now as she stood there at the ironing-board, the sun streaming in through the open window at her side. She had been scolding me about what I had been doing and suddenly she looked up and said, "Robert, you will end up on the gallows yet — I know you will." I was only a boy and it seemed when I heard those words as if I had lost my mother. I couldn't see how she could say anything like that to me. Those words of hers have followed me down through all these years and many a night I have wakened covered with a cold sweat, in the midst of a dream where the hangman had placed around my neck the heavy rope with the big knot under my ear and the black cap over my head. Once or twice during these years I have come near to this same end.

I was a sensitive lad in many ways. Sad music in church made me want to cry and going to a funeral was more than I could stand. Yet with that constant hunger for home love and care unsatisfied I got deeper into deviltry every day. My school work was not hard for me and I stood well in my classes.

In the Spring of this year, together with some of the neighbors' kids I formed a "gang." One of our first jobs was a neighbor's barn. The people had left town for the Summer and we found their barn full of the sort of plunder that delights young thieves. There were guns and ammunition galore and stationery of all kinds. The man who owned the place had been the head of some bankrupt insurance company and the surplus supplies of the company had been stored in his

barn. He was also an official in some gun club and a great sportsman. We sold about a hundred boxes of shotgun shells and hid the shotguns and rifles in Bill's barn for use later. The gang had many a laugh over the inability of the local police force to find out who had stolen the stuff.

It was in the Fall of that year that I first learned of there being any such thing as jealousy. Father had been down town in the evening and Mary and I had been sent to bed, when Mr. G——, one of the neighbors, came over to see Father. Mother told him that Father was down town and asked him to come in and wait. He stayed about a half hour and then left. Mary and I could hear them talking downstairs. When Father came home Mother told him about Mr. G—— having been there. Father got angry and commenced to swear. He made so much noise that I jumped out of bed and knelt down at the stovepipe hole that was in the floor. He was swearing at her and telling her she was a flirt and threatening to throw her out. She was crying and denying everything he accused her of being. When they quit talking Mother came upstairs to bed and Father slept all night on the lounge down in the library. When we got up in the morning, he had already gone down town without any breakfast. Somehow after this I never respected him quite so much. I knew my mother was good.

CHAPTER IV

FOR some time past I had been brooding over being spied on at home and over being condemned as an utterly worthless boy. In January of that next year I made up my mind to run away. I thought that my grandmother, who lived three hundred miles away and who had visited us once or twice, would be good to me, so I planned on the trip for several days. One evening, after quietly breaking open my bank and taking the contents, about thirty dollars, I told the folks I was going to Bill's house for a minute, and instead hiked for the depot. I bought a ticket to K—— and got on the train. Being lonesome and scared at the last moment, I told the conductor who I was and he, knowing my father, kept an eye on me during the night.

In the morning I reached B——, where I had to change cars. It was Sunday morning, and I found there was no train to K—— until Monday. I stayed around the big depot all day Sunday and there met a young fellow who also had run away from home. We ate our meals at the lunch counter in the depot and I paid for everything.

Along about ten o'clock Sunday night a big policeman asked me where I was going. I became scared and

told him I was waiting for my father. At eleven thirty I was pretty sleepy and had curled up on a bench to sleep, when this same policeman came up again and said, "Robert, where are you going to sleep tonight?" I asked him how he knew my name and he laughed. Then he said for me to come with him and he would give me a nice place to sleep and that my father would come and get me the next day. I cried all the way to the police station.

The big policeman took me up into the operators' room where the patrolmen's and fire calls came in on a big switchboard. I was in deathly fear of being locked up and I can remember begging the man at the desk downstairs not to put me into jail. They told me to stay in the room with the operator and that I could sleep on a couch there.

After the policeman had gone, I asked the operator, who was a young man, if I could look out of the window, and he said, "Sure, kid." I can remember so well how I looked out across the big river to the rows and rows of lights burning over there. There was a big moon that night and its light flooded the snowy banks of the river and the hills over beyond. From the part of the city across the river came the clang of street car gongs and the whistle and roar of many trains. Then and there I made up my mind that some day I would lose myself in a big city and get a new start. I was only fourteen years old and already wanting to lose my identity. That night I slept on the couch for a few hours and in the morning Father came and took

me back home. He talked to me for hours on the train that day, but it was all along the lines of my being no good and that if I did not mend my ways I'd sure land in jail, and he ended up by saying that when I did, I could rot there before he would lift a hand to get me out.

My trip made me quite a hero among the boys and I began immediately to plan another one. I had had my first taste of the city. But while I enjoyed in a way the notoriety my escapade brought me, still I didn't want any one to know that I had been in the police station.

The boys in the neighborhood commenced collecting stamps about this time and I was soon busy at the same thing in my spare moments. We would send away for stamps on approval and sell them to each other, making a small commission. I made considerable money this way. Then Bill found among his father's old papers a lot of unused Department stamps. I managed to get most of these and sell them at a good price. Then I sent away for a lot of stamps on approval under an assumed name and had them sent care of General Delivery. They came all right and I sold part of them, sending the money and balance of stamps back to the company. Then under the same name I sent for a large quantity and on the strength of my former return, the company sent them. I kept the whole lot and never heard anything more from the senders. I stayed away from the postoffice altogether and did not seek for any mail under the assumed name.

The money from this source was used to buy a small revolver, ammunition, dime novels, belts and other plunder for a robber's outfit.

Many of the boys in our end of town hung out around the candy store owned by a man named Tommy. He would buy any small article of jewelry which the boys might bring to him and he would not ask where it was obtained. He had slot machines of all kinds and we boys spent a lot of money with him. On one of these machines we could play with pennies and on another one we could use nickels. My first gambling on these machines brought me a queer sensation. It made my heart beat fast to watch the wheel spin around and slowly draw near a winning number. Here was where I first learned to believe in luck. I stole many a dollar just to feed into those machines. Tommy had bent the pins behind the winning numbers and we used to tilt the machine to beat him when we found he was trying to cheat us.

Two or three of the boys used to go with me on excursions to the woods on Saturday. We always carried our revolvers and lots of shells and it is a wonder that some of us were not killed. I loved to shoot, to feel that I had and controlled, in my own hands, the power of destruction.

At this time Mother had a servant by the name of Benga and she had been saving her money for years, most of it being in five-dollar gold-pieces which she kept in an old stocking in her trunk. She used to leave the key in her trunk. One day I saw her putting some

money into the stocking and I made up my mind to get something out of it. I waited for a chance and took five dollars. This was not noticed, so I kept "touching it up" until I had taken fifty-five dollars and I did not dare to take any more. Most of this I "planted," waiting for a chance to run away again.

In the Spring of this year I took what money I had planted and ran away to B——, to which city my grandmother had moved. This time I didn't tell any one where I was going and I managed to reach her house safely. She immediately notified Father and in a few days he came after me. In the meantime, Grandmother bought me a lot of new clothes and took me around the big city, showing me the points of interest. It was on this trip that I had my first street car ride. When Father arrived, he gave me a beating the minute he got hold of me and I carried the marks for many days.

When Father got home with me from this trip, he paid Benga the fifty-five dollars I had stolen and made a rule that I was to stay in the house every evening. Many and many are the nights that I have gone up to my room and kneeled down by the window looking out at the moonlit lawn and shrubbery and hearing the other boys playing and calling to each other. On nights like these when I could feel the cool evening breeze laden with the scent of the flowerbeds and lawn blowing through the screens on to my hot little head, I would cry and cry and swear to myself that I would run away for good and never come back. I was en-

tirely sincere in my belief that I was useless to my folks and really not wanted. And yet, while these thoughts made me sad, there was somewhere within me an unnamed pleasure of some kind that made me glad that I was an outcast. I was also glad in a way that I was foxy enough to get away with some of my deviltry. I took a certain pride in the many little deals I pulled off without getting caught.

During the fall of the year, when school opened, I found a new source of income; stealing school books and selling them to the second-hand bookstores and to Tommy. I would erase names or tear out flyleaves and sell the books for what I could get. I was never caught at this trick.

Father never refused me spending money when I asked for it but I always had to ask. During all these days Mary looked upon me with a sort of horror and would not have anything to do with me except to watch me and tattle to Father and Mother.

One queer thing about me through all my hell-raising was that I never let a night go by without getting down on my knees beside my bed and saying the prayers that my mother had taught me. And while the form of these prayers has changed, yet I have seldom missed a night during all my life when alone, that I did not kneel down and ask God to forgive my sins and help me to be better. During the first years of my stealing and deviltry, I had a conscience, but by the time I was fifteen years old, it was dead, as far as stealing was concerned,

and it died as far as about everything else was concerned as I grew older.

In all these days the thought never came to me that I couldn't help doing as I did. I simply did these things because I felt bitter towards the world. I had heard somewhere about society owing some one a living and I figured that it applied to me. I had been doing a great deal of reading; in fact, much more than the average boy of my age. This reading was a queer mixture and ran the gamut from the Decameron to the Golden Bottle, but my favorite reading was stories of hidden treasure.

The Fourth of July was always a great time for me. I loved to handle explosives and to watch the effect of some of my home-made bombs. Christmas was another red-letter day for me, not for the presents I received, but for the presents I could give.

Winter of that year saw me busily engaged in experimenting with electricity and putting up electric door-bells. This work, together with my photography, brought me in a little money. Together with Bill I used to go down town on Saturdays and steal small articles from the stores. Once in a while we would get a little cash, but usually it was pens, perfume, drug sundries and such stuff as usually is displayed on the counters. I worked a few Saturdays and nights after school in a drug store and stole all kinds of small things. Tommy bought much of this stuff, giving me about half what it was worth.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Spring came, I began to feel a longing to run away again, but Father forestalled the action by promising that I should spend the Summer at a lake near by. Some friends who owned a cottage there had invited Mary and me to spend the Summer with their children.

I had the time of my life that Summer and did not steal anything for the simple reason there was nothing to steal. Father sent me considerable spending money, but I did not have much of a chance to buy anything. Being out in the open air so much did me a world of good. I was getting to be a good-sized lad by this time but still retained that blue-eyed look of innocence.

Upon my return home in the Fall I started in to school as usual. I commenced stealing school books again and came near getting caught; so near, in fact, that I dropped this source of income.

The gang got together again and we had a lot of what seemed to be fun for us, in stealing the refreshments from parties and sociables. We would steal ice cream, cake, candy, oysters and such things right out of church basements and gorge ourselves until we were sick. We were fortunate in not getting caught, although we had several narrow escapes.

During this Winter I formed a habit that has been a curse to me for over fifteen years. Some of the gang smoked and finally they persuaded me to smoke a cigarette and taught me how to inhale it. I was as anxious to learn as they were to teach me and I shall never forget how sick I was the first evening I tried it. Father had gone down town after supper and I sneaked out of the house to meet the gang. I smoked one cigarette and then began to get dizzy. When I stood up to go home the sidewalk rose up towards me and I sat down hard. Then I wanted to get home as quick as I could and although I tried to run it seemed as if I never would get there. I tried to sneak up to bed, but Mother caught me in the hall and seeing I was sick, she got the story out of me and then beat me with a cane. But my getting sick did not stop my smoking and I was soon smoking five or six cigarettes a day.

Of all the bad influences that have in any way affected my life, I know beyond all doubt that the inhaling of cigarette smoke from the time I smoked only five or six a day until I was smoking forty has been the most terrible. It saps the mental strength and weakens a boy's or a man's morals, it creates in the average man a taste for liquor and the craving for liquor tends to develop sensuality and the combination of cigarettes and liquor, while it may stimulate at first, will in time decrease a man's earning power and take away the joy of living just as surely as the night follows the day.

Up to this time I had not had much to do with girls. I was always bashful and kept out of their way. The

boys in the gang were getting old enough to learn things about the world and when the gang would assemble at the camp down in the weeds and light up their cigarettes, the talk would run to girls. The collecting of cigarette pictures became very popular and it was not long until a picture showing a woman dressed in tights was called a "peach" and in trading was worth any two of the common kind such as flags, or women's heads.

There were a few tough girls among our schoolmates and some of the older boys in our gang ran around with them. The stories these boys told us filled our heads with a lot of curiosity and new thoughts.

I spent considerable time around Tommy's new pool-room that year and if there is anything on earth that can be likened unto the Vestibule of Hell, it's the pool-room where young boys are allowed to congregate. I believe this applies to men as well.

I have never yet had the pleasure of knowing a constant frequenter of pool halls who amounted to a damn in a business way.

Along in the Spring the Wanderlust overtook me again and one evening in May, with nine dollars in my pocket, and in company with Pete, one of the "gang," I dug out for the East.

We climbed into an empty car of an east-bound through freight and left the town, as we supposed, for good. Along about four o'clock we woke up chilled to the bone. If there were ever two homesick lads who

wished they were home in their own warm beds, we were the two.

We shivered and shook until the train reached a small junction where we crawled out. A few tramps got off the train at the same time and built a fire down under the railway bridge. We went over to the fire to get warm and the tramps began to ask us questions. We told them some yarn about being bell hops out of a job and they let us sit down with them.

Along about seven o'clock two of the hobos started over to the one little store at the junction saying they would get some "punk" and other grub. I offered to pay for part and right then and there the hobos fell on me in a bunch. They took every cent Pete and I had and almost tore our clothes off. Then they told us to shut up or they would kill us.

They got an old can, filled it full of water and put it over the fire to boil. The hobos who had gone to the store came back with some bread, meat and onions. They put the meat and onions in the can of water and made up a mess which they called "Mulligan." They gave Pete and me a chunk of meat and some bread and told us they would give us back our money later. A little later another east-bound freight came along and the bunch made a run for it and caught it. Pete and I held back and the hobos and our money were soon out of sight.

We were pretty well discouraged by this time and I went over to a little house near the depot and asked

the old hag who came to the door for something to eat. She said she would give me something if I would cut some wood. I sawed and split three big sticks and when I was through she gave me three slices of bread spread with bacon grease. I was so tired and disappointed that I cried, but Pete and I ate that mess. During the afternoon another long freight pulled in and off dropped another gang of tramps.

About seven o'clock in the evening I went over to the dinky little hotel and told the girl at the kitchen door that I was a bell hop "on the bum" and that I'd had nothing to eat all day. For a wonder she took pity on me and asked me to come in. Making up a half-dozen cold meat sandwiches and putting them into a paper bag together with some cake and a piece of pie, she led me to the door again with a caution to keep away from the tramps over at the depot as they would take my "hand-out" away from me.

Sure enough, the moment that I came out of the back door of the hotel, over they came with a rush. I jammed the pie, cake and one sandwich inside my shirt, and with a sandwich in one hand and the bag in the other ran as fast as I could toward the open country. But it was of no use; they were gaining on me so rapidly that I dropped the bag and kept on running.

The hobos stopped when they reached the bag and fought over it while I put a good distance between us. Pete watched the performance and took a run down the railway tracks, so I cut across country to meet him. I gave him his share of the grub I had hidden

inside my shirt. We built a little fire beside the track and when a west-bound freight came along, we climbed into a car loaded with wood and about five in the morning reached our home town.

I sneaked up home by the back way and lay in the old weeds back of the house. When I saw Father go down town, I climbed over the back fence and went into the house. Mother looked at me and said, "You poor boy," and fussed over me a great deal. She was baking fresh biscuits and I ate about a dozen. Then I went into the sitting-room and laid down on a couch after asking her to wait until evening before telling Father I was back. The next thing I knew I was being picked up and thrown half-way across the room and there stood Father ready to grab me when I got to my feet. After waiting till I was sound asleep Mother had called him up and he had come home in a hurry. When he got through beating me I was a sight to behold. Mother washed the blood from my face and put me to bed. That licking took the "run away" idea out of my head for a few weeks.

After school closed that Summer, the folks sent me down to the lake on a camping trip with a bunch of boys from the Sunday School. I was not very much at home with that crowd, but I stuck it out because it gave me a chance to be on the water.

After I returned home, a friend of Father's who had charge of a general store out in a small nearby town suggested that it would be a good idea for me to go out on a farm near there and pull mustard for a farmer.

I was to get seventy-five cents a day and my board, so Father shipped me out to this friend.

I got into the little town in the evening and had to stay all night with Father's friend. The next morning I had to wait around the store until the farmer showed up. So I put in my time in "annexing" a few articles for my own use. I got five dollars in cash, a perfectly new Smith & Wesson revolver and two boxes of shells. I sneaked the gun and shells over to the friend's room at the hotel and put them into my little telescope. The farmer drove into town about twelve o'clock and after we had dinner, I started with him for the farm. We arrived there about two o'clock and drove up to the barn.

The farmer told me to take my telescope into the little room in the front part of the barn, so I did. When I looked in the door of that room my heart sank. There was only one piece of furniture, an old wooden bed with a dirty mattress and an old quilt thrown over it. On the footboard of the bed sat a big hen. There were two or three more of them in the room. I asked the farmer if I was to sleep there and he said, "Sure, but you want to keep that door shut or those damned hens will be in there all the time."

I made up my mind then and there that I simply would not stay. But first I had to find some way to get away. The farmer told me to come with him and we walked down into a field where some boys and men were pulling mustard out of the wheat. I noticed that the front of the barn and the road to town were

out of sight of where the men were working, so I worked a little while and then said I was going to the barn to get my gloves. When I reached the barn I grabbed my telescope and hiked out for town, six miles away. I didn't get there until after dark and I slept in a little room over a restaurant. In the morning I got on the train without seeing Father's friend. When I reached home I was scolded good but Mother said she did not blame me for not wanting to sleep in a hen roost.

Shortly after reaching home, Grandmother sent me money to buy a bicycle. This kept me busy and I cut out the stealing for a few days.

CHAPTER VI

FINALLY there came a temptation too big to resist. A big wholesale house burned out and the owners stored thousands of cigars in an empty barn near our house. The doors had the regular old-fashioned locks and by hunting around I found a key that fitted one of them. I took Bill and Pete into the deal and for several nights we carried away boxes of cigars until our arms ached. The owners finally noticed that something was missing and while they did not know how much had been stolen, they began investigating. All they ever found was a few boxes of cigars hidden in a pigeon house.

We sold our loot to a junk dealer and made a lot of money out of it.

Then I decided to run away on my wheel. I started early one morning with most of the proceeds of my share of the cigars in my pocket, and about six o'clock that evening I reached the lake where I had camped earlier in the Summer. Here I found some of the older boys from my home town camping out. They let me sleep in their tent and I stayed several days with them.

It was here that I took my first drink of beer. The boys used to send to town and get a keg and have a

regular blow-out about twice a week. I was present at one of these performances and was awful sick that night. When I got up in the morning, they made me drink some of the stale beer left in the keg, telling me it would stop my sickness. It did.

My father found out where I was and had the Town Marshal at the lake put me on the train and send me home. I received the usual beating and a few days later school opened.

I was sixteen years old at this time and getting old for any more petty thievery. That Fall I got five bicycles when their owners were not riding them. I had some trouble selling them, but managed to get away with it. My father was City Attorney at this time and I felt that I could bluff out any suspicion.

During the late Fall I went to work nights after school and Saturdays in a photo gallery helping with the finishing and other work. I had been trading around for several years among the boys and had obtained a fine kodak. Working with this had given me considerable experience and the photographer paid me four dollars a week for helping him. After I had worked there some time one of the older boys who had a large camera asked me to get him some plates at wholesale. So I helped myself to two dozen and sold them to him.

This started me and soon I was doing a good business in photographers' supplies. The man who owned the place was a poor business man but a genuine artist and he had more business than he could take care of.

He never knew how much he bought or what stock he had on hand.

In his dark room, he had a little tin bank, one of these affairs that open with a two-number combination. The bank had a slot in the top of it and the old man was always dropping in the silver money which he received in payment of bills. Once in a great while he would empty it and deposit the money or pay bills with it. I made up my mind to get that thing open and I started out to try every combination commencing with one or both dials. After considerable experimenting I got the combination and thereafter I had three or four dollars a week out of that bank. Finally after a particularly bold steal of printing paper, he became suspicious and I quit the job.

In the Spring of 1897 the "gang" got busy building a shack. We dug out a space eight feet square in the side of the hill back of my house and at night we would forage around new residences in course of construction, and steal lumber, tools and nails. We soon had a comfortable den fitted with a stove, hanging lamp, ventilator pipes and everything we needed. When the younger members of the "gang" stole refreshments they brought them to the "shack," as we called it, and we would have a feast. I was smoking a good many cigarettes these days and they were already beginning to have an effect upon me.

In this neighborhood was a young boy whose folks were very well-to-do. They bought him a fine kodak

and complete outfit and engaged me to teach him how to use it.

For two weeks I went to his house nearly every night and helped him finish his work. I received fifty cents each trip, and the first day I was there I noticed that the boy took the money out of a big glass dish on a shelf in the kitchen. This shelf was right over the kitchen sink where we used the running water most of the time. So on my second trip I left the brush in our dark room and made him go and get it. While he was gone I investigated and found this dish to be half full of small change. I stole a couple of dollars this first time and touched it up regularly during those two weeks. It seems that the boy's father put whatever silver he had in his pockets each night into this dish. The boy's mother paid for vegetables and groceries and such things out of this fund. The last time I was there I lifted over six dollars out of it.

CHAPTER VII

ALL this Spring Mother had been feeling poorly and one day she told me that some day soon there would be another child in the house. I was dumbfounded at first and could scarcely believe it. I did not know much about such things, only what the older boys had told around the gang camp fires and what little I had read in books and magazines.

I noticed that Mother read a good many boy stories and around the house appeared a lot of new pictures of children, mostly boys, and I heard Father and her discussing something which they called "Prenatal Influences." I remember so well looking up the words and then how the thought came to me like a blow that they wanted another boy because the first one had turned out no good. I think in that hour I became suddenly a great deal older. I know that I had hope, just a little, now that there was a substitute for me on the way. I felt that I could get away out of their sight and hoe my own row. I somehow felt confident that once I was away from there I could grow into a good business man at least. I looked forward to that baby's coming with a great deal of boyish anxiety.

I can remember so well asking God in my prayers each night to have the baby be a boy. On several oc-

casions I forgot to ask God about the baby and I can remember crawling out of bed and getting down on my knees again to ask him for the boy.

One morning in July Father called me in a hurry and I had to take my wheel and ride to the livery barn, get a hack and go after the nurse. When I reached home, Father told me there would be a little baby upstairs soon. It was the first time he had mentioned the subject to me.

I went out on the porch and sat down on the front steps. I could hear my mother moan and cry out once in a while and my heart ached. I thought she was going through all that pain on account of me, because if I had been a good boy, they would not have needed another baby. And if ever a child's prayer was earnest it was mine that bright summer morning as I sat there in the sunshine, thinking a man's thoughts and praying for a brother — not a brother that I could play with, but a brother who would be The Boy of the family and an honor to my father and mother. I can remember a few pangs of jealousy over how he would be loved and trusted and I would be roaming around the world alone. Somehow as I had grown older I had come to think it would be desertion on my part to run away and leave them without a boy, even though I was only a bad one. I felt somehow that if the baby was a boy they would be good to him and he would grow up nice.

When the doctor came downstairs at last, I was afraid to ask him what the baby was and he smiled at

me as he drew on his gloves and said, "Bob, you have another sister upstairs."

I didn't answer him but I ran into the house and threw myself face down on the couch where my mother had lain so many afternoons and I cried and sobbed for what seemed hours. Father came into the room about noon and, pulling me up from the couch, asked me what I was crying about. I shrank away from him and could not answer, but as I looked at him the queerest expression came over his face and he said something about "being damned." I wonder sometimes if he read my disappointment.

From the moment I saw that baby I loved her. She is sixteen now and I have almost worshipped her since that morning.

That Summer I got a job in a wholesale grocery house and worked hard and behaved myself.

When school opened in the Fall, I settled down to hard work and began to take an interest in my studies. I also joined the Y. M. C. A. and attended all their meetings. At one of the Sunday afternoon meetings I became greatly repentant and when the evangelist asked the ones who wished to go on the Lord's side to step forward, I stood up and walked forward. This action on my part greatly pleased my folks and the friends of the family. Even my school teacher spoke to me about it one afternoon after school. They crowded and jammed religion down my throat until I was dazed, and finally I became disgusted with the whole thing.

I started to work evenings and Saturdays on the stage at the Opera House. Sundays I was singing in the Episcopal Church choir. This soon became tiresome and I spent my Sunday mornings back of the big pipe organ with the minister's son, Percy.

Percy was an adept at "touching up" the collection baskets just as the services were over. After he put me wise to this, we both had spending money.

It was during this Winter that my father came very near killing me. My mother interfered just in time to save me.

One evening when Father had particularly cautioned me against going out, Percy and his sister came along and urged me to go over on the other side of town with them for an hour. Father was suffering with rheumatism but had gone down town to Lodge. I figured that I could get back before he did and so I sneaked out without asking Mother. We went over to a friend's house and I got to scuffling with one of the girls out in the hall and pushed her through the glass panel in the front door. Her mother was very angry and sent us all home, and shortly after we left she called up my home on the 'phone.

Father had returned and he answered the call. The woman told him about my pushing her daughter through the glass door and Father got crazy mad. He put on his hat and coat and started out to hunt me.

I passed him on the way and had sneaked into the house and hung up my hat and coat when he came in. He let out a roar and made a dive for me, but slipped

on the polished floor and fell against a little stove, which was standing in the corner. He knocked this stove over and parts of it rolled across the room. Luckily there was no fire in it. He grabbed one of the stove legs with one hand and me with the other and jammed me up into a corner. His hand was around my throat and his knee in my stomach when he struck at me with the stove leg. The piece of iron caught on the edge of the shelf, glanced down onto my shoulder and slipped out of Father's hand. He did not let go of me but smashed me in the face with his fist and then Mother pulled him backwards to the floor and I got away. She quieted him and then patched me up but it was a week before I could go out anywhere.

This brutality made me worse than ever and the next thing I started was stealing overcoats. I stole two from church sociables and three from a denominational college which was located near our house. I had to go there twice a week to take music lessons. I did not want to study music but Mother paid me to take lessons and practise. The overcoat thefts were dangerous and when the police began to investigate, I laid low for a while.

During this Spring Mother decided to have me baptized. She had often spoken of it and finally one Wednesday night I went to prayer meeting with her and had it done. I cried during the service and so did Mother. She sat there looking at me so strangely just as if she had faith that the placing of God's seal upon my head would save me from damnation.

That Spring I had to work hard to pass in my studies on account of the poor attention paid to them during the late Winter.

CHAPTER VIII

IN the early Summer Mother and the baby, together with Mary and myself, went to visit my grandmother who had moved back to her old home, the town I had tried to reach on my first run-away trip.

After we had been there a few days I started to work for the telephone company doing local repair work and putting in instruments. I had fooled around with electricity considerable during the preceding three years and it was not difficult for me to do this kind of work. After a month of it, the General Store people, who were friends of my grandmother's, offered me a job at five dollars a week in the store.

This store carried a stock of groceries, tobacco, jewelry, drugs, and had a large patent medicine manufacturing business which was operated under the same management as the store.

This sort of a position was a snap for my thieving hands and I got busy right away. One of the first things I stole was a small keg of port wine and in company with several of the telephone men went to the cemetery one evening where the "gang" proceeded to get drunk. I was so sick afterwards that from that day to this I have never touched port wine.

While working in the store, I had a chance to meet

many of the girls living in the town. Some of them were terrors and while I was ignorant regarding many things, yet I found a great fascination in going with them and letting them make love to me. They must have sized me up right for they certainly teased the life out of me.

One of the girls in particular was very beautiful and seemed to take a liking to me. Finally I commenced giving her things out of the store — a ring or two, perfumery, candy and such things.

The patent medicine business was booming at this time and the firm bought thousands of revenue stamps to put on the packages. These stamps, of all denominations, were kept in a big cabinet in a side room. I commenced grabbing off a sheet or two a day and hiding them in a tin box out in the warehouse.

When this girl whose name was Mabel decided to go to R——, a nearby town, and visit her aunt, I decided I would go and see her later on and at the same time go around by W——, which was a good-sized town, and dispose of the revenue stamps.

This I did, receiving about fifty dollars for the bunch worth over a hundred. Also I had grabbed off a couple of watches, a few league base balls, fountain pens, some gold rings and such stuff. I sold all of this in W—— and had nearly a hundred dollars in cash when I started for R——. I arrived there in the morning and went to the hotel. After breakfast I went to see Mabel. She was glad to see me and told me she would meet me that evening.

I went back to the hotel and as I was sitting at dinner I heard some loud talking out in the little office. The queerest faint feeling came over me and a moment later the hotel clerk came into the dining-room and walked over to me. His face was red and he looked angry. He told me to go out in the office as a man wanted to see me. I knew something was wrong and the moment I stepped into the office and saw the heavy, thick-set man with a star on his coat, I knew I was going to be arrested. I did not know just what for as there were so many things back of me and I can remember going over a lot of them mentally in a very few seconds.

The village marshal, for such he proved to be, asked me my name and I told him. Then he said I was under arrest for the authorities at grandmother's home. I knew then that it was for the stamps and things I had taken out of the store.

The marshal made me pay my hotel bill and then get my little satchel and go to the jail with him.

There were no other prisoners in the jail, which was a small, ramshackle, wooden affair. The big man led me through a sort of office into a room containing three little cells, or cages, made out of iron bars. Opening the door of the first one, he pushed me in and shut it; then reaching up on the wall he took down a big key and locked me in. After getting me a tin pail of water, he left the cell room and a little later I heard the jail door slam shut and I knew I was alone.

I looked around the cell I was in and found a narrow

iron cot fastened to the wall and covered with a dirty grey blanket. I can remember the awful feeling that came over me as I realized that at last I was in jail.

I stood at the cell door and looked out of the grated window across the narrow corridor. The sun was shining brightly and I could hear a wagon going by. The birds sang outside in the trees and I couldn't see how they could. Then the realization of where I was came to me all of a sudden and I grabbed the cold, iron bars in the door and shook them and rattled them, for I was fearfully alone and afraid in that moment. Then I began to cry and to grow more afraid and I called and screamed but there wasn't any answer. Then the thought came to me, "Suppose the jail gets on fire?" That made me yet more afraid and I screamed and kicked at the bars until I wore myself out and sank to the floor.

About four thirty the marshal came back and with him came the county attorney and Grandmother's old family doctor, who had an interest in the store.

I can remember how, after the marshal had unlocked my cell door, the old doctor came into the cell and leading me out into the sunlit corridor said, "Bobbie, why did you do it?" I put my head on the old man's shoulder and cried like a baby.

After a few moments, the doctor pushed me away from him and said to the others, "I guess you can leave us alone for a few minutes." Then he hesitated and said, "Wait a minute," and ran his hands all over my body, feeling to see if I had a weapon hidden in my

clothes. I have often wondered where the old doctor learned that trick.

He then told the marshal and the attorney to go, saying at the same time that he guessed I would not try to hurt him. After they left the cell room, the doctor got at me and made me tell him the whole story. Finally he called in the county attorney and told him to make out a list of all the things I had stolen and to also take down the names of the people to whom I had sold them.

It was late when we got through with this and the old doctor, after taking every cent I had, gave me five dollars and told me to go to C—— and stop at a certain hotel, giving me at the same time a note to the hotel people, stating that my mother would call for me in two days and would pay my board bill.

I got on the train that night with a thankful heart, swearing I would never steal again. Mother came a few days later and took me home. She had written to father about the trouble and he seemed heartbroken when he met us at the train. That night I heard him talking to Mother for hours after I had gone to bed. He did not beat me this time. My grandmother later paid the store in full for everything I had stolen. When she died a few years afterward her entire estate went to my mother and Mary.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN school opened that Fall, I took up my work in a half hearted way and nights after school and Saturdays worked in a bookstore. After a few days in the store I commenced to hold out money from my sales and in this way soon had a few dollars ahead.

About this time, I began to drink considerable for a boy of my age. I was somewhat ignorant regarding women. Despite my companions and their stories I was absolutely innocent regarding sex relationship.

On the night of my eighteenth birthday I went down town with Bill, one of the other boys belonging to our old gang. We had several drinks and finally wandered into a gambling room connected with the saloon. This was the first time I had seen such a lay-out and I became excited immediately. I only had fourteen cents in my pocket and obtaining another cent from Bill I started to play a dice game. This game consisted of a big single dice with a picture and name of some famous horse painted on each face and a strip of oil cloth fastened to a table and marked off into six divisions in each one of which was painted a horse and name to correspond with one of the faces of the dice.

I laid my fifteen cents on the oil cloth space marked

"Saxon," the man running the lay-out spun the dice around on a little wooden platform and when it stopped, the side of the dice which turned up read "Saxon" and I had won. I kept this up for half an hour and then had something over six dollars.

Then we went to the roulette wheel and I quit there with a little over ten dollars. After this I shot craps and lost all but three dollars. Then we went across the street to a saloon which catered to the wine room trade.

After a couple of drinks in the bar we went downstairs to the wine rooms to "see what we could see." I cannot forget even the walk down those heavily carpeted stairs, the scent of the cigarettes being smoked behind the closed doors of those little rooms and I wondered at the time if I would see a woman smoking a cigarette. I had heard of their doing it but had never quite believed it. I know I was trembling a little when I went down there and I guess most men when they approach the turning of the way in life do so with some fear. It seems to be but natural. Why I should choose the night of my eighteenth birthday for such an action I don't know but I suppose it had to come then as well as any other time.

Bill and I went into the little room which was open and I pushed the button for the waiter. We ordered a drink and I paid for it and ordered another immediately. I felt reckless and for the first time in my life, a little vicious. I was beginning to feel the effects of what I had imbibed and was ready for any deviltry

that might develop, but I can remember being glad that Bill was there.

While we were sitting there drinking our second round a pretty dark-eyed girl looked into the room and said, "Hello, kids." Bill and I both said, "Hello."

She stood there in the door a moment looking at us and finally came in and asked us if we would buy a drink. I jumped up quick and after pushing the button for the waiter, pulled out a chair for her to sit on. She looked at me kind of funny when I did it.

I sized her up while the waiter was bringing in the drinks. She did not have on any paint or powder. Her hands and hair were well cared for and she was dressed very simply in a dark skirt and clean white, tailored shirt waist. Her hat was small and very becoming. She was the first woman of her kind that I had ever met and somehow I couldn't believe she was "one of them." I was all eyes and ears and, in fact, could not take my eyes from hers for very long. She seemed to look at me in such a queer way. She didn't pay much attention to Bill.

Her big brown eyes were clear and her cheeks had plenty of color. I could not believe that any man could have her until I saw her swallow that big drink of whiskey. Then my natural boyish respect for her as a woman sort of faded a little.

Then she came over and asked if she could sit on my knee. I let her sit there and she put one arm around my neck and kissed me. At that something flared up within me. I turned to Bill but he began to get red in

the face and getting on to his feet said, "Bob, I'm going out of doors for some fresh air." After Bill left, the girl jumped up from my knee and went over and locked the door.

She came back to me and sat down on my knee again and putting her arm around me began telling me the story of her life. She talked particularly about her splendid education. Then she asked me all about myself and I was just drunk enough to tell her who I was and to answer all her questions. My answers to one or two of her questions seemed to tickle her immensely and she laughed and kissed me several times. She told me she liked me and wanted to know if I liked her and I said "Yes" in a strong voice although I was trembling from head to foot.

When I left that room a half hour later I was perfectly sober yet dazed. My childhood and my innocence were a part of the past and I shall never as long as I live cease to remember my feelings as she unlocked the door. I was oddly happy over what had taken place and somehow considered myself at last to be a man. I knew that on the morrow I should look at women in a different light. I did not feel that I had done any wrong but that I had only taken from life something which belonged to me.

I looked around for Bill and found him upstairs eating free lunch. I asked him to buy me a drink as I had given the girl downstairs what money I had, a dollar and twenty cents. She had not wanted to take it at first, especially as I had counted out the

nickels and dimes on to the table. I can remember how her face flushed as I put the last nickel down but I had insisted on her taking it and told her I wished I had more to give her. I can remember even now how ashamed I was that I did not have more money with me.

I was pretty quiet walking home with Bill and he wanted to know all about what had taken place but I would not tell him. I wanted to get away from him to think over this new thing which had come into my life.

I lay awake a long time that night trying to peer into the future and wondering what it held for me.

A few days after this I quit school and told Father I was going to business college and learn to earn my own living. He told me he would not pay any tuition for me but that I could have my board as long as I behaved myself.

I went down town to the business college and asked them if there was any way I could earn my tuition. The principal laughed at me at first. My father was then one of the city officials and it probably did sound queer to hear his son asking for a chance to work his way through school. But I persisted in my efforts to convince the principal, telling him that my father had worked his way through college and that I was not too proud to do the same thing.

Finally he told me he would give me my tuition and books and two dollars and a half a week if I would see that the fires in the four big stoves were built each morning and kept up through the day, the rooms swept

every morning and the desks dusted. I was to have a Swede boy to help me at this work. The wood for the stoves was kept in a big shed on the ground floor and had to be carried up two flights of stairs.

I took the job and started to work the next Monday morning. Our whole neighborhood talked about it and several men patted me on the back and said, "Good boy, stick to it."

It was hard work and it took all my nerve and grit to stick it out. My former school mates kidded me continually and called me, "Janitor Bob." Yet I learned more in those few months than in any two years I attended public school. Also I had more of an excuse to go out evenings and that meant a great deal to me.

Before I had been very long at the janitor work I saw an opportunity to do a little stealing and I made the most of it. The school sent out many letters and booklets to prospective students and this necessitated their using a great many postage stamps in the office. I managed to get a key to the stamp drawer and in this way kept myself in spending money.

The students hung their coats and hats in a big room which opened onto the hall. A person standing in this room could easily hear any one coming down the hall and one morning after school was opened I made a tour of investigation through the room and gathered in a few dollars.

I had noticed that some of the students who came from the country districts received money from home every Monday so I decided that Monday afternoons

ought to be a good time to make a "clean-up."

One girl in particular always had plenty of money and the principal always cashed a check for her Monday mornings. So I awaited my chance and the next Monday afternoon I went through her coat and found a pocket book containing about thirty dollars in bills. I took a twenty dollar bill and left the rest. She never made any holler about it but I was nearly caught during the following week so I decided to find another source of income.

About this time I became acquainted with a boy named Fred who worked for the phone company. He had recently moved into our neighborhood and we soon came to be good friends. He gave me a lot of wire and stuff from the telephone warehouse and I used to go to the warehouse with him on Sunday mornings. On my first visit there I noticed thousands of dollars worth of copper lying around and it looked to me as if it might be a "source of income."

I laid for Fred's keys and one Sunday morning while he was up in the warehouse office I "lifted" the bunch which he had left hanging in the padlock. This was not an unusual thing for him to do and when he was ready to go home, he pulled the door shut and snapped the padlock, never missing his keys. Early the next morning I took the warehouse key to a locksmith and had a duplicate made. The following Sunday I dropped Fred's bunch in an open keg of insulators where it was found a few days later.

The question now was how to get the wire out. Sat-

urday night was the best time as Jack usually went to see his girl and the crew foreman, the only other man who had a key, always went on a drunk that evening.

I took Bill into my confidence and on our first trip we took nothing but spools of insulated copper wire. This netted about twenty dollars for the evening's work. The next Saturday night we took Bill's horse and buggy and drove down near the warehouse. We tied the horse and walked to the place, opened the door and rolled out two of the big coils. We then shut and locked the door and hurried back after the horse and buggy which we drove into the alley and, lifting the coils into the buggy, we threw a robe over them and drove back to Bill's barn where we hid the wire.

For two months we seldom missed a Saturday night's trip and we had about a dozen coils of wire hid around Bill's home, some in the barn and some in the lumber pile.

One Sunday morning Fred told me that some one was stealing copper from the company and they were going to station a man in the warehouse to watch. This warning was lucky for us and I threw my key away that same day.

Bill and I were afraid to dispose of the wire in the coils so we decided to cut it up in short lengths. We borrowed from a neighbor an old strap iron cutter and sharpened it. We rigged the affair up in Bill's hay loft and started in to cut up the lot. After we had cut up two rolls, we loaded the short pieces into the spring

wagon and drove out to a junk man's place. This old man was a thorough crook and we had no trouble in selling our load.

We finally became tired of the work involved in cutting up the wire and made a dicker with the old crook to buy the remaining rolls. He drove up back of Bill's barn one night and we sold him the whole lot. We received a good-sized bunch of money for this work but when I look back at the risk we ran I cannot see how we ever got away with it.

I was getting tired of the janitor work and had fallen into the habit of chasing around with one of the girls who went to the business college. She was a terror and led me a merry chase.

One night when I had a date with her, Father cautioned me to be home by eleven o'clock and I did not get back until twelve. I rang the bell and hammered on the door and finally Father opened the window upstairs and hollered, "You can't get in here, young man. Go and sleep with the other night owls."

For a few moments I stood there in the moonlight looking up at the house, half expecting that Mother would open the door for me but she did not. I walked to the gate under the tree and turned again and looked up to her window, hoping she would at least tell me where to go, but she did not speak.

When I realized that I was locked out I opened the gate and walked away. I have never since felt so utterly God forsaken and alone as on that night when I was refused entrance to my own home. That home

was never the same after that evening. The closing of the door against me seemed like a still small voice saying, "See, Bob, they don't care a damn for you; go on your way." And while I was hurt and heartbroken yet I was glad in a way, for it seemed to be a sign that I should shake the dust of the place from my feet.

That night I went to a hotel and slept. I had the bill charged to Father, who paid it the next day without a word. That night I was home early.

Several times during that Fall I hesitated over continuing my way downward. Many an evening at home when the family would be sitting around the big library table, I have wanted to get up and go around to Father and tell him how sorry I was for what I had done and that I wanted to make a clean start. But when he would look over at me it would be with such a hopeless look and with such disgust that my pride and anger would get the best of me and my good resolutions go a-glimmering.

During that Winter it seemed that anything peculiarly or unusually sinful appealed to me as I had grown hopeless of ever being anything, and if I was to be a crook and a bum, I wanted to be a good one.

Up to this time I had never been in any of the resorts in the town and one night in company with Bill and some of the other boys I went on a tour of inspection through the houses.

In one of the places I met a girl named Agnes, with whom I "fell in love." She took a fancy to me and I became a frequent visitor at the resort. Agnes finally

gave me a key to the front door so that when I reached the house on my frequent visits, I could open the door and walk right into the hall. The old nigger maid used to come running into the hall and holler up the stairs, "Miss Agnes, youah lovah hab done come," and Agnes would yell, "Come on up, Sweet." I was very proud of my "stand-in" at the place but it became noised around town before long and Father heard of it.

One Saturday night I stayed there all night and when I went home Sunday noon I told the folks that I had stayed at a boy friend's all night. Father did not say very much but looked at me rather queerly.

The next Saturday night I planned to stay down there all night again. Early in the evening when I was coming up the stairs from the barber shop I met Father and he said, "If you go down to that Hell hole again to-night, I'll come down there and beat you to death." Nevertheless, I went but I did not stay all night. Father did not say anything when I came home about eleven o'clock.

The Swede had been doing most of the work at school and I had been giving him the two dollars and a half per week for some time, when I decided to quit the janitor work. Agnes had told me several times to quit and that she would give me spending money if I would come to see her regularly. I never spent much in the place and God only knows how it would have turned out if it had not been for a row in the place one night.

I was trying to dance with Agnes when I stepped on the foot of a big Norwegian who worked in one of the local clothing stores. He was half drunk and when I stepped on him he picked me up and threw me through the window into a snow bank, cutting my hands and limbs badly on the edges of the broken window pane. Agnes hit the Norwegian on the head with a piano stool and laid him out cold. They dug me out of the snow bank, patched me up and put me to bed. I went home the next afternoon and that night Father ordered the place closed. I never saw Agnes again.

CHAPTER X

ABOUT this time I met a young man named Daniels who had come up from the South and started a small manufacturing plant. He asked me one day if I would like to learn the business and I took the job at nine dollars a week. I learned to run the machines and also had to pack and help deliver goods.

Jack was a hustler in every way but he would get drunk. He worked up a big business and managed to get out in society a little. He was a great ladies' man and they took an immediate liking to his Southern ways.

One girl in particular he wanted to meet and one day he said to me, "Bob, can't you get Florence to come in here sometime?" I told him, "Sure," and next time I saw her I asked her to come in to the office some day. She belonged to one of the wealthiest families in town and was very popular among the young society people. She dropped in a few days later and I introduced her to Jack. They became interested in each other immediately, and when she left he had an invitation to call.

Several nights later I came into the office about nine o'clock for something and as the switch for the elec-

tric light was in the back of the office, I had to stumble over bags and packages to get to it. I had almost reached it when some one swore and grabbed me and threw me out. I was so surprised that I could not see anything but I knew from the odor of violets which was noticeable in the room, that Florence was in there with him. He laughed at me next morning when I came in and said, "For the love of Mike, knock when you come in here late at night." The realization that a girl like Florence would come in to a place like that at night with Jack opened my eyes to the fact that society was not all that it seemed to be. She got into serious trouble a few months later with another man and he was square enough to marry her and take her away, but the shame of it all killed her father.

Jack drank more and more as Spring lengthened out and finally he left overnight. He paid me on a Thursday for the entire week and Friday he was gone. His brother took the business and kept me in his employ.

I did not like him so I made up my mind to get out. I had been offered a position with a big wholesale house in C—— and I wrote to them asking them if they could use me July first. I received an answer saying they could use me at any time so I made up my mind to leave home for good. Fred had moved to C—— and had a good position, so I wrote to him and asked him if he wanted a roommate. He wrote back to come ahead. Then I had to skirmish around and get money enough to get out of town. I had been spending my money as fast as I made it and I finally decided to

pawn Father's shotgun for enough money to get out of town.

I sneaked the gun away the night of July second and pawned it for a small amount.

Something seemed to tell me that I was leaving town for good this time. When the evening of July third came, I sneaked into the nursery where the baby was asleep and leaned over her crib. The night light shone faintly on the crib and I can remember to this day how sweet she looked with her little fist curled up under her cheek as she lay asleep. I stood there a minute looking down on her, then leaning over I kissed her once on the forehead and slipped out of the house without so much as a look at the rest of the family.

CHAPTER XI

THE next morning, Fourth of July, I reached C—— with exactly four cents in my pocket. I walked to Fred's room and found him there. He was glad to see me and took me to breakfast with him. After breakfast I walked over to the factory of the people with whom I had corresponded. Although it was a holiday Mr. M—— was there and after a little talk with me he offered me a position at seven dollars a week. This was much less than I had expected to get but I had to take it as I was a stranger in the city and had to live. Fred loaned me enough to pay my first week's board and let me room with him.

At the factory I was placed in charge of the packing room where some twenty girls were engaged in packing coffee in small packages. These girls worked under the direct supervision of a tall, slender blond girl named Maud. She was about nineteen years old and very good looking. From the day I commenced work there she was respectful toward me regarding the work but in a personal way she took great delight in teasing me. She called me "Bobbie" from the beginning and it was not long until I asked her if I could come and see her. She told me to come any evening and finally I summoned up nerve enough to make a call.

She lived in a small frame house in a respectable neighborhood. Her mother was a worn, tired-looking woman and did not look as if she particularly enjoyed life. Her father was a big good-natured sort of a man and was employed as a switchman in the railway yards. Maud was all dressed up that evening and ready to make an impression, which she certainly did.

When I left that night I kissed her and promised to come and see her again the next Saturday evening. It was not long until we were going round together a great deal.

I had considerable trouble to make both ends meet these days; my board and room costing me five dollars a week, left me only two dollars a week for laundry and spending money.

I can remember one evening in particular. I had just twenty cents in my pocket and I jumped on a street car and rode out to a lake near the city. This place was a sort of an amusement park with a big pavilion extending out into the lake. They had a very good band and when I reached the place I hunted up an unoccupied bench and sat down to listen to the music. It was here that I had my first real touch of homesickness and I was completely discouraged and disheartened. I thought that if I could get a boat and go away out into the lake and jump overboard, it would be a fitting end to my life.

While these thoughts were running through my mind the band commenced to play Schubert's "Serenade" and I crumpled up on the seat and cried until I thought my

heart would break. And to this day whenever I hear Schubert's "Serenade" it brings back in every detail that night when I sat out there on the lake shore practically penniless and without a real friend in the world.

After reaching the room that night, I wrote to my mother and told her I was working and earning my own living and asked about the baby. She answered my letter and gave me some good advice and wished me good fortune. We corresponded regularly after that. Father only wrote once, to threaten me with arrest for stealing his gun and to tell me never to darken his door again.

