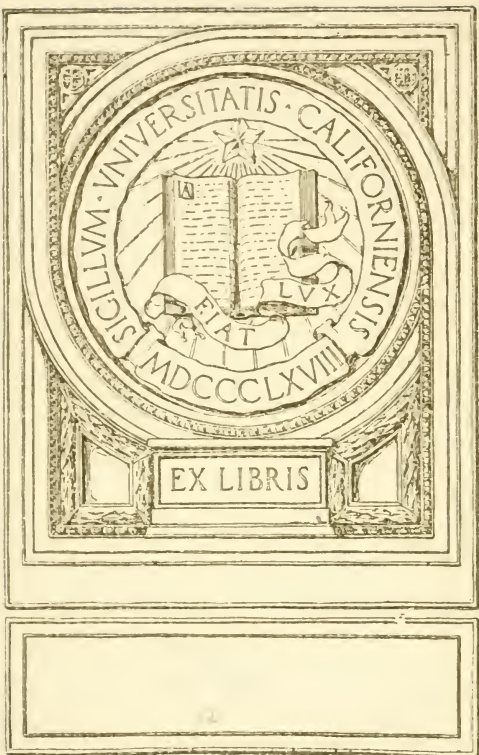




shown only their names

Dr. Lloyd - Mac -
Dr. Eastwick - D.



ALIENS

BY

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AUTHOR OF "AN OCEAN TRAMP"

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TO
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ALIENS

PROLOGUE

TEN minutes after the birth of the New Year, when the shouting of "Auld Lang Syne" had scarcely died away in the parlour of Shovitzsky's Hotel in Chestnut Street, a party of three, two men and one woman, might have been seen slowly ascending Pine Street, which leads to Van Diemen's Avenue, the highest point in the town of Netley, in the State of New Jersey. They moved slowly because the snow, which had descended steadily for thirty hours, had been long ago abandoned by even the most persistent shovellers, and lay a foot deep on the sidewalks. Arrived at the top and moving southward along the ridge of what is really a foothill of the Orange mountains, they paused in front of a vacant plot of land, a quarter of a mile each way, that formed the side of the hill, and occupied the space between Broad Street at the bottom and Van Diemen's Avenue at the top. Above their heads was the dark blue vault of the sky, obscured here and there by indeterminate blotches of moving cloud, and far away to the eastward

lay a long, low glare pierced by a single white light, the lantern of the Metropolitan Tower in New York.

They paused and stood close together, but without speaking, their figures etched in jet against the ghostly purity of the snow. It became immediately apparent that they were not watching, so much as listening, for on the freshening easterly wind there was borne such a noise as men are not often either permitted to make or to hear. It could not be called a noise, it was rather a terrible and confusing *presence* translated into sound. So enormous was it, and so distant, that it seemed to be omnipresent. It was as though one were listening to the cheering of numberless myriads on another planet. There was neither cessation to it nor paroxysm, neither surging up nor dying away. It was simply a continuous and prodigious drone. And the wonder might possibly be driven up a notch higher when it was known that this blood-chilling and mysterious uproar was caused, not by the moans of a lost world falling down through inconceivable spaces to Gehenna, but by a million tin horns which the two million people of New York City considered to be a suitable welcome for the New Year. It was a fanfare *in excelsis*, defying criticism and distance. It was the apotheosis of Manhattan; it was a skyscraper of sound. It was the expression of a primal and singularly innocent joy, the joy of a young nation on beholding a New Year. It was almost as

though, in the cataclysm of unlooked-for casualties, in the vanishing of cities, in the eruption of mountains and the sinking of titanic ships beneath the waves, even the recurrence of the seasons had become problematic and a matter of supreme wonder.

A million tin horns !

It was doubtless their preoccupation with the solemnity of the hour and the extraordinary nature of the sound filling their ears that prevented the three persons in Van Diemen's Avenue from noting the first appearance in the sky of a strange and disquieting signal. For some moments, before they became conscious of the fact, there shone, far away to the south-east, beyond Newark, a tiny constellation of three green lights, arranged in a triangle with the apex towards the zenith. It was only when this peculiar phenomenon, which was advancing irregularly towards them, was emphasized against a dark bank of cloud, that the taller of the two men raised his hand and spoke to his companions. Immediately the sound of New York's million tin horns was forgotten, and they raised their faces to the sky in rapt contemplation of this yet more amazing portent. And as they gazed the triangle of green lights was borne beyond the cloud-bank and was seen against the dark blue of the star-lit heavens, moving more and more rapidly. The three people plunged into the snow and crossed to the edge of the vacant plot, which was higher than the road-

way. Suddenly the woman gave a cry, for the object of their attention was now near, and plunging frantically in the air. One swerve was so abrupt that the lights vanished from view, and it was this that caused the woman to cry, "Oh! oh!" When they reappeared they were perhaps a thousand feet above the snow. And then, with the rapidity of a bird of prey, the dark mass to which the lights were attached described a flat parabola towards the earth, spinning the while upon itself with incredible speed, and struck the snow with a soft thud.

Before the three watchers had covered even a quarter of the short distance that separated them from the fallen airship, it had burst into flame, and the whole expanse of snow was brilliantly illuminated. So sudden was the catastrophe, and so mingled with the deep snow was the unfamiliar wreckage, that they merely blundered on a few steps further and stood in stupefaction. Their movements, before the appearance of the green lights, had aroused the suspicion of a patrolman ascending the further side of the ridge by Friedman Street and who now stood watching them from the shadow of a house at the corner. Without comprehending the cause of the conflagration, the officer stepped to a box, fastened to a telegraph pole in Van Diemen's Avenue, and, opening it with his key, sent to the fire station down in the valley the call of the section in which it stood, Number Twenty-three. Every one in the town

heard this new sound, two hoots, a pause and then three hoots more. It stayed the glasses in the hands of the revellers in Shovitzsky's Hotel. Residents who were winding up their watches paused and went to the windows to listen again to the number, Twenty-three. Watchmen in the paper-mills along the Pasayack River peered out and saw the reflected glare of the fire. A burglar at work on the back door of a summer-house in Montauk Street, which was in Section Thirty-six, listened attentively to the number and then proceeded confidently with his operations.

And then, as suddenly as they had appeared, the flames went out, and the melting snow quenched the few glowing fragments of bamboo and linen that remained. The auto fire-engine, the pride of the townsmen, had scarcely struggled through the snow of Broad Street and attempted the steep incline of Pine, before all trace of the disaster was obliterated. The driver, somewhat nonplussed, braked his wheels, and got down to investigate. He found four people, one of them the patrolman who had given the alarm, peering at a blackened hole in the snow. As he came up he tripped over an invisible wire and cursed incoherently.

"Say, Buck, where's your fire?" he demanded, pulling at the wire and drawing towards him a tangle of charred rubbish. The patrolman pointed to the hole.

"It is finished," said one of the men, the shorter of the two. He was looking down seriously at

the ruins as though trying to remember something.

“Sure,” said the patrolman. “But what is it, anyhow?”

“I think,” said the short man, “it was an aeroplane. It came down, you know, and the gasoline caught fire and——” He struck a match and sheltered it with his fingers, but the wind blew it out.

And then other people began to arrive.

* * * * *

By a curious fatality the newspapers of New York City were unable to view the incident dispassionately. For some days previously they had been agitated by a mystery which seemed to promise a thrilling denouement. This was no other than the affair of Hermann Gottschalk, the eminent and aged millionaire. To explain how that gentleman came to be temporarily connected with a case of which he himself had never heard, it is necessary to recount briefly the salient points of his recent history.

Hermann Gottschalk was ninety-eight years of age and had lived for some fifteen years in virtual retirement. It so happened that the celebrated Chamock Commission, which was probing the financial methods of Wall Street at this time, suddenly decided that certain transactions of Mr. Gottschalk in 1893 were irregular, and issued a subpoena for his attendance at Washington as a

witness. For several days officers beset the Gottschalk residence in Fifth Avenue, but without success. Then the papers took the matter up. From a small paragraph on the third page of the *New York Daily News* it leapt to the prominence of the left-hand column of the front page, and was expanded to another half column over leaf. New Yorkers on Christmas morning enjoyed descriptions of the whole Gottschalk household, including a wart on the butler's nose. On Christmas night the *News* reporter who covered the Erie Basin and all the maritime district southward, happened to discover that a private yacht, laid up in the Morse dry dock for the winter, had been denuded of its timber coverings and taken out to sea. He telephoned to the *News* office that Gottschalk was going for a cruise to the Bahamas to avoid the inquiry. Simultaneously with this information came word that Mr. Gottschalk was visiting his mother in Nebraska. Up to this the business had been expensive; but now the money squandered in reaching the elusive millionaire became terrific. The Dustless Derringer, the fastest, cleanest and most expensive train running between New York and Chicago, an all-steel train carrying a drawing-room, a state-room, a club car, an observation car, a stenographer and a wireless operator, was boarded on the afternoon of December 26 by eighteen officials armed with subpoenas, all bound for Omaha, Neb., and seventy-two reporters armed with cameras.

At the same time, the *New York Daily News* did not neglect to plan out a scoop of their own. The report of the Gottschalk yacht putting to sea in mid-winter reminded a bright young man in the office that Gottschalk had once had a residence on Saint Simon's Island. He did not know where St. Simon's Island was, but he looked it up and found it to be on the desolate marshy coast of Glynn County, Ga. When he mentioned this to the editor, as bright young men will, the editor told him to telephone for a berth in the next south-bound train of the Atlantic Coast Line. In consequence of this the bright young man found himself, twenty-four hours later, steaming into Brunswick, Ga., and looking forward with some reluctance to a New Year far from Broadway.