After I had been in C—— about five weeks, Fred wanted to move so we found a couple of rooms in an apartment building. Fred paid most of the rent. He was getting a good salary and could afford it. Shortly after we moved, his employers promoted him to a travelling position. In the meantime, my pay had been raised to ten dollars a week. Fred wanted to keep the rooms and as long as he was willing to pay most of the rent and was in town only every other week, it more than suited me.

I had been telling Maud about our cute little rooms and one evening she said she wanted to see them. We went to the rooms and remained there all the evening. While there, I found that she was not anywhere near as innocent and demure as she had appeared to be. I had begun to care a great deal for her and after this night I loved her with all my boyish heart. She came to the rooms very often during the next few months.

It was getting late in the Fall when I lost my position through a combination of unfortunate circumstances.

I had been taking my meals at a boarding house near the factory and had fallen behind in my board bill. Finally I quit eating there when I owed them eight dollars. The woman who owned the place called me up at the factory twice and threatened to tell my employers about it. It scared me when she called the second time and I promised to pay her the next Saturday noon.

Just before noon Saturday I had occasion to go to one of the upper floors in the plant. We had no attendant on the freight elevator as all the employés knew how to run the car.

At the third floor one of the boys, a big, awkward, ungainly kid, wanted to ride up. So I stopped the car and he got on with a four-wheeled truck which he was pulling. The truck was empty and he sat down on it facing the elevator entrance and with the handle of the truck held upright between his knees. After I started the elevator he began to push the truck back and forth while he was still sitting on the front part of it. His knees were only about six inches from the edge of the elevator shaft and the only protection over the shaft entrances at each floor was an automatic half gate. I was afraid that he would slide the truck out far enough to catch his knees between some floor and the ascending car. I told him twice to stop moving around but he paid no attention to me.

Between the fifth and sixth floors the truck slipped

forward just as we were reaching the sixth and the boy's legs were both caught between the edge of the truck and the floor. We were going to stop at the sixth floor and I was intent on stopping the car correctly when I heard the boy scream and his bones crack. I stopped the car and reversed the ropes, sending it down a foot or two. The men on the sixth floor came running to the elevator and lifted the boy off the truck. Both his legs were broken and the men sent him to the hospital in an ambulance.

The owner of the plant called me in to the office and asked me to tell him about the accident and he asked me if I would sign a statement which he would make out and I said I would be glad to. He told me to come back to the office after lunch.

It was now about one o'clock and on account of the excitement I forgot to go to the cashier and draw my wages. So when I went to lunch I could not go around to pay the bill at the boarding house.

When I returned to the factory the owner called me in to the office and handed me the statement he had prepared and I signed it. Then he handed me two salary envelopes, each containing a week's pay and told me he would have to let me go as I did not seem to be able to support myself on my wages, and that the extra week's pay was given in place of the usual week's notice.

Because I had not paid the landlady at noon as I agreed, she had called up the office and told them.

So I was out of a job and with only a few dollars in my pocket.

CHAPTER XII

MY folks had some friends in B——, a large city near C——, and I went over there one morning to hunt them up.

One man in particular, a prominent judge, gave me a letter to the owner of a big department store in C——, and I returned immediately to C—— and presented the letter.

I had on a good suit of clothes and as I always kept myself neat and clean, I made a good appearance. Inside of twenty minutes I had accepted a position as floor walker at fourteen dollars a week. Of course, the letter from the judge was in a great measure responsible for my obtaining the position. The owner of the store was under heavy obligations to the judge, who was distantly related to me.

Maud was very glad to see me get this position and used to come to the store Saturday nights at closing time and walk to my rooms with me. During the next three months Maud and I became very intimate and both of us were sincere in our love for each other.

Of course, there were many temptations for me in the store among the girls. Some of them were devils just for the sake of deviltry and others made such small wages they had to become immoral in order to exist.

We had about four hundred girls in the store and there were dozens of them who had been ruined since coming to work there. I used to look at Mr. K——, the owner, and wonder how he could sleep at night knowing as he did the conditions existing among his employés and also knowing that the low wages he paid were forcing so many of them into a life of shame.

Among them there was a beautiful, dark-eyed little girl who worked at a bundle desk. Her first name was Bertha and her last name was the same as mine. She lived near my rooms with an uncle who was a cab driver. She often met me in the store and on the way to and from work, and on one or two occasions we walked home together.

One night after I had retired there came a knock on my sitting-room door and I asked who was there. A girl's voice answered, "Let me in quick." So I jumped up and pulling on some clothes over my pajamas opened the door. Bertha slipped into the room and closed the door after her. She looked to be about fifteen years old standing there in a dress that came only to her shoe tops. I had never before noticed closely how much of a child she seemed to be. Her face was flushed and she was evidently ill at ease. With considerable hesitation she told me that she had been locked out and wanted to know if I could find her a place to sleep. I asked her if any one had seen her come in and she said, "No." Finally I told her she could sleep in my room and I would get another. No, she would not do that; she would not think of driving me out.

Then I asked her how old she was and she said eighteen. I thought she lied but she stuck to her story. So I told her I would sleep on the couch in the sitting-room and she could sleep in my bed in the other room. She agreed to this and I went out into the hall to smoke a cigarette while she retired.

When I came back into the sitting-room the light was turned out in the bedroom and she was in bed. I told her good night, pulled the portières together in the doorway between the two rooms and without undressing lay down on the couch.

About one o'clock she called me and I went to the door and asked her what was the matter. She said she was afraid to stay in there alone, so I went in and turned on the light.

I sat down on the edge of the bed and gave her a good talking to. She looked so much like a child lying there in my bed, it did not seem possible that she could know anything of wrongdoing. She cried and moaned for an hour or two and finally fell asleep.

In the morning I took her to breakfast and then walked to work with her. On the way to the store she asked me to loan her five dollars and I let her have the money. The last time I heard of her she was in a resort in C—— where some man had placed her. Thank God, I, at least, did not contribute to her downfall. My actions that night were among the few decent ones in my life.

Shortly after Easter I had a row with the superintendent of the store over the conduct of a girl he was

keeping. I told him what I thought of him and his lady and quit the job. I was sick of it anyway. I asked Mr. K—— for a letter of recommendation and received it.

My next position was with an instalment house, one of those concerns which sell lace curtains, clocks, rugs and such stuff on weekly payments.

This position paid fifteen dollars a week and my duties consisted of checking up the wagons and accounts of the salesmen and collectors. I had not stolen anything for the preceding nine months for the simple reason that I had had no chance, but here was a golden opportunity. I began to steal lace curtains, silk portières and similar goods and sell them to pawnshops over in B——. I made these trips at night usually and cleaned up quite a little money. Our stock was large and my thefts were not noticed.

About this time I began to take Maud to the theatres a great deal. I was wearing tailor-made clothes and my expenses were heavier than my income despite my thefts. So I went to see a salary loan man of whom I had heard. He was a very cordial sort of a man and I borrowed twenty-five dollars of him. I became well acquainted with him in a short time and as I always paid promptly, I could always get money on short notice.

There was a lame jeweler who kept a big store around the corner from our office and I went in to see him one day about buying a ring for Maud. He showed me some beautiful opals but I told him they were too ex-

pensive for me. He asked me where I worked and I told him I worked in a lace curtain and rug house. He said he needed some curtains for his home and I offered to trade him two pair of fifteen dollar curtains for the ring I wanted. I told him I could get the curtains at wholesale. He winked at me and told me to bring them in that evening and if they were all right he would make the trade.

I took them in that evening and we traded. Then he wanted some more stuff and inside the next few weeks I sold him about three hundred dollars' worth of goods for about one hundred and seventy-five dollars worth of jewelry. I sold most of the jewelry to friends.

One evening early in June, while we were sitting in the parlor at Maud's home, she suddenly told me that she feared she was in deep trouble. I shall never forget the look in her eyes as she told me this. For several days she had not been feeling well and her mother had wanted her to see a doctor.

The following Saturday afternoon I told her mother that I was going to take Maud to a doctor with whom I was well acquainted. She made no objection to this and we went to the doctor's office that evening.

When he told us that what we feared was true, we could not speak for a minute. Finally I asked him for some information regarding the matter and he gave it to me.

After leaving his office Maud and I went to my rooms and talked the matter over. She wanted me to consent

to her undergoing an operation but I would not do so. We worried more over the possibility of her folks discovering her predicament than over any other phase of the matter. At last I suggested a plan which met with her approval.

When we reached her home that evening I told her mother that the doctor had said Maud must take a long rest and I suggested that she come out to visit my folks who were going to take a cottage for the season at a summer resort near B——. Her mother did not know my folks and, of course, had no way of knowing that they had no intentions of going to any summer resort but she did have a great deal of faith in me. She consented to this arrangement and it was decided that Maud should work until July first and then take her rest.

The next day I went to see one of the foremen at the factory where Maud and I had worked. He had always liked Maud and on several occasions we had spent an evening with him and his wife at their little home in one of the suburbs.

I told him frankly of our trouble and offered to pay him well if his wife would take care of Maud for a few weeks. He said he would talk it over with her that evening and let me know the day following.

The next noon I went to see him again and he said that his wife would be glad to help us out of our trouble.

A few days later my employer sent me out on the road to collect a lot of old instalment accounts. My

instructions were to settle all the claims for as much cash as I could get. This was a snap for me and I worked hard to get the money. I did well and when I returned after a three weeks' trip, I turned in about six hundred dollars to the office and kept a hundred and fifty dollars. The firm had no way of knowing just how much money I had collected as I had settled up every account in full and taken what I could get.

The day after my return I took Maud to the home of the foreman. I made arrangements with a friend at the summer resort to forward Maud's mail and to re-mail the letters which I would send to him. Maud's mother cried when she bid us good-bye and perhaps she knew intuitively that her daughter was destined to suffer much before she would see her again. I promised to come to the house every week and let her know how Maud was getting along, saying that I would, of course, keep on with my work in C—— and only go out to the lake for the week-ends.

While Maud's mother knew we were not engaged, yet I think she believed we would marry some day.

The foreman's wife, Mrs. M——, gave Maud a nice little room and took good care of her from the beginning of her stay. I went to their home every evening and did my best to keep Maud cheerful. We had no trouble over receiving and mailing letters from and to her mother. I wanted Maud to marry me but she would not hear of it, saying that some day I might say that I had married her because I had had to. She was a brave girl as subsequent events showed.

During the latter part of July I quit my position suddenly as my employer became suspicious over the disappearance of some bronze clocks. He did not give me any letter of recommendation and there I was without a job, Maud in trouble and with only sixty dollars to my name.

I applied for and obtained a position collecting instalment book accounts on the road with a firm in B——. I paid a lawyer five dollars to get me a bond.

Just as I was ready to leave on my trip my mother wrote me that the family were moving to B—— to live, as by the terms of Grandmother's will Mother came into the possession of the nice, new home which Grandmother had recently built for herself in B——.

I went out on my trip and worked honestly for the first few weeks. Then I began to hold out on my collections and managed to get ahead some seventy dollars.

It made it very lonesome for Maud not to have me there to cheer her up each day, but she realized that we had to have money to live and she was very patient and sweet about it.

In the middle of September she wrote me asking me to return to C—— at once. I took the first train and when I reached the M—— home found her suffering a great deal. My return seemed to help her in some ways and I gave up my work to remain beside her. I took a small room down town and journeyed back and forth from this place to Maud's room each day.

On September twentieth, the day before my twenty-first birthday, I was down town on some errand and

went to my room for a few moments. While there a messenger boy brought me a note from Maud asking me to come to her immediately.

I hurried out there at once and upon reaching the house found the front door unlocked and no one around the lower part of the house. Hurrying upstairs to Maud's room, I found her in bed. The window curtains were pulled down and the room was nearly dark. I walked over to the bed and never until I die will I forget the look on that girl's face. It was white as death with the exception of her lips which showed splotches of red where she had bitten them through in some great agony.

CHAPTER XIII

AS I kneeled down beside her, my heart filled with fear, she put her arms around my neck and whispered to me, "It's over, Bobbie." I asked her what she meant and then she told me her baby was there beside her on the bed. It seemed hours before I could realize what had happened. Maud was crying and sobbing and suddenly asked me if I wasn't glad. Before I had a chance to say "Yes," Mrs. M—— looked in at the door and asked how she was. We did not answer and she went downstairs to get supper. She had been out visiting all the afternoon and Maud had been all alone during that hour of agony.

I had been so dazed and surprised at what had happened that I had not wondered at the child's not making any noise. I asked Maud why it did not cry, and drawing her arms more closely around my neck she whispered, "Bobbie, it's dead." I thought the horror of the thing would kill me.

A half hour later I left the house, carrying in the black leather hand bag, which I had given Maud, the little body.

I had called the doctor and he had promised to come at once. I did not tell him over the 'phone what the trouble was, for I was afraid he would not come if he

knew. I reasoned that after he did arrive, he would not refuse to take care of her.

I was right in this, for he did take care of her when he saw what she had been through.

When I reached my room, I put the hand bag in my trunk and sat down to figure out the next step. I did not sleep all that night, and early in the morning, leaving the bag locked in the trunk, I went out to see Maud. She was resting easily and seemed so happy that the trouble was all over. She made me sit beside her all day. I think I loved her more that day than ever before.

This being my twenty-first birthday, I was expected to sign over to my mother an insurance policy on my father's life. Mother had asked me to come over on that day and sign the papers.

So about seven o'clock in the evening I went to my room, and taking the hand bag started for B——, intending to get off the car at the bridge and drop the bag into the river. There were too many people walking across the bridge when I arrived, so I carried the bag on over to Mother's with me and left it in the hall upstairs while I went in to her room and signed the papers. Father gave me a few pleasant words as a birthday present and Mother handed me a dollar.

As I came out into the hall, I saw my little sister trying to lift from the floor the hand bag I had left outside the door of the room. I almost screamed when I saw this, and dropping to my knees I gathered her

into my arms. She put both little arms around my neck and hugged as hard as she could. It was several moments before I recovered strength enough to get up and after I had kissed the little sister good-bye I left the house, carrying the hand bag with me.

On the return trip, just before the car reached the bridge, I got off and walked out on to the bridge. When about half way across I looked around to see if any one was watching and then dropped the bag over the rail into the river. I never heard of it again.

In this way I began my twenty-first year and a few days later I was destined to go yet further along on the road to Hell.

When I reached my room in C—— that night, I went to bed completely tired out, but could not sleep. I lay awake for hours. Somehow I realized that I stood on the threshold of life, and that it was up to me to decide which road I was going to take. I was responsible now for my every act and the law would act accordingly. I knew that if I committed any more crimes I could be made to suffer a severe penalty. There would be no more excuses on the grounds that I was not of age.

I can remember of going back over my life step by step and I realized that so far I had made a terrible mess of it. Father and Mother were living only a few miles away, yet they did not want me and the little sister that I had loved so much had hardly known me at first when I went to the house that night and Mary had not even spoken to me.

I could see that dead baby's face in the shadows of the room as I lay there and it would not let me sleep and I can remember sobbing and crying for hours. When daylight came at last I had made up my mind to go on to Hell and have it done with.

That morning I went to Maud's room and sat beside her, holding one of her hands in mine and talking with her. She did not seem to care quite so much for me, and once she spoke of the man who had been going with her when I came into her life. This made me insanely jealous, and coupled with my thoughts of the night before caused me to decide to get out of town. I did not want to leave until she was out of danger and ready to go home.

Three days later Maud wanted to be taken home and I had considerable difficulty in persuading her that it would be dangerous to move her then, but she fretted so much over my refusal to move her that I finally decided to risk it.

Just a week from the day her child was born I carried her in through the door of her own home and laid her on her bed. I had chosen an hour when her father would not be there. Her mother nearly fainted upon seeing her, and it took me some little time to persuade her that Maud was not in a serious condition.

I left the house immediately and to this day do not know what took place between mother and daughter that afternoon.

That evening when I called, her mother met me at the door and silently motioned to me to go into Maud's

room. I found Maud smiling and cheerful and she seemed so glad to be home again. I did not stay very long and when I left the room it seemed as if the world had been lifted from my shoulders.

Her mother walked to the gate with me and thanked me for taking such good care of Maud, and I knew then that she knew the whole story.

The next morning I again went to Maud's home and she was feeling so much better that I decided to make my "get-away" immediately.

That afternoon I was passing one of the banks down town and the thought came to me at once, why not forge my father's name to a few checks, pass them and get out. I went into the bank and stood at one of the wall desks looking over the blank checks in the rack. Finally I selected a bank in B——. The cities were close together and the banks in each city carried blank checks on all the banks in both cities. I took about two dozen of the checks on the bank I had selected and walked out.

That evening I bought two kinds of ink, one black and one blue and practised for hours on a tablet, writing my father's name like he wrote it, big and sprawling. Then I practised a signature for myself so as to have the two different, and when I went to bed that night, there lay on the table five checks for amounts running from forty to sixty dollars and signed with the forged signature of my father.

The next afternoon, after banking hours I took the checks and started out. I paid a little bill at a cloth-

ing store with a sixty-dollar check and received some fifty-odd dollars in change. I did the same thing at two other clothing stores with fifty and fifty-five-dollar checks. A tailor to whom I owed ten dollars cashed a forty-five-dollar check, giving me the change, and a stationery store where I was acquainted cashed the forty-dollar check. I had two hundred and eighteen dollars in cash by five o'clock and was ready to get out of town.

The excitement of cashing those checks was almost as much to me as the money. To see that I could take away other people's money so easily dumbfounded me. I had no thought of retribution and perhaps I may have thought Father would make the checks good. But in this case, like all of my other thieving, the possibility of any one's really catching me at my thefts never scared me. I, somehow, in common with other young thieves, had an idea that I was smarter than those who make a business of catching crooks. I was bucking against not only society and its laws but also against a bunch of men who have been trained to catch just my like. My innocent appearance and so-called "engaging way" helped me more than any other one thing to get away with my thefts up to this time. I also had yet to learn that the law in the end usually exacts full payment for crime, particularly the crime of stealing.

That evening I went up to Maud's home and sat beside her bed for an hour. At last I told her I had to go away for a day or two, and I left a ten-dollar bill

under her pillow with a request that she have fresh flowers put in her room every day. I said nothing to her about the doctor's bills, which it was my duty to pay. I knew that I was leaving her for good and something within me made me hesitate at the last moment before I kissed her good-bye, but it was too late then, for I knew they would be after me the next day. So I kissed Maud and left her with my tears on her cheek. That was all that she received as the reward of our love and sin. Her bravery and courage brought her no reward in the way of a lasting love from the one for whom she had suffered in agony and silence.

My desertion of this girl in her hour of sorrow was one of the most contemptible things I have ever done. The fact that men usually desert girls when they get them into trouble was no excuse for my action.

This was my first lesson proving that an illicit and sinful love never brings any lasting happiness, but on the contrary only sorrow and misery.

That night I burned up everything I could not crowd into a suit case and bought a ticket for Chicago. I had heard a great deal of the city and felt that I could lose myself there.

CHAPTER XIV

UPON my arrival in Chicago, I went to a hotel and registered under my own name. By this time I had figured it out that my father would make the checks good and consider himself rid of me cheaply.

That morning when I was walking down Randolph Street, I ran square into my old employer, Jack. I was more than glad to see him and he greeted me very cordially. He took me into a bar and bought me a drink and when I came to buy I pulled out my roll, which was nearly all fives and tens. He nearly fell over at the sight of so much money and said that he had been on the "rocks" for a month. I loaned him ten dollars and he was certainly glad to get it. He had a room over on the West Side but hung around with me most of the time I remained in the city.

One afternoon I met a man whom I had known in C——. He was connected with a picture enlarging house located in Chicago. After asking me what I was doing in the Windy City and being told that I was looking for work of some kind, he asked me to come and see him the following week. In the meantime, Jack and I loafed around and drank considerable.

One evening he took me over to Custom House Place and "introduced" me to a bunch of women who were friends of his and inhabitants of the house. One of the girls in particular, Bon Bon by name, paid considerable attention to me and before I knew it I was spending a great deal of time with her. For the first few visits she let me blow my money in, but after I had been there a few times she would not let me spend a cent. She slept with a little stiletto under her pillow and I was deathly afraid that she would stab me some time when she was half drunk. She treated me as nice as she knew how and tried to give me money on several occasions.

My money was getting low and I hunted up my friend in the enlarging business. He offered me a chance to go out on the road with a crew of men, soliciting photo enlargements in the small towns of a neighboring State. I was so near broke that I took the job. He sent me away that night and I said good-bye to Jack, telling him I would return in a week or so.

When I reached my destination I was thoroughly sick of everything. The excitement of the big city and the drinking and carousing around had put me in poor physical condition and when I had sized up the old man who had charge of the crew and noticed the half starved look of the whole bunch, I did not think much of the proposition.

The old man spent the next morning teaching me prices and how to talk up the enlargements. In the

afternoon he took me out and showed me how he landed the sales. He made six dollars during the afternoon and that cheered me up a lot.

The next day he started me out, telling me to walk along certain roads and work all the farm houses. It was a thickly populated section and I did better than I expected the first day. At night I slept at a farm house, paying seventy-five cents for supper, lodging and breakfast. I kept this work up for four weeks, coming in to some agreed-upon meeting point with the rest of the crew each Saturday night, when we were allowed to draw in advance a certain portion of our commissions on orders sold.

While in from my work the first Sunday, I sat down and wrote a letter to Maud, telling her that she would never see me again, that I was no good and that it was better for her that I was down and out. This letter cost me her love, as I was to find out a few years later.

Among the crew was a minister's son who lived in E——, and the next Sunday I went home with him on the Interurban. That evening he took me over to see some friends at a boarding-house and we had a very good time.

After four weeks of this road work I decided to pass it up, as it was getting too cold to tramp around. The last week I worked I turned in in addition to my legitimate orders about twenty false orders with pictures I managed to steal in homes where I had obtained orders. I collected my advance commissions on all these and dug out for E——. Arriving there I went

to the boarding-house where I had visited and engaged a small room.

During this time I had no particular ambition to be anything. I did not know what was going to become of me and, in fact, did not care. I hung around E——, spending what money I had in company with a young fellow whose first name was Carl. Finally we both went broke. I had no overcoat and the snowstorms were becoming frequent. I can remember pawning my razor for twenty-five cents and I lived on that quarter for two days and let Carl rustle for himself.

Carl and I were occupying one little room together at this time and we owed considerable room rent. Finally I became desperate. I could find no work and it was awful cold. I can remember Carl and I one morning standing in front of a little restaurant where they made a specialty of pig sausages and wheat cakes. We could see the man in the window flopping the wheat cakes over and over and there was a big pan of those little sausages sizzling away alongside the griddles.

We went back to the room and I looked for the rest of the blank checks I had obtained in C——. I found them tucked away in a flap inside of my grip.

That evening after Carl had gone out I sat down and practised some signatures and finally made out four checks, ranging in amounts from twenty-five to sixty dollars, using my father's and my own name as before.

The next morning I started out to get them cashed. First I went to a music teacher whom I had met at the

boarding-house and persuaded him to take me to a piano store and identify me so I could get a check cashed. They made him endorse it before they gave me the money. Next I went to a prominent lodge man and told him who I was. He looked up my father's name in a national list of lodge members and finding it there, consented to endorse my check for me. This was a forty-dollar check.

Then I went to a clothing store where I had purchased a few things before and these people cashed another check for me when I bought a hat.

In all these places I would take out a letter and unpin the check from the letter while talking to the prospective victim. Between calls I would pin a new check to the letter and put it back into the envelope. If any one had asked to see the letter or the envelope I would have been up against it.

My last call was at the men's clothing department of a big department store, where I knew one of the clerks, who had been a frequent visitor at the boarding-house. I asked him to wait on me while I selected an overcoat costing twenty dollars. When it came to paying for it I pulled out the letter, unpinned the check and asked him for a pen with which to endorse the check. He called the manager and this man looked at me pretty sharply. He asked me about the check and I told him my father had sent it to me. He asked the clerk if he knew me and the clerk said, "Oh yes, I know Bobbie well." The manager pulled out a pencil and O. K.'d the check, saying, "I hope it's all right, young

man; God help you if it isn't." I endorsed the check and they gave me the coat and forty dollars change. Then I hurried back to the room wearing the overcoat and in my pockets I had a hundred and fifty-five dollars in cash.

Carl was sitting on the bed with his head in his hands. Neither of us had had anything to eat that morning. I said to him, "Carl, do you remember those cakes and sausages?" He looked at my overcoat and said, "What do you mean? What's happened?" I told him to come along with me, that we were each going to eat about five dollars' worth of grub.

I can remember how we did eat and how good everything tasted.

After we had redeemed our things in the pawnshops and returned to the room, Carl asked me where I got the money and I told him my father had sent it. Then I asked him if he wanted to go to Chicago and he said, "You bet."

So that evening, without telling any one where we were going, we took a train for Chicago.

Upon our arrival there we took a cheap room at a hotel and Carl started looking for a job. He had a friend connected with one of the big stores, and this friend promised to put him to work in a few days.

The first thing I did was to hunt up Jack, and I found him in one of his usual haunts, a basement restaurant and wine room on Monroe Street. He was sitting at a table with two pretty girls and when he saw me, he called me over and introduced me to them.

They were sisters, one named Fay and the other Julia.

Fay in particular took my eye and it was not long until we were both interested in each other. Jack and I met them again that evening and after a dinner and a good many drinks we took them home. When I said good night to Fay we were alone in the lower hall of the flat building where she and her sister lived, and she put her arms around me and kissed me.

When I returned to the hotel, Carl was sitting up waiting for me. He had had nothing to eat since noon, so I took him out and bought him a big lunch. He knew where I had spent the evening, as I had told him I usually hung out around there with Jack.

The next day I spent with Jack, and he suggested that I get a room near him and save hotel bills. So he went with me to the hotel and there we found Carl waiting. He was angry and hungry again and wanted me to loan him ten dollars. I gave it to him and told him I was going away. He set up a big howl at this and wanted to know what he was going to do. I told him he ought to be glad he had a job waiting for him. But he cringed around and still wanted to go with me. I told him flatly that I could not take him with me and I left him there in the hotel, a picture of misery because I would not support him any longer.

Jack found a room for me on the ground floor of a flat building near his room.

The next evening we took the girls out to dinner and then over to my room. Jack and Julia finally went over to his room leaving Fay and me alone. That girl

was a devil if ever one lived, and when I took her home that night I held her in my arms a long time before I would let her go upstairs.

It was getting along into the middle of November by this time and my money was getting low.

Fay was coming to my room every day. She was a cigarette fiend and between the two of us we had about fifty empty cigarette boxes piled on a table in my room. Jack was an inveterate cigarette smoker also and he helped contribute to the pile of empty boxes.

He received a little money from the South once in a while, but was usually broke. One thing I always admired about him, he dressed well.

Finally I ran out of money entirely and I can remember standing on Jackson Boulevard one cold, drizzly morning, hungry and penniless, watching the men trying to work on the new Postoffice, and envying them the fact that they had work and some place to go when night came.

That afternoon I locked myself in my room and wrote out the last six checks I had left, filling them out and signing them as before. In all this time I had heard nothing from the checks passed in C—— and in E——.

Somehow in these days I did not look ahead to what I would do when my means of obtaining money ran out. I evidently must have thought also that I could keep on going the downward path forever and not get caught.

The next morning I took the six checks and passed

one at a drug store; one at a stationery store where I had bought some little things and had on order some monogram stationery which I paid for out of the check; one in a saloon where I was known; one in a drug store near the apartment building where I roomed and the other one I took to Bon Bon.

She laughed when I asked her to cash it and said, "Kid, your damn check is no good to me. Get my pocketbook out of the bottom of that wardrobe." I got it for her and she pulled out a roll of bills, wrapped the check in them and shoved the whole thing into my trousers pocket. I objected to this, but she took me to the door and pushed me out into the hall, saying, "Kid, you're welcome to all I've got any time. Get out now, I want to sleep, but you be sure to come back to-night." She was a good-hearted girl and I never saw her again. There was fifty-two dollars in the roll of bills.

It had taken me most of the day to pass the checks and that evening the girls, together with Jack and me, went on a slumming trip. We took in a lot of places in the old Twenty-second Street District, and we were all half drunk by twelve o'clock.

Coming back we rode on the front seats of one of the grip-cars, which were then running on State Street. I reached in my pocket for the carfare and found that my roll was gone. It sobered me in a minute and we all started back to find it, but it was gone for good. I don't know to this day where it went. I had thirty dollars in another pocket when I reached my room. I was

half crazed over my loss and did not know which way to turn. I had figured on getting out of town with that money the next day and now I was nearly broke. Jack somehow did not believe that I had lost any such sum, as he knew I had been broke that morning and I had refused to tell him where I obtained the money.

The next morning I stopped in at the stationer's and got the expensive stationery which I had paid for the day before and took it over to the Monroe Street place and left it at the cashier's desk. My name was written on the outside of the package.

Along toward evening I went down to the restaurant and waited for the others to show up. I had given up hope of getting away and had about made up my mind to kill myself. I wanted to see Fay, though, once more.

While I sat there at a table alone I noticed a couple of men walk in and sit down at a table near me and engage Jules, the head waiter, in conversation. I did not pay much attention to them, although I felt awful queer and uneasy, as if something were about to happen.

Along about five-thirty Jack showed up and a little later Fay came in. Julia was at home ill and unable to meet us.

The three of us sat down at the table and had a few drinks before we ordered the dinner. I was laughing and talking with Fay when Jules, the head waiter, came up to our table. I jumped on him for the delay in serving the dinner. His face flushed and he turned

away stammering out something about "seeing to it."
I was puzzling over this when a heavy, thick-set man
stepped up to our table.

CHAPTER XV

THIS man still had his overcoat on and was carrying his hat in his hand. I supposed he was some friend of Jack's until he leaned over in front of me, and calling me by name, asked me to step to one side, as he wished to speak to me. I got up from the table and stepped over behind a pillar with him. He reached in his pocket, and pulling out a paper of some kind said, "Robert, I've got a warrant here for you and I'll have to ask you to come with me." I almost fainted, but he put out his hand and steadied me.

"All right," I said, "I'll go with you, but I have ordered a dinner and these other people are my guests." He hesitated a minute, then told me to go ahead with the dinner and he would wait for me. He took off his overcoat and sat down at a vacant table where he could keep an eye on me. I had not asked him as to where I was wanted, but somehow took it for granted that I was under arrest for the job in C——.

I went back to my table and sat down. I was very weak and my hands trembled a great deal, because when I lifted the glass of wine which stood by my plate, I spilt a lot of it on the table. Jack and Fay both asked me what was the matter and I told them that after dinner I had to go out on some business with the man who was waiting.

We did not eat very much, as we all seemed to realize in some way that I was in serious trouble of some kind.

I paid the check, and putting on our wraps we went upstairs to the street. I said good night to Jack and kissed Fay. I knew somehow that it would be many days until I saw her again.

The detective, for such he proved to be, walked with me over to the Central Station, and on the way over asked me if I was not glad that the worry was over and I was to go back North. I told him "Yes," thinking he meant C——.

When we reached the Central Station, he took me to the chief's office and a man who sat at a big roll-top desk asked me my name and age and who my folks were and a lot of other questions which I answered. Then he told me that I had been "picked up" for the police of E——, where I was wanted for obtaining money under false pretences. My heart sank when I heard this and I began to sob. I had thought all the time that I was going back to C——, where my folks would get me out of trouble. Instead of this, I was going further away from them and among total strangers.

The official spoke to me in a kindly way and said he was sorry but they would have to lock me up to await the arrival of the E—— officer, who would be there the next day. At the same time, he asked me if I would go back without extradition papers and I said "Yes."

They then searched me and took everything out of

my pockets. I only had twelve dollars and they took all of this except two dollars, telling me the balance would be returned the next day when I went North. I asked the man at the desk to telegraph my father and he said he would.

I found out years afterward how, when the telegram reached home very late at night, Father was in bed, sick. He got up and dressed, and as the suburban cars had stopped running, he had to walk two miles through the deep snow to one of the lines that ran all night so that he could get to the newspaper offices in time to prevent any items appearing in the morning papers. Mother has told me how heartbroken he appeared when he reached home.

After the men in the office were through questioning me, the official told the detective to take me downstairs and lock me up. He took me downstairs and through a long corridor to a big, dark cell. He said I would find a cot in the corner and some blankets, and for me to lie down and go to sleep. The turnkey gave me some water and locked me in. After they had been gone a while, the turnkey came back and asked if there was anything I wanted. I gave him a dollar and asked him to get me a couple of packages of cigarettes. After a while he returned with the cigarettes and the change and I gave him a fifty-cent tip. He thanked me and gave me a bunch of matches.

It was pitch dark in the cell, and while there was an electric light hanging in the corridor, the wide iron crossbars in the cell door kept out all the light.

I had taken off my hat and coat and after I was left alone, lit a match so as to examine the interior of the cell. It contained nothing but a tin bucket, a tin cup and an iron cot with a cheap, dirty mattress and a dirty blanket. The walls and floor were of stone and the place smelled terrible.

The shock of my being arrested had not yet worn off, but after I had walked back and forth for an hour and smoked several cigarettes I quieted down considerable.

Suddenly a full realization of the horror of it all came over me like a flash and I dropped to my knees on the stone floor. I moaned and sobbed and prayed, asking God to take me out of there and let me be a man. I have suffered much in the years since, but the agony of that night stands out above all my other suffering. It seemed as the hours crept on that I would become insane. In my agony I threw my hands above my head as I walked back and forth and beseeched God to help me. I guess there were no other prisoners in the section where I was, because no one said anything to me or came near me. I tried to lie down, but I could hear the rats in the cell as soon as I became quiet and I was afraid of them. It was nearly morning when I finally fell into a troubled sleep.

If my father could have walked into my cell at that hour and talked to me right there, as he talked to me years after, I could have gone out of there with him, a man, without any further punishment.

The horror of it all was so powerful it would have

been all the lesson I needed, could I have been released then, before I became hardened to prison life.

But after that morning it was too late, for my only hope after that first effect wore off, lay in my working out my own salvation behind the walls of the penitentiary.

There was a rattling at the cell door about seven o'clock and I got up to see what it was. The turnkey stood there with a can of coffee and a plate containing meat and potatoes. He told me he had brought me an extra good breakfast. Opening the door, he gave me the food and then locked me in again. I gave him my other dollar and asked him to get me some more cigarettes. He soon returned with them and I gave him a quarter tip. I had smoked during my frenzy of the night, at least a part of each of the twenty cigarettes he had obtained for me when I was first locked up. I ate every bit of the breakfast and after smoking a cigarette, felt better.

About eight o'clock the detective who had arrested me came to my cell and, after looking me over, said he guessed I had passed a tough night. Then he took me into a wash-room, and after allowing me to clean up, returned me to my cell, telling me to cheer up as the officer from E—— would be there about ten o'clock.

About nine o'clock my cell door was unlocked and I was told to "come out of there." I came out and stood in front of a big, burly detective and some business man. The business man looked at me closely and the detective said, "Is that the crook?" The man

said "No," and the detective pushed me into the cell and locked the door. Then I began to fear that the Chicago people on whom I had passed the other checks would see the news in the paper and come to identify me, but no one came.

At eleven o'clock the detective from E—— arrived and came to my cell to talk with me. He asked me if I was willing to go back with him without any trouble, and I told him "Yes." Then he said he would go to my room with the detective who had arrested me and get my things, and I asked him to also get the package of stationery I had left at the restaurant. He smiled and said, "Yes, but I shouldn't think you would want to see that package again. That is what identified you."

It seems that a few days before Carl had written to the boarding-house at E—— concerning some laundry, and asked them to forward it to him. Of course, the police had already been there looking for me and found that we both had left at the same time. So when his letter arrived, the landlady called up the police and they at once communicated with the Chicago police, instructing them to get hold of Carl. After a little persuasion he told them where I formerly hung out and when they inquired for me at the restaurant, the cashier showed them the package with my name on it and told them I had left it there saying I would call for it.

About three in the afternoon, the detectives returned with my things. They came to my cell and took me up-

stairs, saying that it was no wonder I was in jail if I had smoked all the cigarettes that had been in the empty boxes which they found in my room. As we were passing along the corridor in the basement, I noticed in a little room to my left two men holding a rough-looking young fellow while another man was trying to photograph him. The detective from E—— asked the local man if they had “mugged” me and he told him they had not as yet. He then told him to never mind, as perhaps the matter would be fixed up. I pricked up my ears at this remark and began to have a little hope.

When we arrived at the office upstairs, they gave me back the things they had taken the night before, with the exception of my knife, which Detective A—— said he would keep until we reached E——.

They put me into a patrol wagon, and the two detectives got in with me. We rode to the depot, where the local man watched me while A—— purchased the tickets. After I had said good-bye to the local detective, we boarded the train. A—— made me sit next to the window and said he hoped that I would see the wisdom of not attempting to escape. I told him he needn't fear that and so in this manner we returned to E——, arriving there late at night.

CHAPTER XVI

UPON our arrival at E—— we found the patrol wagon awaiting us and I was at once taken to the Central Station, where I was searched and then locked in a cell.

In the morning, after the usual station-house breakfast, I was taken to the police court. There some one read the complaint, which charged me with obtaining forty dollars in cash and an overcoat on a check which had been returned marked, "No account." I remembered then the words of the department store manager.

Detective A—— whispered to me to plead "Not guilty," and I did so and was then bound over to the District Court under fifteen hundred dollar bonds.

After we left the court room A—— took me into a big room where a lot of detectives were standing around. The officer in charge talked to A—— a few moments and then turned to the men, telling them to take a good look at me. He also told them my name and why I was under arrest.

After this he told A—— to take me "upstairs." I was taken upstairs into another big room fitted up as a photo gallery and here I was photographed in two positions, front view and profile. Then I was meas-

ured by the Bertillon system. I could not understand this action, in view of what A—— had said in the station at Chicago, and I asked him why they “mugged” me. He simply said it was customary. Those two pictures of mine were in the Rogues’ Gallery at E—— for two years, and copies of them were sent to many of the larger cities throughout the country.

Detective A—— then told me he was going to take me to the county jail and that he would not handcuff me, but cautioned me not to try to escape. I can remember how suggestively he patted his overcoat pocket as he said it.

At the county jail I was thoroughly searched and then locked in a cell. Detective A—— left, telling me not to worry, as my folks would probably square up the matter. Somehow I did not have much hope of this, on account of the fact that they had let the checks come back to E——.

About eleven o’clock the under-sheriff came to my cell, and entering, asked me all about my trouble. I told him the whole story. He sympathized with me and said he would send up writing materials so that I could write to my folks right away.

Just before noon I was taken to a bathroom and allowed to bathe, after which the jail doctor examined me and said I was in need of medical attention, which was given me.

I was then taken to a very large cell, which was usually used for holding important witnesses. It was equipped with hot and cold water, electric lights and

other modern conveniences, together with a comfortable cot, two chairs and a table.

At noon I was given a pan of boiled meat, several slices of bread and a big cup of jail coffee. These things were shoved through an opening in the cell door.

That afternoon I wrote to my folks asking them to help me. This letter I had to leave unsealed, so that the under-sheriff could read it. The rules of the jail required that all letters written or received by the prisoners be read by the under-sheriff.

The daily routine in jail was very simple. In the morning we were awakened by a gong in the corridor, and at seven o'clock received a small pail of coffee and all the bread we wanted. At noon we received a pan of stewed or boiled meat, together with bread and coffee, and at night bread and coffee. I was furnished with reading matter, but spent most of my time pacing the floor.

It took several days for a reply to come from home, and in the meantime a young man belonging to one of the church societies came to my cell to see me. I became well acquainted with him and told him my story. He took a great interest in me and was very good to me, giving me a Bible and coming to see me every day.

Out of all the hundreds of so-called Christian men whom I have met, Ed was one of the very few I have found to be absolutely sincere and unselfish. He held a poorly paid position in a railway office and supported a mother and sister. All his spare time was devoted to helping others.

When the letters from home arrived the under-sheriff brought them to me and before he gave them to me told me to cheer up and be a man.

There were two letters, one from Father and one from Mother. In Father's letter, which was very short and began with "Robert," he simply said that he was sorry, but I would have to take my medicine and that he hoped I would profit by the lesson. He also said he could not afford to settle with the people who had cashed my checks. The letter was written on a typewriter and signed with his typewritten initials only.

Mother's letter was long and contained many reproaches. She, too, wrote that they were unable to pay the people I had robbed, and that she was very sorry for me and hoped that the judge would not give me the long sentence. Also she hoped that when I was released I would go somewhere and begin life anew.

I think that what little good there was left in me passed out of my life entirely as I read those letters. They were able to repay every cent I had obtained and those who had been defrauded were willing to settle. My father's influence would have saved me from any sentence after the complaints had been adjusted. Of course, my parents were disgusted with me and I suppose they had lost all hope of my ever being of any value as a man. I often think that their anger over being disgraced and shamed by my arrest was the real reason for their not giving me any assistance in my hour of trouble.

But, please God, if anything like this should ever come to any son of mine, I would forget self-pride and family pride and I would even sell the clothes from off my back before I would ever let him enter the doors of a penitentiary. I would do almost anything to save him. For once a man enters the big doors of a State's prison, as a convicted criminal, he leaves behind him forever that cloak of visible honor which is given to us all equally at birth. No wealth, no prayer, in fact nothing can ever make him as he was before he enters the City of the Dead. He enters the doors as a man even though he be battered and a wreck, but he emerges a Thing, haunted day and night through the rest of his life by his secret. Any hour, no matter how many years he has striven to make good, his secret may become public and he becomes in the sight of practically all the world a Thing to be shunned and avoided. His real right to be a husband and a father is taken from him forever, for what clean, decent man-soul with the brand of "ex-convict" wants to be the father of little innocent children who could some day be made to suffer too as a result of the father's old mistake? Crime should be punished without doubt, but at my age and under the existing circumstances I could not by any process of imagination have been wisely deemed a criminal in the true sense of the word.

And if my parents were to give me a million tomorrow it would not help one bit. Nothing, absolutely nothing, can erase that terrible stain which spreads through and through, even to the last little letter of

my name. The tears, the misery, the prayers, the hard work and struggles of ten years have not changed it.

And one man, born no better than I, but seated on a high, wooden throne by a political power, had the authority to tear from me, a fellow-man, my last weapon of defence, my only remaining asset — my name. And his authority did not cease there, for he placed on parents, on sisters, and on children yet unborn a lasting shame. Still it is the law.

No man living knows or can know, by any process of reasoning or imagination, what the ex-convict feels, unless he, himself, has paid the price of knowing, which is — serving time. No man has lost his reputation until the law takes it from him. Until that hour he can always rebuild, and wipe out his former indiscretions.

No one living man to-day has the ability to properly judge as to just how much punishment any fellow-man should suffer.

I wrote to my folks and told them I was sorry to learn that they would not help me and that I would not bother them any more. I also told them I was going to plead guilty when my case came up.

When Ed read the letters, he cried with me and said he would write to my folks, which he did, but with no better results. Then I wrote to the judge in C—— and asked him to give me a letter which I could show to the judge who would sentence me.

He wrote me a very dignified letter, stating that I had always been a good boy up to that time and that he hoped the judge who sentenced me would take into con-

sideration my family and all the circumstances connected with the case and a lot of other stuff.

By this time I had decided to plead guilty and had said so to the county attorney. I had no money for a lawyer, anyway. He said this was the best thing I could do. It would save the expense of their having to send for some one connected with the bank in B—— to be present at my trial and by his testimony prove that my father had no account in that bank at the time I issued the check, and that besides this the signature was a forgery. My pleading guilty, he said, would help to get me a short sentence.

As the time drew near for my appearance in court and we found out which judge was to hear my case, Ed wrote to Father begging him to write a letter to the judge asking him to be lenient with me.

Father wrote a short letter addressed to the judge, telling him that I was, no doubt, sick in mind and body when I passed the checks, and went on to say that he hoped the judge would take into consideration my youth and my family. The letter was a cold one and I did not have much hope of its doing any good.

In the meantime, I told Ed of all my other forgeries, giving him the names of the victims and the amounts. I did not know why he wanted these details, but I was to learn later.

Soon I received another letter from Mother and also a Bible. She asked me to read a little in it every day. I was in a hopeless mood all this time and had no care as to what was to become of me.

A few people came to look at me through the bars, among them the music teacher and the former landlady, who seemed horrified to see one of her former lodgers behind the bars. I refused to talk to any one except Ed and the jailers.

Christmas came and the only present I received came from Ed. Mother sent me a little card containing some good wishes for the season. We had a chicken dinner that day.

New Year's Day the prisoners were treated to a concert by the choir from Ed's church. One of the ladies stood in the corridor near my cell and sang "The Ninety and Nine" in a beautiful voice. I cried myself to sleep that night.

On the afternoon of January the sixth, I was handcuffed to another prisoner, and together with three other couples, similarly cuffed, was taken to court by deputy sheriffs.

It was a cloudy, gloomy afternoon, and the streets were filled with snow and slush.

Upon our arrival at the court room we were conducted to a long bench up near the judge's desk. Our handcuffs were unfastened and we sat back to await the calling of the cases.

I looked down the row of men sitting on the bench with me and noticed what a tough-looking lot they were. I was the youngest in the row.

There were only a few spectators in the court room and I did not even look at them.

CHAPTER XVII

SOME one rapped with a gavel and called a name and the deputy sheriff sitting beside me told me to stand up. A man read the complaint against me and I was told to plead. I hesitated a minute, and then, looking up at the judge, who was sizing me up, I answered in a clear voice, "Guilty."

The judge, who was a big man, sat back in his chair and looked at me steadily for a moment, then, calling me by my first name, said, "Robert, why did you do this?"

I told him I was cold and hungry and without work at the time and had signed my father's name to the checks to get money to live on.

The judge then asked me what my father said about this thing. From an inside pocket I took the bunch of letters which Ed had arranged for me and handed them to a court attaché who gave them to the judge. He took them and read them over slowly.

Meanwhile I stood there, looking across the court room to the windows. I could see the rain falling outside and the dirty smoke blowing from the chimneys on the buildings across the street. The tears started to come, but I gritted my teeth and held myself in as best I could.

The judge looked up at last and said, "Robert, I am sorry for you, but I think you need a lesson. I will sentence you to the penitentiary at M—— for the term of two years. I sincerely hope you will make a man of yourself yet and be an honor to your parents."

I sat down in my seat and the man next to me was told to stand up. I can remember nothing that was said to him, nor can I remember any of his answers. The tears were rolling down my cheeks, and I had all I could do to keep from putting my hands up to my face.

A few moments later I was told to stand up, and after I had been cuffed to the man next to me, a deputy led us out and back to the jail. Upon our arrival there, the under-sheriff came up to my cell and handed me the letters I had given the judge. Then he took my razor from the stationary wash basin and after telling me to bear up like a man, locked my door and left me alone.

I threw myself down on the bed and lay there, sobbing and crying until Ed came at supper time. They locked him in the cell with me and he stayed all evening. His talk with me did have an influence on me and just before he left we both kneeled down beside my cot and prayed. After the prayer I calmed down and felt much better. I have never forgotten that prayer of Ed's. I believe that I could repeat it word for word to-day. Never have I heard any one pray with such faith and conviction. His words seemed to make me know that God anyway had not deserted me and that my sentence was all for the best. Ed was the only

man who had ever exerted a good influence over me.

That night I wrote to my folks, to Jack, and to Fay, telling them I was going away for a couple of years and giving them my address.

The next morning I was told to get ready to go to the penitentiary. I packed up my few belongings and the under-sheriff gave me my suit case and the few dollars which remained of my money. The overcoat they sent back to the department store. Ed came to the jail and said good-bye to me and hurried back to work with a promise that he would write and would come to see me later.

One of the deputies was to take me to M——, and after fastening a handcuff to my right hand he told me that he would not fasten me to him, but would simply hold the other cuff in his hand and that I should walk close to him so people would not know I was a prisoner.

He had suggested that we walk to the depot, saying it would be some time before I would again look upon the busy streets of a big city. I was glad of the chance and we walked slowly to the depot. One or two people noticed the glint of the handcuffs as we were jostled by the crowds and turned to look at us. I had the suit case in my left hand, and having the cuff on my right and without the use of that hand, somehow could not walk easily.

When we reached the station we went to the ticket window in the big waiting-room. There was a brass railing, inside of which people were filing past the win-

dow and purchasing their tickets. The deputy let go of his part of the handcuff and told me to stand outside the railing while he stepped into the line and purchased our tickets.

The sun was shining brightly that morning, and now that I knew that I had to go to the penitentiary and that the suspense was over, I felt much better. I stood there in the sunlight which streamed through the windows, waiting for the deputy to get the tickets, and before I noticed what I was doing, I was swinging the other handcuff, which was fastened to the one on my hand by a short steel chain. The flash of the metal in the sunlight caught the eye of an old lady sitting on one of the long benches in front of me. The look of horror that came over her face caused me to notice what I was doing. I can remember smiling bitterly at her expression, and the thought came to me that pity usually comes too late.

Shortly after the train got under way the "news butcher" came along and the deputy offered me a cigar which I refused, saying that I had cigarettes. He told me I would have to smoke them up on the train as I would not be allowed to smoke in the penitentiary. The "news butcher" tried to sell me a railway guide but the deputy laughingly told him it would be considerably out of date by the time I took my next ride.

We reached M—— early in the afternoon and took a hack to the prison. Upon arrival at the place I stepped out of the hack first and stood looking up at the big building while the deputy paid the bill. At

that moment it seemed to me that the prison itself filled the entire universe. It was a big, white building with a high tower in the centre and a long wing extending on each side filled with countless little windows. The whole appearance and air of the place filled me with horror. It seemed as if I did not have strength enough left to walk up the long walk leading to the entrance.

The deputy told me to come along and I started up the walk with him. When we were nearly up to the door I turned around to take a last look at the "out-of-doors." It was a beautiful day and I stood there a moment looking up at the sky and taking deep breaths of fresh air. Then I turned and walked up the steps and through the door with the deputy.

CHAPTER XVIII

I WAS first taken to the warden's office, where my complete record was written out and all my personal property taken from me.

Then I was taken through a hall and up a flight of steps to a big steel-barred door. I could see through these bars into a big room where a man in uniform sat reading. He saw us at the door and came over. After he had examined the commitment papers he unlocked the big door with a big key and let us in, shutting and locking it after us.

The clang of that big door closing made me shudder from head to foot. Many a weary day was destined to pass before I should again hear its clang.

The walls on two sides of this room were composed of vertical steel bars placed about four inches apart. The cell blocks in the two main prison wings could be seen through these bars. On the wall of this room, which was called the guard room, were gun racks, partially filled with Winchesters. The sight of these guns brought me my first realization of how serious my position was.

We were taken across the guard room to a smaller door, which was also opened with a big key. Passing through this door, which was quickly locked behind us,

we went down a winding iron stair to a corridor and, turning to our right, we entered the executive office of the prison proper.

In passing down these stairs, I noticed for the first time the prison smell. There is no other odor like it on earth. It almost overpowered me and it was many days before I became accustomed to it.

In the office my commitment papers were delivered to the deputy warden and I was again subjected to a thorough search.

The deputy-sheriff then shook hands and, telling me to be a good boy, went back up the winding stair. I was sorry to see him go as he seemed to be the last link connecting me with the outside world.

I was next taken to a bath room by a convict trusty and made to bathe in an old galvanized iron tub and given one little, rough towel with which to dry my body. Then I sat shivering until a bundle of clothes was brought to me. I was told to dress and be quick about it.

The underwear was coarse and rough and looked like a suit of overalls. The socks were thick and heavy and came half way to my knees. The shirt was dark blue with fine white lines in it. The coat, vest and trousers were of a heavy grey cloth and about two sizes too large for me but I got into them as best I could. The shoes were the coarsest, roughest things I had ever seen and fastened with buckles. They were at least three sizes too large and hurt my feet from the minute I put them on.

After I had dressed myself, I was taken to the prison barber shop by a trusty and was shaved and had my hair cut by one of the prison barbers. There were five of them in the room with a guard watching them. It seemed so queer not to hear a word spoken by any one. From there I was taken to the tailor shop where I was measured for clothes and shoes and given a heavy grey cap. I was then returned to the executive office and told to sit down on a bench. It was while returning to the office that I saw something which I have never forgotten.

Standing a short way down the corridor talking to a guard, was a little grey-haired man dressed in stripes. The feeling of horror and revulsion which came over me was terrible. I could not believe that a human being could look like that old man did.

About five o'clock I was taken through the corridor to a short, wide flight of steps, down these and along a wide corridor. On one side of me was the whitewashed inner wall of the cell house and on the other side was the whitewashed cell block just filled with row upon row of narrow, steel doors opening onto narrow galleries. It was getting dusk and I could not see into the cells. I was led clear to the end of the cell block and then up a little flight of stairs to a gallery and along this until the trusty ahead of me stopped, pulled open a cell door and motioned for me to go in. When I stepped in he closed the door after me.

It was dark and I could not see but I found a little stool inside and sat down on it for a few minutes. The

place smelled horribly. I explored around and found a steel cot folded up against the wall, a heavy tin bucket with a wooden cover and a shelf upon which were a tin wash basin and two big tin cups. The cell was about four feet wide and eight feet long and I could stand up without my head quite touching the ceiling. The walls were of stone covered with a rough plaster and the floor and ceiling were of wood.

In about half an hour my door was pulled open by a guard and I was told to go to the big table in the corridor and get my supper. I found a long table piled high with loaves of bread and little tins of sauce. A big convict was standing behind the table cutting the bread in thick slices, and a guard who was standing beside him told me to take what bread I wanted and one tin of sauce and get back to my cell. I did as directed and the guard who had remained on the gallery shut my door but did not lock it. A few minutes later I heard the marching of many men down the steps, through the corridor and up on to the galleries. I stood inside my door peering down at them through the steel slats. There were hundreds of men walking along in single file, stopping only long enough at the table, which was just below me, to grab some bread and one of the tins. The sight of all these men seemed to hearten me a lot. There were only a few in stripes, the majority wearing grey clothes like those given me.

A few minutes later I heard a peculiar sound which seemed to fill the big corridor, "Clickety clack," "Clickety clack," coming nearer all the time. Finally

a guard stopped at my door and I saw he had a big key in his hand. "Hey," he said, "where's your light?" I told him I did not know. He looked up at the top of the door and said, "Oh, I see. Feel around on that back wall and you'll find an electric light. Turn it on." Sure enough I found it and turned it on. Then he told me to pull my door shut and hold it until he locked it.

A few minutes later I heard a little noise at the door and, looking up, saw a long tin spout sticking through between the slats and a whisper floated in, "Say, you fresh fish, put a cup on the shelf here on the door." I got a cup and put it on the little shelf which was fastened down low on the inside of the door. The trusty tipped up the can he was carrying and filled my cup with so-called coffee. A few minutes later along came another trusty with a big can of water and filled my wash basin and my other cup.

I ate my supper with a relish and let down my cot. I found it equipped with a straw tick, two sheets, a blanket and a pillow. I lay down on the bed and stretched out my aching body. While lying there I happened to look at the door. Two fingers were hooked through one of the openings and I could see that some one was standing there looking in at me. I did not know it at the time, but that little fellow was destined to be my best friend among all those convicts.

About seven o'clock that evening my door was unlocked by a guard who told me to come to the office with him. Here I was given two sets of printed rules

and sent to the doctor's office. He examined me and, after giving me some medicine, told me to come in every morning and noon at sick call. I was then taken back to my cell and locked in for the night. I read the rules all over a couple of times and when the lights went out tumbled into bed.

That night was a horror as the cell was running over with vermin. I did not sleep much and every hour or so some one would come sneaking up to my door and flash a light into my cell. It was a night guard making his usual rounds.

At the clang of the bell in the morning I jumped up, washed and dressed, turned out my light and stood with my hand on the door as the rules directed. The guard came along unlocking the doors and when I heard the two raps on the gallery railing, which signified that the convicts on our gallery should open their doors, I grabbed the tin bucket and stepped out into the line.

We filed out around the corner of the building to a big square filled with men flushing out hundreds of buckets. Placing ours on the edge of the square, we took up the march to the dining-room.

It was just dawn and I took a look around me. We were in a big yard surrounded on three sides by high stone walls on top of which were stationed guards who paced back and forth carrying rifles. The fourth side was taken up by the penitentiary administration building and cell houses. The yard was about a block square and contained many big work shops. There

was also a big lawn, in the centre of which was a big flower bed covered over with straw and burlap.

The sight of all those men marching in single file across that yard in the early light of the dawn seemed all of a sudden to drag me down to the lowest levels of life. The expression on the faces of those around me was one of utter hopelessness and as we marched into the dining-room through a haze of smoke and steam from the kitchens, I felt as if I were indeed among the lost.

The men filed into the big room and seated themselves on low stools in front of tables which were only fifteen inches wide and extended half across the room to a centre aisle. At each place were set a plate, two bowls, a knife, fork and spoon. The men were crowded close together in rows, all facing the front of the room, and in the early light of morning were a hard-looking crowd. Guards stood in the centre aisle and around the sides of the room. Each one carried a heavy cane and down in the front part of the room on a raised platform stood the deputy warden. Trusties passed along between the rows of men, dishing out boiled potatoes, bread, water, a thick gravy and coffee. There was not a word spoken during the meal.

At a signal from the deputy, the men got up and started marching to the shops by companies. When I reached the door I was pulled out of the line and told to go to sick call. The doctor doped me up and I was then sent after my bucket, upon which was painted a number corresponding to my cell number, and told to

go to my cell. At noon I was sent to the dining-room early and had more potatoes, some spoiled meat, gravy, bread and water. At night I went through the same performance as on the previous night.

I followed this routine for three days, when upon returning to my cell one morning I found my new clothes and shoes. A guard later came to my cell and told me to change my clothes and come to the office, bringing the old clothes with me. The new ones fitted nicely and I was glad to get shoes that did not hurt me so much. I took the old clothes to the office and was then questioned as to what kind of work I had done. The deputy asked me if I could sing and I told him that I had sung in a church choir.

Finally he told me he would assign me to the shop where they made garden tools and that my cell would be changed that day so I would be among the men working in that particular shop. I was then taken to the prison photograph gallery and photographed again, profile and front view. This time they hung a little steel frame around my neck and inserted some numbers in it so that my prison number would show in the pictures. I did not know what this number was but when I was taken to my new cell I saw the number 7246 printed on a card and stuck in a holder on the door and I knew that it was I. The next afternoon I was taken to the shower baths and made to bathe.

The next day was Sunday and after breakfast we went to church in the prison chapel, where the chaplain preached to the men. There was a prison choir made

up from among the convicts and they sang very well. They were dressed a little more neatly than the main body of men, wearing in addition to the regular prison clothes, stand-up collars and four-in-hand ties of the same dark material as their shirts. Their clothes were made to measure by the prison tailors and they were allowed to wear regular shoes such as are for sale in any store.

Sunday we were given a better dinner, including a piece of pie. A Bible had been left in my cell and I spent most of the afternoon reading it.

CHAPTER XIX

MONDAY morning I went to work with the men in the wood-working shop. I was put at work on the sander, smoothing down handles for garden tools. I had to sand a certain number a day as a "task." Somehow the work was not hard for me and I began to take more of an interest in my surroundings.

The shop guard sat up at one end of the room on a raised platform where he could see the whole shop. The foreman for the contractors who hire the labor from the State took a liking to me and I did not have a great deal to do. The silent system was in force in the prison and we were not allowed to speak to each other. If we even wanted a drink of water, we had to raise an arm in the air and get the keeper's nod of assent before we could leave our work. On visiting days when outsiders were shown through the prison the convicts were not supposed to look up from their work. Our keeper often came down from the platform and walked around the shop, stopping for a few words with some of the men. He spent considerable time talking to me and I grew to like him as much as was possible under the circumstances.

Friday nights we always found clean underclothing,

shirts and socks in a bundle in our cells. Each separate piece was stamped with our number, as were our clothing and shoes. Saturday mornings we carried out our soiled clothing in a bundle on our way to breakfast and dropped the bundle onto a big pile in the corridor.

Every Saturday each company was taken separately to the bath house, which was fitted up with enough showers to accommodate a whole company. There each man was compelled to bathe thoroughly under the watchful eye of his guard.

After I had been there a few weeks, I was put in the choir and had two evenings a week for choir practice. The members of the choir were allowed to talk to each other at these meetings which were held in the big, gloomy chapel and were always in charge of the deputy warden. The organist was a young man serving a life sentence for killing his wife with a flatiron. The nine men in the choir included all kinds of criminals.

A few days after entering the choir I obtained permission to attend prayer meeting and this gave me two other evenings a week out of my cell. I had always cared a great deal for music and even the chance to sing hymns at the prayer meetings meant a great deal to me. Many of the men who attended these meetings were sincere in their professions of faith. To hear some of those old men who had been there for ten or fifteen years stand up and tell of the peace which God had put into their hearts would bring tears to the eyes of any one with any knowledge of sorrow whatever.

The little fellow who had stood at my door the night

of my arrival was the shipping clerk in my shop and a trusty. He was doing a life sentence for murder and had been in prison fourteen years. Evenings he delivered the second-class mail to the cells.

After I had been at work a while I was put to helping him in the shipping room. There was no guard in this room although old Pete came in every hour or so and looked around.

Charlie, for that was the name of the little trusty with whom I worked, was very good to me, slipping many a paper and magazine into my cell evenings.

Shortly after my arrival at the prison, the letters my mother had written, together with those from Fay, Ed and Jack, were given to me.

Mother had become very sympathetic and was sorry that she had let me go to prison. Fay wrote very nicely and told me she would "wait for me until I got out." Jack wrote a very righteous letter, saying he hoped I would profit by the lesson. He expressed surprise at what he called my vicious conduct. This was the thanks I received for spending my money on him. Ed wrote in cheerful vein and promised to come and see me before long.

I was allowed to write one four-page letter a week. The first I wrote was to Mother, telling her how I was getting along. I also wrote to Ed the first chance I had. Mother sent me some magazines and promised to send more every month, which she did.

Each man in prison was given a plug and a half of chewing tobacco each week. These plugs were very

small and made up in the prison. My craving for cigarettes was terrible and finally I began chewing tobacco. We were not allowed to smoke anything, although some of the men obtained cigarette papers and smoking tobacco via the "underground route," which was worked through the free foreman and drivers for the contractors. These men lived outside the prison walls and some of them could be bribed to bring in stuff. There was considerable silver money in circulation inside the prison unknown to the officials. This money was sneaked in through the free men by relatives and friends outside.

The convicts were shaved weekly by the prison barbers who came through the shops with their kits.

Shortly after I came into prison Charlie gave me a Prudential calendar, showing all the days, weeks and months of that year and the succeeding one. I hung this calendar on the wall of my cell, and each night as I came in from work I marked off the day which had just passed. I had figured out my "good time" allowance and found that I would be released in September of the following year if I behaved myself.

The men who had money on deposit in the front office were once a month allowed to buy, through a purchasing agent, a few things on what was called purchasing day. This was always a great event. We were allowed to purchase liquorice, soap, toilet articles, certain musical instruments, music and a few other things.

Charlie, who received a few dollars each month from the contractors, had considerable money saved and pur-

chased several little articles for me. Also on Sundays he would manage to get an extra piece of pie which he would cut up and slip through my cell door.

One day I was called to the office and found Ed there. I was glad to see him and we visited for an hour, a guard being in the room with us, but not always within hearing. I asked Ed what was going to happen to me when I got out as I was afraid that the other E—— people and the Chicago people would get me. He said he would write to Mother about it. He told me in parting that he was glad to see such an improvement in me.

The Summer was one long period of suffering from the heat. Sundays especially were terrible as we had to stay in our cells most of the day. Many a Sunday afternoon I have stripped and, spreading a newspaper on the floor, have lain there all afternoon with my head close to the holes in the cell door, trying to get a breath of fresh air.

Late in the Fall of that year I began to be affected by the prayer meetings and began to read and study my Bible in a thorough manner. Every night since entering the prison, I had kneeled down and asked God to help me, to bless my folks and those around me. My suffering and the lesson of those about me was beginning to have an effect.

I had to wage a constant warfare against the vermin in the cell and many a night I have been wakened by the rats running across my face. I did not sleep well, anyway. On one side of me slept a nigger lifer

who had killed a white girl and on the other side was a man sent up for highway robbery. I have been wakened many a night by the screams of the nigger when he would see in his dreams the face of the girl he had killed. There were many in my section of the cell block who in their dreams would hear things and see things out of their pasts. Once in a while some poor devil would go insane. Usually the attack would come on at night, and in the noise of getting him out every one would wake up. Then there would be howling and yelling and cursing from the awakened convicts.

Then again there would be evenings when things would not be so bad. We were allowed to read or play certain musical instruments every evening until eight thirty, when the lights went out. It was surprising to see the number of men who loved music and who played some instrument. We had a violinist on our gallery who was one of the finest musicians I have ever heard. There was also a lifer who played the cello. For ten years he had lived crowded into that little tiny cell with his cello. He played beautifully, and many an evening when he was playing I have heard the others gradually cease playing until there was no other sound in the place. Even the guards were still. Many a time since have I paid three dollars to hear playing that could nowhere near equal his.

Charlie told me one day that he had often seen the old fellow sitting there in his cell playing and the tears rolling down his cheeks. Charlie said he always seemed to be talking to God through his music.

Often in the still hours of the night I have heard some one sobbing in his cell in an agony of repentance or hopelessness. The night sounds in a prison are terrifying, and after all it is not strange that so many of the convicts go insane.

The days dragged along slowly until Christmas, when we were given an extra good dinner. In the afternoon the men were turned loose in the corridors and allowed to laugh and talk with each other. That night the guard unlocked my cell door and Charlie slipped in a package wrapped with newspaper. In this package was half a fried chicken, half a mince pie and three doughnuts. It was the only decent meal I had in all those months. He would never tell me where or how he obtained it.

Mother sent me two handkerchiefs for Christmas and Mary sent me a little book of quotations from different authors.

I spent a great deal of time evenings, marking and underlining with red ink many verses in my Bible.

The first of April it became noised among the men that we were to have a new warden. The old one had never bothered me any, but some of the men hated him.

April the tenth a new warden was appointed and after he took charge prison life took on a better aspect.

That night when the men were locked in their cells an awful din arose. The convicts began beating their wash basins and cups on the cell doors and howled, whistled and sang until the place was a bedlam. It was their way of showing their joy over the resigna-

tion of the old warden. One of the first things the new warden did was to grant a half holiday every Saturday in the big prison yard. We were also allowed to have smoking materials in our cells, although cigarettes were barred. A committee of convicts was to be selected by the chaplain to work with the warden for the betterment of the men.

Never as long as I live will I forget that first Saturday on the lawn. For fifteen months I had not set foot on the soil, always walking on wood, iron, stone or cement. When we marched out of the dining-hall that bright, sunny afternoon and the company ranks were broken at the edge of the lawn I was actually afraid to step on the grass. When I did step on to it, my knees bent under me and I dropped down full length and buried my face in the lawn and thanked God. I noticed hundreds of others doing the same thing.

Shortly after this happened I had a letter from Mother in which she said she was paying up all my bills and was trying to get me out, but that it would take a long time. I did not have much hope, though, that she would be able to do anything.

In addition to my choir work I was now teaching a class two nights a week in the convict night school. It was pitiful to see big, grown men trying to learn long division.

One day while talking to Charlie I mentioned the fact that I did not know what I would do when I got out, as I would only have a few dollars coming from the State. He said he was going to transfer ten dollars.

from his account to mine so that I would have something. He did this a few days later.

During the first part of May I was returning one evening from choir practice and in starting down the steps to the cell house I noticed that the wooden doors which opened out on to the big lawn inside the prison walls were open, but the outer steel-barred doors were pulled to and locked. Through the bars I could see the moonlight on the lawn, and I stepped over to the door where the night guard stood and asked him if I could look out. He said "Sure," and I pressed my face close to the bars. For the first time in sixteen months I saw the moon riding high in the heavens. There was a soft spring breeze blowing and the smell of growing things and freshly turned earth put new life into me. I stood there for five minutes taking deep breaths of the delicious air, and it seemed so hard to believe that only those few bars stood between me and freedom.

And to this day, whenever I become gloomy and discontented with my lot, I have only to remember standing at that prison door that night, shut in from all enjoyment of nature and God's own fresh air, to immediately realize that I should be thankful that I am now free to enjoy these things.

A few days after this the Pardon Board met at the prison and while they were in session I was called over to the office. I hurried over, not knowing what was wanted. When I reached the deputy's office he asked me what I wanted and I told him that I had not

sent in a request to see him. He said there must have been some mistake and sent me back to the shops. In going through the hall leading from the office I noticed three men visitors talking to one of the guards.

The next morning I was working with Charlie in the shipping-room, when I was again ordered to the office.

I hurried over, and when I reached the office found the deputy warden and another official waiting. The deputy looked at me and said, "Robert, I have some news for you." This was the only time he had ever addressed me by my first name, and I was more surprised at that than at the rest of his remark. I stammered out, "What is it, sir?" and he laughed and said, "I guess we will have to let you go home. The Governor signed your pardon last night." I dropped to the floor in a faint and when they brought me to, I began to laugh and cry alternately. It did not seem possible that it could be true.

The deputy took me to the tailor shop and they outfitted me with a black suit, a soft hat, a white shirt and collar and a black necktie. The shoes I was wearing were good enough.

While these clothes were being pressed, I obtained permission to go back to the shop and say good-bye to the keeper and Charlie. The keeper shook hands and wished me luck.

Out in the back room I took both of Charlie's hands in mine and told him the news. The tears came into his eyes and he told me he was glad I was free. Then putting his arm around my neck, he kissed me on the

cheek, and so I left one of the best friends I ever had. He, too, was pardoned a few years later.

I then returned to my cell and gathered together what few treasures I had there, among them my Bible and the calendar upon which I had marked off the days as they passed. I kept that calendar locked up in the safety deposit vault among my papers until only a few months ago.

After I had put on my new clothes I was taken up the winding stair to the guard room, where I said good-bye to the chaplain, and then after over sixteen months the same guard threw open the big door and I walked out a free man. The clang of that big door's closing sounded joyous to me at this time.

I went to the warden's office, where I received the ten dollars in cash which the State gives the convicts when they are released, all the things I had left there upon entering and the money remaining to my credit, which amounted to about fourteen dollars. This included the ten dollars Charlie had transferred to my account; in addition the warden gave me fifteen dollars as a reward for my services in the choir and handed me a telegram from Ed saying he would be there at two o'clock and instructing me to wait at the boarding-house across the street from the prison. I shook hands with the warden and walked out of the big front door and down the steps.

The scene as I stood there on the sidewalk comes back to me now. It was nearly noon, and the sun shone very brightly. Down the street I could see an

electric car. Two boys were riding bicycles across the street and a little girl was sitting on the steps of the boarding-house playing with a kitten.

I walked slowly down the walk and across the street to the boarding-house. It seemed somehow that I could not walk easily. My steps lagged and I was afraid to move. When I stepped into the boarding-house office the man behind the little desk asked me what he could do for me. I told him I wanted dinner and expected a friend on the two o'clock train. He told me to make myself comfortable and that dinner would be ready soon. I went out on the steps and sat down. Just then the foreman of the prison contract put his head out of the door of the company's office across the street and called to me to come over. I went over and he shook hands with me and took me to the cashier, who gave me a ten-dollar gold piece for "luck," as the foreman said.

Then the company's secretary came out of his private office and said I had to eat with him over at the boarding-house. I had talked with him in the prison many times, and liked him very much.

So I went to dinner with him and at the table with us sat two of the prison guards in their uniforms. They called me by name and talked with me just as if I had never been a convict. It seemed so strange to be sitting there eating at the same table with them. I could not eat much; every mouthful seemed to choke me, and I wanted to raise my hand each time before I spoke to the others.

After lunch the secretary gave me a cigar and sat with me on the steps for a long time. Shortly after he left, Ed came down the street on a run and when he came up to me he threw both arms around me, he seemed so pleased to see me free.

He told me that Mother had squared up all my other troubles and that Father wanted me to come home and had sent him twenty-five dollars for me. He also said that Mother had done most of the work toward getting my pardon, but that Father had obtained the signature of the governor of our own State to the application for the pardon.

Ed took me down town and I bought a suit of clothes, a hat and some other things out of the twenty-five dollars Father had sent me.

I can remember how afraid I was to cross the busy streets, thinking I would surely be run over. I was just like a little child in some ways that day.

Seeing that I was completely tired out with all the excitement, Ed suggested that we get a room at the hotel and rest for the balance of the day. We not only did this, but also decided later to remain there all night.

Before going to bed that night Ed and I kneeled down beside the bed and thanked God for my release and asked for help for me in the new life.

In the morning we got up early and I bought a ticket home via Chicago. Ed and I both cried when we said good-bye.

I reached Chicago late in the afternoon and the first

thing I did was to buy cigarettes. Then I tried to find Fay, but she had moved.

The balance of the time until my train left I spent in walking the streets and in getting a good meal. Every time a person looked at me I imagined that he could notice the prison smell or that my pallor told where I had been. I did not get over this feeling for several days.

Somehow my supper did not taste good to me, although it was as good as money could buy.

I bought a berth in the Pullman that night and never knew a thing until the porter woke me in the morning. I rode out home on a street car, and, arriving at the house, walked around to the back door.

CHAPTER XX

I KNOCKED and soon a little tot opened the door. I asked her if Mrs. — was at home. She said "Yes, sir," and then I asked the little one if she would call her. The little tot stood looking at me a minute and then said, "You are my bruvver," and held out her arms to me. I dropped to my knees and gathered her into my arms with the tears running down my cheeks and thus my mother found us.

Mother cried a great deal and called me "her boy." She said I looked pale and sick and she made me sit down to the table and eat something, the little sister insisting on sitting on my knee while I ate. Mother 'phoned my father that I was home and he came out at the lunch hour. He was very severe and stern, but told me he was glad to see me home at last. Mary was in the hospital recovering from an operation and Father told me to come to his office during the afternoon and he would take me to the hospital.

I went to his office that afternoon, and as we passed out of the building he told me to walk a few steps behind him. He did not say why, but I knew why. I did look like a jail bird all right with my pale, sallow face and furtive air. But I think when he told me to walk behind him that he undid right there most of the good my serving time had done me.

I walked along behind him until we were out of the business district, and then he motioned for me to come up beside him. The rest of the way he talked to me and told me he was going to give me a chance to make a man out of myself. I was still smarting from the command to walk like a dog at his heel and I am afraid that his talk did not do me much good. I had already made up my mind not to do anything more that would take me behind the bars again.

At the hospital Mary said she was glad to see me and hoped I would be a good boy from then on. She looked at me with a great deal of curiosity while I was there, just as if I was some strange kind of an animal. I did not remain long at the hospital but hurried home.

That night I sat out on the front porch looking up at the sky counting the stars, and God knows I was sincere in my resolutions to begin life anew. It seemed so good to be free to breathe the fresh air, to walk and run as I wanted to and not to see any stone walls or iron bars.

After I had fallen asleep that night, I woke up to find Mother standing beside my bed. She was holding a lighted lamp in her hand and looking down at me. I asked her then never to bring a light into my room after I had fallen asleep and explained to her why I could not stand it. And to this day, if any one brings a light into my bedroom while I am asleep, it wakes me and my first thought is "The Night Guard," and I nearly always dream that night that I am again back in prison.

For the next few days I lay around home resting and eating three square meals a day.

In the mornings when I wakened from a good night's sleep my first thought would be, "I wonder how soon that gong will ring?" Then I would miss the sounds to which I had become accustomed and instead would hear the birds in the trees outside my window. Then I would hear Mother moving around downstairs and I would know that I was free at last.

The greater part of my time for the next few days was spent in getting acquainted with my little sister. The reaction experienced in coming from prison life to home life, the change in diet and surroundings, had a tendency to upset my whole system. After resting for a week, I began doing a little work around home.

CHAPTER XXI

ONE morning I was at work in the basement, and happening to glance out of the window, I noticed a beautiful young girl coming across the lawn. I heard her come into the house, where she sat talking to Mother for some little time. After she left Mother told me she was one of the girls in the neighborhood and that she came to the house quite often.

A few days later Mother introduced us and I fell head over heels in love with her the moment I met her. She was the purest, sweetest-looking girl I had ever seen, and her accent, owing to her Southern birth, was the quaintest thing I had ever heard. She seemed to take an immediate liking to me and we became good friends in a short time.

A day or so later I went over to C—— and found that Maud was working in a department store. I went up to see her and she treated me very coolly. I asked her what was the matter and she said that upon receipt of the letter I had written after leaving her she had suffered a relapse and had been taken to the hospital. She told me that it was best that we should not see each other again.

I saw her only once after that day in the store.

I also called on the salary loan man and he was glad to see me, because I still owed him thirty dollars. He persuaded me to give him a note for fifty dollars and returned my old note. I agreed to pay him two dollars a week on the new note as soon as I obtained work.

After I had been home two weeks one of the neighbors offered me a position at nine dollars a week working in his warehouse. I went to work on a Monday and lasted just ten days. There was a lot of heavy lifting to do and I could not stand it. On the day I was taken sick and had to quit work, one of the girls who lived across the street from our house gave a party for me. I had been dreading it, as I did not feel like meeting a lot of people. I seemed to feel as if people, by talking with me, might find out where I had been. During my stay in prison Mother had told the neighbors I was down East. My being taken sick while at work gave me a good excuse for not being present at the party. The girl who was giving it never forgave me for this.

A few days after this, I obtained a temporary position in a railway office making out checks in the pay-roll department.

While engaged at this work, I heard of an opening in a wholesale hardware house, and applied for the position. When asked for references I gave the one or two I had kept from my former positions in C—— and also gave the name of the secretary of the prison contractor at M——, and the same day wrote him asking him to help me get the start.

I was put to work at once as an assistant bookkeeper. For two weeks I worked at this when one day the President of the company, a so-called Christian man, called me into his private office. He informed me that he had heard where I had been and that, while he had at first decided to let me go, still he would keep me on if I would consent to a decrease in salary. He was then paying me twelve dollars a week and wanted to cut it to ten. I told him that I would be willing to stay at the reduced salary and would endeavor to show him I was worthy of his confidence; and in this way this God-fearing man took advantage of my misfortune and saved two dollars a week on his payroll.

I kept on with my work that Summer, as the firm was a big one and I was willing to put up with anything in order to get a start.

In the early Fall another one of our neighbors who owned a factory in the city asked me if I would like to work for him. I jumped at the chance, and while this Mr. K—— told me he would not hire me away from the hardware people, yet he would have a place for me any time I was free to accept it. I immediately gave notice at the hardware house and they offered to raise my salary, but I refused to remain.

A few days later I went to work in Mr. K——'s factory as bookkeeper. His business was a good one and a little out of the ordinary. He was a self-made man in every sense of the word and one of the squarest men who ever lived.

He was a hard worker, and always willing to show

me how to do anything around the office. In the office was a young girl named Carrie, who did the stenographic work. She was a pretty little dark-eyed girl, an orphan, and lived with an aunt.

The factory employed about thirty people, and my work kept me very busy. Mr. K—— trusted me implicitly with everything. He was a man who managed to keep all the details of the business at his fingers' ends without much effort, and occasionally he would go over the books with me. He was an inveterate cigarette smoker and told me to smoke all I wanted to in the office. I took advantage of this permission and was soon smoking on an average of ten cigarettes a day. Mr. K—— paid me ten dollars a week and soon increased this to twelve dollars.

During the Fall and Winter I saw Jean, the girl with whom I had fallen in love, quite often, and went to call on her at her home a few times.

CHAPTER XXII

IN January of the next year, I wrote to Fay's old address and in a few days received a reply from her. We corresponded for a couple of weeks and then I decided to go down to Chicago, Mr. K—— having said I could have a three days' vacation. I wrote to Fay and told her I was coming and where I would stop. Shortly after my arrival in Chicago she called me up and said she was in the drug store across the street and would come up to the hotel parlor. She came over a few minutes later and met me in the parlor, looking just as she had the last time I had seen her, over two years before.

The first thing she told me was of her marriage a year previous, but she said that need not make any difference in our relations. I can remember being a little surprised at this, because I had always believed that a wife should be true to her husband. Fay said she knew of a place where we could go and get a few drinks without any one seeing us. We went over there immediately and obtained a small private dining-room and ordered a drink.

For nearly a year I had been voluntarily decent, keeping away from drink and trying to make a man out of myself; but after Fay and I had had a few drinks

I forgot my good resolutions entirely. The liquor had considerable effect on both of us. Fay said that it was the first time she had "broken away" since her marriage, and went on to tell me what a shrimp she had married and how he ran around with other women.

We had lunch, and then Fay asked me to come out to her flat. I can remember our climbing the steps at the elevated station, and how hard it was for us to keep from falling down, as we were both well under the influence of liquor.

Fay's flat was on the first floor of a flat building on the north side. When we went into her flat, she slipped the chain bolt on the door so that if "Hubby" came home he could not get in until she unfastened it.

About five o'clock in the afternoon, just as I was getting ready to leave, we happened to look out of the window and saw a young man coming to the door. Fay said it was her husband and that I must skip out the back way. I grabbed my overcoat and hat and she let me out, at the same time telling me to come again the next morning at nine o'clock.

As I was coming out of the turnstile gate at the L station near her home the next morning, I saw her husband coming up the street. I stepped into a news store and bought a morning paper and stood in the shop reading it while he went by. I don't know what made me wait, but about a minute afterward he passed the store again going in the direction of his home. I remained in the store about five minutes longer until he

came past again and went up the steps to the elevated station. This time I watched until a city-bound train pulled out and then I walked slowly to the flat.

I remained there until noon and then took Fay down town to lunch. After lunch we went back to the flat, where I remained until four o'clock, talking over old times. Finally I told her good-bye and promised to come to Chicago again soon.

The next day when I reached home, Mr. K—— told me that my eyes looked like burnt holes in a blanket.

Mr. K—— had raised my salary to fifteen dollars January first, and I was saving a few dollars. My love for Jean had kept me pretty well straightened up with the exception of my trip to Chicago. She was a good girl in every respect, and while I had never told her that I loved her, yet she seemed to know that I thought a great deal of her.

About this time I joined my mother's church, and as Jean was also a member there we attended services together nearly every Sunday evening.

In the latter part of February my sister Mary, Jean and I went to Chicago to attend the opera. We reached Chicago in the morning and after taking the girls to a hotel and promising to return at five o'clock, I went to meet Fay. We had a few drinks and went out to her flat, where I remained until nearly five o'clock.

When I returned to the hotel I dressed for dinner and went to meet the girls. When I saw Jean standing there in the hotel parlor, looking so sweet and innocent, I was thoroughly ashamed of what I had done that day,

and vowed to myself that I would never see Fay again. I kept that vow.

That night at the opera I sat beside Jean, and the beautiful music of "The Magic Flute" seemed to weave a spell over us. Unconsciously our hands met in the semi-darkness, and when the curtain went down I realized that her hand had been clasped in mine for several moments. I can remember the blush which spread over her face and neck, and how she would not look at me for a long time. I was happy that night, happier than I had ever been.

June saw me in Chicago again, on business for Mr. K—— this time. I remained several days, but kept away from Fay. While in the city I received my first letter from Jean, and immediately answered it. She had promised to write to me and her letter helped me to keep straight. It was a simple, friendly little note, yet she had written it, and for that reason it meant much to me. My love for her was entirely different from that which I had had for Maud.

Jean was only seventeen years of age, and the pet of her father. I felt deep in my heart that I did not dare to tell her of my love on account of the fact that I was an ex-convict. This thought bothered me more and more as the days passed, and I began to brood over it. And then, for the first time since leaving the penitentiary, I began to feel hopeless. It seemed more than I could bear, to think that I could not marry a decent woman and have little children of my own. Somehow I did not feel that it would be right to marry a good

girl, because our children might grow up some day to hear some other child say, "Your father was a convict." Yet I kept on going to see her and getting deeper in love.

About this time a young girl relative of ours came to visit us. She was a very odd girl, and had made her father and mother a great deal of trouble. Her parents were very wealthy and she had been well educated, especially along musical lines. She was of a very passionate nature and full of the devil.

One evening she asked me to take her slumming and I did so. We both drank considerable in the different resorts and she seemed to enjoy herself immensely.

While we were down in the slums she asked me to get a room in a lodging house and I was just drunk enough to do it.

After the old hag had shown us up to the room and I had closed the door I stood looking at my companion. She was taking off her hat when she saw my look of surprise. She hesitated just a moment and then, putting the pins back into her hat, said: "Come on, you fool, we'll go home."

On the way home she sulked, and I asked her what was the matter, and she told me I was a chump and that at that we were only distant relatives.

It was very late when we reached home and she took off her shoes in the hall and sneaked upstairs. The house was full of company and I was sleeping on a couch in the library down stairs. I lay awake a long time thinking that perhaps after all I was not the only

wicked one on earth, yet in the next few days I came to think an awful lot of this girl and was sorry to see her go back home.

CHAPTER XXIII

ONE Saturday morning one of the neighbor's boys and I rented a rig and Mary and Jean having put up a nice lunch we drove out to a nearby lake on a fishing trip. We fished until noon and then ate our lunch out under the trees. After lunch the girls lay down under a tree and the other fellow and myself went for a stroll.

When we returned the girls were lying asleep under the tree. Jean had on a plain black dress, made with a little square Dutch neck. She was lying on her left side, with her head resting on one outstretched arm. A ray of sunlight shining down through the treetops rested on her face and hair. As I stood there looking at her, it seemed as though the One Great Love which comes to most men at some time in their lives, had come into my heart. It was a pure, unselfish love, and I felt that I would give my life to make her happy. I forgot all about prison and the life I had led and thought only of my love for her.

And although I have loved and been loved by many women since that day, yet I know that a pure, unselfish God-given love seldom comes to any man more than once. The second and other loves are usually founded on either passion, loneliness or a desire for wealth.

As I stood there, she opened her eyes and looked into mine, and I knew that she knew what was in my heart and that she did not find it unwelcome. She jumped up, and arousing my sister we four spent the afternoon roaming through the woods.

During the ride home through the moonlight, Jean and I occupied the back seat in the carriage. We did not talk much, seeming to be contented in enjoying the beautiful night. I wanted to take her in my arms, but did not dare to, and somehow I was unable to tell her what I wanted to.

When we reached her home and I helped her out of the carriage she seemed to be a little displeased over something, but said she had had a beautiful time and whispered to me to come over the next evening.

I was afraid to call on her the next evening, for I knew that I would tell her of my love, so, sending my sister over to tell her that I could not come until the following evening, I went for a long walk alone. I wanted a chance to fight this thing out with myself and to kill it once and for all, as I thought I was doing wrong. When I reached home, late that night, I had decided to give her up for her own sake and to sacrifice my love.

Early the next evening she came over to our house and I walked home with her in the moonlight. When we reached her home she invited me to sit down with her on a rustic bench out on one side of the lawn.

I had been very quiet during our walk, and after we sat down she asked me what the trouble was. I told

her I was feeling a little blue and had been working hard that day. She sympathized with me and tried to cheer me up.

Dressed in a simple white gown, with her hair brushed straight back from her forehead, she was more beautiful to me that night than ever before.

I sat there looking down into her eyes for a few moments, and then, before I knew it, I was telling her of my love for her. She waited until I was through talking, and then, placing her hands in mine, said, "I love you, Bob. I always have." There were tears in her eyes when she held her lips up to mine, and that first kiss seemed to blot out all my past and give me something to live for. She sat there with her head on my shoulder and her hands clasped in mine for a long time, and the thought came to me that surely God had forgiven me my sins and would yet give me a place among men.

That night I could not sleep, and I lay awake until dawn planning for the future.

When I passed her house on my way to the car line in the morning she was sitting on the porch. She came down the walk to me, her face radiant with happiness, and walked with me to the car.

That Summer was the happiest of my life, and we were together nearly every evening. Mornings she would walk to the car with me, putting her arm through mine as soon as we were out of sight of her house.

CHAPTER XXIV

IN September I was offered a chance to buy an interest in a retail store in the city, and while I only had a few dollars saved, I took the time to look into the proposition. It required an investment of five hundred dollars more than I had saved, and I told Mr. K—— one day in the office how I wished I had five hundred dollars more. He laughed and said, "Want to marry the little girl and go into business, don't you?" I told him yes, but that I did not want to leave his employ. Then he told me that if I knew of any one who would loan me the money on my note, he would endorse the note. I knew an old Jew who was a customer of ours, and that night I went down to see him at his store. He said that he would loan me the money on my note if Mr. K—— would endorse the note, but that he would have to charge me eight per cent. interest and a bonus of twenty dollars.

The next day I told Mr. K—— that I had a friend who would loan the money on his endorsement. He pulled a blank note out of a drawer, and writing his signature across the bottom of it he handed it to me, saying, "That is what I think of you, Bob. You have been a faithful worker and I am sorry to lose you." That noon I filled out the note to the Jew and received

the four hundred and eighty dollars and a promise from him that he would not tell Mr. K—— that he had the note. He was one of Mr. K——'s customers and I was afraid he would not like my going to him for the money.

That afternoon the papers were signed and the money paid over to the retail people. I was made treasurer of the firm and taken to their bank and arrangements made for me to handle the financial end of the business and to sign all checks.

There was one active partner with me in the business and one silent partner. We each owned one-third of the capital invested. I had looked over the books, which showed an undivided profit of six hundred dollars, and as the retiring partner was a good church member, I did not take an inventory, but thought, after looking over the stock, that it would come to about the amount they claimed.

That night I told my folks about my new venture. Father did not act very enthusiastic, but Mother was greatly pleased.

Jean went into raptures over the news, and I know that both of us were thinking of marriage that night as we sat in the hammock.

For the next few days I was very busy with my new work, and I was very enthusiastic over its possibilities. Most of my evenings were spent with Jean, and I began to think more seriously of marriage. Her father was a retired business man and very wealthy. Both he and

his wife had taken a great liking to me but I was afraid that when I came to ask for Jean he would say that I was too poor to marry his daughter.

During all these days the old fear and dread that my past life would become known had not bothered me so much, but when I came to think of asking Jean to marry me it all came back a thousand fold. Night after night I lay awake wondering if I should tell her the whole story before I asked her to marry me.

Finally I decided that it was my duty toward her to tell her. I was twenty-four years of age at this time and old enough to know what I was doing.

One Sunday morning, on the way home from church, I told her I wanted to take her for a walk that evening and discuss something with her.

That night I called for her and we walked north to the edge of the city and out along a country road under the trees. It was a typical October evening, a little chilly and just the kind of a night I loved, with the wind blowing the dead leaves across the road.

After we had left the city behind us I told Jean that I was going to tell her several things that would hurt her a great deal and asked her not to say a word to me until I was all through.

Then I began with my coming to C—— years before and told her everything that had happened, but leaving out all reference to the girls I had known. I told her all about my having been in prison and all that I had been through. Then I told her that I loved her with

all my heart and soul, that she had changed my whole life and that I worshipped even the ground on which she walked.

Then I asked her to marry me, but told her not to give me any answer until she had had time to think it all over. I told her frankly and brutally that some day my past might come out and if she had married me people might point to her and say, "There goes that ex-convict's wife"; that our children, if we had any, might hear other little ones say to them some day, "Your father is a convict," and refuse to play with them. I painted the future in the blackest possible colors, so that she might never say that I had not warned her.

Then I told her I was going away for five days and that at the end of that time I would look for a letter from her at the store telling me yes or no. I told her that it was best for her to write the answer so that my presence could not have any influence over her when she gave it.

During all this time we had continued our walk and when I was through talking we were standing in the road at the top of a hill. I turned to her and saw she was sobbing and that her cheeks were wet with tears.

I can remember turning with her so that the moonlight shone full upon her and asking her to look at me. She lifted her head and looked straight into my eyes, with what seemed to me all the love on earth. Then she threw both arms around my neck and kissed me, whispering, "Bobbie, Bobbie," and would not let me go. We

stood there a few minutes, her cheek against mine and the cool wind blowing her hair across my face.

On the way home she did not say much, except that she did not want me to go away even for a few days. She asked me to come to her on the fifth day and hear her answer right from her own lips, but I told her that the other way was best.

When I kissed her good-bye that night I did not know for certain that I would ever hold her in my arms again. She clung to me and kissed me again and again, and at last I had to use a little force to release myself from her embrace.

The next night I went to Chicago on business connected with the store and did not return for five days.

The afternoon of the day I returned I received a special delivery letter at the store. My hand shook so that I could not open it until I had bowed my head on the desk and asked God to grant that it contained good news. Here is her letter:

My dearest boy:

At last these five long days without you have passed. This week has been dreadful, and so you could think for an instant that I could put you out of my life! You don't know how I have missed you. Still I have known all the time that you were wise in insisting upon my taking plenty of time to think.

And I have thought deeply and earnestly. I don't believe that there has been a moment since I saw you

Sunday evening when I have not been thinking of you — my own dear, dear love.

Before Sunday it seemed to me that I loved you all I could but now I love you a thousand times more and I think that a thousand fold the respect and honor is due you. How glad I am that you told me, for I long to share your sorrows as well as your joys and it is not with the slightest hesitation but with gladness that I give you the keeping of my life in the future — “for better, for worse, for richer or poorer, till death do us part” and I do not believe it will end there. And I will be only too willing to go with you wherever you think best.

I am waiting for you to come to me. Surely you know now that I love you — I love you.

Yours forever,

JEAN.

It was dark when I reached her home and she was waiting. As I came up the walk she met me, holding out her hands to me. I gathered her into my arms and held her, while she cried with her face hidden in my shoulder.

She told me that night that there had not been any doubt that she would marry me, even while I had been telling her the blackest part of my story.

We talked over the question of my telling her father about my past life and decided not to do so. That night I took away with me a little ring which she had worn for years and the next day bought an engagement

ring costing a hundred and fifty dollars. I ran into debt a hundred dollars for this.

When I gave her the ring that evening she told me to place it on her finger with a wish and I did so. I asked her where her father was and she took me in to him and then slipped out of the room. The old gentleman laid down his paper and asked me how I was getting along. I told him, and then asked him for Jean. This took him by surprise, although he smiled a little.

He told me she was too young to marry and that he wanted her to wait two years longer. He said that he had no objections to me and that he was willing she should marry me at the end of that time. I asked him if he had any objections to our becoming engaged, and he said he had not, providing we would promise not to get any foolish notions into our heads regarding a runaway marriage. I thanked him and then went to her mother, who gave us her blessing and said she believed we were suited to each other. Of course, Jean and I were terribly disappointed over her father's decision, but she told me to cheer up, that she would be able to bring him around to our way of thinking in no time.

When I told my folks about it that night they were both pleased, although Father looked at me rather queerly. He came into my room late in the night and asked me if I had told Jean about my past life and I said, "Yes." Then he asked me if I had told her father and I answered that I had not. He sat on the edge of my bed without saying anything for a few minutes, and then said, "You will have to tell him some

time." He seemed to think that I should have told her father that evening.

In the first part of December my partner asked me to go to a "house of call" and help him collect a bill which the landlady owed us. I went with him and, as is customary, he ordered a few bottles of beer. While we were sitting there a girl came in and sat down on the couch beside me. We had a few more drinks and before I knew it I had my arms around the girl.

This was in the afternoon, and I did not go home until late that night, having forgotten all about Jean for the time being, and in this way a few drinks started me again on the downward road.

For the next few days I was very sorry for what I had done, but it was only a few days later when I again went to see the girl. Within a week I had fallen back into the old life. One night I would be with Jean and the next night at the flat.

This cost money, and soon I was juggling the firm's books and appropriating money for my own use. My partner was a hard drinker and sometimes failed to turn in the money he collected. The business was in a bad shape and I began to put away a few dollars in face of the storm which soon would break.

During December Jean's folks allowed us to have the parlor to ourselves and many times we were alone for the whole evening. A few days before Christmas I went up to the flat. It was late in the afternoon and the girl was not there. I drank considerable and remained for dinner with the landlady. I finally became dis-

gusted with the whole outfit and went out to see Jean.

I was still a little under the influence of liquor when I reached her home. She was all alone in the house. While she noticed a slight odor of liquor upon me she did not say anything, knowing as she did that I took a drink occasionally.

After I had removed my overcoat Jean gave me this letter and told me to go into the library and read it while she changed her gown. The letter was in answer to one I had written the day before and read as follows:

My dearest:

I have just received your letter and oh, I do so wish that right now you could feel and know the depths of the love that I give you.

Such a thought as doubting you never enters my mind. I would truly as soon doubt God himself as to doubt you, so great is my confidence and trust. Please remember this, there is absolutely nothing that could shake my faith even for an instant. I have given my life and heart and my all unreservedly into your keeping and I haven't a shadow of a fear for now or the future. You will always be my lover and I your sweetheart. I no longer worry over the two years we are supposed to wait, for we will do about that as seems best.

What worries me is seeing you grow thin and knowing you don't eat or sleep as you should, the two things that you so sorely need.

Sometimes I am strongly tempted to throw all rea-

son to the winds and go with you now, away somewhere, where we may always be together and when this feeling comes over me I am just as I was Wednesday evening. It takes every bit of self-control I have to do as my common sense tells me is best in many ways. When I was quiet on that evening, I was thinking and longing to do something to stop the ache that seems to be always in your heart. I do love you so much. Far more than you know of, because it is only rarely that I show it to its full extent. Don't think, dear, that I don't want you to talk over your business with me. I never meant that you should get that impression. I always want to share your trials and your sorrows. I don't ever want the smallest thing to come between us and I do want to be your chum and best friend as well as your sweetheart and sometime — your wife. I have given you my implicit confidence and trust and respect. I always doubt others, some more than others, and all but you a little. I would stake my very soul on you and I know it would not be lost.

When you come to-night you shall see that I do love you above everything else.

Please try to eat and sleep. It will break my heart if you don't, for I love you so much. I can't see you get so thin.

If I don't have a chance to mail this I will give it to you to-night. Remember I love you always.

Your own,

LITTLE GIRL.

That letter of Jean's seemed to show me the road I was travelling and I walked out of the library and waited at the foot of the stairs until she came down. I promised her that I would not drink again. After that night I did not go near the "house of call."

There was no excuse for my deviltry, absolutely none while I was engaged to Jean. I have no excuse to offer for it. I loved her without doubt and loved her with a clean love, but it is more than hard for any man who had pampered, fed and gratified his passions as I had done for a number of years to live clean and alone for any length of time. I wanted her for my wife and wanted her in the right way, but after all I was as yet only a child when it came to real love, though I knew it not.

In January I decided to give up my interest in the store. I had seven hundred dollars put away and the business was in bad shape. My partner was drinking heavily and not turning in his collections.

So, telling Jean where I was going for a few days, I left the city and waited for the storm to blow over. I had juggled the books so that no one could untangle them and I knew that there would be some difficulty in fastening the thing on me.

A week later, when I returned to the city, I went to a good lawyer and told him the whole story. He immediately wrote to both the active and silent partners "demanding a settlement of the affair." There were a lot of accusations and counter-accusations on both

sides and we threatened my active partner with arrest for embezzling collections. They claimed that I had wrecked the business and removed some of the books.

Finally they paid me three hundred and eighty dollars for my interest in the business and the good Christian brother who had sold out to me went back to the store and took charge. Long before this, when I had come to fix up the books so no one could understand them, I had found that he had also been doing some "fancy bookkeeping," and that there had been no undivided profits when he sold out to me. So I did not feel very sorry for him when I knew he was to be the one to straighten out the tangle I had left. But I was not to be let off so easily, as later events proved.

For the next few days Jean and I were together all the time. Then I decided to go to Seattle and go into some kind of business. I kept out of Mr. K——'s way during the trouble at the store and was not worrying much about the note, as it did not fall due until the following September.

Jean cried a great deal over my going away, but I told her that it was only that I might make a home for her that I went.

The morning I left, Jean came to the train with my folks and was the last one to kiss me good-bye.

Father thought that I had sold out my interest in the store, so did not object to my going.

CHAPTER XXV.

ON the train I became acquainted with a business man from Toronto, Canada. He was on his way to investigate one of his branch stores at Vancouver. Before he reached Seattle he offered me a position in his Toronto office and made me promise to consider the matter.

I stayed on the Coast two weeks and then decided to go to Toronto. I wrote to the man at Vancouver and he answered immediately, instructing me to be in Toronto in two weeks. I took the train for home, remained there five days and then went on to Toronto. Jean wanted me to stay at home, but somehow I felt that I could not.

For two months I worked in Toronto, earning considerable money. It was a cold, lonesome place, and if it had not been for Jean's letters and telegrams I could not have stood it.

During my stay in Canada, my sister Mary was married to a young man from Chicago and went there to live.

One day I received word in a roundabout way that a receiver had been appointed for our old store. This worried me some, and finally I came home, wiring Jean to meet me in C—. We rode over to B— to

gether and after leaving my bag at home went to her house.

Her father, who was sitting in the library when we came in, looked up at me rather queerly and asked me why I got off the train at C—— instead of coming through to B——. I was a little startled at his question. I had feared that perhaps some one would be looking for me at the train with a warrant, but I told him that I had thought it would be nice for Jean to come over to C—— and ride back with me. The old gentleman made no answer to my remark but looked at me rather strangely.

This was on a Wednesday, and the following day Jean and I were together all day. In the afternoon we took a long walk and when we reached a part of the city not very thickly populated we sat down on the edge of the sidewalk. Jean laid her head on my knee and began to cry. I asked her what was wrong and she said she did not know, she just felt as if something terrible was going to happen. The dear, brave little girl suggested that we go out and get married that afternoon and then nothing could happen to separate us. I told her that I was afraid she would regret it afterwards on account of her folks and finally persuaded her to give up the idea.

On the way home I suggested that we go and visit the penitentiary at D—— the next day. It was only a two hours' ride on the electric car and we could get back early. She looked at me rather strangely when I suggested this, but agreed to go.

The next morning, early, we started out for D——. A guard took us all through the prison and for the first time in her life, Jean had an opportunity to see a lot of convicts. She came near fainting when shown the little cells where the men slept and she clung to me closely for the rest of the trip.

On the car going home she was taken ill, and when we reached home she was utterly exhausted.

After lunch I went over to see her, but was told by her sister, who opened the door, that Jean was sick and could not see me.

I returned home and was reading in the library when her father came to our front door. He was greatly excited over something and asked me to take a walk with him. I put on my hat and we started out. He was breathing very heavily, and when I asked him what was the matter and where we were going, he answered, "To the church, you will see what is the matter."

The church to which both of our families belonged was only three blocks away, and when the old man took me into the pastor's study we found the good man awaiting our arrival.

I began to get scared when I noticed the increasing excitement of Jean's father. We three sat down, and the old man told the pastor that he had some questions that he wanted to ask me and wished him to be present.

He then asked me if I had not been in the penitentiary at E——. I said, "Yes." He asked me if I had not been released owing to the work of the Y. M. C. A. and I answered him that my mother had obtained my

release. He then asked me if I had told Jean of my past life and I answered that I had done so. He would not believe this and I, beginning to get angry, told him that I did not care whether he believed it or not.

Then he went on to tell me how he had traced back my whole history, how I had been going to see the girl in the "house of call." He also said that he had gone over the books left in the store and together with the receiver had found me out to be a crook and a thief. He said that he had had a detective on my trail for weeks and that I would be in jail in a few days.

Then he got up out of his chair and raising his hands above his head, swore in the sight of God that as long as he lived, his daughter should never marry an ex-convict. Then he turned to the pastor and asked him if he thought a pure, innocent young girl should marry me and this noble-minded man of God arose and said, "No, Robert should never expect to marry with a past such as he has." Then the old man told me that Jean never wanted to see me again and that if I did not write to her there in his presence and tell her that I could not marry her because of certain physical reasons which should prevent such a step for all time to come, he would kill me and himself. I refused flatly and told him to go ahead with his killing. He reached behind him with one hand and the worthy minister jumped at him and held him.

I figured that this was a good time for me to go and had started for the door when the pastor called me back, saying there was no telling what the old man would do

and that surely I did not want to have his blood on my head. He went on to say that for the good of all concerned it was best that I write as the old man desired.

So I sat down and wrote as the old man dictated.

This was the most cowardly thing I ever did and I have suffered deeply for it. I wrote as the old man dictated and signed it. Then I wrote across the bottom of the letter, "Dictated by your father." He demanded that I write the letter over and omit that. I told him I would not and walked out of the church.

That evening he came to our house with a big package of letters which I had written to Jean. Handing them to me, together with the engagement ring which I had given Jean, he demanded that I give him the letters she had written me. I told him to call in the morning for them and shut the door in his face.

That night I went over her letters and destroyed all those wherein she had written little things pertaining to our relations. I kept a few of the most precious ones and when the old man came in the morning I gave him the balance.

That morning I told Father and Mother that Jean's father had broken off our engagement, claiming that I was in no fit condition to contract a marriage. Father immediately took me to the best doctor in the city, who thoroughly examined me and gave me a letter stating that I was in perfect health.

In the afternoon I walked past Jean's house and saw her standing in the window of her room. When she saw me she threw me a kiss and with her hands made

some signs which I could not understand. That evening a policeman was stationed at her home and I did not dare to try to communicate with her. She stood in the window of her room and, while I could see her, she could not see me. She was still there when I went by the house the last time at eleven o'clock.

The next day was Sunday and about three o'clock Jean rushed into our house, asking me to hide her as she had run away. I immediately took her over to a private park near our home and sat down with her on a bench. She put her arms around me and burst out crying, begging me to take her away with me somewhere and saying over and over that she did not believe there was anything wrong with me and that she would go with me to the ends of the world. I let her read the doctor's letter and finally persuaded her that the best thing for her to do was to go back home and wait until the thing blew over.

She walked back to my home with me and into the library, where, after shutting the door, she drew me over to the window and put her arms around my neck. Looking into my eyes for a moment, she kissed me full upon my lips and, turning, walked out of the house. Her folks took her away the next day and it was over a year before she returned.

I learned afterward that her father scared her into believing that if she married me it would kill him and she promised finally that she would never marry me without his consent and would not talk to me at any time. She kept her promise. Three times since I have

met her on the street and each time she has only nodded to me.

The next few days I spent loafing around and in a mood to end my life. Mr. K—— sent for me to come to his office. He had sold out his business and had an office in one of the big buildings down town. I was looking very poorly and he asked me what ailed me. I told about losing Jean and he was so sympathetic that I broke down and told him all about my former life. He was greatly shocked at my story but told me to cheer up. He asked me about the note and I told him I had loaned the proceeds, coming from the settlement, to my brother-in-law. He believed me and in every way showed his faith and confidence in me.

During these past few months I had been smoking on an average of fifteen cigarettes a day.

I finally decided to go to Portland, Oregon, and after selling Jean's engagement ring for a hundred dollars, I again went West.

During the trip out I brooded over the events of my life and when the car ferry was crossing the Willamette River, I tried to jump overboard but was held back by the other passengers. I stayed in Portland just one day and then took the train for home.

Upon my arrival Mr. K—— sent for me and when I called at his office he told me he had invested some money in a big instalment store with the idea of buying a half-interest later. He wanted me to go in and take care of the office and cash, and I accepted the position at twenty dollars a week.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE firm in which he had invested his money was in a bad way financially and after a thorough examination of the books, I found a leak in the cashier's department. We discharged the cashier and placed Carrie, the girl who had formerly worked for Mr. K——, in the position.

I worked hard and faithfully and earned my money the first three months. In July I received a letter from the receiver of the old store, stating that unless I settled up for the shortage in the accounts, they would bring suit against me. A few days later, I showed this letter to Mr. K—— and he, having a great personal dislike for the receiver, told me to give him the letter and he would settle it. He came back in an hour and said that I could settle the whole thing for a hundred dollars cash and advised me to do it. I told him I had no money, so he made me sign a note for a hundred dollars and advanced me the money, telling me I could repay him at the rate of five dollars a week. This was only another example of the man's great kindness to me during those years.

A few nights before the five-hundred-dollar note fell due I went down to Mr. K——'s home and there in his library told him I would be unable to pay the note when

it came due. He seemed a little put out, but said he would take care of it and I could give him a new note for the old one and pay the interest later, which I did. It took me three years to pay the entire note.

Early in October, I learned of Maud's disappearance from C——. This was the last I ever heard of her.

In May of the next year my father showed that he had at last gained faith in my efforts. He put in my application to his lodge and I was made a member. This was the greatest evidence of his love and faith that he had ever given me. I determined to be worthy of it.

I had worked hard during the Fall and Winter and had behaved myself. I longed for word from Jean but none came, even though I wrote twice to her Southern address.

I shall always believe that she saw truth in the mass of evidence against me which her father laid before her. She saw in time, too, for I know now that a girl brought up as she had been could not have stood the whispers which in some unknown way would surely circulate among her friends regarding my old record. No matter how decent I became some people would always remember the old stories and be constantly keeping them alive. And anyway, I had not yet learned my lesson. She had everything to lose and, after all, nothing to gain.

Her marriage two years ago has brought her a world of happiness as I could see by her expression when I met her on the street recently in a far Western city. She spoke to me kindly as we stood there talking a few

moments but she did not know how glad I was for her sake that she had not married me.

About May 15th, Mr. K—— decided not to buy into the store and went West. A few days later he sent for me and I went out to him.

He started up a new business and I travelled on the road all Summer and Fall for him, leaving his employ when the weather turned cold.

I came home to rest up, but within a few days was asked to take charge of a factory in the city. I accepted the position and held it for fifteen months, during which time I quit stealing and braced up. After going for a year without getting into any deviltry, I began to see daylight ahead, but in January at a musical I met a married woman who lived in an apartment house in the best part of the city. We took a liking to each other and as her husband was away I spent a good many evenings with her.

He came home unexpectedly one evening and I had to get out the back way in a hurry. This scared me so I did not make any more calls there.

Shortly after this incident, I received an offer of a position in a big factory in Chicago and accepted it.

I was now past twenty-seven years of age and had given up all hope of ever getting married and having a home, a wife and babies of my own, but I was determined to make a big success of my business life. The trouble in the store had not become generally known and my past was never mentioned by any one. My little sister was being brought up in entire ignorance of this

part of my life and to this day does not know of it. Father had begun to make a companion of me and Mother was very proud of my progress. For the past two years I had been drawing a salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year and I had a host of acquaintances who in some ways made life very pleasant for me.

Of course, there were some people, particularly friends of Jean's father, who talked about me considerably, but as we lived in a community composed principally of gossips this was nothing to worry about. I had begun to realize the terrible sorrow and suffering which I had brought upon my father and mother and I tried to atone for it by being decent. I drank very little and once in a great while went on a quiet little tear on a Saturday night. It was but natural that after all of my dissipation in the preceding years, the beast in me should crop out once in a while and I figured it was best to go among the other beasts at such times. And to this day, I believe my attitude on this question was correct.

The one thing that held me down and helped make a beast of me had a more powerful grip on me at this time than ever before. I was smoking and inhaling on an average of twenty cigarettes a day. They were gradually sapping up my health and vitality and try as I would I could not stop using them.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHEN I took up my work in Chicago, I went to live with my sister Mary at her earnest request. She had married one of these clean young men, who have never done wrong and know nothing of sin and its so-called pleasures. He held a very good position which, together with the dividends on his stock, netted him close to five thousand a year. They lived in a flat in a very fashionable neighborhood and their living expenses amounted to three-fourths of their income.

Mary still had her violent temper and snobbish ways and I used to look at her husband and wonder how he stood it all in silence. It seemed to me at times that if he would "gentle her down" a little, she would have more respect for him. I don't believe any wife today respects and admires a husband she can order around like a house dog.

Owing to my work in the factory and the distance to town, I had to get up every morning at five-thirty. The maid served my breakfast and I took my lunch at a saloon near the factory. Dinner at night was always kept awaiting my arrival. Mary was very good to me during the weeks I lived at her home.

My work kept me on the jump and after five weeks of it I quit without giving the owners any notice. Mr. D——, the president of the company, had been very good to me. One day just before I quit he called me into his office and said to me, "Robert, you should go about your work more quietly. You get too excited and you have an idea that the whole plant depends on you for existence. You have an exaggerated idea of your own importance around here. Go about your work in a sane, quiet way and I hope to see you become a very valuable employé of this concern."

This talk hurt me, because I had worked hard, but his words did me a lot of good later. I also had occasion later on to sincerely regret leaving him without notice. This was where I made my first serious mistake in my new business career.

Within the next few days I made application to the Chicago branch of a Cleveland factory for a position. The branch manager took the matter up with the Cleveland people and a few days later I was told to proceed to Cleveland for an interview at the factory.

At this time I was nearly broke, having only about five dollars above the railroad fare. My clothes were not very good and I was greatly worried over the impression I might make at the factory. The branch manager was very anxious for me to get a position with his firm, as the concern which had employed me in Chicago was his worst competitor and I suppose he figured that I would be grateful for his assistance and give

away to him the business secrets of my former employer. So he agreed to pay my expenses down to Cleveland and back if I did not land the position.

I knew that I could handle the work and figured that I could, with my knowledge of the business, overcome any bad impression which might be created by my somewhat shabby appearance.

When I landed in Cleveland I had just three dollars in my pocket, but I had made up my mind to land that position.

After an hour's talk with the general manager and his son, who was his assistant, I was given a position as a travelling salesman and had signed a year's contract. They gave me a hundred dollars expense money and after a few days in the factory I returned to Chicago on my way to my Western territory.

I stayed in Chicago two days, and was with the local manager most of the time. He attempted to pump me regarding the inner workings of my former employer's business and the prices at which he sold goods to the big State Street stores. I claimed ignorance regarding the price question, and what little information I gave him did not hurt my former employer in any way. I may not have had much sense of honor, but somehow I did not want to betray my former employer's business secrets.

I learned several months afterwards that after I left Chicago on my first trip, the local manager went to several of the large State Street buyers saying that I had quit my former employer and had entered the em-

ploy of his firm and that he had found out from me that some of the stores were getting better prices than others from my former employer. This sounded plausible to some of the buyers and caused a lot of trouble for Mr. D——. There happened to be considerable truth in the claim of our local manager, and while I had not betrayed my former employer, yet he took it for granted that I had. In this way our local manager put another blot on my business reputation.

My work on the road was very interesting and I made good from the beginning. All my expenses were paid and I received a salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year. The firm was the largest of its kind in the world and I was very hopeful for the future.

July saw me in Chicago for a month's work at the local branch.

During the latter part of the month, in company with another salesman in our employ, I went out to Riverview Park one evening. We had had several drinks and were feeling somewhat elated.

On the car going out to the Park I noticed a very beautiful girl sitting in the seat across the aisle and called Frank's attention to her. He made several remarks with the idea of attracting her attention, but she did not turn around. When we reached the Park, this girl was met by another girl, and we followed them through the entrance gate.

They stopped near the big candy wheel and stood watching the crowd. I had made several remarks regarding the appearance of the girl whom we had no-

ticed on the car and Frank, who was feeling pretty good, said that he would go over and bring her over to me. Sure enough, he went over to them and after a little hesitation on their part brought them over and introduced them to me.

We bought a number of chances on the candy wheel, and after the girls had each won we walked around, taking in the different attractions. Finally Frank suggested a drink, and we sat down at one of the little round tables in front of the orchestra shell. The girls were willing to drink, and by eleven o'clock the bunch was a little the worse for liquor. We then went across the street from the Park entrance to a big wine room and stayed there for a half hour.

In here I had a chance to talk to the pretty girl and found out that her name was Marie. She was a quiet girl and very refined and I could not understand her picking up with strange men. From her attitude that evening she appeared to be a girl who had had some serious trouble and was trying to forget it in a rather reckless existence.

I took her home on the car and at the gate of the house where she lived with her mother and brother, we stood talking for a long time. She promised to call me up the next day and said she had enjoyed meeting me, as I was a little different from most men and that there was nothing "fresh" about me. As I was leaving I asked her if she was going to kiss me good night. She stepped back from the gate a little and said that she did not know me well enough yet to do that. I re-

spected her for this and made up my mind then and there to see her again.

I met Frank on the corner, as agreed upon, and we rode to the hotel together. He had taken a liking to the girl to whom he had been paying attention during the evening, but he said that I must have fallen in love with Marie, seeing that I raved so much about her.

We hardly expected the girls to call us up next day, but they did, and we made an appointment to meet them at a Monroe Street restaurant the next evening.

We met them as agreed upon, and had a nice dinner. In order to make an impression, I ordered two bottles of wine with the dinner, and after I had paid the check, which amounted to nineteen dollars, we left the place in rather a wobbly condition. After a visit to a few down-town wine rooms, we took the girls home on the car. Frank's girl was sick, so we all stood out in the front vestibule, where there was more air.

Arriving at Marie's home, I sat out on the front steps with her in the moonlight until two o'clock, and when I went home she seemed more than willing to kiss me good night.

A few evenings later I took her to dinner with me and after dinner took her home in a taxi-cab. On the way home I asked her if she did not want to ride around Lincoln Park a little while, and she said "Yes."

When I came to pay the driver, after we reached her home, I owed him eleven dollars, and this taught me a lesson regarding love rides in a taxi.

Marie was very affectionate with me that evening and when I finally left we had agreed to meet again the next evening.

Upon the following evening we had quite a few drinks with our dinner and later in the evening we finally went to one of the hotels on Wabash Avenue.

We had to take an elevator to get to the hotel office, and when the car stopped and the door had been opened, we saw a nigger bell hop standing there. He motioned Marie to the parlor, and I went to the desk and registered under an assumed name. We had no baggage, and I was surprised at the ease with which we obtained a room. The hotel clerk asked me how old Marie was, and I asked him how old she had to be. He laughed and said, "Eighteen," so I told him she was nineteen. I had been told about the place before, but was afraid we could not get in, as Marie looked so young.

We went to this place several times during the month, and I began to think a great deal of Marie. She was willing to meet me any evening upon short notice, and from this I judged she was not running around with other men. She was employed in the office of one of the universities and was well educated. During all the time I went with her I never heard her use a coarse or vulgar expression.

She had one bad habit, smoking cigarettes, but at that time I thought it looked cute to see her puffing away on a cigarette. She inhaled the smoke and showed a familiarity with different brands.

The first of August I took up my road work, and on each trip back to Chicago Marie always came to the train to meet me. I began to seriously think of asking her to marry me. While she had not been a good girl, yet I felt that that fact should not make any difference.

My own life had been anything but decent, and I thought that I should not expect to receive more than I could give. I had known of several cases where girls like Marie had married and been happy with their husbands, but never a case where a girl had happily married the man responsible for her downfall.

In September I received a letter from the Cleveland office ordering me to come there at once. At first I thought I was to be discharged, but I knew I had done exceedingly well in my work and could see no reason for such a thing happening unless my old history had leaked out.

It was with considerable trepidation that I entered Mr. G——'s private office one morning. He was not at his desk, but his son sat at another desk in the room. While waiting for the manager I sat sizing up his son for the first time, and somehow I did not like his appearance. He looked tricky and deceitful. Finally he turned from his desk and said, "I suppose you wonder why we sent for you. Do you expect to be fired?" I told him I had no idea what they wanted of me, but that I did know I had tried hard to make my work a success. He turned back to his desk with a mut-

tered, "Bet you have." I did not like his remarks at all, especially in view of the fact that he was just about my age.

When his father came in he shook hands with me and asked me to wait until he was through with his mail, which had been opened for him by a tall, blonde girl sitting at a small table in the corner of the room. This girl's big grey eyes had attracted my attention the moment I came into the room, but I could not remember having noticed her before. She was a soft-spoken girl and very quiet at her work.

Finally Mr. G. turned to me and told me he was greatly pleased with my work. I had heard that he was a man who seldom praised any one's work, and my heart began to beat high with hope. He then told me that after considerable thought he had decided to offer me a position in the office as sales manager at a salary of two thousand dollars a year. He went on to tell me the duties attached to the position and that I would be in charge of all the salesmen and the branch houses. He then told me to take time to think over his proposition if I so desired, but I told him after considerable stammering that I would take the position immediately. His son turned around and said, "I'll help you to make a big success of the work, old man," and so the matter was settled. As I rose from my chair, I caught a glimpse of the peculiar expression on the face of the girl sitting at the little table. She seemed pleased over something.

The next day I was initiated into my new duties,

and Mr. G—— decided to turn part of his work over to his son, whose name was Harry, and to have Harry turn some of his work over to me. They then gave me the grey-eyed girl from their office to help me. This girl, whose name was Hattie, was given a flat-topped desk immediately back of mine. Part of her duties in assisting me was to take down the special letters I wished to dictate, the bulk of my dictation being handled through talking machines. She also attended to many of the minor details of my work. During the next few days I was very busy learning the ropes and did not have any chance to notice anything around me. I wrote to Marie telling her of my good fortune, and received a mournful little letter in reply, congratulating me on my promotion.

On my twenty-eighth birthday, which came the latter part of the month, I mentioned the fact to Hattie, and during our few moments' conversation she told me her age, but would not believe that I was only eight years older than she. Then, when I had said something about its being a lonely city, she invited me to call and see her some evening. I thanked her and told her I would do so after I had settled down to my work.

A few days later Harry came to me late one afternoon and said he wanted me to go home with him for dinner that night. I hesitated somewhat, but he told me there would be no one else there but his wife and babies and that I simply had to come.

When I was introduced to his wife, upon our arrival at his flat, I was so flustered I could hardly acknowledge

the introduction. She was of the blonde type and one of the most beautiful women I had ever seen. When our eyes met the strangest feeling came over me, just as if we had met somewhere before.

She was very gracious toward me, and succeeded in making me feel at home in a very few moments. They brought the two baby girls to me and I fell in love with them immediately. They were beautiful children and before I knew it I was holding one on each knee.

At dinner both Harry and his wife, whom he addressed as Nadine, treated me as if they had known me for years. Harry called me Bob and talked to me in the familiar way common among boy chums. After dinner he played the pianola and later, when his wife played, he criticised her playing and I saw then that he was of a domineering type and accustomed to having his own way around home. She could not help but feel hurt at his actions, but succeeded very well in controlling any outward evidence of feeling.

Later in the evening she took me into the nursery to see the sleeping babes and I told her they were the most beautiful children I had ever seen. As I stood there and looked down on those two little children, somehow a feeling came to me that I should never have any little ones like those.

About ten o'clock we had a few bottles of beer and when I left I thanked them both sincerely for one of the most pleasant evenings in my life.

The following Saturday evening I went to call upon Hattie, who lived in one of the suburbs of the city.

Her home was a little frame house, very plainly furnished. Her father was one of those short, fat, loose-lipped men with self-indulgence showing in every line in his face. Her mother was a tall, thin, dark-eyed woman, very nervous and looking as if she was completely tired out. Her brother was a young fellow, who appeared to be of a very moody and morose disposition.

There was a big fire burning in the parlor grate, and after the whole family had sat around a half hour in stiff-backed chairs talking about the weather, they withdrew, leaving Hattie and me alone. She pulled two big chairs up in front of the fireplace and we sat down to get acquainted.

I learned much of her family's history that evening and she also told me a great deal about herself. She was a plain-looking girl, except for her eyes and beautiful light hair. Her voice was low pitched and when she talked to me she had a way of looking square into my eyes which affected me strangely.

When I said good night to her in a formal way, she invited me to call again the following Wednesday.

Being in a strange city and having my evenings to myself, I was very lonesome. Instead of remaining in my rooms evenings I walked around down town considerable. I smoked a great many cigarettes these days and took a few drinks occasionally.

I welcomed the opportunity afforded me by Hattie's invitations and began to call upon her regularly three times a week.

The third week in October, I again went to dinner at Harry's home. This time I had a long talk with his wife. She had attended school in Washington, D. C., with one of the girl friends of my childhood, and this fact helped us to get acquainted. Harry was playing the piano and paying no attention to our conversation. She told me she had married Harry against her parents' wishes and had been practically disowned by her folks. I learned later that she was a daughter of old man C—— of Philadelphia and had been brought up surrounded by every luxury. When I left that evening somehow I felt sorry for her.

Several times during these days I noticed that Hattie and Harry called each other by their first names. This seemed a little unusual, but I did not pay much attention to them until one day I came suddenly into the private office and found her standing close to his chair. They both started when I came in and Harry flushed up and asked me rather tartly what I wanted.

Somehow this incident made me jealous of Hattie. I had called on her several times and was beginning to think a great deal of her. The thought came to me several times that I should not allow myself to fall in love with her because of my past, but I was so lonesome evenings that before I knew it I was a constant visitor at her home. This had gone on for a month and we had never said a word about love. Once or twice during my visits our hands had met, and I had noticed that she acted queerly upon these occasions.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AS I look back now over my courtship of Hattie I wonder why I acted as I did. I think that the fact that I had made so much of a success in my business life gave me a false sense of security regarding my past record. I wanted a wife and a home and I did want children of my own and I did want to be a respected business man. Of course, I was lonesome and in a strange city and Hattie had been so kind in the office that I naturally turned to her for companionship. My courting her was not prompted by a love of her as my ideal woman. She came of a poor family and she worked to earn the clothes she wore. She did not have any talents particularly and I did not notice that she had any ideals such as a young woman should have. Yet I did love her, but not with the real love which comes to a man but once in a lifetime.

As to why she wanted me to come and see her, later events brought out her reason.

One evening, while we were sitting in front of the big grate fire at her home, I was debating with myself as to whether or not I should go any further with our friendship. She sat there near me in a big easy chair watching the play of the little flames over the coals. Every

time I moved my hands or turned my head she looked up quickly at me. It seemed always as if she was waiting for something that hadn't been said as yet.

More in a spirit of experiment than anything else I told her that I had been a wild devil and had raised hell generally for several years. Then I asked her if that would make any difference in our friendship. She came right back promptly with the remark that it did not make any difference what I had done, that she was my friend and she could tell I had seen a lot of the world. The warmth and apparent sincerity of her remark drew me closer to her and I can remember that my heart beat just a little faster then. I told her that I wanted a home and children of my own, but that my old life had been such that I did not think I would ever ask any woman to marry me. She flared up immediately in my defence, saying that as long as I had learned to behave myself I had a right to ask any woman to marry me.

Our talk drifted around for the first time to love and later I spoke banteringly of my having been there at her home so many times in the few weeks I had known her and she had never kissed me good night.

She blushed and said she had long ago made up her mind never to kiss any man until she was engaged to him. I can remember so well how a little later she got up out of her easy chair and after rearranging some pictures on the mantel seated herself on the big divan in the corner. I remained where I was and we talked across the room for a few minutes; then I got up and crossed over to her side.

There were several pillows piled in one end of the divan, leaving barely room enough for the two of us. We sat there watching the play of the flames in the grate. There was no other light in the room. Outside the wind was howling a gale, and I knew I had a long, cold walk to the car line and then a tiresome ride into the city and a lonely hour in my bachelor quarters before turning in.

She sat there so close to me and seemed to care for me in such a way that I suddenly seemed to feel that I needed her. I could feel the warmth of her body so near mine and it seemed to me that I could be happy with her as my wife. In a rather halting manner I asked her what she thought of marriage. She told me then that she, too, wanted a little home to take care of and a husband, but she didn't say anything about children. At the time I thought this was due to natural modesty. Hearing her views so plainly expressed I turned to her and told her I had grown to care a great deal for her and asked her if she cared for me. She owned up that she had cared for me since the day I had first entered the office.

The next minute I was asking her to marry me and receiving her promise. Then she kissed me with a passion and force that startled me. Right there, something seemed to warn me that I had made a mistake, but this feeling passed almost as quickly as it came.

The next evening when I arrived at the house her father opened the door for me and when I stepped into the parlor I noticed that the folding doors opening

into the sitting-room were closed. I took advantage of the opportunity and asked for Hattie's hand. He said he feared this was coming and that he hated to lose his only daughter. He also said he did not know much about me, only what Hattie had said and he asked me to give him some references to whom he could write and inquire as to my standing. I gave him two names and he then said that if the answers were satisfactory he would give his consent.

There were tears in his eyes as he called Hattie and her mother into the room and told them of my request. Hattie's mother kissed me and said she knew I would be good to her little girl.

For some time past Harry and I had been in the habit of going to lunch together and a few days after I had asked Hattie to marry me, I was at lunch with him.

Looking up from the table I said, "Harry, old sport, I am going to marry one of your Cleveland girls." He was just lifting his spoon to his mouth and holding it in mid-air said, "The hell, you say — who is the dame?" I answered, "Hattie." In a flash his face became chalky white and dropping the spoon and contents into his lap, he muttered, "God, man!" He didn't seem able to say anything more for a moment, but he finally mustered up a weak smile and held out his hand to me. I can remember so well how cold and clammy it felt and how it shook. We both laughed over his dropping the spoon and finished our lunch. On the way back to the office he insisted that I take a good big drink with him

and suggested that we say nothing around the office about our engagement.

That night I wrote to Father and Mother asking them if they thought I had done right in becoming engaged.

The next afternoon Harry's wife 'phoned, asking me to come out to dinner with him that evening. Upon my arrival she greeted me a little coldly, I thought, but congratulated me upon my engagement. After dinner she asked me a few questions about my engagement and how long I had known Hattie. She acted queerly all the evening and once, while Harry was playing the piano, I noticed tears in her eyes and I thought that perhaps Harry had quarrelled with her that morning. She held my hand an instant longer than usual in parting that evening and I wondered at it.

Hattie and I had decided to be married January 12th and my folks said in their letter to me that they would not be able to come to my wedding if it were held in Cleveland. Father asked me in his letter if I was sure I had known the girl long enough.

I did not have much money at this time and told Hattie so plainly. I told her I wanted to get her an engagement ring but that I did not see how I could do so and also afford a wedding trip. She acted very nice about it and chose the engagement ring.

In the first part of December it was decided in the office that I was to go to Chicago the 14th and remain there until the 21st, meeting and instructing our salesmen on the next season's work.

Hattie's father had received answers to his letters regarding me and had given his consent to our marriage. Hattie had quit work at the office and was getting ready for the wedding. When I told her that night about my intended trip she began crying and said that I would see Marie in Chicago. I had told her about knowing Marie and she knew that I had received several letters from her.

Hattie acted so unreasonable and excited over my intended trip and showed such a lack of faith in me, that again something told me I had made a mistake in asking her to marry me. When I left her that night we had had our first little quarrel.

The next day was Sunday and I went to the house in the morning. We had made up our little quarrel of the evening before when suddenly she suggested that we be married before I went away so I could take her with me. I was a little surprised at her suggestion, as she knew I could not very well afford it. But I figured for half an hour and finally decided I could get through with it in some way. So I agreed to it. We persuaded her folks to consent to our plan and decided to have a very quiet home wedding. They were to ask only a few intimate friends and I intended asking Harry and Nadine.

When I asked him he said they would be delighted to come.

The next few days were busy ones for me, as there was a lot of work to be finished before I left on my trip. I was at that time occupying a two-room apartment

and Hattie and I decided to stay there after our return until we could find a flat. I had only a hundred and fifty dollars, but my December salary would be due January first and we had decided to buy our furniture on the instalment plan.

We were to be married December the twelfth at six-thirty in the evening. The night before, I sat up very late destroying old love letters and photographs and such stuff. I had been over at Hattie's home during the evening and had found things all torn up and every one excited.

We sat alone for a few moments in front of the big grate fire, silent and thinking of the morrow. When I left she gave me a little package she wished me to put in my grip. She blushed when she gave it to me and I could not understand it. Her trunk was to be sent according to my directions the next day as we did not want any one to know which route we were going to take.

The day of the wedding I worked at the office until one thirty, then I hurried down town on different little errands and then to my room, where I dressed for the wedding.

At five o'clock I reached Hattie's home and was ordered to stay in the parlor out of the way. At six o'clock Harry and his wife arrived. Harry greeted me with a hand shake and his wife took both my hands in hers and held them for just a moment. She was beautifully dressed. A few moments later the rest of the guests arrived. I told Harry and his wife that I felt

like I was going to break down. He spoke up and said that if I did he would choke me.

At a few moments before six thirty the guests seated themselves in the parlor, with Harry and his wife standing close to the fireplace, which had been banked with ferns.

I can remember, as if it were only yesterday, my feelings as I looked over the motley array of guests. There was the little dressmaker, who had made the wedding gown, a couple of railroad brakemen and their wives, and a saloonkeeper with his wife. I did not know the rest of the crowd, which numbered about twenty-five all told. Nadine stood over at one side and somehow her presence gave me comfort. The feeling of disgust and lonesomeness that came over me as I watched these people crowded into that little room made me feel faint and I wondered what my mother would say could she see them all. I was glad, in a way, she could not, and a feeling of resentment filled my heart for a moment, until that old saying, "Beggars cannot be choosers," came to my mind.

A big smilax bell hung in the double doorway between the parlor and sitting-room, and suspended from the centre of it was a bunch of mistletoe. The minister whispered a few words of instruction to me and just a minute before the hour set, Hattie came through the hallway into the room, leaning on her father's arm. She was dressed all in white, and looked more beautiful to me than ever before.

The tears came to my eyes as I took my place beside

her under the bell and the minister began the service. I cannot remember the service, only that I seemed to answer at the proper time. I was thinking of my father and mother and sister at home and their not caring enough for me to come to my wedding. As the minister finished the service, I kissed Hattie and as I did so my eyes met those of Nadine. The tears were rolling down her cheeks.

After nearly everybody had kissed the bride and shaken hands with me, Nadine came to me and holding out her hands, said, "Bobbie, I do wish you good fortune."

After the wedding supper had been served in the crowded little dining-room, my father-in-law mixed the punch and the furniture having been removed the guests began dancing. They made my wife play one dance for them.

The punch was very strong and it was not long until its effects were more than noticeable on some of the assembled guests. My father-in-law asked me to call him by his first name and kept insisting that I should have another drink.

I had ordered an auto to call for us at nine o'clock and had told no one about it but Hattie. At half past eight she slipped away and soon returned dressed in her travelling gown. When the sound of the horn announced the arrival of the car, we made a run for it amid a shower of rice and old shoes. We had not told them which road we were going to take and we managed to escape the intended demonstration at the depot.

Once in the drawing-room on the Pullman, we shook the rice out of our wraps until the floor was covered. I can remember how embarrassed I was when I found my overcoat pocket filled with little china dolls.

The berths were not made up, so after taking off our wraps I turned out the lights and we sat there for a long time, her head resting on my shoulder, while we watched the moonlit landscape flying past. She was very quiet, except for an occasional little crying spell, at which I wondered exceedingly.

Once the porter came to the door and asked if he should make up the berth and she jumped up excitedly and turning on the lights said, "No! No!" I thought I could understand her actions so I told him to come back in half an hour and I then tried to quiet her, but she seemed to grow more excited and kept squeezing my hand convulsively.

Finally the porter came to make up the berths and asked if he should make up both upper and lower and as she did not say anything, I answered shortly, "Just the lower."

We sat on the lounge until the berth was ready and she insisted that the curtains be put up on the berth.

After the porter left I turned out the lights, but she asked me to turn them on again and she began to undress. This surprised and hurt me and I could not understand it. Earlier in the evening she had objected to my leaving the drawing-room even for a moment, but I firmly excused myself at this moment and told her I would go into the smoking-room while she retired.

When I came back she was in the berth but the lights were still burning. As I stepped into the room and locked the door behind me something seemed to tell me that everything was not right. The very air seemed charged with impending trouble. I can remember how my heart sank.

I spoke to her and she answered me in a very faint voice. I turned the lights out and when I was ready to retire I parted the curtains of the berth and finding her hands, took them in mine and asked her to kneel down with me beside the berth and ask God to bless us in the life's journey upon which we were starting.

She got up and we kneeled down beside the berth and with my arm around her shoulders I silently asked God to bless and help us to be as He wanted us to be, through the coming days.

After we had finished the prayer she asked me rather chokingly to leave the little light in the ceiling burning and I did so. After we had retired she asked me to close the berth curtains, which I did. Then she raised the window shade, letting in a flood of pale, silvery moonlight and asked me to put my arms around her.

CHAPTER XXIX

AFTER I had taken her in my arms she looked up into my eyes. If I live to be a million years old, I can never forget how she looked with that unearthly light on her face, the tears rolling down her cheeks and that awful, newborn fear in her eyes; never can I forget those first words she uttered as she drew me close to her body —“ Bobbie, I have not been a good girl, and something is wrong with me. I am sick.”

Ah God! I aged ten years in that moment and my heart stopped beating, I know. I couldn't believe it. I just couldn't, but after a moment the realization came to me that after all it might be true, and then my questions came thick and fast. To most of them she returned no answer, but to my question, “ Hattie, was there more than one man?” she said “ Yes.” Then, and not until then, did I feel like turning from her. I got up and dressed at once. I can remember my being unable to find my clothes, I was so blinded with my tears I seemed to be groping around in a daze. And while the swaying train crashed onward through the night and the berth curtains swished about my shoulders, I sat beside her and learned the whole miserable story, all except the names of the men. My first duty on the

morning of the first day of my honeymoon would be to find a doctor to begin the cure of the ailments resulting from my bride's past sins. No, I didn't dare to think about it much then, not until hours afterward.

Upon our arrival in Chicago, we went to the Annex and occupied the room I had reserved. Many and many a time since have I passed along that hall and a shudder would go through me as I came to that door through which my bride and I passed that morning.

I made Hattie go to bed and ordered breakfast served in the room. After breakfast I called one of the best physicians in the city and left him with Hattie while I went for a walk.

He met me at the door of the room as I came back and we went down into the lobby. Then he told me that my wife was in bad shape and would need several months' treatment. He knew the whole story, I could see, and his words of advice were well meant as he surely did sympathize with me. But I had half decided on what to do and wanted to talk with her before I made up my mind definitely. All that day I sat beside her comforting her, for I was truly sorry for her, and underneath all my pain and sorrow I did love her.

She told me that afternoon that my making her kneel down beside the berth the night before was all that made her tell me she was sick. She had not intended to tell me about that part of it, but in her ignorance supposed she could avoid the blame and that I would lay it to something else, seeing I was so trusting. But when my arm went around her shoulders while we kneeled there

she knew that she must tell me and that little prayer of mine that night saved me from what might have been worse than death.

That evening, after dinner in the room, I told Hattie I was going for a walk and that she must stay in bed, as the doctor was coming again.

I walked up and down Michigan Avenue between Congress and 12th Streets in the cold, icy wind blowing off the lake. I could not feel the bitter cold, for my mind was busy with the problem confronting me. What should I do? Should I take her back to her folks and tell them I didn't want her? I knew that the law would uphold me in getting rid of her. Yet if her folks knew her condition wouldn't they throw her out? Where could she go in her condition? And then the thought came to me, who am I, that I should refuse to do what I can to make good? Couldn't I, after all, take care of her and see that she got well and then wouldn't she love me all the more? Wouldn't she truly appreciate the home I would make for her? It seemed to me as I plodded along through the cold that God had given me this cross to bear in order that I might earn the happiness of having a wife and a home and perhaps, babies. I knew she could be cured, for the doctor had said so plainly that morning. When I returned to the hotel, I had fought the fight and won it, and when I walked into the room where she was, she looked up at me from the bed in such a pitiful, hopeless way that I sank down on my knees beside her and putting my arms around her told her we would get her well and go on just

as if nothing had happened. I did not feel that I was doing anything wonderful, but only that God had set my task and it was up to me to do it.

Her tears of relief and her promises to do her part repaid me then and there for my heartaches. She slept peacefully the whole night through.

The next day I was busy part of the time with the men. Harry came to our hotel upon his arrival and when I shook hands with him he acted queerly. I bought him a drink and tried to cheer him up. He made absolutely no reference to my marriage outside of asking how my wife was.

It was after my wife had retired on the second evening of our stay at the hotel that I found a long switch of false hair on a shelf in the wardrobe. I can remember the queer feeling that came over me as I touched it. I knew then how my wife came to have such beautiful hair. I had always had a feeling of antipathy toward anything false or artificial and this was the first time she had let me know that her hair was not her own.

After my meetings with the men were over my wife and I went out to my sister's for a day or two and returned to Cleveland on Christmas eve.

We went immediately to my old apartments and found that the housekeeper had decorated the rooms with holly and mistletoe in honor of our homecoming. My wife called up her folks and told them we were home safe and happy. I talked with them a few moments and told them I was the happiest man on earth. The next

day we went out to Hattie's home for dinner and spent the afternoon with her folks.

Up to this time I had not talked much with her folks and did not know them very well, but during this Christmas afternoon I had my eyes opened a little.

I had been out in the kitchen talking to her mother and was walking through the hall in search of her when I heard her father's voice in the sitting-room and thinking she was with him I walked towards the door. As I drew near, I heard her father reach the climax of a coarse joke and then came a shriek of laughter from her. When I entered the room, I saw her sitting on her father's knee and in one hand she held a glass of hot toddy, the one thing the doctor had forbidden her to touch. I was so overcome for a moment that I could hardly speak and noting the look of surprise on my face, she looked at me a little defiantly and took a sip out of the glass. I couldn't say anything in front of her father as I did not want them to know her condition. He wanted to make me a drink, but I refused it as nicely as I could. It did not seem right that she should deliberately do the one thing that would keep her from getting well.

That night, as we went back to our apartments, I made her promise not to touch another drop of liquor, no matter who asked her to.

I went to the office next day and Mr. G—— told me to take a few days' vacation.

Early in the evening a big box arrived from my home. It contained our wedding present from my folks,

a big chest of silver and also our Christmas presents.

One thin, flat package was addressed to Hattie in my mother's handwriting. When she opened it, we found it contained a picture of myself when I was a little tot wearing curls and with the picture was one of the curls tied with a pink ribbon.

Hattie put the picture and curls under her pillow that night and I woke up along about two o'clock to find her crying, but she wouldn't tell me the reason.

The next day we went out looking for a flat and finally found a beautiful little five-room apartment in a new building in the suburbs. The rent was thirty-five dollars per month, but I figured we could afford that.

I did not know what to do about money. I had been given my December salary the day I was married and only had about sixty dollars left. We needed about a hundred dollars to start our flat and then we had to live until February first. Finally I borrowed a hundred dollars from a salary loan company and gave a note for one hundred twelve fifty, running six months at six per cent.

We then selected four hundred dollars' worth of furniture and paid down fifty dollars. The other things we needed to begin housekeeping with cost forty dollars more. And so we started out with sixty dollars in cash and a debt of four hundred and fifty dollars hanging over us.

Both our lives were wrecked before we moved into the new home, but I was fool enough to think that we could yet be happy.

I placed my wife under the care of a specialist, but he told me confidentially that he did not believe he could do much for her as for some reason she did not respond to treatment. I was soon to find out the reason.

Her mother was at our flat a great deal of the time and many a night I came home to find Hattie crying and she would tell me that her mother had been there.

We lived very quietly for the first month, not having much company.

About this time I received from Marie, who had evidently heard of my marriage, an envelope containing a single sheet of paper upon which was written "stung."

I was working very hard and nearly worn out with worry over Hattie. She did most of the work around the flat except the washing. Once a week we had a woman come in and clean the floors and woodwork. I gave Hattie five dollars a week spending money for herself and we had accounts at some of the stores. I paid all the bills for the maintenance of the household. We were poor, but I did everything I could to make her happy.

About February first she began to change a little, becoming reckless in her talk and actions. We had established one custom the night we were married and that was for both of us to kneel down side by side and pray each night before retiring.

Along in the first part of February I had to ask her several times to kneel down with me and one night in particular she arose before I did and grabbing a pil-

low from the bed threw it at me, while I was yet on my knees. She laughingly repeated this trick for several nights, showing that she had little respect for anything sacred.

She wanted me to give up cigarettes and when I could not, took to smoking them also. Her father brought us over a case of whiskey. His business took him among the whiskey dealers a great deal and he received many presents of liquor. I had no use for it, but served it to an occasional guest in our home.

One evening I had to stay at the office, so I called Hattie up and told her I would not be home until ten o'clock, but I finished my work about eight thirty and reached the flat a little after nine. I used my pass key, thinking Hattie might be asleep. There was a light burning in the kitchen and thinking she had forgotten to turn it out I went out to attend to it. I found her there sitting at the table reading and with a half emptied glass of toddy before her. Then I understood why she had not responded to the doctor's treatment. I think that when I saw her sitting there that night and found that she was deliberately deceiving me, most of my love for her died. I did not scold her; I simply picked up the glass and throwing it in the sink said I guessed we had better give the rest of the case away. There was nothing more said about it and early the next morning I gave the rest of the whiskey to the janitor. I just about lost all hope when this happened, but waited to see if she would try to get along without the whiskey.

February the eighteenth she suddenly threatened to go home to her parents, saying that I was too quiet for her. I quieted her down the best I could and she slept with her head on my shoulder that night, but I could not sleep. I knew somehow that the end was in sight.

The next day Harry's wife sent word that she wanted us to come to dinner on Saturday evening. When I told Hattie about this she flatly refused to go, but along in the evening she awoke me and said she would go.

Saturday afternoon we went out to the stores around the corner to buy the things for our Sunday dinner. Among them was a nice thick steak, which we put in the window refrigerator at the flat.

Saturday evening we went early to Harry's home. Nadine welcomed us with open arms and treated us royally.

During the dinner Nadine watched Hattie rather closely and I noticed it particularly several times. I don't think she was very favorably impressed and once or twice she looked at me rather oddly. I suppose I did show the signs of the strain and worry under which I had been struggling.

After dinner we sat around the parlor talking and laughing. During the evening Harry and I went out to the kitchen twice and had a little drink of Scotch. After the last trip, I was talking with Nadine when Hattie said, "What have you got out there in the kitchen, Harry?" and he told her to come out and see. Nadine did not pay much attention to what he said

and they both went to the kitchen. I did not imagine for a moment that Hattie would take a drink, but when she came back into the room I knew by her flushed cheeks that she had. I could not do anything then and it seemed to me, as I sat there and talked to Nadine, that all of a sudden I didn't give a damn any more as to what Hattie did, I was thoroughly discouraged.

About midnight Harry brought in several bottles of beer and Hattie said she was going to have one if she never had another thing as long as she lived. Then Harry brought in the Scotch and we all had a good-night drink. I was about through with the whole thing.

Going home on the car, Hattie was in an ugly mood and upbraided me for talking so much with Harry's wife. She kept this up until we reached the flat.

While she was preparing to retire, she made several ugly remarks and insinuations regarding Nadine and myself and I spoke to her rather sharply.

I was sitting in the dining-room smoking a cigarette after she had retired when I heard her laughing.

Switching off the light, I went into the bedroom, asking her what tickled her so much. She was in bed and all the lights in the room were turned on.

In answer to my question, she said she was just laughing to think how sore I must be that I couldn't have married Nadine instead of her. I had never had any such thought and her question made me laugh.

My amusement over her remark seemed to suddenly drive her insane with rage and sitting up in the bed she

screamed, "You damn fool, you haven't anything on me. Harry is the first man I ever had anything to do with."

When she said that, my world seemed to stop. I could not believe it, but she commenced in an incoherent way to tell all about it and to curse me in a manner that would have done credit to the worst old hag on earth.

I think that at the time the sound of those curses coming from her lips shocked me more than did the truth about Harry and herself.

For a moment I thought she had gone insane, but she gave me detail after detail concerning their relations, which had extended over a period of two years and I knew then she was telling the truth. Then she told me how he had kissed her that evening and held her in his arms out in the kitchen.

And not satisfied with that, she told me how, together with another girl in the office, she had gone out with Harry and another fellow one evening. She had drank a great deal and had found herself in the other fellow's arms when she woke up in a rooming house the next morning. She explained in detail that that was where she had acquired her sickness and that since that night Harry would not take her out again.

When she had tired of telling me the whole sickening story she got out of bed and clad only in her night gown went to the rear of the flat returning with a bottle of whiskey and a glass. She got into bed still holding these articles in her hands and after propping herself

up with the pillows poured out a big drink and swallowed it. Then she continued her talk regarding Harry. I was sitting in a chair looking at her all the time she was talking and had said nothing to her since first hearing her mention Harry's name.

I got up out of the chair, weak and trembling, and walked over to the chiffonier. In the top drawer I kept a heavy revolver. Taking it out, I broke it open and after slowly loading every chamber snapped it shut. Then walking over to the bed, I sat down on the edge of it, still holding the gun in my hand.

CHAPTER XXX

I SAID nothing to Hattie but simply sat there looking at her. When I had taken the gun and loaded it, she had sat up in the bed, her eyes following my every movement. She seemed paralyzed and unable to move her limbs. But as I sat down on the bed she seemed to get sober in a flash and her eyes opened wide with a look of unutterable horror and fear. Throwing the glass down on the bed she begged me not to kill her. I can remember so well watching the empty glass roll toward the edge of the bed and wondering whether it would fall on the polished floor and break or on the rug. I heard all she said but paid no attention to it, I was waiting for that glass to reach the edge of the bed and fall. It fell on the rug and I can remember feeling relieved that there wasn't any crash. She sat there in the bed waiting; I still said nothing, but just sat there watching the empty glass roll along the rug and waiting for it to stop.

Then she began to moan and creep across the bed toward me. She begged me not to kill her and swore with an oath she would be true to me, that she did love me.

Still I said nothing. I was trying to decide which one of the two to kill first. I can remember calmly

figuring on my chances of going to his home, killing him and then returning to our flat and after telling her how I had shot him, finish her. Then I was afraid that if I left her alone she would get away. I thought once of tying her up and gagging her and then I would be sure to have her there when I returned. Then I grew afraid that after I had killed either one of them, the police would get me before I could kill the other.

Hattie had quit crying now and lay there looking up at me, her face white as death.

All of a sudden the thought came to me, "What will become of his wife and babies if I kill him?" The disgrace and horror of the thing would fall on them and who was I that I should ruin their lives? And who was I that I should pass judgment even upon my own wife? The incidents in my own past seemed to flash across my eyes, scene after scene, and I could again see myself as I had been, guilty of all manner of crime. Then before me seemed to appear again the face of my little dead child and I knew that I could do nothing.

I walked over to the chiffonier and put the gun back in the drawer and, putting on my hat and coat, left the flat.

I walked the streets until daylight. During that walk the full horror of the whole thing came to me. I can remember stumbling along, sobbing and talking to myself. I could see then why Harry had been so startled when I had told him of my coming marriage. Many other little incidents in the office came to my mind and I cursed myself for having been so blind.

The one thing that hurt me most of all was that he, after all his protestations of friendship, could come to my wedding and stand there and see me married to the woman whom he had worse than ruined. My own past came up to me again and again and I at last realized that I was not through with my penance.

When I returned to the flat I found the lights all burning and Hattie sitting fast asleep in the kitchen with her head resting on the kitchen table. She was clad only in her nightgown, and in the hand that rested on the table was clasped a partially filled glass of whiskey. The gas stove was lit and the tea kettle had burned dry, filling the room with the odor of burned metal. I woke her and asked her to go to bed, but she only cursed me and laughed at me.

I went into another room and threw myself on a couch and slept. When I woke at noon she was up and dressed and wandering around the flat. She asked me what I was going to do with her and I told her that one of us would have to get out right away. She cursed me again and said that she at least would not be the one to go. We had neither breakfast nor dinner and I cannot remember noticing this fact at the time.

About seven o'clock she asked me to go to the drug store three blocks away and get her some headache powders. As I was nearing the street crossing on my return I saw a woman signal an approaching street car. I recognized Hattie and ran to her, catching her arm just as she was about to step on the car. I told the conductor to go ahead and led her back to the flat, tell-

ing her that if she did go it would be in the day time and not at night.

I locked the door of the flat on the inside and, putting the key in my pocket, went to the kitchen where I made tea and toast. These I took in to her and made her eat. Then I undressed her and put her to bed. She demanded whiskey and I got it for her. She was talking loud and swearing and I was afraid some one would hear her.

That night I slept on the floor in front of the door leading out of the flat. Twice in the night she woke me trying to get out, but each time I put her back in bed.

The next day was Washington's birthday and I had to go to the office to look over the mail. Hattie got breakfast and when I left I asked her to give me the usual good-bye kiss, which was a regular custom with us. She did so and said that when I returned she would be gone.

On my way to the car I stopped to 'phone to her mother to come to the flat and take care of her.

Harry was at the office when I arrived but I could not look at him. There were only a few employés in the office that morning as it was a holiday. I finished my work about one o'clock and went down town.

At five o'clock I returned to the flat and had to use my pass key to gain entrance, no one answering my ring. When I stepped into the flat it was dark and I could tell somehow that Hattie was not there. I turned on the lights and found the place deserted. The bed

had been made, but the breakfast dishes had been left unwashed and I could see that she had not had lunch in the flat. I rang for the janitor's wife and she told me that my wife had left early that morning alone.

I can remember going into the bedroom and sitting down in one of the little bedroom rockers. A feeling of utter despair came over me and I cried like a baby. I wanted her to come back but still I could not forget her actions of the night before nor could I forget the story she had told me.

I had a feeling that she would not come back and I determined that I would not go after her. A minister who lived in our building called about seven o'clock and asked if my wife was ill. His manner somehow prompted my inviting him in and I told him enough of the story so that he understood she had left. He sympathized with me and told me God would straighten out the tangle for us. He wanted to go and see Hattie that night and asked me if I was sure she had gone home. I told him I was not sure where she had gone. He went to his own apartment and 'phoned to her father, ascertaining that she was with her folks. The minister returned to me and remained until ten o'clock that evening. After he had left I called the janitor's wife again and gave her all the perishable food in the kitchen.

That night I slept alone in the flat, and in the morning left for the office at the usual hour. As soon as my mail was out of the way, I called up her father and told him that Hattie must either return to the flat that day

or else take her personal belongings away. He swore at me and said she should never return to me.

Upon arriving home that evening, I saw immediately that some one had looted the place. All the linen, silverware, wedding presents, window curtains; in fact, everything not covered by the mortgage on the furniture had been removed. A copy of the furniture contract lay open on a table and each item had been checked off.

Even the pillows and comforter had been taken off the bed. They had left the sheets and blankets. My gun lay on the bed broken open and the shells had been removed.

I slept in the flat that night and when I reached the office in the morning told Harry that my wife had left. He would not believe it at first, but when I asked him for permission to get away from work so that I could attend to storing the furniture, he saw that I was in earnest. He was very sympathetic and told me to remain away until everything was settled to my satisfaction. As I stood there by his desk, I was tempted again to kill him but something told me to wait.

That day I had the instalment people come for the furniture, telling them to put it in storage, as I was compelled to give up housekeeping. I sold all the kitchen utensils to the janitor for a five-dollar bill.

That evening after everything had been removed from the flat, I locked the door on the inside and went into our old bedroom. There in the middle of that deserted room, I kneeled down and asked God to show

me the way out of my trouble and into a better life.

When I locked the door for the last time, the janitor, together with his wife and one or two neighbor women, were standing in the hall. I was crying and could not look at them. I simply handed the keys to the janitor and turned and walked down the stairs without a word.

I moved my few possessions back into my old quarters that night, and the next day went about my work at the office as usual. Harry was the only one in the office who knew of the trouble. The next Saturday afternoon, Nadine, Harry's wife, called me up and invited me to dinner that evening. I refused as best I could, but she insisted that I come. Her voice sounded so sweet and sympathetic that I finally accepted her invitation. Harry told me they would have dinner about seven that evening and for me to go on up to the flat as soon as I was through at the office, as he had to go down town and might not return to the office. When I reached the flat he had not arrived, but Nadine met me at the door and, placing a hand on each of my shoulders, told me how sorry she was for me in my trouble.

After Harry came in we sat down to dinner. Nadine had placed a big bowl filled with roses at the side of the table where my wife had been seated just a week ago that evening. Nadine and Harry tried to cheer me up during the meal. I could see that he did not know that I knew all about it.

At first it hurt me to sit there and break bread with

him but I wanted to keep up our relations until I could decide what to do.

During the evening he went out to get some whiskey and while he was gone Nadine talked with me regarding my troubles, saying among other things that at the time my engagement was announced to her she had thought I was making a mistake to marry that girl. She had noticed her at the office and had not been favorably impressed with her appearance and actions. During this conversation Nadine took one of my hands in hers and somehow I felt comforted and cheered by her sympathy.

After Harry returned we sat around for a long time talking over various matters connected with our business. Nadine sat in a big wicker chair beside a little table upon which rested an old mission lamp. She was sewing on some little garment, and in the light shed by the old-fashioned lamp she appeared to me the most beautiful woman I had ever known. She seemed so much the ideal wife and mother. It made my heart ache to realize how different my home had been.

The work went on as usual at the office until one day in the middle of March I received a letter from an attorney stating that my wife had placed in his hands a claim for separate maintenance, charging that I had deserted her.

The receipt of his letter made me almost insane and I called him up and told him that I would see him a mile deep in hell before she should ever receive one single dollar from me. He told me not to get excited but

to take a few days in which to think it over, as the law would make me pay anyway.

I hunted up a lawyer that afternoon and placed the matter in his hands. Unfortunately I did not choose wisely in making my selection.

The following week I told the manager about my trouble, that I was nearly a nervous wreck and that I desired to go back to my road work. It was a week before he consented to this and another two weeks before I started on a trip over my old territory. My attorney had not come to any agreement with my wife's attorney and I did not know what to do.

It galled me to think that I would probably have to pay my wife a certain amount of money. I had done, as I thought, all I could do to make her life pleasant for her. I had done far more than most men would do, yet I was not as most men. I was under a handicap and I realized it, but yet I wanted to make good.

At last I wrote to my father and told him the whole miserable story. He wrote me a long letter, sympathizing with me and saying Mother was heartbroken. Regarding the paying of any money to my wife, he said in part:

“My advice to you is to pay them a lump sum and keep your mouth shut entirely and let the world think what it wants to. As to the question of cowardice in making a settlement, I wish to say that the settlement is not cowardly but the only manly thing to do. If you settle and keep your mouth shut entirely, the world may ask of her why you deserted — she will attempt to

explain — still they will say there must be some other reason for the desertion which is unexplained. Her explanation does not explain, so the conclusion will be that there was a good reason for the desertion, but the husband is manly enough to keep his mouth shut and refrain from any statement that will reflect on a woman. In this way you do not lose but maintain in every way the dignity of the man who will not allow himself to tarnish the name of a woman, no matter how guilty she may be. Time is a great leveller and in the years to come will level all things. This is not a question of your past life; it is a question of your future life based on your actions in the present.”

As soon as my sister Mary heard of the trouble, she came to Cleveland to see my wife, not even letting me know she was coming.

My wife was able to completely fool her and work upon her sympathies. Mary told her that I ought to support her because she had been my wife. And then she betrayed her own flesh and blood by telling Hattie that I would never dare to go on the witness stand in a divorce case or any other case, as there were some things in my past which I would not want exposed. This action on the part of my own sister practically delivered me into my wife's hands, and her attorney taunted me with this fact before I left the city. It was not until two years later that I would even speak to Mary.

I left for Chicago, having instructed my attorney to make the best settlement possible.

CHAPTER XXXI

I HAD written to Marie's old address, telling her I would be at the Auditorium April nineteenth, and asked her to call me up on that date. I arrived there on time and late in the afternoon she called me up, asking very coldly what I wanted. I invited her out to dinner and she agreed to meet me at six o'clock.

She was waiting for me when I arrived but did not even offer to shake hands with me. After we were seated at the little table, which had been our favorite, she threw back her thick black veil and sat staring at me without saying a word for what seemed to be hours. In my heart I was ashamed of the way I had treated her.

I began to tell her how sorry I was for having given her up and she leaned over the table and said just one little word, "Liar." This took me back considerable and I waited, not knowing what to say next.

Then she began to talk, telling how she had gone the downward path since hearing of my marriage, how she did not care a damn for any one or anything and hoped to be in Hell before long.

Our drinks came about this time and after she had swallowed hers she ordered another brought immediately.

During our dinner we drank a great deal and I told her all about my trouble with my wife. Marie gave me a "dressing down" I have never forgotten. I found that she had left home and moved to a furnished room on Lincoln Avenue.

I took her home in a taxi and she insisted that I come up to her room with her, saying that the landlady did not care who she brought there as long as they were quiet. After we had removed our wraps, she threw herself into my arms and cried as if her heart would break, telling me she loved me and asking me never to leave her again.

When I left her that evening our old friendship had been resurrected and she seemed very happy. I remained in Chicago several days with her, finally leaving for the West. She wrote me very often and her letters were the only bright spots in an otherwise dreary existence.

My work was successful, and in June I was called to Cleveland to go over some matters with the firm. While there I tried to settle up the claims of my wife.

It seemed that my attorney had been trying to get her attorney to accept four hundred and fifty dollars in settlement of all claims for maintenance and alimony. He would not consent to this. He wanted six hundred and fifty and a verbal agreement on our part that my wife be allowed to file an uncontested suit for divorce on the grounds of abandonment when the year of separation had expired, the following February.

I was growing angrier over the matter each day, and

one evening as I was standing in the hotel lobby, her attorney came to me and asked to speak to me. His actions and remarks made me lose my temper and finally I said I would sue for a divorce, naming the grounds for action, and they were not very nice. He opened his eyes at this and asked me to meet him in the hotel at noon the next day.

When I met him the next day, he said that my wife claimed that I had been responsible for her downfall before our marriage, and unless I settled as they desired they would file suit against me at once and bring me into court. I told him to file and be damned. Just then a nigger deputy sheriff stepped up to me and served papers on me in the action for separate maintenance. I was so angry I could have killed the attorney right there but he slipped away.

I immediately took the papers to my lawyer and he told me not to worry. The next day I left Cleveland for Chicago and a few days later received word that my salary had been tied up in Cleveland. This action on their part drove me nearly insane, and if it had not been for Marie, I should have gone back to Cleveland and "cleaned out" the whole outfit. I had plenty of money on hand and the fact that they had held up my income did not bother me so much as the idea of her being able to do it.

In July, during my absence, the case was heard and the Court entered an order allowing my wife fifteen dollars a week for maintenance. My attorney then had my June and July salary released by paying my wife's

attorney seventy-five dollars. My firm had been very kind to me during all this trouble and told me not to worry over the outcome.

Harry came to Chicago to attend a meeting during the latter part of July and one evening asked me if I did not know of some girls who would like to go out for a time with us. I called up Marie, but she did not know of any one she could get, so I told her to come along.

That evening we three had dinner together. During the dinner we drank a lot of wine and mixed drinks and by the time we started for Riverview Park we were all feeling hilarious.

On the car and at the entrance to the park, Harry accosted several women, asking them to come with us. Finally at the dance hall he picked up a girl and a little later another couple joined us. We roamed around the park all evening and finally went across the street to the wine room.

Harry became thoroughly drunk and insisted upon keeping time to the music by beating on the table with an empty wine bottle, with the result that we were ordered out of the place.

In going to the car, we passed a photo gallery and I immediately suggested that we all go in and have our pictures taken. So we piled into an old automobile and had our pictures taken. Marie and I sat in the front seat, and Harry sat on a drop seat in the back of the car, holding the girl on his knee. She had one arm around his neck and they were both smoking cigarettes. The other couple were sitting in the rear seat.

When the pictures were finished, about twenty minutes later, they gave us each two. Harry handed me his with the remark that he did not dare to have them in his clothes. He was so drunk that the girl with him left us, and Marie and I had a great deal of trouble getting him back to the hotel. When we finally did get him there, we left him at the entrance and spent the balance of the night at the Wabash Avenue place.

The next day he apologized for making such an ass of himself but I only laughed. I was beginning to see a way of "getting him."

In August I went back to my road work and kept at this until the middle of September, when I was again called to the factory in Cleveland. The firm had recently given me another advance in salary and they often consulted with me regarding many things connected with the business. While in Cleveland at this time I made a settlement with my wife regarding the maintenance and alimony claim.

We agreed upon six hundred and fifty dollars and attorney fees, and I was to pay her the amount at the rate of fifty dollars a month. In the settlement nothing was said about a divorce but they understood that I wanted one as soon as possible.

Only the wishes of my father and mother and the fear of my past being made public prevented my filing suit just as soon as the money settlement was made. By this time I was in a mood where I wanted her to suffer for her deviltry. Of course, my filing the suit upon the proper grounds and giving proof of these things, as I

was in a position to do, would cause her to leave the city. I knew, in fact, that she would not dare to face my attorney on the witness stand. Yet I feared that her attorney would delve into my past and bring out all the disgrace. I had suffered enough over that, fearing as I did to a certain extent every day that some one would discover it and I would lose my position and not be able to get another one. One of the reasons I had worked so hard all these years was so that if my prison record should be exposed my business record since leaving there would help to counteract the effect.

I returned to Chicago and had no more than arrived there when I was called to Cleveland again to help outline some new work at the factory.

Harry had just left on a week's vacation and as I had not seen Nadine for several months I called her up from the hotel that evening. She was surprised to hear that I was in the city and asked me all about how I was getting along. We talked for several minutes and she said she was so sorry that Harry was not at home so I could call. I told her I regretted it also, as I had been looking forward to seeing her, but supposed we had to obey the dictates of old Mother Convention.

When I hung up my 'phone I was puzzled over the new note I had noticed in her voice. She had asked me at the last moment, in such a breathless way, how long I was going to remain in the city and I had told her several days.

The next afternoon she called me up at the hotel and asked me if I would be shocked if invited to come and

see her that evening. She said she had been fixing up a room in the flat which she had intended that I occupy on my next visit to the city, and now that I was there and could not occupy it she wanted me to see it at least. She seemed to be very excited and talked just like a little child planning to do something naughty. I told her I would come if there was no danger of getting her into trouble. She said she had fixed all that, for me to arrive at exactly eight, ring the bell twice and if the coast was clear she would press the button that opened the door downstairs and I could walk upstairs to their flat.

I was somewhat excited that evening when I reached the apartment building, and this excitement grew upon me as I stole quietly upstairs after she had opened the door in response to my signal.

As I reached their landing, the door of their flat was opened and I walked in. She closed the door and held out her hands to me. The light in the hall was turned low but I could see how beautiful she looked dressed all in white, and her hair bound with a broad, pink silk ribbon.

After telling me how pleased she was at my coming, she led me into the parlor. We sat there talking for a few moments and then she took me into the room she had fixed up for me. It was decorated beautifully and she had made pillow covers, spread, table and dresser pieces of a material to match the decorations; even a little mission lamp was covered with the same pink material. On one side of the room was a big divan and, seating

herself there, she motioned for me to sit beside her.

I can remember how I was trembling as I sat down. I was startled at the events which followed so closely upon each other since that 'phone call and could not help but feel worried over the situation. I had always admired her and respected her so much, and it did not seem right that she should run such risks for my sake.

We sat there and talked about different things for an hour. We went over again the troubles connected with my marriage and I could see the tears in her eyes as she sympathized with me. Whenever I looked into her eyes as she sat beside me they seemed more beautiful than ever. She seemed to exert some kind of a magnetic influence over me and to draw me nearer to her. I was telling her how I never again expected to have a home and how I wished God had given me a home like hers, a wife like her and some little children, when she suddenly put her head down on my shoulder and burst out crying.

CHAPTER XXXII

I HAD been in a great many difficult situations in my life but this was the most difficult one of all. I took both her hands in mine and told her not to cry but to tell me her trouble. We were sitting in a very uncomfortable position and suddenly she asked me to put my arm around her and hold her close to me while she told me something. I did as she told me and then she poured out her story between sobs, how she had loved me for a long time, and how she had wanted me for her own ever since she first saw me. Then she told me about how she had stood there at the wedding and watched me married when it was almost killing her and how glad she had been for her own sake when she heard that I had separated from my wife.

That beautiful girl, for she was yet only a girl, lay there in my arms and bared her very soul to me in that hour. She told me of her life, how she had been brought up and the struggle to exist on Harry's salary; his drinking and running around with other women, his cruelty to her and his dislike for the children. She also spoke of his mother and how unkind she had been and of how her own mother had never come to see her on account of her marriage to Harry.

Then she told me that she loved me better than all

else except her babes and that ever since my wife and I had separated she had been waiting for a chance to tell me, even though she felt as if I did not love her. She also said that since the evening before she had thought this would be her only chance to tell me and for that reason she had asked me to come to her.

Up until this hour I had never thought of loving Nadine. It had seemed to me as if she was way above me in everything, birth, culture, and beauty. I could not doubt that she loved me after I had listened to her story, and the realization of this fact staggered me, yet I felt my heart opening to her even as she was speaking, and within me there was born a love and a longing for this beautiful girl.

One could see that she had really never loved before; one could feel it in the very touch of her hands.

After finishing her story, she lay there in my arms for a few minutes and then, lifting her flushed and tear-stained face to mine, asked, "Bobby, will you love me?"

My heart was beating so loudly that I thought she could hear it and I could hardly breathe. "Nadine," I said, "do you think that I am worthy of your love?" At this she dropped her head to my knees and sobbed out, "You are all the world to me. I must have you. I will have you. Tell me you love me. Tell me, Bobby." I raised her up and said, "Nadine, come in here with me." I led her into the nursery and up to the little cribs where the babes lay asleep. The little night light shone very dimly in one corner of the room and we could barely see the faces of the little ones. I knew as

I led Nadine into that little room that she would know her own heart when she gazed on the two little babes. I did not think of the right and wrong of our love; I simply wanted her to know her own heart.

As we stood there, looking down on them, it seemed as if she were waiting for divine guidance. After we had been there a moment she turned to me and, placing her hands in mine, she lifted her head and kissed me. What must have been her thoughts as she stood there looking down on her two little children? What a powerful love she must have had for me! What a wonderful faith and trust in me to give not only herself, but also those little ones into my keeping! For while I did not know it at the time, that is what her kiss meant that night.

We returned to the other room and, sitting there on the divan, I held her in my arms for a long time with not a word spoken. Then I told her I did love her, but that I had never before dared to even think of her loving me.

I took from my hand a ring I had worn for years and placed it on her finger. She was greatly pleased over this and, kissing it, said she would wear it forever.

As the evening wore on we both grew tense with the excitement which the discoveries of the evening had occasioned; I told her that I must leave as it was getting very late. She clung to me, begging me not to go, but I told her it was my duty to her to go then. She made me promise to come again the next night and, after holding her in my arms a few minutes at the door, I slipped quietly out of the flat and hurried down the

stairs. While waiting for the car on the opposite corner I looked up to her flat and saw her standing by the open window, and as my car came along she raised and lowered the little night light three times in front of her window. Just as I was retiring she called me up and told me that the signals with the little light were "good night" from the babes and herself.

The next evening I went to see her again. She was waiting for me as before, only this time she kissed me on both cheeks before she allowed me to remove my overcoat. That evening we again sat on the divan and talked of our love. I told her I was going away the next day and would not be back for two months. She cried and sobbed for a long time.

I asked her to write to me every day and told her that by the time I returned she would know what she wished to do. I had made up my mind to go away, leaving her with nothing serious to regret, and we had a very plain talk. I told her a love like ours knew no laws of any kind and that for the sake of the children we should know ourselves better before going any further.

I put the whole question before her in a hard light, half hoping for her sake that she would see the futility of it all, knowing in my own heart that it would surely lead only to the inevitable sorrow and misery for us. I was sick of punishment and, while I loved her, I did not feel in my heart somehow that it would end well. By the time I left that night her demonstrations of love for me had banished most of these thoughts and I loved

her more than ever and had a little hope that the future would yet bring peace and happiness to us. She again stood at the window and signalled good night as I stepped into the car.

That night I asked God to help me to be strong in my resolution to do nothing which might ruin Nadine's life. The next day I started on my trip, stopping in Chicago long enough to buy a little gold and enamelled wreath of forget-me-nots in the form of a brooch. I had it engraved on the back "9-29" and sent it to Nadine. She corresponded with me regularly after this and her letters were filled with love and faith.

In the meantime I was receiving letters from Marie also. Some days in my mail there would be one of Marie's letters filled with passionate sentences and expressing a desire to be in my arms, and in the same mail would come one of Nadine's letters, breathing the other — the true love. Unconsciously I would compare the two and wish to be with Nadine.

The latter part of October, Nadine's father died and she wrote me, telling me about it.

In November I wrote Nadine that I would arrive in Cleveland the eighteenth. When I reached Chicago she called me on the long-distance 'phone and said she would meet me at the train in Cleveland. When I arrived she was waiting for me at the depot with a big limousine car. She took me to my hotel and waited while I went in and registered. Then we drove to one of the parks and after we had alighted she told the chauffeur to re-

turn to the same spot for us in two hours. We walked up one of the small paths and when we were alone she threw her arms around me and kissed my cheeks until they hurt. We walked around for an hour and then sat down on a bench. It was cold that morning and I can remember her hands seemed warm while mine were almost freezing.

While we were sitting there on the bench she turned to me suddenly and said, "Bobby, can you get a room somewhere where we can meet? Harry is home and we cannot meet at the house." I was stunned for a moment and my heart seemed to jump into my throat. Turning to her, I said, "Nadine, have you thought what that means?" She turned her head away and did not answer for a moment. Then, without looking up, said, "Bobby, don't you want to meet me?" I put my arm around her and made her look at me. Her face was flushed and in her eyes there was a look I had never seen there before. "Nadine," I said, "are you sure, dear, you will never regret it?" For a moment she hesitated and then said, "Bobby, I would not do anything which I could regret."

I told her I would find some place that very day and she explained that she had made arrangements to get away the next afternoon.

At this moment the car returned for us and we rode into the city together. She dropped me at the hotel with a promise to call me up that evening.

At the hotel the clerk gave me the address of a woman

who owned a flat and occasionally rented rooms. I called this woman up and made arrangements for the next afternoon.

When Nadine called me up that evening I told her I had all arrangements made. She agreed to meet me at two o'clock the next afternoon at a drug store about four blocks from this flat.

The next day I got away from the office for the afternoon with the excuse that I had to see a doctor. It was raining while I stood on the corner waiting for Nadine.

When she got off the car and came toward me I hardly recognized her, as she was dressed all in black with a heavy black veil completely covering her face. I held my umbrella over her for a moment as we stood on the corner and told her I would walk ahead and turn in at a certain number, and for her to follow about a block behind me and turn in at the same number when she reached it and that I would be waiting for her just inside the door. She followed my directions and soon we were safe inside the flat.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FOR a few minutes after our arrival Nadine was frightened at what we had done but her love finally overcame this fear and before long we had completely forgotten our strange surroundings.

That afternoon was one of the most memorable of my life. The light in Nadine's eyes was something such as I had never before seen in any woman's eyes and I learned for the first time that day how much a woman can love.

And that dreary, rainy afternoon I took from the man who had so long posed as my friend and who had stood silently by as I married the girl he had ruined, his wife and the honor of his household.

That evening I took Nadine in a cab to within a block of her home. She kissed me good night and, with a promise to meet me again the next evening, I saw her walk away through the rain to her babies and the man she had forsaken.

We met again the next day, and that night I returned to Chicago. She wrote to me every day, and nearly every evening while I remained in Chicago I called her on the long-distance 'phone and heard her ask, "Do you love me, Bobbie?" Sometimes she would have to stop talking and hang up the receiver as Harry would hap-

pen to come into the room, but usually we talked for two or three minutes each evening.

My work kept me in Chicago until December twentieth, when I met Nadine in Toledo by appointment.

She had managed to get away from home for several days with the excuse that she was going to see friends. We stayed at a hotel for three days and planned how she was to get her divorce and marry me as soon as I obtained mine. Her father had left her about sixty thousand dollars from his estate and she had no worry as to getting along without her husband's support in the meantime. The next thing to do was to catch him in something that would give her grounds for divorce. I had a way to do that.

In January he was to meet me in Chicago and he had already spoken to me about the high old time we would have. I knew I could get Marie to help me frame up a deal.

Christmas Eve saw me in Chicago, where I went on a drunk. The next few days I loafed around the hotel and the day before New Year's met an old friend with whom I had often travelled. He had just quarrelled with his wife and was about half-drunk. Early that evening we started out to take in the usual New Year's Eve celebration. We each bought a big tin horn and started down State Street. At Adams and State we ran into one of his lady friends who worked in one of the State Street stores. She was feeling a little hilarious and informed us she was on the way to her dress-maker's and didn't care when she got there. While the

three of us were standing there along came a reporter for one of the daily papers. He, too, was about half-loaded and, being acquainted with the girl, was soon talking with the three of us.

The girl suggested that we get two more girls and make a night of it. To this we agreed, and my friend, Jim, and I began to keep an eye out for a pair that looked somewhere near decent. We had passed up several couples when I noticed two girls coming down State Street. They appeared to be very quiet and respectable, but something prompted me to say to the larger one of the two, "Won't you join our crowd in a little celebration?" They stopped and looked at us and smiled, but seemed to hesitate. We urged them to come along and finally they consented.

I bought some more horns from the vendor on the corner and gave them to the girls. Jim stepped in and, taking the arm of the girl I had spoken to, headed for the — Inn. The reporter and the shop-girl followed and I trailed along behind with the other strange girl. Over at the Inn the head waiter placed us at a big double table and we ordered drinks.

The girl I had accosted on the corner was a very pretty, rosy-cheeked, healthy-looking girl. Her eyes were very large and black, and I could see that her beautiful head of dark hair was all her own. She was very neatly dressed and of the type of woman that men look at a second time.

I was angry at Jim for taking her away from me and giving me the little girl, who was so meek. I said one

or two little things to the dark-eyed girl about Jim's having taken her away from me, so she changed places with the little girl. Jim objected to this but she told him she would come back later.

Our crowd had had a good many drinks before eleven o'clock and Jim became so noisy the head waiter asked us to leave. We left the place and walked around to George ——'s, where we had difficulty in obtaining a table. After we had secured a very small table, the fun became fast and furious and all the girls showed the effects of the liquor which they had imbibed. There was a terrible crowd down there and the air was stifling. At twelve o'clock pandemonium broke lose, bells were rung, whistles blown and horns tooted until we were deaf.

At one o'clock the reporter took the saleslady up to the street car. When he returned he was cursing a blue streak. It seems that he had been touched for his pocket book and he believed the girl had taken it, but what made him so mad was the fact that she had borrowed five cents from him for carfare.

Finally Jim went over to a nearby table to speak to some women. The little girl and the reporter went over to a crowd of students to help them sing and the black-eyed girl was left with me. I bought her another drink and suggested we get out. She said that was what she had been wanting to do, so we looked around to see if we could get away from the others.

Jim was still talking to the women; somebody had emptied a small package of flour on his hat and he was entirely oblivious of his surroundings. The little girl

was sitting upon the table, surrounded by students and trying to drink a big stein of beer. The reporter was laboriously telling some one he was reporter for the ——.

So Bess, for that was the girl's name, slipped into her coat and we skipped out.

We went over to a place on Van Buren Street where we managed to get in by the way of a side door. Here I ordered a bottle of wine, which we drank, when suddenly Bess complained of being ill. I took her out of doors and walked her around until she felt better.

I can remember her saying that if she was not back at her boarding house by twelve o'clock she could not get in, but I paid no attention to this remark.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WE woke up the next morning in a Wabash Avenue hotel. Neither of us could remember how we reached there. I was scared for a while because I did not know what manner of trouble I had brought upon the girl. She had looked so clean and decent the night before that somehow I did not think she would deliberately go to a hotel as we had done if she were sober. But she soon set my mind at rest by telling me that this was not the first time that she had stayed out all night, although she had not been guilty of such a thing very often. She was only nineteen years old and the downward journey had not made much of an inroad as yet on her splendid health. That New Year's day she told me all about herself and the life she had been trying to lead, and that it sometimes seemed so hopeless to even try to be decent when one had something to always remember. In this way began a friendship which was destined to mean much to me later on.

The next day I received the following letter from Nadine:

Dearest: I received your dear letter. Tell me what to do and whatever you think best, I'll do.

Of course, if you do not catch Harry in something I'll leave him anyway.

The nearer I get to you, dear, the further away you seem to get and when I think I can reach out my arms to you there is always something which prevents it. Oh, God! I hope you are sure I will not fail in my divorce. Not for our sake, Bob, but for the babes. I do not want to disgrace them, and, dear, I have become so blind in my love that I cannot advise myself. I want you, I need you, I am hungry just to hear your voice. Oh, Bob, we were made for each other and we could not give up the struggle now, could you? Would you? If I thought you could, I would end it all right now. I have put all my faith, love and confidence in you and have gone against every other person on earth now. No one dare or no one would dare to advise other than to go to you.

Now, dear, I must leave you; advise me quickly if you want me to come to Chicago when he is caught. God help us.

Yours forever,

NADINE.

I immediately wrote and told her not to come on as it would only complicate matters.

Three days later Harry came and, in company with Marie and another girl, we spent the entire night in a hotel. We had two connecting rooms, and at four o'clock in the morning, while Harry lay in a drunken stupor, I admitted to the room two friends of mine, who took a close look at him and his companion so as to be able to identify them later if necessary.

Marie had agreed to help me out on the deal, believing that I was after him for something he had done to me.

The next day I called Nadine on the long-distance 'phone and told her that it was all fixed. She wanted me to write to her, giving her the details, but I told her the letter might get lost.

The next morning I had a narrow escape. Harry and I were at breakfast, when a page came to our table with a special delivery letter from Nadine. Her handwriting was very peculiar and for a moment I was afraid Harry would recognize it. I grabbed the letter from the tray and slipped it into my pocket, remarking that I would read it later. He did not recognize the letter so I escaped. I had to watch my mail closely for the next few days so that he could not see it.

On the dresser in his room at the hotel was one of Nadine's pictures which I had never before seen. Two days after he returned home the picture was on my dresser. All the time he had been in Chicago I had been carrying in an inside pocket the little gold case belonging to him and containing the dainty miniature of Nadine. She had given it to me at Toledo. In doing these things I felt no qualms of conscience whatever.

About January twelfth she wrote me that she was coming to Chicago on the fifteenth to spend Sunday with me. I wrote to her to come and on Friday night she 'phoned me that she would reach Chicago late Saturday afternoon.

I met her at the depot and took her to one of the best hotels.

That evening we had dinner in our rooms and sat talking and planning until late. In the night she suddenly asked me if I had been responsible for my wife's downfall before marrying her. This question of hers turned my heart to ice. When I asked her what made her think I had done such a thing she simply said, "Harry said so." This incident was enough for me. To think that after all I had told her and all that had passed between us, she could believe anything he had told her showed that she did not have complete faith in me. I, of course, denied the story and she said she did not believe it anyway.

About nine o'clock in the morning I told her I was going out to see a man on business and would be back in an hour.

I returned to my hotel and wrote a note telling her I was being followed by a detective and for her to pay her hotel bill and take the noon train for Cleveland. I also told her that she would find a paid ticket and parlor car seat held for her under the name of Miss Andrews at the ticket window at the station and with the note I enclosed a twenty-dollar bill.

From a corner of the train shed I watched her take the train and that night I called her up at Cleveland and told her everything was all right.

I simply could not love her after the evidence of her doubting me. It killed my love just as it had been born, in a flash.

She wrote regularly each day and I answered every letter.

During this month I took Bess out to dinner several times. I had found Marie in a saloon on the North Side one evening sitting on the saloon keeper's knees and I was about through with her.

Bess was different from any girl I had met so far in that she was very bright and entertaining and more of a good chum than a sport. She had made a serious mistake a year or so before and never seemed able to forget it. She was a stenographer in a downtown office and earned a very good salary. She was a clean-minded girl and I don't think she really wanted to go on downward but went out with me more to forget her trouble than for any other reason. I always treated her respectfully and tried my best to make her happy.

About this time I was frantic over being mixed up with three women at one time. Marie was writing me reproachful letters and Nadine was continually writing and 'phoning me, and my work needed every bit of my attention.

I was glad when February came so I could go back on my trips West. I became a little careless in answering Nadine's letters but corresponded regularly with Bess and once in a while wrote to Marie. February tenth I was called to Cleveland again. Upon the day of my arrival there I engaged a new lawyer and instructed him to notify my wife that unless she filed suit for divorce on the grounds of abandonment not later than February twenty-fifth, we would file suit on the true grounds.

That night Harry invited me up to dinner and I sat close to Nadine at the table. She had one knee pressed

against mine all the time we sat there and I thought two or three times she would give the whole thing away by her actions.

I sat there and broke bread with him at his own table and there was joy in my heart that I had somewhere near evened up the score. Yet my heart ached for her because she loved me so and I knew I could not love her again after she had shown her lack of faith in me.

After dinner that evening she brought the babies in to me after she had put them into their little nighties ready for bed. I held one on each knee and she kneeled down in front of me and talked to the three of us. Harry was playing the piano and turned around once with the remark, "Oh, see our happy family," and then went on with his playing.

Harry made the remark that evening that he did not want any more children and that he had made up his mind to that long ago. He said two were enough, they were so much bother.

After Nadine had put the babies to bed and Harry had gone in to quiet them, she came to me and kissed me, whispering that she loved me. God knows she was clean and pure in her love, even though she gave it as she did, and I think that He has forgiven her long ago, although she will never forget the sin.

I could not get away the next day to meet her and that evening she was frantic when she called me up. She said Harry had gone to a dinner and would not be back until very late and for me to come to the flat at

once. I told her that I could not do this as he might catch me there. She said that if I did not come at once that she would never see me again.

Finally I told her that I would come and I started. Twice on the way I stopped in at places and 'phoned her, telling her I could not come, but each time she grew more frantic and finally I reached the flat.

She opened the door as I reached the top of the stairs and I slipped in. I shall never forget how she looked as she stood there in the hall dressed in a thin, white *négligé* gown. Her hair was braided in two long braids which hung nearly to her knees and her eyes were like twin stars. At the sight of her my heart almost stopped beating. I gathered her into my arms and kissed her lips, her cheeks and her throat and held her close to me for a moment.

Then, realizing the danger we were in, I told her I could not stay. She clung to me and would not let me go until I reminded her of what it would mean if Harry came in and found us there and the disgrace it would bring on her and the children. She held me close to her and kissed me many times. Perhaps she knew in her heart it would be the last.

After I had returned to the hotel, she called me up and I heard her ask for the last time, "Bobbie, do you love me?"

I left the next noon for Chicago and after seeing Bess went on with my road work.

During the latter part of February I was in Chicago

and found Harry there. He acted very queer toward me and I thought at the time he had found out something concerning Nadine and me.

During the next two days he hung around me a great deal, continually talking of his wife and how much he loved her. He refused my invitation to join me at dinner with the girls, saying he had cut out all that sort of thing. I left him in Chicago and went West again on business.

Nadine had told me in one of her letters in the early part of December that she had finally broken off all relations with him on account of his having been mixed up with some woman in Cleveland in the latter part of November.

It seems that some drunken woman had called up the flat one morning and Nadine answering the 'phone asked her what she wanted. The woman replied that she wanted her Harry and wanted him damn quick. Nadine had tried to find out who she was, but the woman hung up the receiver.

When Nadine asked Harry regarding this, he at first denied knowing the woman, but finally said he had met her a few evenings before. Then Nadine told him she was through with him, but that she would continue to live there in the flat and take care of the home and the babies.

Nadine wrote me daily and several times asked me to send her some sort of an affidavit regarding Harry's escapade in Chicago. I put her off each time, say-

ing I would soon be in Cleveland. I was tempted to send her one of the photos we had had taken the preceding July, but I did not do it. About March tenth I received this letter from her:

Thursday evening.

My dearest:

It has been several days since I have written or heard from you but I think it's on account of the severe snow storms here and there also.

My heart, dear, is ever with you and to-night somehow I turn to you more than ever.

By this time you must have my letters forwarded to you from Omaha.

The babes are both better and oh, how I wish I could give you a good report of myself, but I am ill and I am much afraid it means trouble.

I feel miserable. It nearly breaks my heart for just at this time, dear, it must not be — that's all.

I believe, dear, I never wanted you or needed you as this night and all day, Bob, I felt as though you must come to me at once. There has been nothing in the papers as yet regarding your wife's having filed suit though I look each morning and evening regularly. As the time passes I grow more afraid she will not apply and, dear, don't you see what disgrace it means if you apply?

Bobby, think of me if what I fear is true regarding this other.

Don't worry, dear, I'll find a way. Still my heart

breaks as I have to tell you this. I cannot bear to stay here, still I must for a time yet.

To-night, dear, I wonder where you are? I wonder if your heart aches as mine to-night. I wonder how this will all come out.

Let me know, dear, how you are feeling. I don't understand your silence. Perhaps I will hold this letter until I hear from you again.

Don't you have to be here when you apply for a divorce and can they claim you as a non-resident?

I can't write much to-night, dear boy, as I am not well enough but, dear, my silence the last few days means that I had no way to reach you, not knowing your address.

Never forget me like this again, as it cuts so deep although I know you never meant not to send me your addresses.

Harry stands here talking over the 'phone to a friend and I am writing to you.

Oh, God, I want you to love me and tell me over and over again I am all yours. Those letters would help me so now. Never forget, dear, these are bitter days for me without you.

I love you, dear — good night and love me.

Forever,

NADINE.

P. S. I would give all for your dear lips to-night on mine.

This letter startled me and worried me a great deal.

I had known for some time that I could not marry her, not only because my first love for her was dead but also because I saw at last the folly of dragging her into the mess I had made of my life and then I thought anyway, that some day even after she married me, she might deeply regret our relations prior to our marriage. I felt that Nadine would be better off with Harry and perhaps in time he would come to love her as he should and she to forgive him and love him.

This new trouble, if that is what it turned out to be, would complicate matters a great deal, but I reasoned that she would be able to explain it in some way.

At this time the effects of smoking cigarettes were becoming very pronounced. I smoked about twenty-five a day and would get up in the night to smoke. The constant use of the cigarettes seemed to obliterate any sense of right and wrong. I drank considerable and began to forget details in my work.

March fifteenth I went to E—— for a rest. Late in the afternoon of that same day, the Western Union telephoned the following message to me at the house:

“Look out. You are in danger of arrest.”

(Signed)

“HANNAH.”

Nadine's servant was named Hannah and I knew immediately that something was wrong, but I could not wire any answer for fear of getting Nadine into more trouble.

The receipt of this wire made me wild. To think of this message coming over the wires into the city where my father was getting to be a prominent man was more than I could stand, but I was absolutely without recourse at the time.

CHAPTER XXXV,

I REMAINED around the house for two days when I received the following letter, mailed from a small suburb of Cleveland. It was written in a scrawling hand and was stained with tears.

Robert:

For God's sake look out. Harry has a detective following you and has your last letter to me. Send my mail care of Hannah Roberts, General Delivery, and she will call for it there. Don't fail to do this.

He promised me that the minute I gave you up, he would let the detective off your track. He has your letter to me and oh, God, I am wild.

Hannah telegraphed you. I don't know what she wired but she tried to help us. I am insane over it all, be so careful. Will let you know all when it's safe to write.

I am writing this in the bathroom. He is watching me. I am in Hell but to protect you I denied every question he asked me. I shall deny all to save you. He intended to arrest you but when I got down on my knees he promised not to. I can't say anything. All I can do is to send this hoping it reaches you safely.

Forever,

I love you, dear.

NADINE.

I knew when I received this that there was deep trouble ahead for us and also that I would have to resign my position. This latter fact did not worry me, as I had had several offers from other firms, so I immediately wired an eastern house who wired back that they were making me a proposition by mail and asking me to await their letter before doing anything.

In the same mail with Nadine's letter came a letter from my attorney. This letter had followed me around the country for two weeks. My lawyer wrote that on February twenty-fifth my wife had filed suit for divorce on the grounds of abandonment. This was good news to me.

Two days after this I received a special delivery letter from Nadine, reading as follows:

Dearest:

Am taking an awful risk in sending this. Hannah will mail it at Station K. Harry has a government inspector watching all incoming and outgoing mail. They got your letter on March 8th. I never got to know what was in it but whatever you do, deny it as I am doing. Otherwise he is going to use it to accomplish his aims and he said he knew I was in Chicago with you. That must have been his detective that followed you.

Also he said he would have you behind the bars in twenty-four hours if I did not give you up. We must be patient now and let matters settle. I am in an awful state of mind and body so I'll agree as far as he

is concerned not to write to you, but, dear, keep me posted through Hannah at the down town postoffice.

Oh, God, how I have suffered. Hannah sent the best telegram she could to you as I was watched. My heart is broken, dear, as now he has us at least for awhile.

For God's sake burn my letters. He claims he will get them. He also says I am wearing your ring and if I must, I'll send you a box, empty, to fool them as he has ordered me to send it to you. If they open it, what then?

When he questioned me to-day I laughed at him and told him I would answer "no" to every question designed to entrap you, that I loved you and would protect you.

Soon, dear, I can see you, but when you do come for God's sake let no one know it.

He says if I leave here, he will prove me unfaithful with proof he claims the detective obtained and that he will take my babes.

I love you, dear, never forget this, but I must be patient for a while. Do not say anything they will understand when you write.

Be brave and let it comfort you that I am ever,

YOUR NADINE.

I wrote to her in care of Hannah telling her about the message I had received and how angry I had been. I also told her I was that day resigning my position

with her husband's firm and that I could not come to Cleveland.

In this letter I also told her many other things, trying to show her the folly of our love for each other. I was a little harsh, but I was doing it for her own sake.

In the same mail I wrote the firm resigning my position, to take effect immediately.

A few days later I received an answer from the treasurer of the company, expressing regret at my action and stating that he hoped that I would reconsider it before accepting any other position. This, at least, showed that my work with them had been appreciated.

About a week later I received another letter from Nadine. This letter contained a small piece of the broad pink silk ribbon she was so fond of wearing in her hair. Following is the letter.

Dear Robert:

It seems only fit that I write once again to you and tell you that whatever has happened, I am absolutely innocent of it all. I have had so much to make me turn from you but listen, Robert, it has not shaken me at all. I still feel the same and God knows I always shall toward you. In justice to myself I will say that I have no hatred, nothing but what I have always had for you. It has been so hard to bear it all but my tongue has held back everything. I told them nothing and I have suffered so much that life is nothing to me.

Your old words over the 'phone, Bob, that you loved me, are always in my ears.

Surely, Bob, they have turned you from me but, dear, ask your own heart, look back over all I have ever been to you and then form your judgment against me. It crushed me that you did not come but I am waiting just as I was before.

Your letter stabbed me to the quick, but what a dear comfort to know that I have never said anything to them about you and, Bob, if they should take all those dear letters of mine written from the depths of my heart to you, into court, I can still face you and look straight into your eyes and know I have never wronged you.

My one sin is that I loved you. I was unselfish in it for I knew how much you needed a love like mine.

Yesterday, Easter, I went to church and, Bob, I asked God to help you to know and help you to do right. I am asking nothing by writing this letter. It is sort of farewell to you. I am so crushed that I cannot write connectedly but listen, dear, I have forgiven you for everything and have made my own peace with God.

When I sent you that telegram, it was to warn you and protect you, Bob. I was so afraid he would arrest you. He threatened to so many times.

I am sending you this little piece of ribbon and if it reminds you of me and you still care, return it and if not, take back the hope you gave, I claim only a memory of the same.

There is no need to tell you, Bob, how sick I am and it is all the worse with no cheering, hopeful letters from you. I have asked God to help you.

But what is left for me? I shall never give you up.

Forever,

NADINE.

P. S. Do you love me, dear?

You promised to never leave me and said that I was yours forever. Some day you will come to me, won't you, dear?

This letter showed me what I had done and I felt again that there was no hope for me. But I did place the little bit of ribbon in an envelope and send it to her.

A few days later I received the following:

The return of the piece of pink ribbon, dear, has filled my heart with hope for — I know not what, only it came from you.

My heart stopped beating to see your writing.

Never have I turned from you in these days since I have been making dear little baby clothes, I have tried to hear always in my ears, "I love you, dear." This has kept me from breaking down. I have more courage than I ever had and whatever it is, dear, that has caused this trouble remember in your heart I'll always love you and you can never again say you are alone.

Forever,

NADINE.

After I read this letter, I went up to my little room and after locking the door got down on my knees beside the bed and asked God to forgive me for what I had done. It had been all my fault, after all. But somehow when I arose from my knees I did not feel that God had even heard my petition for forgiveness.

That afternoon I received a wire from an attorney in Cleveland stating he was representing Harry's father and asking if I would consult with him if he came to B——. I wired back that I would see him.

He arrived two days later and I met him in his room at the hotel. He handed me a large legal document and said that if I would sign it and turn over to him all of Nadine's letters and photographs, he would return me the letters I had written her, give me release of all claims which Harry might have against me and also would give me a draft for five hundred dollars.

I threw the papers in his face and had started to the door when he called me back.

He asked me to listen to him for only a few minutes and I told him to go ahead.

He stated that on the evening of the day previous to his wiring me, Nadine, in the presence of her sister, her brother-in-law, her husband and his father and mother and two attorneys, including himself, had made a clean breast of the whole thing and had asked for forgiveness. He went on to describe the whole scene and I knew his story was true. He laid on the table the ring and the pin I had given Nadine and a lot of my letters. He told me that he knew Harry had

wronged me and then he asked me to read over the papers he had brought.

I read them over and hesitated. There were two copies signed by both Harry and Nadine and they contained a release of all claims which they or myself might have against each other.

At last I told the attorney that I would sign them and give him the letters upon his promise to deliver them to Nadine. He agreed to this and I took him to the safety deposit vaults and got the letters and the other things which Nadine had given me. I had placed them there a few days before so that no one could get them away from me.

I had at home a few of her letters and pictures which I did not surrender, saying nothing to the attorney about them.

I signed the papers and after turning over the letters received a draft for five hundred dollars. Half of this went later to pay for my divorce and I sent a draft for the other half, without anything to tell who it came from, to the local orphan asylum. I felt that it was no more than right that his money should pay the cost of severing the knot which bound me to the woman whose downfall he had caused.

I have never seen either Harry or Nadine since, but in the Fall of that year and on my birthday, the twenty-first of September, a baby boy was born to them.

What must have been her thought as she nursed that little one? Could she love it and care for it as she did for the other babes? What must he have thought as

he gazed upon that little face? What could his thoughts have been when he heard that tiny wail in the still hours of the night?

They moved to the south of France shortly after the boy was born and many of their friends wondered why they chose to leave their old home. But his father had business interests there and they have settled down to live out the rest of their lives.

And that fair haired, blue eyed little lad growing up under foreign skies — will any of us three ever know the truth?

CHAPTER XXXVI

IN the new position which I shortly afterward accepted, my earnings were large and my work very pleasant. My duties took me all over the United States. During early May while in Chicago I received word that my wife had obtained a divorce and I was free. Some of my friends heard the news and invited me to a celebration in honor of the event. Marie accompanied me and for the first and only time in my life, I became helplessly drunk. This scared me and from then on I cut down on my drinking.

I had not seen Bess for some time and had not invited her to attend the celebration, as I knew it would be a wild, rough time and I knew she did not care much for that sort of amusement. I had not written to her, anyway, for a long time.

During the latter part of May I wrote Marie that I was coming to Chicago and asked her to meet me at the train. She did so and we went to one of the big hotels. She had been going down hill rapidly and the next morning when I saw that her clothes were shabby and that she had not been taking good care of herself, I, low down and unprincipled as I was, decided to pass her up for good. After breakfast we parted, agreeing to meet again that evening, but I did not keep the

appointment. I never saw her again, but received the following from her in August:

Dear Bob:

I really have no excuse for bothering you with this letter, but some way I have been feeling blue and rather lonesome to-day. I know you do not care if I write you and it will undoubtedly make me feel better to write this little letter to you.

I have been wondering so much to-day where you are and what you are doing. Can you not find time in your busy life to write me just a little note and cheer me up a bit? For the sake of the many good times we have had together, please write and tell me something about yourself.

As ever,

MARIE.

I did not reply to this letter and later in the Fall heard that she had entered a resort in St. Louis.

In June I went to a certain big city in Indiana to figure on a large contract. I waited for two days to see the man who had the placing of the contract and finally, when I stood face to face with him, saw that it was the old warden of the penitentiary where I had spent so many dreary days. For a moment, I could not speak, feeling sure he would recognize me, but he did not. I talked as little as possible and I guess this helped me, for I went away that day with a signed contract in my pocket.

During July I was in Chicago most of the time and was soon going around with Bess again.

She did not care much for drinking and dinners and we spent some of our evenings wandering around the parks. She roomed on Michigan Avenue and many an evening we have walked over to the lake front and sat there talking until a late hour. I often told her of little incidents of my boyhood days and one evening after telling her of a particularly vicious piece of deviltry, she said laughingly, "Bobbie, you're a bum," and I replied in the same bantering tone, "So are you, Bess." She said very quietly that she knew it and God only knew how sorry she was. I do not believe to this day that Bess in those days ever really gave up hope of yet becoming decent.

She seemed to care far more for me when we were sitting on the retaining wall on the lake front watching the play of the moonlight on the water than when we sat at a table in a café. She took very good care of herself and always looked neat and clean. She worked hard and saved her money and I always felt somehow that she was trying to stand still on the downward road. I used to tell her that our present life could only have one ending and she used to say, "Bobbie, why don't you turn around?" and I would answer that it was too late for me to turn.

We became good friends during this time and I used to wonder how our friendship would end.

The first of August I took another position at a larger salary, leaving my former employer without any

notice. During August and September I travelled considerably, taking in only the larger cities. I saw Bess two or three times a month and was beginning to wish that I could settle down in Chicago.

September twenty-sixth I was offered a position that paid a salary of five thousand dollars a year and expenses with another Cleveland firm and I accepted it immediately, again leaving my former employer without any notice. On the night of September twenty-eighth, after having been with Bess all evening, I left for Cleveland to take up my new work.

I was not afraid to go back there as I knew Harry was too big a coward to say anything to me and I knew his folks had no desire for any publicity.

My new employers were very nice people and I congratulated myself on having made the change. My work necessitated a great deal of travelling and I did not have much time to brood over my troubles.

Bess and I corresponded regularly and her letters gave me a great deal of pleasure.

But early in December there came one which caused me many heart aches. It was as follows:

Bobbie dear:

You will certainly think there is something wrong or you wouldn't be getting another letter from me before you have had time to answer the last one.

I hardly know how to write what I want to tell you. It would be much easier to tell you about it if I could

only see you. I suppose I may as well commence at the beginning and tell you all.

The first week I was home on my vacation, I met a young fellow and I guess it was simply a case of love at first sight. There have been a couple of other times in my life when I thought I was in love, but when compared with this I see how insignificant they were.

We are not going to be married until some time next summer.

He is a little taller than I am and is very light. He is a graduate of —— University and has worked in Chicago for two years. He is going into business with his father next month and I don't see any reason why we shouldn't be happy and contented.

He is only twenty-four and it seems as though we are pretty young but we have both seen enough of the world to know what we are doing.

We won't get to see each other very often in the next few months, but he is going to spend every other Sunday in Chicago with me.

I am done with the old life; you know Bobbie what I mean, and hereafter I am going to do what is right. I am going to be true blue, for, after all, what is there in life, except the love of one man and one woman for each other?

You are the first and only person who knows about this, but I think that under the circumstances it is only fair that I tell you all about it.

I will always be glad to hear from you, Bob, and

when I am married no one will ever be more welcome in my home than you.

If you care to answer this letter, address me at the old address and when you get in town you might call me up.

I consider you one of the best friends I ever had and will certainly never forget the good times we have had together. I hope we will always continue to be the very best of friends.

I hope to hear from you soon.

As ever,

BESS.

I was glad to hear this news, and yet was sorry to lose Bess.

That night I wrote her a long letter and the last page of it was blurred with many tears, as I closed with a "God bless you" and wished her luck.

Several days later I received another letter from her thanking me for my letter and telling me to be sure to let her know when I was coming to Chicago.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE day before Christmas I was in Toronto and in the mail that morning received a letter from Mother saying that my girl relative with whom I had gone slumming many years before in B—— had written saying she was in Cleveland with her husband and would like to have my address. The letter was two weeks old, having been forwarded to me via Cleveland and New York.

So when I returned to Cleveland the twenty-sixth, I hardly expected to see her, but upon inquiry found that her husband was working at one of the local theatres. I called him up and he immediately asked me to come down and he would take me over to his wife.

I had nothing to do that day, so walked over to the theatre and introduced myself to him. He said that he had often heard his wife speak of me and that he would take me over to the house as soon as he was through with rehearsal. They were staying with some friends and had been in the city three weeks. On the way home he told me about himself and I learned that he was getting up new music for some production.

When we reached the house his wife was not up, so we had to wait a short time. When she did come into the room, she surprised me, for she had grown into a beautiful woman.

She walked up to me and kissed me square on the lips and then smiled at her husband and said, "He's my relation." He did not seem to object to it.

He had to go back to the theatre and invited me to make myself at home until his return when we could all have lunch together.

After he had gone, Tulips, for that is what I called my cousin on account of her pretty lips, made me come into her bedroom, where she had her coffee and toast served. She told me all that had happened since we last met and how she had come to marry her husband. She showed me some of the songs she had composed and on the walls of her room were many autographed photos of prominent stage folk.

Their home was in New York and they had been doing theatrical work for some time. Her husband was twenty-eight and she was twenty-six. They had come to Cleveland, where he had about four weeks' work to attend to.

In a joking way she asked me if I loved her yet as I had vowed I did years before and I laughingly told her yes and that each time I had been in New York I had tried to find her.

She certainly did look sweet that morning. I could not help noticing the tiny little gold-beaded slippers she was wearing and she took one off and tossed it to me. This incident started us talking of her visit to our house years before and she wanted to know if I was as pious now as then. I smiled and told her if she only could read faces, she would not ask that question.

Remarking that I did look a little "battered," she made me promise to spend the evening with her. She smoked a cigarette with me and also sang a couple of her songs.

Her husband returned about this time and pleading a previous engagement I got out of going to lunch with them and went back to the hotel.

That evening I went to the house again, taking along a hundred of my favorite cigarettes as a little gift. She was waiting for me and after thanking me for the gift, she asked me to take her some place where we could get a drink.

We went to a café and after we had had about a dozen drinks I was making love to her again. She became confidential and told me how sick she was of struggling along on fifty dollars a week. It seems her father and mother had lost their money and were living with her in New York. Her father had a poorly paid position and just managed to keep up his part of the household expense.

Tulips became very tearful and also very drunk and demanded that I take her out of the café. When I got her out on to the street, the cold air seemed to make her feel worse instead of bracing her up. She was a dead weight in my arms and I was getting scared as it was already eleven o'clock.

I put her into a cab and told the cabby to drive us to a certain hotel, where I carried her to a room and laid her on the bed. Then I sent for a doctor who was a friend of mine and we got her sobered up. I

took her home, reaching there at one o'clock. Luckily her husband was out somewhere playing poker and did not see us.

The next evening I took her to dinner with me. Her husband had to be at the theatre and seemed contented to have her go out with me. That evening we drank considerable, but I watched her this time and when she had had enough I suggested we get out.

She demanded to be taken to the same room in the hotel where we had been the night before. I tried to persuade her to forget that, but she insisted, so we went.

She had a crying spell as soon as we entered the room and began telling me all her troubles and said she wished she had married me. I took her in my arms and comforted her and before I knew it we had both forgotten her husband and even the fact that we were distant relatives.

Late in the evening she began to demand a drink about every fifteen minutes and smoked innumerable cigarettes, which helped to make matters worse. When I took her home at two thirty we were both drunk.

As we stepped out of the cab at the house, we saw her husband walking up and down the sidewalk waiting for her. He began to scold her and she slapped him across the face and told me to take her in the house, which I did. I did not know at what minute he would jump me, but he seemed very meek about that part of it, simply saying he had told her to be in by eleven o'clock. I apologized for our condition and Tulips

immediately slapped my face. This seemed to please the husband.

The next morning when I called up the house and asked for Tulips, some woman answered that she and her husband had gone out of town, but I knew from the way the woman spoke that she was acting under the instructions of some one.

During the day I wrote her husband a letter, apologizing for our condition of the night before and told him I would be more careful next time.

The next evening at seven I called up and asked for Tulips and she came to the 'phone. I told her I was going away that night and she said she must see me and for me to meet her at a certain drug store. I sent my baggage to the station and went to meet her.

She looked ill when I met her and told me to take her some place where we could talk. I took her to a café and she ordered a dish of ice cream for each of us.

When it arrived she looked at it a little ruefully and then told me what had happened. It seems that after the morning of our return to the house she had quarrelled with her husband and he had locked her in her bedroom. In the afternoon she secured a pint bottle of whiskey and drank most of it, so that by the time I called up, her husband was fighting mad and told her friend, Mrs. N——, to say that they were out of town.

She had sent a note to the Hollenden for me and I had not received it. Until I called her that evening she had been in bed all day.

She wanted me to take her away for a couple of days,

saying she could arrange to meet a friend in Chicago, but I told her I could not, as I had to go to Chicago on important business. I promised her to be back on Sunday and would then see what we could do.

She rode in a taxi with me to the station and waited with me until nearly train time, when I put her into a cab and kissing her good night, sent her home. She was crying when we parted.

She had had a hard life, having been brought up in luxury and suddenly losing everything, and then having to give music lessons until she married the man who could not earn enough to keep her in comfort.

I thought a lot of her, and in fact had fallen in love with her, but that love was founded on passion.

I reached Chicago the next morning and found there at the hotel a note from Bess, saying that she had moved and would call me up at seven o'clock that evening. I had written her several days before that I would be there Friday and asked her to call me up at the hotel. We had not met since September twenty-ninth and although I knew she was engaged yet I did want to see her again.

At seven she called me and we talked a long time. At last I mustered up courage enough to ask if she did not want to come down town and meet me. She said she would come right down and told me where to meet her.

When I saw her coming across the street I was surprised at her appearance. She had always looked nice,

but that night she looked sweeter and prettier than ever. She was the perfect picture of health and right then and there I made up my mind to send her back home as soon as I could, for I knew that my being with her would not help her any.

After she had greeted me I asked her if she wanted to go to a certain café and to my surprise she said I could not take her there fast enough as she was half dead of thirst and that she had not been out on a time for weeks.

Then I told her that since she 'phoned I had received a wire asking me to meet my sister at a late train and that I had only an hour or two to spare. Bess was greatly disappointed over this and said that all the way in on the train, she had been thinking about the good time we were going to have.

We went to a café and securing a table in an out-of-the-way corner sat down to talk of the old times and her engagement.

When it came to this latter subject, she did not seem so enthusiastic over it. I could see something was wrong, but knowing engaged people sometimes quarrel I thought that the trouble would right itself. She told me that she had not taken a drink or been out on a time for weeks and that she never felt so well in all her life. She said she had arranged to stay out that night as late as she wanted and felt like crying because I had to go to the train.

I stood by my good resolutions, however, and after we had had a few drinks, I put her on the train and sent

her home, promising to call her up the next day. That night I went back to the hotel and wrote a long letter to Tulips telling her how much I loved her.

The next day I received the following letter from her:

Dearest:

A lovely drunken cabby brought me home. He smelled so of whiskey I was really shocked and me without a chaperon! I am ashamed to death when I realize that I am worse than any old washerwoman who breathes gin into a shirt front.

Oh, the calm of the languorous hour which results in a dish of cold ice cream. You are the dearest boy to me and perhaps — I love you.

Don't get in the dumps. You always used to mope around me. Don't do it any more because I am not basking in the virgin light which a pure and unsullied reputation reflects — just now — at home and blue devils would mean sure death. I haven't stopped to think ahead yet — I am afraid to.

This will be a short note, dearie, because it is late, but what I am not writing — I am thinking. Be a good child and think of me rubbing cold cream into the wrinkles in my face — caused from two days' worry.

I will see that the porter over at the Hollenden turns the hose on the Welcome mat there to freshen it up a bit for your arrival Sunday. You will find a note there.

Now good night, dear boy; fate is the devil's own
trick, isn't it?

Good night again,
All sunshine for you
and God bless you.

TULIPS.

New Year's Eve I did not go out of the hotel but
went to bed early instead.

Sunday afternoon, while sitting in the lobby of the
hotel, one of the old prison guards walked past me.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

I WAS afraid he had recognized me, but again I was fortunate. If he had recognized me and said anything about it to the room clerk on duty it would only be a few days until the story would be all over and all the work of the past years undone.

It seemed to me that Sunday afternoon as I sat in my room staring out into the twilight, that after all, my fight had been a losing one. Even after eight long years I was liable to recognition at any time and the truth would become known. Always this thought had been with me and I had simply gritted my teeth and fought on, yet never before had it been brought home to me so forcibly as when I recognized the ex-guard.

I sat there until late in the evening, again going back over all the past and I began to see at last that the life I had led would bring me nothing and that a success in making money did not necessarily mean a successful life. I saw, for the first time plainly, that men worked for other things besides money and that honor and the respect of other men made up the greater share of life's success.

When I at last roused from my reveries it was ten o'clock and I had begun to think of a cleaner life.

I think that the sight of Bess two nights before and

the realization of what an improvement a few weeks of clean living had made in even her usually healthy appearance had set me thinking.

Then the sight of that old guard had taken me back to that bright spring day when with a heart full of good resolutions I had stepped forth from that dreary house of sorrow into God's sunshine. Looking back over it all had shown me how I had failed.

I was yet far from even making any good resolutions but I had begun to question myself and, thank God, when a man begins to do that, there is some hope for him.

The next morning I went North on business. I had promised Tulips to return to Cleveland the day before, but I knew when I promised her that I could not return so soon, but I thought to make it easier for her by promising to do so.

Monday night I wrote her and told her I had been delayed in my return, but I knew she would think that I had been out on a big spree New Year's Eve so I was not surprised to receive the following from her on Thursday at Chicago:

Dear boy:

You didn't think of it, but our lovely spitty post-office closed here most inopportunately both Sunday and Monday. So I only received your three letters this morning.

I have read each letter four times and now must consign them to the kitchen stove. They are splendid read-

ing, believe me, and as sceptical as I am, as bumping about has made me — I am inclined to believe you, at least I am going to accept all you say because you have jollied me up.

I have certainly had a bunch of ups and downs and right here I will smear a dash of blue across the picture and then cut it out. I have never been quite so up against it. I can't write all — but — and I am not meaning any injustice toward any one else — but hubby's health simply won't permit him to work any harder than to just about take care of himself and it isn't right for me to drag the life out of him to make a living for me, too. It is simply a situation that has to be looked squarely in the face and it means for me to do something.

He is very sad over it and the whole thing is maddening to me. I never dreamed of anything like this happening to me. But when he came from the doctor's to-day, he said I was right and he couldn't say no. This sort of thing casts a gloom over one's general life and the pity I have for people has been my own ruination.

I can sit down and cry for hours over something that doesn't even worry the person I am weeping for — but that's my nature. I don't believe any one can ever be happy with that in their system. Mamma is the same way. She will dissolve in tears at the mere mention of the days when she wouldn't let me have the cake when I wanted it but only when I didn't want it — at meal times.

I don't see anything ahead of me but the stage — I shall have to try this small circuit first to get accustomed to the work and to throw presentable stuff together. I know what vaudeville wants but I want to get used to doing things gradually.

I know what you perhaps are tempted to say, "Let me help you"; but please don't, for I have everything planned and I would hate myself if I didn't do it in my own way — I wouldn't be any kind of a sport or a woman — if I didn't.

Do you know I am just enough of a fatalist to believe there was something meant by our meeting again. You tried to see me in New York and I tried to find you here at the same time and you finally found me here. We should have met in New York sooner or later so it was inevitable — why, dear?

There is a Destiny —! Believe it? Fate is generous but indiscriminate in picking out our relatives but still I am glad there is a little of the same blood in our veins — somehow it brings you nearer and I seem to have more claim on you than other — hussies. I can stand up and say: "Get to hell out of here, will you — he's my — relative." (Get to hell is my favorite expression anyway).

Every day since I've been here you've been in my mind — "slush" I hear you say. The explanation simply reeks of simplicity, one of the musicians at the theatre resembles you. I am offering this as a part of Fate's game. I can't explain how I feel toward you, but I can talk to you and you will understand.

Many a girl has gone out on the stage with a smile on her lips and tears in her heart. I know some of them who do it. It simply represents work.

It isn't in me to make anybody else suffer if I know it because it reflects such venom on me — mentally, that I feel as if I would die.

So you must see that I have to be as square as I am capable of being — you know I don't pose — God forgive me — if I even had any "creed," but I simply toss about and do that which seems the kindest to those dependent on me for happiness, but oh, God, I wonder if I'll ever have any myself. Selfish, isn't it —

Do you know I am too damned impressionable — I ache so hard for others — and I never could smell a rose hard enough — I have to let them absolutely alone and I can't enjoy pretty scenery half as hard as I want to — always overdo everything — simply burst at a dramatic scene (like *Way Down East* offers). If they would only leave off the trembly, heartrending music in *ZaZa* I could sit through it — a woman saved my life at the Lyric last year. In the most touching scene, she said to her friends behind me, "I guess I'll have fish cakes for supper."

Listen, dear, I am not going to throw discretion to the four vagrant winds of heaven — because it don't get you anything. I don't know what your idea is — and neither do you for that matter — but I think you will make an effort to please me and I have several little plans to disclose to you. I was obliged to trust Mrs. N—— who was willing to help me. She will get

me to Toledo for the day and night but it would be wiser to come back the same night — even if I go back the next day, for I hate to have people so dead on to me. She will help me to Indianapolis but it is a risk. I must see you before I make any move if it is possible. Of course, later she will go with me to Chicago for a week and keep out of the way most of the time. But she can't go yet a while and perhaps I can't then. I can get to Toledo by nine in the morning and you can arrange your train accordingly. You probably know how to make arrangements in that town, damn you!

Will you do that, dear? Say Monday or Tuesday — that will give you plenty of time and then you can come on over here for a while, can't you? At least, help your relative plan her future.

Oh, dearie, what a mess I have made of everything. Do you know I am sorry if you gave up a good time New Year's Eve on account of love for me. I want you to have a good time — it's all we have left. It would be my way — if I had any.

All I see, dear, is a black cloud — and I am afraid — that's all. I am not mopey about it — only philosophical — another sweet trait of mine.

Go ahead and enjoy yourself — only don't lose your head. There is only one thing I would ask of you, only it's not my privilege — it would only be my wish at best under the circumstances.

You have a much too exalted opinion of me. There is nothing to justify your worshipful moods. Do you know I believe Omar Khayyam is right — literally

you may put fantastic interpretations forth on the Rubaiyat, but the eye he had to the grape solved many a rainy day puzzle for Omar. "I wonder what it is the vintners buy — one half so precious as the goods they sell."

Didn't I see hate sticking out of every line you wrote to hubby. You mustn't feel that way — you won't when you have talked "unstewed" to me.

I was disappointed Sunday but knew intuitively you wouldn't show up — felt that you would carry out your usual New Year's plans.

Do you remember that trip you took up the lakes with that girl? Ah, son, and all those things have changed!!! You see I am, maybe, jealous.

The world looks like another place to me — I feel as though I had been asleep and had just come to and am still stunned to find such a situation before me. I firmly believe everything is for the best though.

You are wondering how much I care — please come over Monday and find out. I simply can't give you up now — and seem to be tied — till I can have a talk with you.

I know Toledo doesn't offer much of an attraction but it's the best I can do now and will serve if you can then come on over to Cleveland. You will let me know of course.

Perhaps you see possibilities in my vaudeville venture by myself but I'm too modest to hint at them. It only makes me thoughtful. You may always send me a wire or special here at the house addressed to

Mrs. N—— and it will be handed to me unopened.

Well, dearest, you understand me now — I am sure as well as I understand myself. I am mixed up where I don't dare think.

I hope you turn down the Chicago girl. I'll bet she isn't in our "class" anyway — I have a perfect contempt for a "tart."

A woman has got to be pretty classy to put it over right. My idea would be — a woman possessed of all the component parts of a "peach" to begin with, besides which I should want her well dressed — with a diamond or two, entertaining — well raised — brainy — witty — (I should say talented) and above all good humored, but then I am dealing with "kept" women, I am afraid. They are always trying to cover up "papa's money" and "mamma's reception gowns" in a loud voice — while the good pal — "tart" (I hope I don't offend) is inclined to tell you what she "seen" and what she "done" at "Rector's" last night and advances enough small chatter to shame Reed & Kellogg's First Reader out of the public schools.

Thank God I can discriminate if I do have to work out my own salvation. It's something to be able to appreciate the general mechanism of everything. I'm a good observer and I find "where ignorance is bliss it's foolish to be a fox." In a minute I'll be lecturing on the threadbare East Side.

I am just writing at random as you can see — I hope to be my natural self soon — poke your finger at me and I'll cry.

Oh, Bobby, it will be all right when I see you I am sure. Do you care enough to make the trip over? It's nice to feel that you really care — but all I offer is such a wreck of principles — still a new love is yours — new to me — I still believe it was meant to be.

Let me hear from you "Special" or wire as soon as you get this.

With all my love, good night, dear.

TULIPS.

After reading this long letter over several times I wrote her that I could not come until the following week, when I would have to be in Cleveland for a day and night only. Right down in my heart I felt that I ought not to see her again, but her letter fascinated me and I determined to go and see her again.

A day or so later I received this letter from her:

My dearest:

Your dear letter just came. Be flattered when I tell you I made three trips over to the postoffice for it but I knew it would be there which is proof of my trust in you. As a rule I am dubious — but I believe you when you say business detained you because what the hell is the use in "spinning them" to me?

I have only a few minutes to write to you. Unfortunately hubby's hours have been changed — works from twelve till two and five till seven. Mrs. N—— and I will fix it for the day and evening by sending her and a friend to the theatre — meeting them afterwards.

I owe Mrs. N—— a treat anyway for she would go through hell for me, cooks my breakfast herself every morning — she is one good friend. If I have to live cheaply it's good to be with her. Always my luck to have some one dumbly worship me and I never can repay them.

Dear boy, I'm at my wits' end to know just what to do. It's easy to say it, but following the dictates of one's heart sometimes ends in misery — but I am doing what I think is best. I'm "breaking away" and legitimately. Mr. E—— is going to give me four weeks over the —— time and then put me over the Western time which is two shows a day and takes me to the Coast. I won't go into detail but you can guess why I am pushing the vaudeville through. It will take me away. Of course, I could sit and play pictures for six hours at a stretch but that isn't my ideal of happiness. If I must take care of myself, I am going to do it without drudgery.

Damn a man that wants his wife to earn half.

Never mind, dear heart, I know what you want to say but we can only talk it over. You will listen to my method of reasoning for I am not looking for trouble but the contrary — and it doesn't come in a minute.

If you knew that every thought of mine belongs to you, "cousin mine" — and that my real love goes out to you only — you will be satisfied to let me go on with what I have planned — it gets me away and may mean a certain amount of success.

This idea of the stage being corrupt is all damned rot, it's just as one makes it. Personally I am just as safe there as anywhere else. I have lots of friends in the business and should attend strictly to my own affairs. It doesn't all glitter and the odor of the Swans Down powder and No. 18 rouge together with hair oil whiskey and "seen" it and "done" it and snatches of how "they kicked 'em off the chairs in Oshkosh," etc., don't turn my head. When your eyes have been opened and your own heart is gone there is no need to worry. I flatter myself I am on to the world, which is round like an orange and flat at the poles.

I love you, dear boy, remember it always.

I find myself drinking hot whiskies for my cold (?). They don't banish memory, however. They say heaven and hell are right here with us somewhere between the gullet and the pit of the stomach. The heaven of it is in imbibing the hair oil cocktail to the "forgetful stage" and the hell of it is the penalty we pay for the heaven indulged in.

I hope you show up soon and come to Cleveland. Toledo is out of the question now under the changed conditions.

Must stop now and post this. Hoping to see your dear self by Wednesday, believe me,

Always,

Your TULIPS.

During the next few days I was very busy on contracts and did not go near Bess or even let her know

I was back in the city. I wrote Tulips saying I could not get away for two weeks and that I was laid up with a cold. On the eighteenth I received this letter from her, written in pencil:

Dear Robbie:

Am waiting for a taxi to take me to the train, going into New York. Hubby is playing vaudeville again. They wired for him and he went Thursday. He is booked for the season.

Will be there Saturday. Terribly sorry not to have seen you again. Understand you couldn't pull away from your business.

Sorry you were laid up. If I were not your own adorable relative, I might ask — who is she. But I am the relative.

Besides didn't I get touched for all I had over at the H—— last night. Threw whiskey at the waiter, then slapped his face.

I do hope you will come on East. Please write to me for you know, dear, how fond I am of you and it hurts me to feel you don't take the same interest in me — perhaps. Write me, New York, Gen'l Del., till I make other arrangements.

Tell me were you legitimately ill? If you were — I am sorry, of course — please don't forget me so utterly — I can't you. Didn't I write you a letter over at the H—— last night and mail it under the table?

I do such dippy things. Do you really want to see me again?

I hope your business is a success and I also hope to do well enough with my songs to get over the starvation stage. Will have to have some pictures made and will send one — if you care for it.

Is there some other woman, Bobbie?

Must stop now — you might drop me a line so I will get it Monday.

Bye, bye and “God will take care of you, Bill.”

Pardon pencil, I am all packed up. Just a line to Gen'l Del., dear.

Always,

TULIPS.

With this letter she enclosed a wire from her husband telling her to come East at once.

I wrote to her care of General Delivery, New York, and received a short little note in reply promising to write again in a few days and asking me to write to her and to enclose my letters in an envelope addressed to one of her married friends. A few days later I wrote as she requested telling her I would be at the Waldorf about the tenth.

A few days later while I was at the factory in Cleveland the secretary called me into his private office. “Robert,” he said, “have you any enemies here in the city?” I was greatly surprised at his question, but told him that I had several that I knew of. Then he went on to tell me that some one had been bringing stories to him and he also said that one person in particular claimed that I had done things in Cleveland

which should cause me to hang my head in shame for the rest of my life. I told the secretary that my trouble with my wife was probably back of these remarks, which were no doubt made by some of her friends. I also said that I had acted as I thought right in that matter and did not believe that any one could truthfully say anything detrimental to me. This pleased him and he told me that he, of course, had not believed the stories, but in my own heart I knew that some one had said something about my relations with Nadine.

While in Cleveland I received this letter from Tulips:

My dear boy:

Do you really believe you are coming over soon. I have been out of town and had planned to go up to the mountains with a lady after hubby leaves the city but won't now as long as there are prospects of seeing you soon. I don't seem able to write a real letter any more because I never know where you are and have been thinking I'd have a talk all this time.

This old world is such a weary place and perplexing to live in. Everything is up hill — so what's the use? I'd simply love to have a farm and raise chickens. That quiet life by the sea — with a grand piano and a bathing suit! A hill goes up and a pill goes down; likewise the barometer of ambitious geniuses.

Oh, well, I am cheerful and my new song is in all the Broadway windows. Besides don't I get enough to eat — if I do have to cook it myself — and there is

still a lot of pure, fresh air — outside of theatrical managers' offices and didn't a cab driver yell, "Hello, kiddo," at me the other day!

I am getting my summer clothes at cost — providing I come across with the cost at least — so you see I won't have many troubles to tell you after all.

Far be it from me to ask you any more to move along. It cheapens a woman to appear to be running after a man — they say.

Well, twilight sneaks up yonder hill and incidentally through Central Park West so I'll stop while there is still purple light enough to sign my name. Are you true and still hopeful?

TULIPS.

Early in February, I wrote a note to Bess asking her how she was getting along. I received a nice letter from her saying that she had broken her engagement and was engaged to another young man whom I had met. It seems that the first one had turned out to be a rascal after all and personally I knew the second one to be no better. I felt sorry for her, but wrote her a letter wishing her luck.

I was delayed in starting on my Eastern trip and received the following from Tulips:

My dear:

Just returned from Trenton. Called up the Waldorf and learned you were to be here this coming week.

Will 'phone down Monday and Tuesday if I don't

hear from you that your plans have changed. Hubby
is playing here for one more week.

No vaudeville for mine alone. I tried it!

Hoping to see you soon,

Always,

TULIPS.

CHAPTER XXXIX

I ARRIVED in New York the following Friday morning and was so busy all day that I neglected to let Tulips know of my arrival.

About seven thirty in the evening I sent a messenger boy with a note to her, but he returned with the information that she had gone out for the evening, so I wrote her a note that night and mailed it, knowing she would receive it the following morning.

At four o'clock the next day she called me up and after telling me how glad she was to hear my voice she made an engagement to meet me at six thirty at Times Square. She was there on time and after our greetings were over we went to the Café de l'Opera for dinner.

During the meal we both drank considerable and when we came out on the street, decided to walk around a little. After an hour spent in walking up and down Broadway, we went to Murray's, where we sat and visited until eleven o'clock.

From there we went to a flat owned by a woman friend of mine on West Fifty-fifth Street. She had a beautifully furnished little apartment and Tulips played over several of her songs for me on the baby grand piano.

We did not go home until one o'clock and when I helped her out of the taxi at One Hundred and Eighth Street she was anything but sober. After watching her until she arrived safely at her door, I jumped into the taxi and went back down town.

The next morning I received instructions to go to Boston that day and just as I was packing, Tulips called me up. I told her I was going to Boston at noon and would return on the Knickerbocker the next afternoon and asked her to meet me at the Waldorf at seven. She agreed to this, saying hubby was going to Washington that night and she would be free to stay out as late as she wanted to on my return.

She was waiting for me the next evening and after dinner we again went to the flat, where Tulips played and sang for me until nearly eleven.

We had several bottles of wine during the evening and about one o'clock Tulips suddenly dropped to the floor. I was considerably frightened, believing she was dead. I called my friend and after we had lifted Tulips into a chair she said that there was nothing serious wrong with her; she was simply drunk.

I carried her into a bedroom and laid her on the bed. The woman then undressed her and after wrapping her in blankets, opened the windows and turned out the lights, saying the fresh air would soon sober her. It was a bitter cold night and I can remember going into the room several times during the next hour to see how she was getting along. She lay there so white and still that it took a great deal of persuasion on the part

of my friend to convince me that there was not something seriously wrong with her. About two thirty, she woke up and called me. I found her much better.

We did not leave until four in the morning and she was a pale, sick-looking girl when I took her home.

But that evening we went out again, although this time I was careful not to allow her to drink so much.

The next evening I was tired out from the loss of sleep and left word at the desk not to call me on the 'phone. Tulips could sleep all day, while I had business to attend to and anyway I was getting ashamed of myself.

Through some error in the office they rang my 'phone about eleven o'clock and, answering, I recognized Tulips' voice. She wanted me to come up to a friend's house on Eighty-sixth Street, where they were having a party. From the way she talked I knew she had had several drinks. She informed me that she was at that moment in a saloon where she had just purchased a bottle of vermouth for the party.

I told her it was too late for me to come up as I had already retired. I asked her why she had not called me earlier and she answered that she had called me several times and had been told upon each occasion that I was out. I told her that business had detained me all evening and that I was too tired to come out again that night. I offered to send a taxi to take her home, but she was angry and told me that if I did not come after her, I would never see her again. We

talked a few minutes longer and finally she slammed up the receiver.

That night, even though I was dead tired, I could not sleep. I smoked innumerable cigarettes and at about three o'clock I got up to get a drink. As I walked across the room, I staggered and would have fallen had I not caught hold of the chair. I felt dizzy and my head ached terribly. The cigarettes I had smoked during the evening had not given me the satisfaction they usually did and somehow I realized that at last they were "getting me." For several months I had been smoking on an average of thirty a day, but was not getting the pleasure out of them that I had formerly experienced. Worrying over this kept me awake until daylight.

My work in New York being completed, I decided to return that afternoon to Cleveland.

I stopped in at a florist's and ordered a big basket of tulips sent to my cousin's address.

When my train pulled out I sat in my section in anything but a happy frame of mind. I had called up the hotel before getting on the train and had been told that no one had called me up since I had left. Somehow I had expected Tulips to call up and say she was sorry for her actions of the night before.

It was a bleak, gloomy afternoon, with alternating flurries of rain and snow, which at times almost hid the view of the Palisades across the river. Somehow I knew intuitively that some change was taking place in my life.

I wrote a short note to Tulips and mailed it at Albany.

At the factory in Cleveland the next afternoon, the secretary again called me into his office. He invited me to be seated and then suggested that I hand in my resignation. Before I could say anything, he went on to state that unpleasant stories concerning me had been circulating through the office and around in certain business circles and he thought the best thing I could do would be to resign quietly.

Then I knew that further retribution had overtaken me. I made no denials to him and said not a word, but stepping to the door I called in a stenographer and dictated my resignation. After signing this I took it in to the old white-haired president and laid it on his desk. After looking it over he said, "My boy, I am sorry to have you do this, but I suppose it can't be helped." He shook hands with me and then told me to go to the cashier, who would give me my settlement.

The cashier gave me a settlement receipt to sign and after looking it over and signing it, I shoved it through the window to him. He pushed out two checks, one for the amount due and another one for a thousand dollars. To this latter one was pinned a slip of paper upon which was written in the shaky handwriting of the old president, "In appreciation of your faithful work," and signed with only his initials.

My eyes filled with tears as I stumbled out of the office without saying good-bye to any one.

Up in my room at the hotel that afternoon, I suf-

fered the tortures of the damned. This was the first and only time in my life when I had been discharged from a position. It hurt me terribly when I realized how hard I had worked for nothing after all.

I did not worry so much regarding a new position, as I had had many offers from other concerns.

That night I left for Chicago, having decided to rest a few days before taking up any new work.

The following was forwarded to me from the Waldorf a few days later and had been written the day I left New York:

My dear Robbie:

I am certainly a rotter and so are you. Sorry I was so ugly over the 'phone — booze.

Don't blame you for not wanting to see me. Did not get in till four this morning and have been in bed all day — am simply all in.

The flowers were lovely, both as flowers and a peace offering — my rotten life needs a dash or two of freshness in it now and then. They sort of make me feel that there may be a God after all. He has certainly turned me over to the Devil's care lately.

I'll call you up in the morning — if you are not there, I can call again.

Thanks again for the flowers.

Always,

TULIPS.

After I had been in Chicago a few days I wrote Tu-

lips telling her I was going West for a month and would let her know when I returned.

And thus another love went smash. I was about through, but did not know it then.

When I began to inquire regarding openings with different firms in my line, I was surprised to find there were none. My first Chicago employer even came to the hotel to see me and though I had long ago satisfied him that I had not betrayed his interests at the time I left him so suddenly, yet he finally decided that he could not use me. I wrote to a few Eastern firms and while they replied promptly, they all stated that they had no opening for me at that time but would place my application on file.

At last a friend of mine told me that my old competitors among the trade had passed around some story about me and I knew then that I would have to change my line of work if I ever expected to earn a big income again. I was offered several positions, but they did not pay as much as my last one had and I refused them.

I had plenty of money and a lot of faith that I would yet land something.

My evenings were very lonely and I suddenly made up my mind to see Bess. I called her up and she accepted an invitation to take dinner with me that evening.

CHAPTER XL

AT dinner she forgave me for not writing to her and said something about not being able to help caring for me no matter what I did.

She showed me the solitaire which her fiancé had given her and when I spoke about him, she said she did not think she cared as much for him as she had when he asked her to marry him, and that he did not treat her with entire respect. I said nothing more to her about him.

We had several drinks with our dinner and spent the evening in our old room at the Wabash Avenue hotel.

I could only see her three times a week as her fiancé called the other four nights. We had to be careful in getting away from her boarding house, as he lived only a block away. I would call for her at a certain hour, in a taxi, she would be waiting inside the house, watching for me, and as soon as I arrived she would run out and jump into the car and away we would go.

One Wednesday evening I took her to the theatre and when I left her at her door, she promised to call me up at seven the next evening. I waited until eight o'clock and not having heard from her, called her up. When she came to the 'phone I asked her what was wrong. She said that her fiancé had learned of our being at the theatre and had just been up to see her.

He was almost wild with anger and jealousy and had shown her a big revolver and threatened to kill me.

I laughed when she told me this and advised her not to be afraid of what he might do to me as I was more than able to take care of myself, but she was afraid and told me that I must not come over that night, that he might be watching for me. I did not want to worry her so I asked her to call me up the next evening early and she promised to do so.

The next evening I waited until eight thirty before calling her up and when she answered the 'phone I could tell by the sound of her voice that she had been crying and when I asked why she had not called me she simply said that she could not. I asked her why she had been crying and she answered, "On account of you, Bobbie." She would give me no further explanation and when I said I was coming right over, replied that she could not see me. Then I asked her about seeing her the next evening and she said that she could not see me then.

Upon hearing her say this, my heart began to sink. I stood there holding the receiver to my ear and I could hear her sobbing. Then I said, "Bess, does that mean you never expect to see me again?" and she replied with a sob, "Bobbie, I guess that's what it means. We can't go on this way, we are only sinking deeper each day."

Never since I had met her had I ever loved her so much as I did at that moment. The realization that she too had found me out for what I was, stunned me.

I could still hear her sobbing, but I was so dazed and heartbroken that I could not talk and I softly hung up the receiver.

Throwing myself face downward across my bed, I cried as I had not cried since my childhood days. Within the next few minutes it seemed as if every sinful act that I had ever committed, flashed before me as if upon a screen and I saw myself at last just as I was, a rotten, miserable failure as a man, absolutely worthless to God, to my folks, to the world and to myself.

Getting down on my knees beside the bed, I told God I was through with the old life and would be a man and when I arose I knew He had heard me.

I went to the 'phone and called up Bess. When she answered she was still crying and could hardly speak distinctly. I told her I was sorry for having hung up the receiver as I had done, but that I had been so stunned at what she had said I could not speak. Then she told me that she was just going to call me up as her 'phone rang and that she was glad I had called her as it proved that I really cared after all. Then I told her that what she had said about our relations was true and that I saw it in its true light at last and then, after telling her I would write to her that evening, I said good-bye.

In my letter to her I thanked her for opening my eyes and told her she had accomplished far more than she knew when she had decided to give me up. I closed my letter to her with a "God bless you, Bess," that came straight from my heart.

CHAPTER XLI

THE next morning I was sitting in the hotel lobby and the feeling of utter loneliness that came over me was such that I was afraid the other guests sitting near me would notice it and I went upstairs to my room. There I sat down and tried to figure out what I should do. It seemed that morning as if I were a stranger in Chicago without a friend or even an acquaintance.

At last my thoughts turned toward home and I decided to wire my father, asking him if I could come home for a few days' rest. I received his answer promptly, telling me to come on home immediately. That night I took the train in response to his invitation.

For a week after my homecoming I did nothing but rest. A great deal of my time was spent with my little sister. I told Father that I had had a dispute with my employer and was going to wait and see what they would do. After a week's rest I began to write letters to different manufacturers and jobbers in my old line of work and during the following two weeks the answers drifted in slowly, but all contained the same information, "No opening." One letter only held out any hope at all and I laid that aside, figuring on returning to Chicago a little later.

During the latter part of my stay at home I invested a thousand dollars in a "get-rich-quick" concern and saw it wiped out completely in two weeks. This left me with just a hundred and fifty dollars to my name and for the first time in years real fear for my business future entered my mind. I shall never forget that terrible feeling that came over me when I began to wonder what I should do to even earn a living. I was paying ten dollars a week board at home and the folks were always glad to take it. I was too proud to let them know that I was running short of money.

I think the lesson that was driven into me so quietly and severely those beautiful spring days was one of the best things that ever happened to me. To have it brought home to me so clearly that my very existence hung on such slender threads made me realize that I had wasted a thousand opportunities which might never come to me again. And I felt that finding a new position was going to mean a long search and in all probability I would have to begin again at the very bottom of the ladder. I could not refer to any of my last employers for references. My recent associates in business evidently were fighting shy of me and where was I to turn? It was at this time in my life that I learned finally the real value of a good reputation and I slowly made up my mind to go out into the world again and get one and keep it. Somehow when I made up my mind to do this my courage came back to me. Thank God, I had faith in my ability to do good work at least, and I determined to make good.

Leaving home with just an even hundred dollars I came to Chicago and started on a quiet hunt for employment. I had with me the one letter that had offered any hope and I went to see the people.

They had lost several good contracts to me during the preceding year and from the way they welcomed me, they evidently respected my ability, but I could see that they had also heard some story regarding me.

I was anxious to get employment and I guess they caught on, because they would not make me any offer immediately. I looked over the institution and saw a hundred places where improvements could be made. I decided to get a position there if I had to work for fifty dollars a month. I knew I could take my coat off, pitch in and work hard and the results would come. I did not worry as to what the future with them would be. I have always found that when a man delivers the goods he is paid accordingly.

So I finally went to the head of the firm and told him frankly that I would like to work for them and was willing to start in for anything reasonable. He asked me what I considered reasonable and I hesitated over naming the amount. I was going to say a hundred and fifty a month for three months or until they could see results, but once more and for the last time in my life that terrible fear for my future entered my mind and I finally offered to work for eighty-five dollars a month until I could show them what I was capable of doing.

I remember to this day the flood of shame and regret that seemed to surge over me the moment I had named

my price. There I stood, past thirty years of age and begging for an eighty-five-dollar job. I think that in that moment a new kind of pride was born within me, for I swore to myself then and there in that instant that never again would I get myself into such a position.

The firm's head looked at me a few moments and I think to this day that I dropped about a mile in his estimation, but he only smiled rather faintly and said, "You can start in as soon as you wish." I went out to the department where I was to work and told the manager that I had been engaged. He seemed pleased over it and wanted me to start in at once. But it being a Wednesday, I suggested that I begin work on the Monday following and he agreed. I wanted a little rest, now that I had found a position.

On the way back to the hotel, I bought a morning paper and up in my room, following an old established habit, I looked over the Help Wanted Ads. One ad caught my attention at once and I read it over and over. To this day I don't know what made me answer it, but something just seemed to tell me to do it and I did. It was cleverly worded and called for men capable of earning at least a hundred dollars a week.

My shame over that eighty-five-dollar position was still with me and I realized only too well that I would have to take a cheap room somewhere and live on thirty-cent meals for a long time before I could get on my feet again. And oh! how I hated to give up a good income and go back among the plodders. To have to give up

my only source of pride, that of being able to earn a big income, took away a lot of my grit and courage and brought the old skeleton out of the closet.

And into my answer to that ad I put the best there was in me. On Friday morning came a reply giving me an appointment with the president of the concern at two o'clock on Saturday. Their letterhead showed me that it was a business concerning which I knew absolutely nothing. I did not feel very much encouraged over the outlook and finally decided to keep the position I already had, so that afternoon and Saturday morning I went searching for a room without finding one. My money was running out and I was greatly worried.

Saturday afternoon I was just leaving the hotel to look up some advertised rooms when I happened to think of my appointment. At first I decided to pass it up, but when I had walked over to Wabash Avenue I decided to go and see him anyway. I think that God guided my footsteps in that moment.

When I reached their offices I had to wait quite a while before the president could see me. My curiosity was slowly aroused at the many signs of prosperity which surrounded me and at the sight of the prosperous-looking men who passed my seat. Everybody seemed to be a live wire and when it came time for my interview I was keyed up to my old-time energy.

After a short interview with the president, upon whom I evidently had made a favorable impression, he took me to the manager and asked him to talk with me.

This manager was a big, fleshy man and a live wire

if there ever was one. The only things I did not like about him were his eyes, which were small, and his mouth, which was sensual looking. But there was something sincere and winning about him and I listened closely to his explanation of the work. As he progressed with this explanation, I became more and more interested, and when he had asked me several questions about myself, I looked him square in the eyes and asked, "Do you believe that I, with my entire lack of experience in this line, can make good at it?" He came right back at me with, "Mr. —, if I did not know right now that you can and will make more money at this work than you ever made before in your whole life, I wouldn't waste a damn minute with you." That remark of his gave me more courage and I told him that if he would give me a couple of their booklets I would study the proposition over that afternoon and let him know. He was standing in front of me holding a contract in his hand as I said this and I can remember the expression of disappointment that came over his face as I made the remark. He hesitated just a moment and then said, "All right. Do that, and just remember that I have faith enough in you to spend good money in training you and what is more, I'll guarantee you fifty dollars a week and expenses for your first month; let me know this afternoon."

So I went straight to the hotel and taking the two booklets I read them over and over and then I walked the floor back and forth from the windows to the door, time and time again, analyzing the proposition, turn-

ing it over and over in my mind and finally I got down on my knees beside the bed and asked God to help me decide. Then I sat in a chair at my window going over all my past life again and at last I decided to make the venture. It took nerve to make the decision as there was only one other place open to me and if I did not show up there Monday morning, I would lose that opening. I chose the harder way but my mind was clear, it was not filled with any sensual, vicious thought that could weaken my judgment.

When I looked at my watch I found it was seven o'clock and then I realized that I had not kept my word with the manager. I was nearly frantic. I wanted that position now and what if he was disgusted with me and wouldn't have me? Right then and there I learned another lesson, to always keep my appointments promptly. It has made me money since that day and helped rebuild the lost reputation.

I was half an hour trying to decide what to do. I could not find the manager's name in the telephone book. I even went back over my conversation with the manager to see if he had at any point therein said anything about where he lived. Finally I decided to risk the anger of the president by calling him up at his home to ask where I could find the manager. I did so and he was very pleasant about it and after saying with a laugh that he did not want to lose a man of my type, he gave me the manager's 'phone number. I immediately called him up and while he was rather cool at first, when I told him in an offhand way that I would

be at the office Monday to sign that contract, he warmed up at once and told me he would be waiting for me. I slept that night as I had not slept for weeks.

Sunday I went over those booklets again and again until I knew the proposition by heart and again Sunday night I slept soundly.

You may wonder that I did not call up Bess, but my lesson of the preceding few weeks had been such that it had driven all such thoughts out of my mind. I did not touch a cigarette or a drop of liquor for I knew somehow that to do so would affect my mental condition and I needed every bit of ability that I had to carry me through my present undertaking.

The possible disaster which threatened my pocket-book, my future and even my very existence, loomed up so plainly before me that I was sick of the things which had brought me to my present condition. For the time being the Beast within me was quiet. I had come at last to look upon my sensuality as the Beast.

CHAPTER XLII

ON Monday morning I was at the office bright and early. The contract was signed and I was given my first instructions. That day and all the rest of that week I worked harder than I had ever worked in my whole life. And as my knowledge of the new work increased, my enthusiasm grew and at the end of the week I was pronounced fit for duty and sent West via my old home.

When Father heard of my new work, he just grunted. Mother was enthusiastic, for she thought I was going to make some money.

I shall never forget that first week's work out in Dakota, nor shall I ever forget the first order and the joy that was mine when I knew I had made good.

The check for the first week's work read just \$233.50 and months afterward I obtained the cancelled check and had it framed.

The letters of praise and encouragement which I received from the office helped me a lot and I did my best.

Day after day I drove through the fields of growing grain, back and forth across the State, working each day as long as the daylight lasted. And I made money and a lot of it and I saved it.

The last of June, I received a letter from Bess. It

came like a bolt out of a clear sky. She asked me why I did not write to her and reminded me that July 3 was one of our "anniversaries." She asked me if I was going to be in Chicago on that day so I could be with her.

This letter had a queer effect upon me. For weeks I had not touched cigarettes or liquor nor had I given any woman a thought. My mind was entirely wrapped up in my work. So bitter had been my lesson and so enthusiastic was I over my successful venture that there didn't seem to be any question of a choice for me as to whether I should attend to business or raise hell.

But her letter acted as a drag on me. I couldn't do good work the day I received it and that night I lay awake for hours. I had saved several hundred dollars and knew that I could afford to go to Chicago and see her. For two days and nights I fought off the call of that little letter, but finally I gave in and took the train for home, where I remained a night and a day. I took my little sister down town and bought her a lot of things, but when I came to kiss her good-bye that night, I suddenly felt guilty and ashamed of my real reason for going to Chicago. I could not sleep that night on the train and when I reached Chicago, I was tired out. I had written Bess that I was coming and that morning I went to the hotel and registered myself and wife. This was at one of the best hotels, something I had not been able to do for a good many weeks, but now I had plenty of money with me.

Bess knew where I was going to stop and called me

up about ten o'clock, saying she was down town. I told her to meet me on a certain corner and she did so. We came back to the hotel together and went to my room. Somehow I did not feel right, I felt as if I was breaking some unwritten or unspoken obligation from the moment I had left my work to come to that room with her. I did not kiss her very passionately and I guess she noticed it.

Somehow I felt uncomfortable and wished I was back at my work. She didn't look good to me that morning and while I still liked her and all that, yet I did not want to put my arms around her. She had a long story to tell me about her "fiancé," and I listened patiently. Somehow she was changed or I thought she was then, but to-day I know it was I who had changed.

Coming over to where I was, she sat down on my knee and told me she had been a fool when she turned me down a few weeks previous — that she had regretted it many times since and was anxious to make up for it now but something kept holding me back, I don't know what it was, and I was blindly seeking some way to avoid going back to the old life.

She put her arms around my neck and kissed me a good many times and ruffled my hair all up as she used to. As we sat there I suddenly thought of a way out of the trouble. I told her I was going over to the drug store for a moment and handed her the morning paper with the suggestion that she read until I return. I was so afraid she would undress while I was gone. I hurried over to the drug store and told one of the

clerks, who was a friend of mine, to call me up in ten minutes at the room, saying he was the manager at the office and asking me to come out there immediately. I had notified the office that I would be in Chicago, July 5th and, of course, had not told Bess that I was in without their knowledge. I didn't even want her to know where I worked.

I hadn't any more than returned to the room when the telephone rang and after answering it, I told Bess I had to meet the manager right away. She acted as if very badly disappointed but I promised to call her up at noon and by hurrying her up, I got her out of the room and on the street in a few moments. Then I took a car and hurried to the office, knowing they would keep me there all day. They gave me a royal welcome and I went to lunch that noon with the president and the manager.

That evening the manager came to my room at the hotel and I left word at the switch board to tell any one who might call, that I was out. The next morning I took the train for home, riding all day that hot Fourth of July, but I was so glad and happy that I had kept away from the old life.

After remaining at home two days, I went out to my work. During the next few weeks, there fell into my hands a little book, the reading of which was to be of inestimable value to me during the rest of my life. It was James Allen's "As a Man Thinketh." This little book gave me a world of courage and moral strength and taught me that after all I could make of

my life yet nearly as great a success as I had once hoped for.

Early in August, I came home to get some new clothes made. After I had made my purchases, I changed my savings into a thousand-dollar bill and a few of small denomination and that night as I sat at the supper table at home, I took the big bill out of my pocket and laying it on the table in front of Father said, "Do you remember, Father, that grunt with which you favored me when I started in with this new work? Well, I have managed to save this and a little more out of it so far. Do you feel like favoring me with a little more encouragement now?" He laughed and said, "Yes, I guess you have come back at last, son."

I put the thousand dollars in the bank and went back to work. In September the manager asked me to come to Chicago and I did so. My commissions were increased and I was given a contract to train other men, in addition to my regular work. Up to this time, I had saved over eighteen hundred dollars and I had not taken a drink or touched a cigarette for months.

And then I met Bess face to face on the street one morning. There was no premeditation in the meeting; we just simply happened to run into each other and before I knew what I was saying I was asking her over to the hotel.

She seemed glad to come and we went together to my room. She kissed me after we had shut the door and putting a hand on each of my shoulders said, "Bobbie, I married him, the week after you were here last."

And I knew from the way she said it, that she was his wife in every sense of the word, so we did not even talk as in the old days.

I took her out to lunch and then calling a taxicab I took her to within a couple of blocks of her home. On the way out I stopped the car at a florist's and bought her a big bunch of American Beauties.

She passed out of my life forever that afternoon. I can remember so well the way she looked, standing there on the corner holding that big cluster of roses and waving good-bye.

CHAPTER XLIII

DURING my trips to Chicago, I had often been asked by the manager and others with whom I dined, to take a drink. I had always passed up the invitation with a laugh, saying I was "on the wagon."

On this trip to Chicago I remained about a week working at the offices part of the day and loafing around the balance of the time. The rich food I was eating while in the city and the heavy, expensive cigars I smoked made me a little lazy and I grew a little careless in my thoughts.

There were about a hundred girls employed in the office and one noon as I was sitting in one of the reception rooms, one of the men who held a very responsible position with the concern, came and sat down beside me. He asked me what I thought of his array of "dolls." I laughed at his remark and he went on to tell me about some of them. This man, it seems, was in the habit of going out on little "tears" in the evenings with some of the girls, and while we sat there he said that when I came to Chicago next time, he would fix up a little party for me. Then he asked me which one of the bunch looked good to me and before I knew it, I had named a certain girl in one of the offices. He

laughed and said that he would get her for me on my next trip and they would show me a real time.

After he left me I realized what I had been thinking and then I knew that my loafing around and eating the rich food had awakened the Beast again and it was time for me to go back to work.

The next day I left for the West and went to work with renewed determination. I was heartily ashamed of my thoughts in Chicago.

During that month and on up to the middle of October, I trained men in addition to my regular work and made a great deal of money. Finally it became so cold that I asked to be transferred to a Southern district. October 17, I received word to come to Chicago again.

The morning I arrived, I was very busy with the manager, deciding upon my future territory. In the afternoon I went down town on some other business and returned to the office about four thirty.

As I was passing through one of the reception rooms an office boy handed me a note from the man who had spoken of the "dolls" on my previous trip. In his note he asked me to step into his office as soon as possible. I was not thinking about the "dolls" and when I stepped into his office, he pushed a button under his desk as he greeted me. He told the office boy who answered to ask Miss N—— to step into his office. She was the girl I had mentioned as having looked good to me. It all happened so suddenly I did not have time to protest and before I could say anything, Miss N—— stepped into the office and closed the door. He intro-

duced us and said he wanted us to be his guests at dinner that evening. She turned to me as if for an answer. She was a pretty girl and did not look as if there was anything wrong about her. I was in a position where I could not very well hesitate so I told him we would be glad to accept his invitation. She smiled at me, saying she guessed we would have a good time, and with a parting "Bye, bye," she left the room.

Then the host-to-be told me that he had spoken to her about me and she had said she would be glad to go with me. He was taking another girl from the office. We were to meet them at a drug store about five blocks from the offices at five thirty so as to get an early "start," as he informed me with a wink.

To this day I cannot understand why I went that night. Why, after all those months of clean living and hard work, I should deliberately walk into temptation, is beyond my understanding. I just simply went, not with any intention of raising hell myself, but half expecting to see some one else raise it. The change from the cold little rooms and the poor food in the country hotels up in Dakota, to the comforts of the city life, together with the fact that I had a great deal of money with me and that I was on the following evening leaving for a comfortable Southern territory, made me feel just a little lenient toward myself and that was where I erred.

At five thirty we met the girls and took them out to a South Side café for dinner. Ben, as the girls called him, after ordering a very good dinner, asked us what

we would have to drink. I knew this was coming and feared it, but I said "Nothing for me, just now." Miss N—— looked up at me and said, "Mr. Bob, you are not going to be a kill-joy, are you? I can't get out very often, aren't you going to do as I do this one evening?" I hesitated a moment only and the thought came to me, "Well, I'll take something, but I won't drink it." So I told Ben to go ahead and he ordered Cliquot.

When the wine came and the glasses had been filled, Miss N—— proposed a toast to me and I took a sip from my glass. It wasn't much, but it was enough to start the trouble. The one little taste brought back an overwhelming flood of desire for the old hell raising. After my months of abstinence it seemed impossible that I could drop so far in a moment, but drop I did and when Ben offered me a cigarette, I took it.

The rest of the evening in the café is a blur to me, with only a few little incidents plain in my memory. I can remember going up into the balcony to lead the orchestra through a certain popular piece and then I can remember climbing into a taxi with Ben and the two girls and his giving the chauffeur a certain number on Indiana. That was a queer thing about that number, I remembered it distinctly the next morning.

The cold night air during that ride sobered me up considerable and when I asked Ben where we were going he said we were on our way up to a flat. Miss N—— and the other girl were certainly feeling hilarious and somehow I was glad we were going to the flat.

When we reached the place I paid the chauffeur and we went upstairs into the flat where we were given two adjoining rooms and served with cold bottled beer. We sat around in one of the rooms laughing, talking and drinking until Ben picked his girl up in his arms and carried her into the other room and shut the door.

CHAPTER XLIV

I BELIEVE that when a man reaches the age of thirty his outlook naturally changes, especially a man who has indulged himself as I had done. My six months' self-denial had made a change in me. My reading during that time had been of a higher order. My repentance and my thoughts regarding the old life had built up in addition to this natural steady-
ing down, something of a new character and with it had come a realization that my body was of value, that after all it was a wonderful thing and should be given some thought and care. To me, at least, had come, unacknowledged until this hour, certain definite changes in my attitude toward women. And when Miss N—— came to me and said, "Unfasten my collar, Bob," I suddenly thought to myself, "I don't love this woman; why should I want her? I may never see her again after to-night. If I take her now, it's nothing but stepping squarely back into the old road and that leads only to one place. I've been almost there and God! what a place it was."

These thoughts and others flashed through my mind in a moment's time. Then came the awakening. It was as if suddenly I saw two beings in myself; my flesh cried out for the girl and my mind and soul repelled

her. It seemed as if I stood in judgment over them. At the end of a moment, odd though it may seem, I gave the flesh, the Beast, his way in order to prove to the mind and the soul, my better self, once and for all that there was no joy or happiness for me any more in the flesh alone. I unfastened the collar.

Thank God, I did it; for in that next hour I proved to my better self that I could never take another woman into my arms unless I loved her for her mind and her soul as well as her body.

My lesson had been a long one but it was nearly learned. You may smile at my method of proving the mastery of my soul over my body, but, please God, it came out as I thought it would and it killed forever within me the Beast.

CHAPTER XLV

THE next morning Ben asked me how I came out, but I only smiled at him.

That afternoon as I sat on a long wooden seat in one of the halls, a girl whom I had never seen before came to a cabinet near me and commenced looking for some papers. I was smoking a cigar and it did not taste good somehow so, with a muttered curse, I slammed it across the hall, not thinking about the girl at the cabinet. She looked up and square into my eyes. In an instant I felt ashamed of my action and I said, "Pardon me, I don't feel very good this afternoon." She went on with her search but I heard her say very faintly, "Evidently not."

Just then Ben came out into the hall and saw me looking at the girl. He sat down beside me and after she had gone back into one of the offices I asked him who she was. He told me that she was a new girl and asked me if I "wanted her." It hurt me a little when he said this; I couldn't understand just why at the time. I answered him that he would have a sad, sweet time trying to get her and he laughingly said, "Don't you believe it; a little money properly spent will get most any of these 'dolls.' They all want a good time. Why say, Bob, I've got sixteen-year-old girls working

here who are only drawing down six dollars a week, yet they wear four-dollar silk socks."

This wasn't a new story to me, so I let him ramble on with this talk. I was thinking of the grey-eyed girl who had said, "Evidently not." Something about her had made me uncomfortable and restless. She had looked at me in rather a scornful way and I didn't like that. Somehow I wanted her to like me.

That night I left for the South and went at my work with a vim. I was stronger in my work now that I knew myself better and I felt more hopeful about my future. To know that I had practically killed the worst part of me was an immense help to me. I did not need any further test or proof. I just knew it intuitively.

About two weeks after I left Chicago I received a letter from the manager, asking me to return at once in order to meet a couple of new men. That same day I received a letter from Ben and in the postscript he said, "Remember the girl in the hall? Well, I got her."

I was standing in the lobby of the Carroll Hotel at Vicksburg when I read that letter and I can remember to this day how I walked out of the lobby and down to the river to get away from everybody. His words seemed to have brought a flush of shame to my cheeks and I felt as if I had done something terrible. His words hurt me, the new Me. My mind was just filled with a murderous rage against that big, fat brute. Still I asked myself why I should give a damn what he did

to her — she wasn't anything to me — she didn't even like me.

During that night's ride in the Pullman I couldn't sleep. I kept seeing that sweet, girlish face as I had seen it that day in the hall. I damned myself up one side and down the other and kept asking myself why I should care what happened to her.

The next evening in Chicago I called Ben up and told him of my arrival. He came down to the hotel and spent the evening with me. I don't know why, or didn't then, but I was cautious about leading up to an explanation regarding the girl in the hall. He saved me the trouble by suddenly saying with a laugh, "Bob, do you remember the little dream you fell in love with out there in the hall? Well, I landed her last Friday night, and, believe me, she is some kid. And say, old man, I think I can fix it for you."

His words and expressions made me actually heart-sick and even yet I could not understand why I should care.

Then he gave me the details of how he had coaxed her out to dinner and persuaded her to drink a lot of wine. While she was drunk, he had taken her up to that same flat. Then he told me she had promised to go out with him again. He had put her on a street car and sent her home alone.

After his story was finished he looked to me for some words of commendation but I could only muster up a faint smile and suggest we go out for a walk.

The next noon I came into the hall where some

of the girls were eating their lunches. She was there and when she saw me she looked down at the little sandwich she was eating. I guess she must have known that I was looking at her, but I don't think she had any idea that I knew about her having been out with Ben.

That afternoon I was sitting in the hall reading some letters when she came to the cabinet again. This time I noticed her more closely and her beauty startled me. I had not noticed her features very closely the first few times I had seen her but, having thought about her a great deal since, I was naturally more keen this time.

The big grey eyes with their long lashes and clearly defined brows were beautiful. The rest of her features were just about perfect, and the two dimples which showed one in each cheek when she smiled made my heart give a little jump.

She was dressed neatly but inexpensively. I noticed particularly her small hands with their tapering fingers and well-kept nails, and also the small, neatly shod feet. She was the neatest, cleanest-appearing girl I had ever seen. Her hair, light in color, was dressed high on her head and not in the then prevailing style. I liked this one thing about her particularly, for it showed that she believed in dressing as best suited her own style of beauty. What I liked most of all about her was her quiet, unassuming manner.

She did not pay much attention to me and when I summoned up courage enough to address her with some trivial remark, she answered quietly and as if she was

thinking about something else. There was a look in her eyes that I did not like to see there. I knew she was very unhappy over something. Somehow my heart went out to her then and there and I just felt as if I wanted to take her in my arms and comfort her, to draw that look of pain and weariness from out her eyes.

When she finished her work there she looked up at me and caught my glance, and I guess she must have read something of my thoughts for she looked startled and, turning abruptly, she went into one of the offices.

That night I made up my mind to meet that girl in some way and get acquainted with her. I felt simply as if I must know her.

The next morning I had my plan all worked out and I went to Ben and asked him if he couldn't fix it for me so that I could get her out to dinner with me. He agreed to do all he could and said he would let me know, but it was the following Tuesday night before he told me his plan.

It seems she had agreed to go out to dinner with him again and he was to bring along another girl for me. Ben had it all framed up that he was to bring her down town to meet me and then go after the other girl and not return. This would leave me with her and then it was up to me to get acquainted with her.

Our plan worked out all right and at six o'clock the next evening I went downstairs from my room in the hotel and found her and Ben waiting for me.

She looked so sweet and innocent standing there beside that big, coarse-looking brute that my heart went

out to her and I wanted to kill him. We started over to a certain restaurant when he left us, as she supposed, to get the other girl for me. It was agreed that we were to take a table up in the balcony and wait for them.

I know that I was trembling as I helped her off with her coat and handed it to the waiter. We sat down at the table and commenced talking about affairs at the office. I was worrying about how I would explain Ben's non-arrival, and as the moments passed she began to look troubled. In desperation I finally asked her if she wouldn't have a drink of some kind but she refused rather coldly. At this point she excused herself from the table and I seized the opportunity to grab a hand 'phone from the balcony rail and call up Ben at the club. I got him on the wire and asked him to call us up a little later and tell her that he could not get back to us that evening. Just as I finished asking him this she returned and I said, "Here, talk to Ben and he will explain this thing to you." She took the 'phone and I could see from her expression as she listened to his remarks that she was disappointed, but she acted nice and I heard her say, "Yes, I'll stay and take dinner with him." Then she said, "Good-bye," and hung up the receiver.

I can remember to this day how the perspiration had broken out on my forehead as I waited to see if I was to have her with me that evening. When she turned to me, after her conversation with Ben, I could see she was not feeling very pleasant, and in that next ten min-

utes I did my level best to make a good impression. In my desire to please her, I again asked her to take a drink of some kind and to my surprise she asked me calmly what I was going to drink and I told her real prompt, "Cliquot," and she said "All right."

Then I ordered our dinner and had the wine brought to us immediately. To sort of smooth over the rough place in the evening, I offered a toast to Ben but she said, "No, it must be to you, seeing this is our first evening together." I drank the full glass to the toast and she did the same.

Then a little color came into her cheeks and she said to me, "Mr. —, I think Ben did not intend to come back at all this evening, and perhaps you knew it, too." I looked her square in the eyes and told her I was glad he had not come back and asked her point blank if she was sorry. She replied rather quietly, "Indeed not."

After her second glass of wine, she thawed out a little and I had a chance to become better acquainted with her. We talked on all manner of subjects until our dinner was served, but I was not hungry and she did not seem to be. So we had more wine and I brought the conversation around to ourselves. She asked me if I hadn't been out with Miss N—— and I told her that was a funny question and that if I had been out with her I was in duty bound to deny it. That seemed to please her and she laughed over my reply, saying that very few men were that way. This was what I was waiting for and I said in an off-hand way that Ben at least did not believe as I did about such things.

At this her face colored up and, looking crossly at me, she remarked, "So he told you, did he?" and I did not answer.

I wanted her to know that I knew. I wanted her to know that her trust in him had been misplaced. I wanted her to hate him and give him up.

It seemed that after I had made the remark about Ben she grew a little reckless about her drinking and was willing to have her glass filled each time I offered her more.

I was gradually getting under the influence of the wine but it did not seem to create within me any feeling such as it had formerly done. It was slowly giving me courage to test her out and finally I said, "Do you know what I would like to do?" And she answered, "No. What would you like to do?" I came right back at her with, "I would like to take you up to Milwaukee Saturday afternoon and come back Sunday night." My hands were trembling so that I could not lift my glass and I can remember sitting there at that disordered dinner table waiting for her answer and after just a moment's hesitation it came, "I'll go with you, Saturday."

Ah, God! But I'll remember that remark long after most other things are gone from my memory. Something within me flared up into a flame. Never before had such a sensation come over me. I could not speak for a moment and somehow I did not dare to. Something told me she was mine then, that very evening. I knew it was the wine that spoke, but I did not care then.

After a moment I looked up at her and said quietly, "Do you mean that?" and she answered slowly, "Yes, I'll go with you, Mr. ——" Oh, but that "Mr. ——" hurt; a moment before she had called Ben by his first name. Why it should hurt me to have her call me Mr. — I did not know then; all I knew was that it hurt.

After drinking a little more wine, I suggested that I call a car and we leave the café. She said with a little laugh that she didn't know whether or not she could walk straight as she had had so much to drink. But I told her I would help her all right. I called up a taxi-cab company and told them to send a limousine car to the café for me. When the head waiter told us that the car was at the door she was somewhat under the influence of the wine but I had no difficulty in reaching the car with her.

After we were seated in the car I turned to her and asked her where we should go. Putting her hand into mine, she looked up at me and said, "I don't care where you take me, Mr. Bob." I hesitated a moment and then, picking up the tube, gave the driver the number of the flat on Indiana.

She spoke only once to me on the way out and that was to say as she gave my hand a little squeeze, "I did not like you, Bobbie, when I first saw you around the office." All I answered was, "Is that so?" She was leaning close against me all during that long ride, and somehow I was oddly happy.

I stopped the car once at a drug store and went in to 'phone out to the flat to see if we could get in. I

had taken the precaution to obtain the telephone number earlier in the day. The woman said to come on out, that she had plenty of room for us.

It was ten o'clock when we arrived at the flat and we hurried up the steps out of the cold.

The woman showed us into the very room where I had been once before. The little girl turned to the woman and told her that she did not want that room but some other one. I knew then that it was the same room to which Ben had brought her. The woman gave us another one and I helped my companion off with her wraps.

Then I sat down in a big, leather chair and took her in my arms. And as she nestled there a content came into my heart such as it had never known. I knew in that moment I loved that girl. I was as sober as I am at this moment.

Love her? God! I had never known what love was before. I knew she had sinned, knew it beyond all doubt before my lips ever met hers, but in that first kiss that night I gave her all that was good in me.

She did not speak as I sat there holding her; she seemed content to just lie there in my arms. I had one of her hands in mine and once in a while she would give it a little squeeze.

Passion? Yes, passion flared within me but not as it had done so often before. It was different, so different that I could not understand it; there seemed to be a fulness and a completeness about it; it awed me. And as I sat there holding her, I asked myself again

and again, "How can I obtain her and her love for my own?" And then came the thought of Ben and were there any others? Yes, surely there must have been. How many — Ah, God! But that question hurt. What should I do? I knew human nature so well. I knew what it meant to go through self-denial. How strong was this girl? How much had she really fought to save herself from that sure and certain downward road? She was only a child in so many things and as I lifted her face to look into her eyes I could not see my answer there. She kissed me full on the lips. If she had been going with other men, wouldn't she keep it up even though I passed her by that night. I wanted her, God knows — wanted her for my own and I was going to have her. And it seemed to me as I sat there moment after moment looking into her eyes, that I could understand why I wanted her; it was as if I could see the woman — the real woman — which was to be some day. And I saw, too, that she was far from knowing life and its shadows and that to have her I must take her even that night in order to keep her from others and perhaps in time all would be well.

As I lifted her from the chair in my arms she kissed me and said, "Oh, Bobbie, I was afraid you wouldn't."

CHAPTER XLVI

WE were both quiet in the big car on the homeward ride that night. She leaned her head on my shoulder and one of her hands was ungloved and clasped in mine.

During the two hours in that darkened room that night I had learned her history. She had tried to tell me the story of her downfall, but when she told me that she had been persuaded by her escort—a big, full-grown man—to drink one night at a Wabash Avenue café and then had been taken to one of the cheap hotels nearby I made her stop. I did not want to hear the sickening details.

She lived at home with her sister, mother and her step-father. Her own father had been dead for years and her mother, after many years' struggle as a boarding-house keeper, had married a young man. I could see from the girl's story that life at home had been anything but pleasant. She and the step-father did not get along.

She was only nineteen years old and her first three initials were the same identically as the three initials in Harry's name. It seemed as if God in some way was connecting up each part of my present life with the past.

Just before we reached her home, she told me that she never would have gone to the flat with me that night unless she had been drunk. When I asked her if she was sorry she said, "No, Bobbie, but what will you think of me?" I told her not to have any fear on that score; time would tell what I thought of her.

I little knew that evening as the car whirled me back to the hotel what I had undertaken, the heartaches, the jealousy, the doubts and the disgust which I was yet to suffer.

Somehow the sinful side of it did not appear to me at all and to this day, I believe, yes, more than believe, I know, that I did right.

I had made up my mind during those two hours in that room that I would possess her for my own and that no other man could have her. I did not actually think of marriage then. No, the evening had been too wonderful to give me an opportunity to think so far ahead.

When I look back to that evening even now I know it was the first real happy evening of my life. That happiness was not inspired by the gratification of any beastly passion. It was just simply the feeling that she was there in my arms content and happy to stay there, that she wanted me to hold her. Of course, she was under the influence of liquor when we went to the flat, but she was perfectly sober in the last hour we were there and I could never forget what that hour held for us both.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE following day Ben came at me for the story of the previous evening, but I only winked at him and told him I would tell him about it later.

As I went out of his office, he told me he was going to take her out again the next Saturday night. I could have walked back to his desk and killed him then with my bare hands and I guess he saw the expression on my face as I hesitated at the door, for he laughed and said, "Bob, did she get your goat?" I went out of that office quick before I should forget myself and start some trouble.

I was to remain at the offices for a week longer as the president was considering sending me to Central America on business.

At noon I had a chance to speak to Dot, for that was her name, and I asked her to meet me Saturday evening and she promptly said she would. She told me then that she was going to keep out of Ben's sight as she wanted nothing more to do with him. I hated to hear her call him Ben, but that hate was as nothing compared to what I was yet to suffer.

I met Ben during the afternoon and he said, "Well, I've changed my mind; I'm not going to take your

'doll' away from you." Then I knew he had spoken to her since noon. She told me that he had, but never told me what passed between them during the conversation and I did not ask.

In the afternoon I ordered a big bunch of American Beauties sent out to her home with a card bearing just one word, "Bobbie."

What is there in man that prompts him to send roses, red roses, to the woman the day after he has conquered her? I was sorry an hour after I had sent them because I had done that same thing before where I had not cared for the woman as I knew I cared for Dot. But from my heart there went with the flowers a message unwritten.

Saturday I changed hotels and registered with my "wife" at one of the best hotels, and that evening I met Dot on the corner and took her up to the room.

The rate of that room was seven dollars a day and I was glad I could take her to a place as nice as that. It was certainly a beautiful room and I don't think she had ever been in a place like it before because I could see her look of wonder and pleased surprise as she took in her surroundings. It was my favorite room and I had taken the trouble to get that particular one because I wanted to know if she liked the things I liked.

She wore a light-colored dress and she had evidently changed at the office, leaving her other dress there. She looked like a child sitting there on a Louis XV chair and she fitted in with her surroundings perfectly. I was greatly pleased to see that because no man wants

to love a woman of whom he will be ashamed under any conditions. I had not had a thought of actually marrying her as yet. It seemed as if I was being carried up and up on a big wave and I had not yet begun the downward slide.

Like a fool, I had told Ben that afternoon that I was going to change hotels that day and we had not been there in the room more than half an hour when there was a rap at the door. I answered it and there stood Ben. He walked in and I shut the door after him. Looking around the place which was evidently a little better than even he was accustomed to, he remarked, "Oh, see what a long tail our cat's got." We all laughed at this and he walked over to Dot, saying, "How's my little girl to-night?" and kissed her. She had put up her hands to keep him away but he had taken them down. When I saw the flush of shame that came over her face and the look in her eyes, I could have killed him. Instead I told him to cut it out and have something to drink. I guess something in my tone of voice warned him, for he stepped over to the 'phone, asking us what we would have.

After the drinks were served he took up his hat and went to the door, saying, "Guess I'll beat it and leave the two little birdies in their nest." Dot and I were both relieved to see him go.

For a half-hour she sat in that same chair talking with me and did not look very comfortable or happy and finally I could stand it no longer. Pulling one of the big easy chairs up to the window and turning out

all the lights except the ones on the dresser, I made her come and sit on my knees.

With my arms around her we sat there looking out on Michigan Avenue for an hour. And in that hour I think she learned to care more for me. I wanted her to love me, not to just like me or to be intimate with me, but I wanted her to respect me, to want to be with me, to truly love me. That hour will always be remembered for it was filled with absolute peace and content. I lost all track of the time and I wished we could stay there forever. There were not any passionate desires burning within me. I did not think of that at all.

I know to-day that it was during that hour that my first thought of marrying her came to me, but I put it away from me then, little knowing the road I was yet to travel.

When I found it was getting late I had our dinner, together with a bottle of wine, served in the room. I can remember so well her modest wishes as regards what we should have for dinner. And when I spoke of wine she said, "Bobbie, do we want any more?" I ordered it just the same and we drank it with the dinner. She did not talk very much and I wondered at her quiet demeanor. After the dinner things had been removed I asked her what time she had to be at home and she said, "By one o'clock."

CHAPTER XLVIII

AT twelve o'clock I said to her, "Dot, I wish you didn't have to go home." Putting her arm around my neck, she asked, "Bobbie, how much do you wish it?" I told her in very emphatic terms and with a roguish smile that brought out the dimples she said, "Perhaps I won't."

A little later she slipped away from me and I switched on the little reading lamp which stood on the little table at the head of the bed. Ten minutes later she tiptoed up to me. My eyes were closed and I did not see her until she kneeled down beside the bed and, putting her arms around my neck, she kissed my forehead, my eyes and my lips.

She had on one of my silk night shirts which was way too big for her and she had pinned it together at the throat with a tiny silver brooch. Her hair hung in a long braid over her shoulder and I knew then that she was not going home that night. I could see in her eyes the first signs of real love for me.

My first thought as I awoke in the morning was that it had all been a dream but somebody's little head snuggled up against my cheek made me realize that it was all true.

For all the gold in the world I would not part with the memory of that Sunday. It has strengthened me

in my hours of agony and indecision. It gave me the knowledge and the love which enabled me to do as I did afterward.

Never will I forget what she said that afternoon as she lay in my arms and looked up at me, "Bobbie, I can never marry any one. Who would have me if they knew?" God! But it brought a rush of tears to my eyes. That was just it. There lay the reason for her doing as she had been doing.

Sixteen years old when her trouble came, she was nothing but a child. Then she went with a young fellow for two years and cared quite a little for him until he told her one evening that he did not see how a man could respect a woman who had not been good. All during these two years she had been decent and good. But after this young man expressed his views in such a way she quit going with him. Then another young man had come into her life and for six months she had gone with him in a decent way when one night he got her drunk and took her to a hotel. For six months longer she had gone out with him occasionally and then they had quarrelled. Then came her change in employment to our offices and Ben's invitation to dinner.

Through no real fault of hers, she was condemned to live alone all her life. Society had no place for her and who can blame her for getting reckless? The mother had been careless in bringing her up and selfish in her love for her second husband. Dot felt that in her own home there wasn't any real place for her. Once her step-father had locked her out at night and she had had

to go to a relative's for the remainder of the night.

That Sunday she told me what she could remember of her own father. How good and kind he had been to her and to everybody else, how he had loved to read and had appreciated the beautiful things in life. And as she told me these things that afternoon there came back to me my own father's saying that "the son is like the mother and the daughter like the father." I guess it's true after all.

That night as we rode home in the big car she told me that she would tell her folks she had been out at a girl friend's home over night.

Just before we reached her home, I told her that I loved her and that what had happened in her life made no difference to me. She only looked at me with a quaint little smile, saying, "Bobbie, I wish it could be." I knew then that she did not have any hope but I also knew that she had learned to love me, at least a little, in those few days.

Tuesday night I took her to the same room again and we remained until twelve o'clock.

The next day the president informed me he was going to send me to New York the first part of December and then to Central America. He suggested that I go home for Thanksgiving and a rest, so after telling Dot good-bye at the office, I took an early train home that evening. She had promised to be faithful to me and had exacted a similar promise from me. She asked in addition that I promise not to take a drink while I was gone and I agreed gladly.

CHAPTER XLIX

AFTER I had reached home, the wave receded and I began to think. For the next few days I did nothing else but think about Dot and to go over and over every hour we had spent together. I wanted to marry her, but could I? And here stepped in for the first time that awful thought, "Some one else has had her." The agony that came to me as I realized plainly what I was up against drove me nearly frantic. Like all men I was selfish in my desires as to what qualities my wife should possess. For the time being I considered myself as having been as good as the average man. My recent business success made me again forget the skeleton in the closet. Something within me rebelled against taking as a wife a woman who had sinned. I did not stop to think that I had sinned with her. I was yet far from what I now believe even God in His infinite goodness would call a man and He is more charitable than any of us ever can be.

Two days after Thanksgiving I received this letter and I noted the poor writing and the misspelled words which she had corrected, in a way that brings a flush of shame to my cheeks now:

Dear Bobbie:— I certainly have been lonesome to-

day and will be until you get back. I really did not know it would affect me this way. I hope it affected you the same way but probably it has not. It's all right anyway, Bobbie.

Probably you will see that party again when you come back and listen to some more of his smooth talk. I will surely be glad when I know you have given him up entirely and I wish I could never see him again. No doubt, we should forgive and forget such things, but I can't yet.

I am sorry there is no cat to look at me, as you said the cat was looking at you when you wrote your letter.

Bobbie, dear, I wish you would come back, for I do miss you. Perhaps I shouldn't tell you, but I do.

Will you be here by next Saturday? Write and tell me.

Your own true,

Dot.

This was my first letter from her and somehow it brought back so plainly our hours together. I was truly ashamed of my thoughts of the preceding few days. I wrote to her several times before the fifth of December but she was not very prompt about her replies. I could not understand this at the time and had an idea that perhaps she was out chasing around with some one else during the evenings. On the fifth I received a wire asking me to come to Chicago at once and I left that night.

At the office the president told me he wanted me to go to New York on the following Sunday and from there to Washington and on to New Orleans where I was to take the boat for Port Au Barrios. The prospects of the trip pleased me greatly and that evening I told Dot about it after we had reached my room at the hotel. She did not say much about it but I thought then she seemed disappointed over something.

During the evening she cried a little and said she didn't want me to go away. It pleased me to think she felt that way about it.

On Saturday she came with me again to the hotel and remained until the next afternoon. I can remember sitting there on the edge of the bed that morning and looking down at her as she lay there. I was not happy for some reason. I wanted her and yet the thoughts of Ben and the other two made me feel that somehow I could never marry her. I would always be thinking of their having had her. And would she remain true to me after her marriage with me? Was she nothing but a shallow-minded girl after all? What would my folks say? Thoughts like these in legion passed through my mind that morning as I sat there. When I reached down and picked her up in my arms to kiss her, the kiss hurt me somehow and for just an instant she turned her little head away from me.

Several times that morning I caught her looking at me with a queer, unfathomable gaze. Her eyes did not flinch; she seemed to be trying to read my soul.

Somehow I could not meet her look squarely and in my heart I felt ashamed.

About noon, just before she dressed, she put her arms around me and said, "Bobbie, I guess you've taught me to love you, dear, for I do." And in that moment my real love for her came forth and drawing her close to me I said, "Dot, when I come back, I'm going to ask you to marry me." Cry? I never saw a girl cry as she did then. I did all I could to comfort her, but she would not eat any lunch and I knew then she was all broken up over something. We had to hurry to the station so that I could catch the eighteen-hour train. At the station, I paid the chauffeur for our trip down and also for taking her out home. The last I saw of her was as the car swung around, she leaned out of the window, the tears rolling down her cheeks, and threw me a kiss.

I was in New York several days and while there met Tulips' father on the street. I took him to lunch at the hotel and that afternoon about four, Tulips called up and said she was coming down town at once to take dinner with me and her husband would join us later.

I met her at Times Square and took her over to Murray's. We sat there and I broke my promise to Dot about drinking. Tulips and I were feeling rather hilarious when her husband arrived. He was pleasant to me and I could not help wondering what he would say could he know all the past.

During dinner, Tulips became tearfully drunk and

he called her down terribly, but she only told him to "go to Hell." I sat there watching their squabble and wondering what there was in life for either of them. Each knew positively that the other had broken the marriage vow, knew it absolutely, as she had told me that afternoon about his having caught her with another man.

We sat there at the table and after the third bottle of wine had been opened, he became somewhat hilarious and I decided it was time for me to go. They insisted on accompanying me back to the hotel and on the way over in the taxi Tulips suggested that we go down to Little Hungary for the balance of the evening. I did not want to go, as I did not feel right somehow. When we stopped at the hotel, I got out and said I would be back in a moment, as I wanted to see if there were any telegrams for me. It just happened that there was a message awaiting me and as I came back to the taxi, I heard Tulips and her husband quarrelling. I opened the door and holding the wire so that they could see it, told them I would have to pass up the rest of the evening as I had received a wire which demanded my immediate attention. They were both pretty well under the influence of liquor and after a little further urging, they saw it was useless to expect me, so they left me, with a promise to call me up on the morrow.

That was the last I ever saw of either of them. A few weeks later they separated and drifted on down the road that leads to oblivion. The last I heard of Tulips she had almost reached the end of her journey.

After reaching my room that evening I sat down and cursed myself for having broken my promise to Dot regarding the drinking. My regret was sincere and even though I did not know whether I would ever marry her or not, still I wanted to keep faith with her. I felt as if she were mine and that she wanted me to keep my promise.

As for the Beast that made my life such a hell, that didn't bother me any more. That afternoon I had felt no temptation in Tulips' presence, hadn't even thought of it. I hadn't been bothered or troubled by it since that evening with Miss N——.

While in New York I received a letter from Dot.

Dear Bobbie:

I had such a long, lonesome ride home, was thinking of you all the way. The folks had gone to the theatre and I was so glad, for my eyes were all red. I am ashamed to remind you what from but I really could not help it, Bobbie.

We have had such a lovely time and I have been so mean, but that is just my way. I hope you will overlook it, dear, because I would not hurt you for the world.

It will be so lonesome for me while you are gone and I am going to hurry to bed every night and dream about you. I hope you will be lonesome for me, too.

When I think of the long journey you have taken, it makes my heart ache, for when I think of it, I know you are everything in the world for me. I live for

you, Bobbie, and you only, but you don't think so.

You will know some day, dear, just what I mean. Now, dear, be sure and keep your promises, because it means a lot to me. It's getting late and mother is going to the mail box with me. I suppose you are in slumber land by now. I'll certainly dream of you, Bobbie, to-night.

Your own true,

Dot.

The next day I left for Washington and found another letter from Dot awaiting me at the Raleigh.

While in Washington I wrote to her and told her just what day I was going to sail from New Orleans and asked her to write care of the Grunewald.

When I arrived there, I found a little short letter from her in which she said she loved me and did not want me to go away and she also said she would write a long letter the next day, so I could have it to read on the steamer, but the letter had not arrived the afternoon of the day before I was to sail so I wired her at her home asking her to wire me word in care of the steamship company before eleven o'clock the next morning.

Down at the docks in the morning I waited for the message, but it did not come. I went into the company's little office and telephoned to the telegraph office and the uptown offices of the steamship company, but there wasn't any word for me.

So I sailed without a single parting message from her. That afternoon I was miserable. I thought to myself

that, now I was away, she had probably been out with some other fellow the night before, perhaps with Ben. All kinds of suspicious thoughts poisoned my mind during that trip down the river to the Gulf. At last I went into the saloon and wrote her a mean, stinging letter accusing her of breaking her promise to me and saying a great many unkind things. I gave the letter to the pilot to take back and knew she would receive it in a day or so.

I became very sick when we crossed the bar that night and for two days I did not come on deck.

Christmas morning I sent my folks a wireless message wishing them a Merry Christmas, but I did not send any word to Dot, nor had I sent her any Christmas present. My heart was sore. This trip to Port Au Barrios was not a pleasant one for me. My mind was on Dot most of the time and I cursed her and myself time after time during those hours. I was bitter toward her and all my old suspicions, doubts and fears came up to torment me and finally I was glad that I was not married to her.

All through the trip across Guatemala and down into Costa Rica that little girl's face was before me. Somehow I could not forget it. The many interesting things around me gave me little pleasure. My business was successfully concluded in each city where I stopped.

At San José I got up early in the morning and went to the big cathedral and when I came out of that grand old place my heart was not so heavy.

The night's trip from Port Limon to Colon was a miserable experience for me. There was every reason in the world for me to be happy, yet the world of meanness and selfishness within me was making me unhappy. I could not sleep that night, but lay in a deck chair up where I could watch the stars.

At the Tivoli at Ancon I found a room reserved for me and as I started to follow the boy upstairs the clerk called me back and handed me a special delivery letter. It was from Dot and mailed three days before Christmas:

My own Bobbie:

I was sick, Bobbie, too sick to even write and I can never tell you how bad I felt to have you go away without word from me. Your telegram did not come until in the afternoon. We had a big storm and everything was delayed.

Oh, I just know I'll get a terrible letter from you. I just feel it in my bones.

Dear Bobbie, you don't know how bad I feel to have you away from me. I wish I could just die until you come back. This may sound awful to you, but it's true. Bobbie, this is the first time I ever loved, I never realized what it was really like. You know that I love only you, if you don't know now, you will some day.

Please be careful and take good care of yourself because that is an awful climate, I hear. I would not want anything to happen to you, for I love you and al-

ways will. I have given you everything, even my heart. You are the only one. Bobbie, I pray for you each night and then I lie awake thinking of you.

Try to write every day, Bobbie, and remember your promises.

Your own true,

Dot.

I wrote her a long letter that night asking her forgiveness for what I had written on the boat and among other things I told her that if I had not loved her, I wouldn't have written that way to her.

My work in Panama kept me busy for a week and just before I sailed for New Orleans I received a heart-broken little letter from Dot. She asked for forgiveness for not having been able to write and her letter made me feel very uncomfortable.

All through that long trip back to New Orleans I thought over the situation. What should I do? I wanted to marry her and yet I was afraid to. She knew I was making a big income. Then this little devil of a thought crept in, "Does she pretend to love me, just so I'll marry her and give her a home?" And there were many more like this one. They tormented me day and night. I asked myself again and again why I should want to marry her, anyway. That was what I couldn't understand. And a doubt crept into my mind that perhaps after all the Beast was not dead — maybe it was only the flesh that I loved and I had been fooling myself all along.

I mentally arranged side by side the reasons both for and against my marrying her. I looked them over and over and analyzed them, looking for the Beast to crop out. Of course, I loved her dear little body; any sane, normal man with good, red blood in his veins would admire her just for her splendid health and physique. But after all I had learned the one great lesson, that love cannot live on the flesh alone and the man who marries only the body marries disaster.

And then there came to me the memory of her eyes and their unfathomable depths. What thoughts lay therein? Wasn't she, after all, nothing but a child? Supposing she would marry me? Couldn't I teach her some of life's lessons and couldn't I make her love me as a woman should love? Couldn't I bring out all that was good in her and make her a happy, contented woman? Not a mother, no, that could not come to us.

When the steamer docked at New Orleans I knew that if I married Dot it would mean that I had found her possessed of a real woman's soul and mind, but would I find them?

CHAPTER L

I HURRIED on to Chicago, having wired Dot that I would arrive there in the morning of the following day and would stop at the usual place.

It was bitter cold when I got off the train and I hurried to the hotel and went to bed. The sudden change in climate had been too much for me.

Dot called up right after lunch and said she had remained away from work, so as to be with me. I told her I was in bed and she said she would come down to the hotel.

When she came into the room an hour later, she kneeled down beside the bed and put her arms around me and with mine about her, we both cried like two children for a few moments.

That afternoon and evening we talked long and seriously about many things and that night she remained with me.

At dinner we had one bottle of wine and when the last two glasses were filled she sat on the edge of the bed and handed me one while she took the other. Looking at me in a rather hesitating way she said, "Bobbie, I have never asked a favor of you, but I am going to now. Will you drink this last glass of wine with me and we will make a silent promise that neither of us will ever touch a drop of liquor again."

Something in her eyes, as she made this request, went straight to my heart and I was glad — so glad, that she had asked me. I answered, “Yes, Dot,” and we made the promise as we drank the wine.

During the evening, she said she had some more news for me. It seems that Ben had taken some girl from the office out on a drunk and they had been arrested. This cost Ben his position and he had left the city, but the trouble did not cease there. It caused a general investigation at the office, with the result that many of the girls had been discharged and several had been called into the office and questioned. When Dot reached this point in her story she stopped, and I told her to go on. She hesitated a moment before saying, “I was called in also, Bobbie.” I can remember how she buried her head in the pillows and began to cry.

It took me some time to get her quieted down and when I asked her what she had said when they asked her if she had been out with any one, she refused to answer me for a long time. Finally she asked me to turn on the little night light beside the bed. I did so and she made me lie back on the pillow and she sat up where she could see my face. I wondered at her actions, but when she said quietly, “I told them, Bobbie, that I had been out to dinner with you, but that I had a right to go, as we were engaged,” I knew why the poor child wanted the light turned on. She wanted to see how I would take it. For a moment I was dazed and then, underneath all my other feelings, I was disappointed, but I did not let her see it.

She threw herself into my arms and cried and cried, but I kept assuring her that she had done the right thing and before long she was quiet. I did not think much more of the matter then, as I was very tired and needed sleep.

Once during the night I woke to find the night light burning and Dot leaning over me. When I asked her what was the matter, she told me she wanted to ask me something. When I told her that I would tell her anything, she wanted to know how many women I had been intimate with. For a moment I hesitated about telling her, then this thought came to me: "Perhaps if I tell her a little about some of them, she will not feel so ashamed of her own past." So I told her of a few of them and I could see by her eyes that I had hurt her. I wished then that I had not told her. She did not go to sleep for a long time afterwards.

The next afternoon I took her out to her home. I was afraid we would have some trouble explaining her absence of the night before, but at the last moment we patched up a story that evidently passed muster.

Her mother was very pleasant to me and I remained there for dinner. Her step-father was a young man and did not impress me very favorably. I could see in a glance why Dot and he could not get along.

After dinner that evening I told Dot something about my former marriage and divorce — just enough to let her know that I had not been to blame. She took it bravely and said she had thought that I must have had

some trouble during my life. I had made up my mind not to tell her anything else out of my life.

During the evening as I was sitting alone in the parlor for a few moments, her mother came in and sitting down said, "Mr. —, I suppose you are going to take my little girl away from me soon. Well, you can have her. I think you will be good to her. She is such a good girl."

This took my breath away and I could only stammer out, "Yes, ma'am," when Dot came into the room.

So she had told her mother after I left for New York that I had asked her to marry me! That was too much for me and a little later, excusing myself as best I could on the plea of being tired out, I went into the hall after my coat. I kissed Dot good-night rather hurriedly and left the house without looking back. I wanted to get to my room as quickly as possible so that I could think alone and undisturbed.

When I reached the room I threw my coat and hat on the bed and turning out the light I drew a chair up to the window and sat there looking out at the lights on the Avenue.

"Snared," "fooled," "roped in," and a dozen other such expressions flitted through my mind at first. What a damn fool I had been after all. Couldn't I see now how that innocent appearing child had trapped me? Did they think for a minute that they could get me in that way? Well, they wouldn't.

Hour after hour through that long night, there in that room where we had spent so many happy hours to-

gether, I fought and fought against the love in my heart, trying my best to put her out of my life entirely. Time after time I took her picture — the one I loved so much after all — the one showing both her dimples — and looked at her face, trying to see something of shallowness and craftiness therein. But somehow I could not see it, try as I would.

When the grey dawn broke out over the lake, I was still fighting, and completely exhausted I threw myself dressed as I was upon the bed and slept until noon.

That afternoon I went to the offices and turned in my report and business. The officers were greatly pleased with my work and the president said that he wanted me to take dinner with him that night.

As I came out of his office, I met Dot and her eyes looked swollen, as if she had been crying. She asked me if she could speak to me, and I said, "Certainly, Dot." We went into one of the little offices and I shut the door. Then she put her arms around my neck and burst out crying, saying, "Oh, Bobbie, Bobbie, what will you think of me after what my mother said last night?" Then I knew that I had judged her too quickly the night before and I told her to never mind, that I understood it all. She made me promise to come and see her the next night and said she would tell me the whole story. I kissed her and dried her tears for her before I let her go back to her work.

That evening the president took me to dinner at my hotel and later in the evening we went up to my room. There he saw a picture of Dot and turning to me he

held out his hand saying, "I want to congratulate you, Robert; you've got the sweetest girl in the offices." Then he told me all about the trouble over Ben and said he had called Dot in, so that he might protect her by warning her to let the suspected girls strictly alone. He said he had also thought that she might be tempted to go out to dinner with some of the men and he wanted to warn her, as he thought a lot of her.

The next evening, when I was seated in the parlor with Dot, she told me her mother was anxious that she get married and that evidently she had spoken that way the evening before so as to hurry things up.

I comforted Dot all I could, but she was all broken up and that evening she told me many things about her home life. I wondered why she hadn't gone to hell long ago. She seemed sorry afterwards that she had told me these things, for as I was putting on my coat she said, "Bobbie, I don't want you to pity me. I've got along all right so far and, please God, I'll come out all right yet."

I sat up late that night again trying to decide what to do. I knew that Dot would marry me, even though I had not asked her to as yet. But there was that terrible fear in my heart. Was she willing to marry me only to have some one give her a home? Would she be true to me after she did marry me? Had she been brought up with any idea of life's seriousness? Did she have any ideals? And then crept in a new question — would I get tired of her after I had married her? What would she look like in ten years? Would she be

one of these semi-respectable married women who run around wearing loud clothes, drinking highballs and trying to reach into the pitch pot without soiling their dainty hands? It made me sick, the whole mess, and I decided to go home and rest.

The next day I obtained permission to go home for a week, but I did not say anything to Dot about it at the office. Instead I went back to the hotel about four thirty and called her up from there. I told her I was going home that evening for a few days and would write to her. She did not take the news very pleasantly, but I could not help it. I was just about frantic with the worry of it all.

I received a letter from her a couple of days later, and in it she said she was deeply hurt at my going away as I did without saying good-bye and she closed by asking what she had done to hurt me and in a pitiful way asked for forgiveness.

While at home this time, I told my folks about her and showed them her photo. Father looked at it rather carefully and though he did not say anything, he looked at me rather queerly.

Mother became greatly excited and asked me if I was going to be fool enough to get married on practically nothing.

I had felt somehow as if they wouldn't like it and I was not surprised at Mother's outbreak.

My little sister was sitting there at the table and tip-toeing around behind me, she looked over my shoulder at the picture. I handed it to her and calling her by

her pet name said, "What do you think of her, Bill?" She looked at it a moment and then, leaning over, she whispered in her quaint slang, "Go to it, Bob. She is all right. I'll love her even if the rest of them don't."

That evening after I was in bed, Mother came in and kneeling down beside my bed said, "Son, if you marry that girl, who is going to take care of us when we get old?" And so there came another question to be answered.

CHAPTER LI

I COULD not reach a decision and it was getting along toward the middle of February when I went back to Chicago. Dot's letters had been growing more pitiful. Evidently she thought she had mortally offended me. My letters to her had been a strange mixture; one would be warm and full of love and the next short and cold. I really went back to Chicago to see her again, as I could have gone straight to my new Western territory from home. But I wanted to see her. Somehow I thought the sight of her would help me decide.

I slipped into Chicago on Saturday morning, thinking I could have her until Sunday evening.

She got away from work and came to meet me at noon. We went to the same old room at the hotel.

When I had taken off her wraps and hung them up, I led her to the window, where I could look deep into her eyes. Yes, she had changed. Unconsciously her letters had led me to believe I would find her changed. She looked a little older, but sweeter than ever. I asked her if she loved me and she said, "Yes, Bob." But there was something different about the way she said it.

Several times, during that afternoon and evening, I

caught her looking at me with that disconcerting, steady glance of hers. It made me uncomfortable and ashamed in some way. She had changed in more ways than one; she seemed to love me more than ever, but there was an undercurrent of something like hopelessness about it all.

It seemed to me as if she wanted to give me everything, but that she did not expect anything in return. Later in the evening she changed a little and became more like her old self.

When I asked her, about eleven o'clock, if she wasn't going to remain until the next afternoon, she said, "Bobbie, do you think I ought to? Do you think I am treating Mother right by staying away all night and saying nothing about it?"

Something in the way she said it made me realize she had been thinking a great deal since I had last seen her.

I acted decently about her not staying, and when I helped her out of the car at her door, she said, "Bobbie, aren't you glad we don't have to lie to Mother about being away over night?" and somehow I was glad and underneath it all I respected my little girl a lot more.

Yet when I rode back to the hotel alone that night, I was disappointed. I had lost something, my complete control over her. She had decided that it was wrong for her to stay away all night. What would be the next step?

Sunday I went out to her home for dinner and remained until late in the evening. That day I

found out that she was passionately fond of good music.

Late in the afternoon she took me up to her own room. It was a pretty little place and neat as a pin. On the walls were the little cards and mottoes that I had sent her from time to time. A queer feeling came over me even as I entered that little room. It was hers, and as I looked at the plain little white bed I somehow suddenly wondered how many hours she had lain there awake thinking of me. And somehow I thought less of myself as a man. There seemed to be something sort of sacred about the cozy little place.

She evidently felt something strange, too, about our both being there and when I put my arms around her and kissed her, two big tears rolled down her cheeks. But she dabbed at them with her little handkerchief and asked me in a very faint voice how I liked her room. When I had finished telling her, she was smiling again.

I have never forgotten this incident and I think her taking me up there that day was a blessed thing for both of us. Two days later, after a tearful good-bye from Dot at the station, I went West on a long trip.

Here I began sounding the depths of her soul. I wrote her long letters and in them I tried to bring up questions which she would ask herself as she read the letters. I planned my letters so as to gradually get her to questioning herself as to her ideals. I tried to indirectly teach her some of the lessons my bitter experience had taught me.

Her answers were pitiful at times. She did not understand many of the things I said. She would think

that I had intended to hurt her when I was only trying to help her to know herself.

For several weeks I worked hard and made money hand over fist. Dot was writing to me right along and I could see the gradual change for the better in her letters. It was taking all my strength to keep up with my work and at the same time try to decide what to do.

Along toward the latter part of my trip Dot's letters became more pitiful again and she said she needed me. And then one morning came a letter which contained a little lock of her hair tied with a tiny pink ribbon. In the letter she asked me to please come to her.

That night I took the train for Chicago and the next morning she was with me in the old room at the hotel. Again she had changed a great deal.

She had grown more womanly and I missed some of the girlish signs that I had learned to love. Her eyes were even more beautiful than ever.

That was an evening which will never be forgotten. She was sweeter and more dear to me than ever before. I can remember her sitting up in bed while I was writing a letter home telling the folks I was in Chicago.

I turned around to her and said, "I wish, Dot, you didn't have to go home to-night," and she replied quickly, "So do I, Bobbie." I came so near saying, "Stay here, Dot, and we will go and get married in the morning." But something held me back. Sitting there in the bed she seemed just as if she ought to be my wife, she seemed to be a part of me. Her hair was in one long braid over her shoulder and she had on one of my night

shirts which was so much too big for her that the monogram on the pocket came clear over on the right side. Her cheeks were flushed and she looked so tired and sleepy, yet happy.

But I took her home at midnight and her mother unlocked the door for us.

For two days I remained in Chicago, going out to Dot's home in the evenings and remaining at the office during the working hours of the day. Then I left again for the West, after telling Dot that I thought it would be my last trip.

On my way out to my territory, I stopped at home for a few days. The second afternoon I was there, I met an old friend on the street — a man many years my senior. Years ago he had been a good friend and I had always admired him for his wonderful knowledge of life and its problems. He invited me to come up to his office for a chat and I gladly accepted the invitation. Taking me into his private office, he gave me a good cigar and we sat down.

He had greatly increased his wonderful store of wisdom in the years I had been out of touch with him and I gradually led him around to the question that was troubling me. "Judge," I said, "tell me something, why is it that a man who loves a woman hesitates over marrying her, if he knows she has sinned with some other man?" Back came his answer without the least hesitation. "Bob, the man loves himself more than he loves the woman. The average man of to-day is the most selfish thing that walks God's green earth."

His answer took me by surprise and I could not see where he was right. Take my own self for instance, was I selfish? No, I couldn't see that I was. I had always prided myself over being generous. The old Judge went on to quote several cases that had come to his attention and when I left him that afternoon, I had food for reflection.

A few days later I left for my territory and remained there just four weeks. Something was wrong with me during all this time. Continually I caught myself thinking about myself. The words of the old Judge rankled in my mind. Could it be that I had been selfish all my life? Could it be that I had thought only of self when it came down to actual spending of money, giving of time and effort, and in my loving? Somehow as these four weeks passed I began to think less of myself. When I looked real deep for faults within me, I was appalled at what I found. The Beast within me was dead, without doubt, but weren't there other things almost as bad? And the more I thought, the more I wanted to see Dot again. I had quit questioning her love. I did not think about that. I was busy questioning self.

During these four weeks her letters had shown an improvement almost unbelievable and mine to her had grown more serious. In one of her letters she told me she had left the office and taken a position with another firm at a better salary.

I was rather glad to hear this, and I wrote to her and told her I was coming in to see her the following week.

Her answer did my heart good. She seemed to be so glad that I was coming back.

When I reached Chicago I went again to the same hotel and she called me up in the morning asking me to come out to the house that evening and at the same time saying she would arrange to get away from work the following day and spend it with me.

I reached the house before she did that evening and I was talking with her mother when she came in. I took just one look at her and then gathered her up into my arms. She had improved wonderfully. That childish look was gone and with it that little expression of hopelessness which I had learned to see in her eyes. She looked the picture of happiness as she stood there holding my two hands.

After dinner we sat in the parlor and talked until ten o'clock. During the evening she told me that my letters had helped her so much and that she was happier than she had been for a long time.

The next morning she came down town and we spent the day in my room at the hotel. This time we had a different room. Somehow I did not want to take the old room again. Just why I felt that way, I did not know then.

She seemed to love me more than ever on this occasion, but in a different way than ever before. I seemed to appreciate her love and what it meant.

Once during the evening I said that I wished I had a position in Chicago and we were married and in a little home of our own. Then she told me the kind of a lit-

the place she would like to have. After describing it down to the minutest little detail she colored up and added shyly, "And Bobbie, a baby." She loved children and flowers. Her description pleased me immensely, for it showed she had at least been thinking about it.

When I told her that I liked to hear her talk that way, she said that was the first time I had ever seemed to care what she thought of such things. She also said she would rather have me with her all the time if I was only earning a hundred dollars a month than to have me away from her most of the time even if I was earning two hundred a week. Then she scolded me for paying six dollars for a taxi to take her home on each of the many different occasions in the past and said that hereafter we would take the Elevated. It had been her fault, she said, as much as mine after all, for she should not have allowed me to do it.

A little later she put her arms around my neck and asked forgiveness for talking to me so.

All during the evening something had been bothering me and puzzling me. The feeling that I had not treated Dot right in some way kept growing upon me. I tried to figure out what it was that I had failed to do, but I could not. At last I said to her, "Dot, I want to ask you something." The little night light was the only one burning and I put my arm around her shoulder and raised her up so I could see her eyes. "Have I always treated you right, Dot, or have I been selfish in my actions?" I asked. Her face paled for just a moment

and her eyes closed, but when she opened them again she seemed to look me through and through as if to discover what had come over me. "Bobbie, you have always been good to me and I know you love me," was her answer.

Oh, but I knew then, I knew it even when I had asked the question, and God, how ashamed I was in that moment, how small and insignificant I seemed.

Then she asked me to turn the light out and when I had done so, she took both my hands in hers and said very slowly, "Bobbie, I want to tell you something you never knew; until you took me I never wanted to do wrong. You have taught me to love you and to want only you and I'd give my life to you to-night, I love you so." Putting her arms around me, she drew me close to her and at last I knew she loved me.

I was ashamed to receive her caresses in that last half hour, for I was just beginning to see what a selfish, unclean mind had been mine.

On the way home with her on the Elevated I made up my mind to do a strange thing. I decided to go away somewhere and purge my mind of its uncleanness and so I told her at the door that night that I was going away on the morrow to be gone a week or ten days and that I would come back to her at the end of that time. She looked surprised, but I asked her not to question me, as it was for our good that I was going. I asked her not to write to me and told her I would explain all when I came back.

Something in my manner of telling her seemed to sat-

isfy her that it was best for her to let me go unquestioned and as I kissed her good-bye, I said, "Dot, dear, to-day was our last day of its kind for us." She looked up into my eyes and I think she understood.

Early the next morning I took a train for home and the next day, after a little inquiry, I found the place I sought. That night I left home and came up here into the pines to build my new creed of life.

CHAPTER LII

IT was the twilight hour when I arrived here at the little log cabin among the pines. Not a ripple marred the still surface of the lake, which stretched away from the very door. The smoke from my little chimney curled lazily upward among the big trees and as I stood there and watched the light slowly fading away out across the lake, I took off my hat and silently thanked God that I had come. Surely I would find here that which I sought.

After supper I took a rocker out on to the little screened-in porch and there in the stillness of the night I began the fight.

In the beginning, I went back to the first things I could remember in my childhood and then I followed again and slowly the crooked road of my life up to the present hour.

Why had I done this or that? Why had I craved this or that? What had I striven for all these years and after all what had I gained? And from the whispering pines above me seemed to come the answer, "Nothing."

It seemed that night that my mind stood before me as a dwelling house and as I walked through the dim halls and peered into the quiet rooms, what I found was

not good to know. And scrawled as if by an unseen hand in the dust of the halls and those silent rooms of my unkempt house was one word, "Self."

Oh, the things that I found in that place during the quiet hours of the night, the things I had never known were mine! And as the first light of the coming dawn stole out of the East, with it came back to me again the memory of that old, old promise of His, "Seek and ye shall find."

I have tried to forget the struggle of those next few days and nights. The shame of finding out that I had grown into such a man was almost more than I could bear.

Fight, ah, God, yes, but I had to fight. I began at the beginning and came first to a realization of what I had done, then there came the realization of what I should have done and after that came the question, "Could I be the man God had wanted me to be, and then would I be that man?" Yes, that was it, could I and would I be that man?

The second night was the most terrible of all, for in those hours I had to make up my mind that I would at least try. I knew it would be a hard fight, but after hours of pacing the floor and then hours on my knees beside that rough little bunk, I looked up to see the dawn — such a glorious dawn — stealing in through my little east window and I knew then that I would try.

It was hard, and I liken it again to the rehabilitating of a dwelling, for it was the dwelling place of my soul.

It seemed as if I took each room by itself and from

it I had to take the accumulation of years of wrong thinking. Envy, Hate, Ignorance, Suspicion, Distrust, Greed, Hopelessness and many others I found, each in their own room and Selfishness in all of them. Hidden away in one room I found a Dead Child and in another a Suit of Prison Clothes and in yet another a Faithless Wife. And it seemed sometimes as I passed through the hall I would see again in a room that I had already cleaned and swept, some of the things that I had taken out. It was as if somebody had put them back again and I would have to carry them out — some of them — again and again.

In some of the rooms, I found lessons learned long ago and put away forgotten. I polished them up and put them back, each in its own place.

So I fought self and fought for and against self and her, my little girl at the same time, and for our future life.

What of the men who had possessed her? Yes, but what might have been her thoughts as she lay at night in that little white bed up in her room and remembered the women who had possessed me? Had she not suffered, perhaps even more than I was capable of suffering? What of the promise I had not kept? What of the days when I had come back to her again and again and taken her in my arms without even asking her to marry me? Yet again and again she had risked everything to give me her love.

What were her sins as compared with mine? They were as nothing. Who was I, that I should judge this

girl, who after all was only a child in so many things?

That night when I had first taken her in my arms, what had been my reason — had I led her up or had I dragged her down? Had I kept my promise to myself?

Would she be faithful? Ah, that was hard at first. Yet, if I always did my duty by her, if I was always patient and kind, if I always gave to her all that should be hers, wouldn't she give me that faith — a woman's faith, which, honored by a man, is almost imperishable. If she could love me as a selfish brute, would she love me as a man?

High above all was this — had I not put hope into her life? Having led her up out of the depths of her hopelessness to view a new life, to give her hope of that existence which every woman craves, was I now to destroy that faith and hope — to plunge her into the depths far lower than from whence I had taken her? If I did she would never again have faith in any man.

Before my coming, her sin was prompted by hopelessness, but after I came into her life it was nourished by hope and love. If I gave her my love and my name, wasn't she giving me as much, and, yes — far more in return? Why did I want her, anyway — was it because I wanted a woman, a companion, a servant, a possession that I could play with, could exhibit to the world with pride, some one who would amuse me? Or did I want some one to whom I could give a pure, unselfish love, some one who would be happy with me, some one to whom I could give a new life, new faith, new hope and a

blessed existence? Ah, was that it after all, did I want to give her that new life, the real life, that something which she had not expected to ever have? Wouldn't it be wonderful, after all, to see her grow in wisdom, strength, faith and hope, to see her develop into that wonderful woman God had intended her to be?

What if she did grow old, wouldn't I also? And in those last days of life wouldn't she need some one to protect and care for her? And long before then wouldn't she have realized where the old life would have led her, down into those terrible depths, and wouldn't she thank God, not me, that I had come into her life? When that realization came to her, wouldn't she do all she could to help others? She had given me of the best of her youth and was willing and anxious to give me more and in her giving didn't she show her deep love for me? Didn't I owe her something and after all, wouldn't I be glad to pay? Could it be called payment?

Suppose we did marry, how would we start life — as two unforgiven sinners who had taken licensed refuge in each other's arms, or as God's children with a joy in living the clean life?

What was I born for, anyway? Wasn't it my heritage as a man to care for and protect some woman through life? Wasn't it the duty of every man to leave the earth the richer for his having been here? And children? — Oh, but there was a way to do that, too. They might not be of our flesh and blood, but they could be ours. Were there not so many things my little girl and I could do?

And as I swept and cleaned the rooms and halls and washed the windows of my house, it gradually took on a different air. The bright sunshine flooded through the windows into many of the rooms and the sight of it there gave me strength to go on with my task. And as I worked I grew happier, and I realized at last that my little girl had a soul and mind. I had been blind.

At last, on a bright June morning, I knew my work was done and through my house, into every nook and cranny, spread the sunshine of the New Life. I knew then, as I have known ever since, that the only way to always keep my house just so would be to sweep and clean each day.

And so my soul moved into its home.

CHAPTER LIII

THAT night I went home. When Mother opened the door for me the next morning, she exclaimed, "Why, son, your vacation did you a world of good." Yes, my vacation. But she never knew.

I telegraphed Dot to meet me at the depot the next morning without fail.

She was waiting for me as the train pulled in and I saw her anxious little face in the crowd long before she saw me. I did not kiss her, but took both the hands she held out to me and told her how glad I was to see her. She squeezed my hands and said she had waited so long for me. She acted timid and a little bashful that morning and in her eyes was a worried little expression. I did not give her a chance to ask me any questions, but asked her a great many about her life at home. At the cab stand I ordered a taxi to take us to the hotel and after we were on our way she looked at me so strangely that I said with a smile, "Never mind, dear, that is the only place where we can talk undisturbed."

I helped her out at the drug store and told her I would come back and get her in a few moments. After I had registered and sent my baggage up to the room

I went back after her. When we opened the door of the room, she said, "Oh, Bobbie, we've got the old room again, haven't we?"

After my breakfast, I ordered a car and we rode through the parks until noon, when we came back to the hotel. When the lunch things had been removed, I locked the door and pulling up to the open windows the same chair we had occupied on our first evening up there, I took her in my arms and held her there for a long, long time. I did not know but what it was to be the last time.

Finally I told her that I had a great many things to tell her that afternoon and that I wanted her to listen to me without a single interruption until I had finished. Then I lifted her up and put her back into that same chair alone, while I took another one opposite her.

Sitting there with her that afternoon, I began at the very beginning of my life and told her the story in all its miserable details. I took the blame upon myself for all I had done and I told the whole truth throughout. I did not spare myself in any way.

Several times she started forward to interrupt and I shut her up harshly. I can remember how she shrank back at my harsh speech, but I had to do it for her sake. Only once did she say anything and that was when I told her about the prison sentence and then I heard her say something about "Glad."

It was nine o'clock when I had finished my story, ending with the fight up here in the cabin. Then I asked her to marry me the next day.

As I finished, the tears were rolling down her cheeks and her little hands were convulsively twitching the fringe on the arms of the big easy chair in which she sat. I knew she was suffering, but I could not help it. It had been my duty to tell her all.

I sat still, waiting for her to say something, but hoping she would not for a few moments. From the Avenue came the sound of the passing automobiles, but in the room the silence was broken only by her choking sobs.

Suddenly she got up out of her chair and walking to the wardrobe, she took out her coat and hat, while I sat perfectly still in my chair. After she had put them on she came over to me and standing there in front of me, she held out both her hands. I stood up and put my hands in hers. She held them tightly just a moment and then, releasing them, she put her arms around my neck and said, "Bobbie, kiss me just once." In that kiss she seemed to give me something such as I had never received before. The light in the room was very dim and I could not see into her eyes, anyway my own were blinded with tears.

Holding me close to her for just a moment she turned and walked to the door. Unlocking and opening it, she turned just for a moment toward me and then without a word she stepped out into the hall and closed the door softly. I could hear the sound of her footsteps growing fainter and fainter as she went down the hall.

CHAPTER LIV

FROM my seat here by the window in the little log cabin, I can follow with my eyes for a little ways, the road which winds away among the pines.

And as I watch some one comes into view at the big bend in the road. She is not alone, for, clinging to each one of her hands is a little child and all three are laughing happily over something. She is my wife and I call her my "Dot."

It is not a long story as to how we came here. Strange as it may seem, after she left me that night without a word, I did not worry. I was sure that she would return. Where she had gone I did not know and I did not follow her. I went to sleep in that chair she had occupied while I had told my story. I had done all I could.

At three thirty in the morning my 'phone rang and a voice told me that a lady wished to speak to me and a moment later Dot's voice came over the wire, "Bobbie, I am out here at the drug store at the entrance to — Park. Please come and get me."

Hastily 'phoning for one of the big cars to meet me over on Wabash Avenue I hurried from the room. An hour later, she was in my arms in the car and I held

her there as the man drove the car slowly through the parks until seven o'clock. My little girl lay there in my arms with her tear-stained cheeks and little swollen mouth, showing the agony she had suffered in those hours as she had wandered alone through that big park, fighting her fight.

Up in my room after I had removed her hat and coat, I bathed her face and hands and made her eat a little breakfast. A little later, thinking she had gone to sleep, I went over and sat down in the big chair.

In a few moments she came and kneeled down beside me and, taking my hands in hers, said, "Bobbie, I'll do the best I can."

We were married at a little parsonage out on the South Side that morning, and that night I brought her straight up here.

The children? Well, it took three months' time and a great deal of money to find them but they mean so much to us now. We searched far and wide for the right ones and finally found them. At the Home where they were we had looked over a dozen little boys and girls before we decided on these two. After that we had to find the fathers and mothers in order that we could be sure the children were all right. It took time, patience and money but we have never regretted it. They have been a blessing to us.

When it was about decided which ones we were to take and the children had been brought to us in the little office for a last examination, Dot said, "Bobbie, let's take them." The little girl looked up at her and

asked, "To-day?" Dot picked the little one up and told her, "Maybe." Just then the little lad spoke up, "If you take her to-day, you will take me to-morrow, won't you?" He evidently didn't see how we could take two children in one day. A few days later they were ours and when Dot and I are alone we call them, "To-day and To-morrow."

Why did we take them? There were many reasons for our doing so, but the real reason was that we wanted to do something as a thank offering to God for His infinite goodness to us and for the wonderful peace and happiness that our marriage brought to each of us. We know of no happiness in this world that equals ours and the pleasure we take in bringing up these two little ones is not to be measured. In one sense it is an atonement for our sins but yet it is all pleasure to do it.

We both know of some things which the average children do not receive — some of the things we did not have, but these children will receive them. Please God, they won't be missing in our home.

There are no cross words in our little household, either in the city or out here, no blows, no ugly looks. There is boundless love, faith, hope and charity for each other and for the rest of the world. There is no Past for us, no Yesterdays.

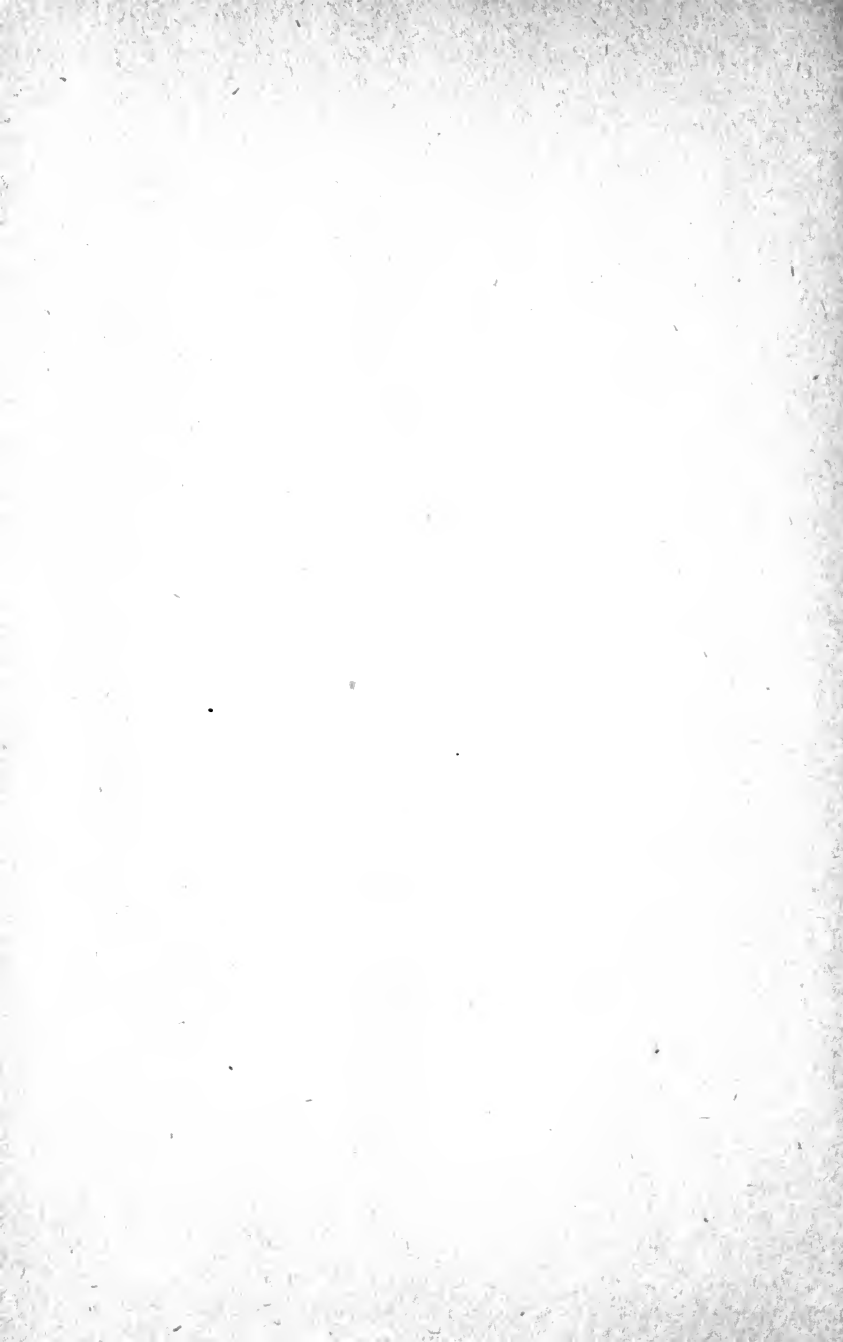
I gave up the travelling so that we could have a home. My income did not suffer by the change. We have our little home in the city and in Summer we come up here. Dot wanted to.

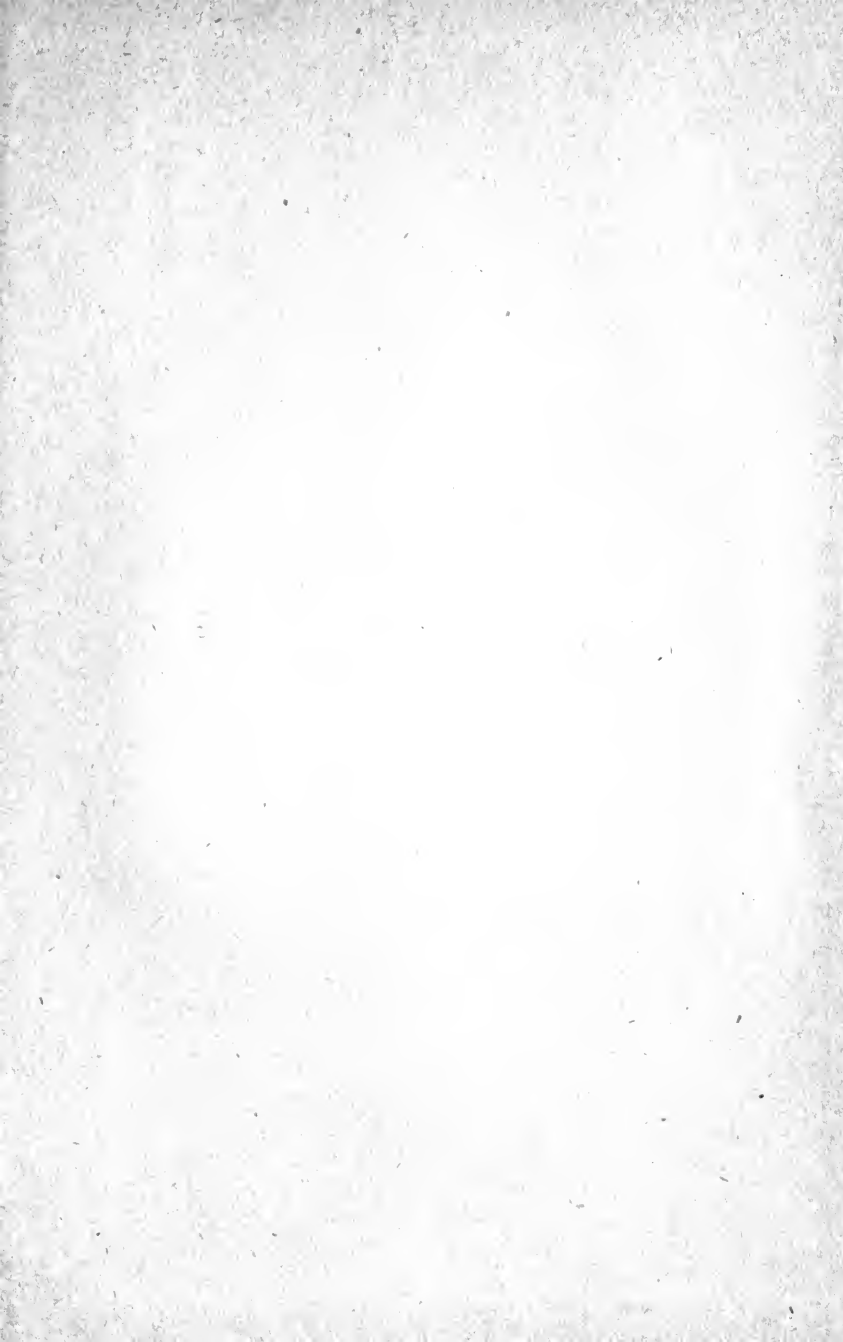
These beautiful evenings after the kiddies are tucked

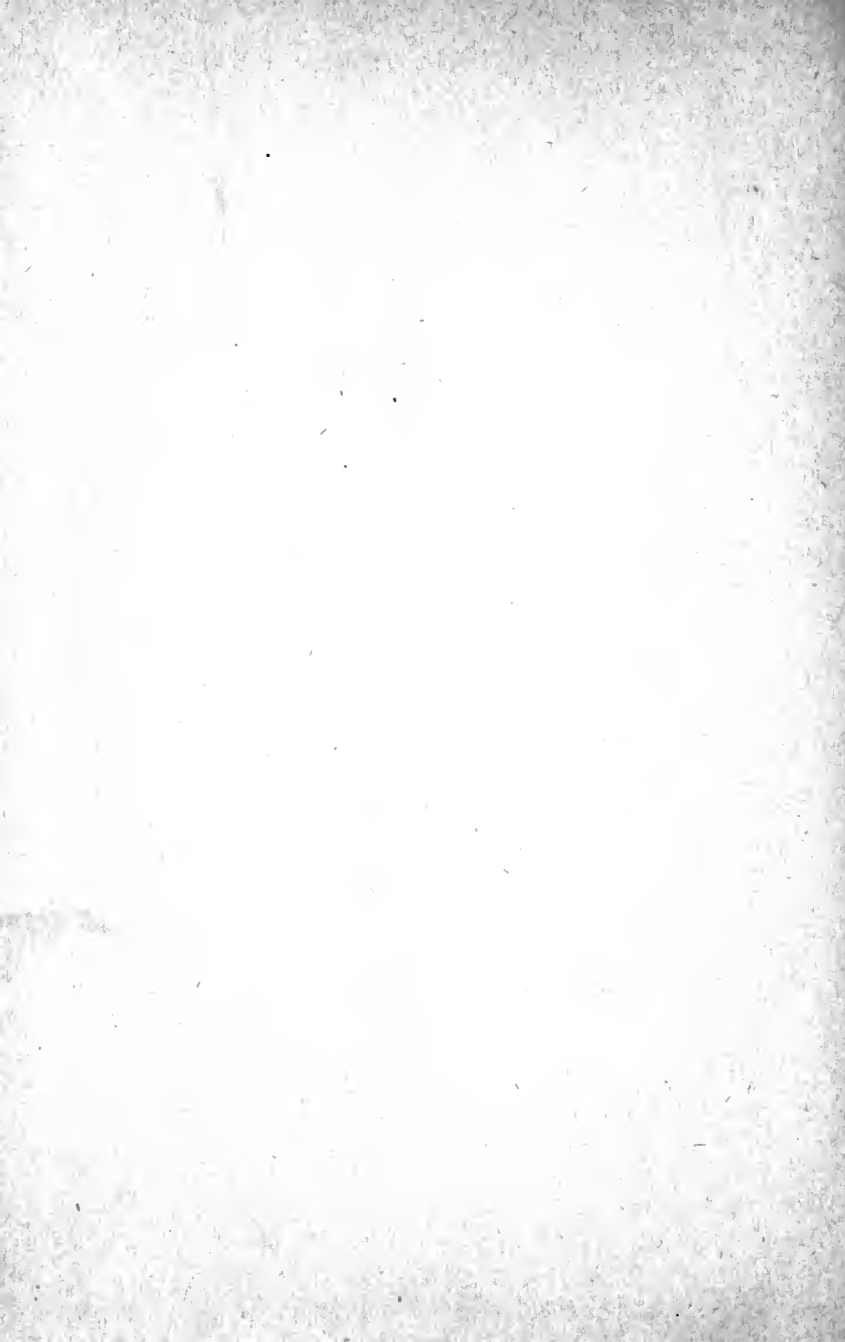
away snugly in their little beds, friend Wife and I sit out on the little screened-in porch in the gathering twilight. As the light fades slowly away across the lake and the bird chorus ceases, her little hand steals into mine and with the whispering voices of the pines comes to us both the knowledge that God, in His infinite mercy, has put into our hearts the "peace that passeth all understanding." We have found Life.

Just one thing more. Sunday evening we had been talking about the future of the kiddies and I noticed she was rather quiet. In the night I was awakened by the sudden tightening of the little arm around me. I asked her if she couldn't sleep and she surprised me by saying, "I don't want to sleep. I'm thinking." To my question as to what she was thinking about she sat up in the bed and after a moment said, "Bobbie, if we should have a little baby of our own, could I name it?" When I told her she certainly could, she asked me if I could guess what she would call it. I thought for a moment and told her I could not guess. At that, she laughed the queerest, broken little laugh and, thumping me ecstatically on the chest with her little doubled-up fist, she said, "Bobbie, we'll call it Forever. Then we'll have To-day, To-morrow and Forever."

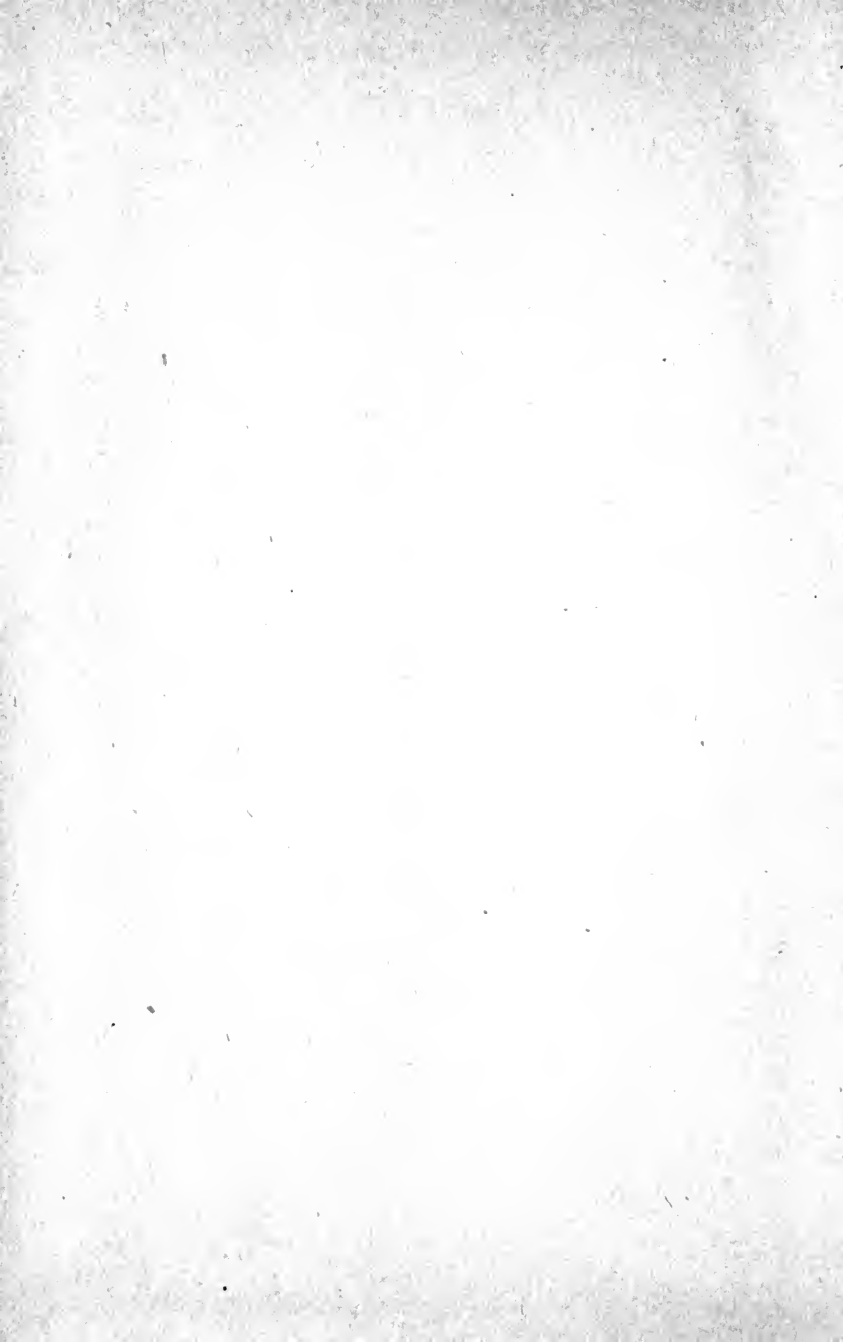


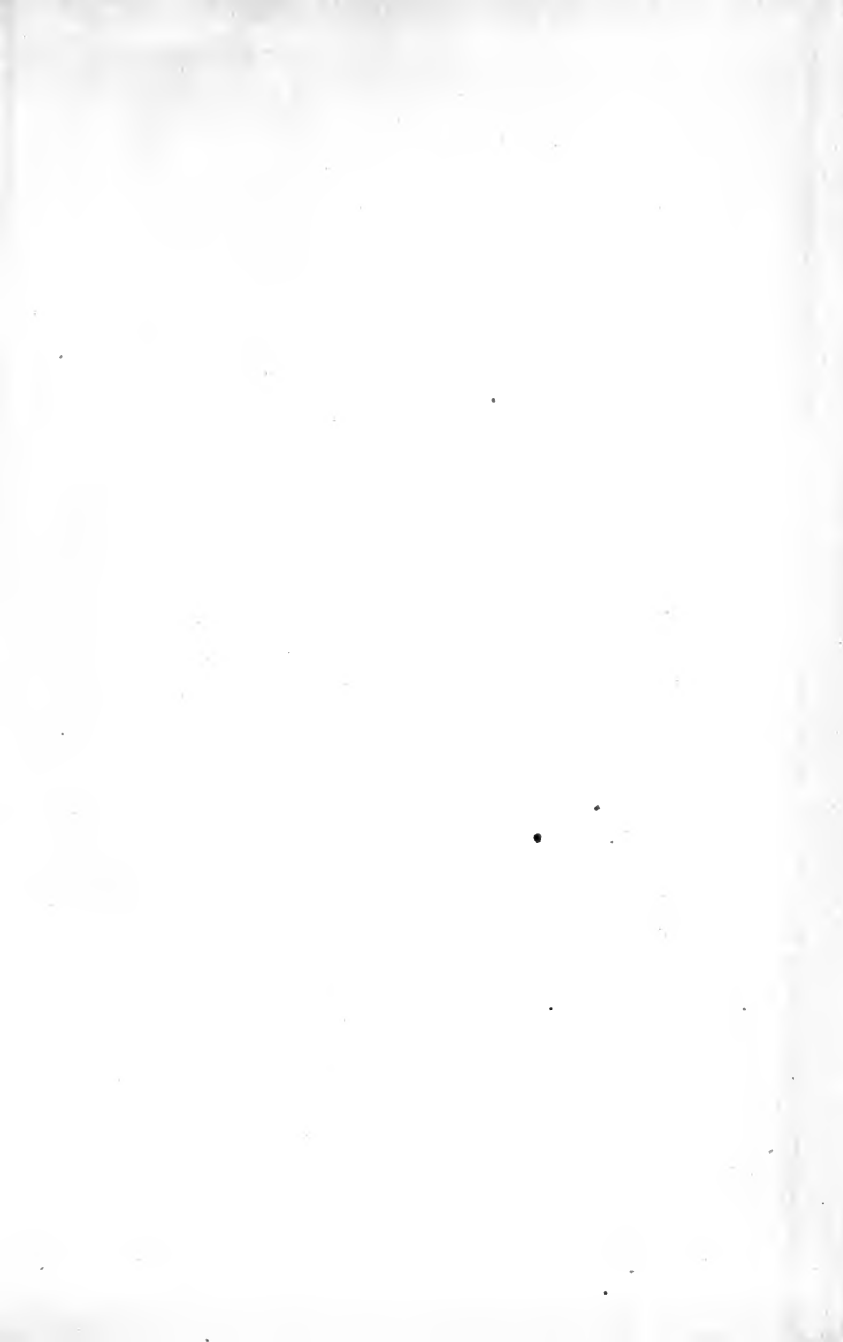












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