In its way the *News* theory was sound enough. It transpired that the yacht sent out of the Morse Yard really belonged to Carl Gottschalk, but nothing was more likely than that Hermann would borrow his brother's yacht for a clandestine cruise until the energies of the Chamock Committee had turned upon some one else. Then, of course, he could not board her in New York. What more probable, then, than that he should be awaiting the yacht's arrival on St. Simon's Island, Ga. ?

The bright young reporter, having taken a room at the hotel and arranged for the hire of a motor-boat, had calculated that the yacht would cover the thousand or so miles between New York and Brunswick in about two days. This gave him a

day at least of leisure to enjoy himself, especially as he had made the acquaintance of a pilot who assured him that nothing could come up to St. Simon's Island without everybody knowing it. So he went round and enjoyed himself, inspecting the three streets of the city, interviewing Strahan the cotton baron, and making friends with the officers of a British steamer loading bales about two miles up the Turtle River. Occasionally he would take the motor-boat and reconnoitre the channel, but no sign of any yacht could he find. This brought him to December 30, and he read with ill-concealed disgust the exciting doings near Omaha, Neb., where the eighteen officers and seventy-two reporters were encamped in the snow round the residence supposed to contain the aged Mrs. Gottschalk and her filial son. On this evening, tired of kicking his heels in the vestibule of the hotel, he donned his thick coat and went down to his launch, planning to drop in on the Englishmen of the cotton-tramp and incidentally sample their Scotch whisky. A thin mist hung over the marshes of Glynn as he chugged up stream. On every hand the horizon was blocked by sombre forests, and the steamer, moored to a little timber jetty, and standing high out of the water, presented a strange and incongruous spectacle in the gathering twilight. Away across the wide expanse of shallow was Turtle Island, a low, treeless, grass-grown segment of marsh land. The throbs of his engine sounded far across the still, gloomy

water. He seemed to be the only moving thing in all the world. He felt very forlorn as he cut his way across the dredged channel and made for the steamer. He had lost all faith in his clues. He had begun to wonder if such a person as Hermann Gottschalk ever existed. He had never seen him, except in pictures. Carl Gottschalk everybody knew. Carl gave every policeman in New York a dime on Christmas Eve. But Hermann! Might he not be merely an invention of Carl, to screen himself from too much curiosity? Gee! that was worth writing up! He had his hand on the tiller to turn round and return to the hotel, when he saw something that drove all thoughts of Carl Gottschalk from his mind. Across the marshes to the southward he saw a low-flying object with green lights. Instantly the bright young man of the *New York Evening News* turned all his youth and all his brightness upon this new aspect of the problem. Here he was, wasting his time looking for a yacht, while Gottschalk was escaping in an aeroplane! As he headed for Turtle Island the object sank into the mist and became indistinct. The reporter urged his launch to its utmost speed, for darkness was falling quickly, and moreover, a fog was coming up the river.

It took him about ten minutes to round the eastern end of Turtle Island, but by that time the light was too poor and the mist too dense for him to make out his position. He found grass brushing the side of the launch and stopped the engine to

listen. The roar of the Gnome ! The young man had stood by an aeroplane and heard the peculiar noise which the engines of these machines make when started. He could not mistake it. Jumping out and throwing the anchor on the ground to make the boat fast, he began to run through the long grass in the direction of the sound. It grew louder. It was to the right. He ran to the right, and found himself plunging up to his knees in water. He stopped, for even a New York reporter cannot be expected to swim across a mere in winter-time. He stopped, and looked anxiously around.

He admitted afterwards that the noise was not really to the right at all, but over his head, but he did not discover that fact until the aeroplane was nearly out of sight in the fog. Even when nearest to him it could not have been very clear. In his telegram to the *News* he called it a bi-plane, which proves that he had no detailed view of it, for the ruin on Van Diemen's Avenue was undoubtedly a monoplane.

As the machine rose the sound grew fainter and fainter, until the dripping of the water from his coat (he had stepped back on seeing the thing) was louder in comparison. He turned once more to seek the launch. He was disappointed in not getting a snapshot, but he must lose no time in sending in his story. Obviously Gottschalk was gone. The yacht was out at sea awaiting him.

After all it would be a scoop.

Certainly the first effect of the news upon New York was to recall the eighteen officers and seventy-two reporters from Nebraska. It dawned upon several editors that after all it was scarcely likely that a man of ninety-eight should have a mother living. Mr. Carl Gottschalk, on being interviewed in his Maiden Lane office by a battalion of reporters, said he was not sure where he had last seen his brother, as he had such a defective memory. Asked by the *Daily News* man if he thought it likely his brother was in Nebraska, Mr. Carl replied that it was possible, but he could not say. Another reporter, who had surreptitiously opened a door in the office, was rewarded by a view of a private chapel where Mr. Carl was accustomed to retire when he felt the need of spiritual uplifting. This very nearly switched the public's attention altogether from Hermann, and in fact would have done if the Newark papers had not cleverly connected the three green lights seen by the people in Van Diemen's Avenue with a casual reference to the same signal in the *News* reporter's story from Georgia. The case seemed complete. Hermann Gottschalk had attempted to elude the law and fly the country by aeroplane. Driven out of his course by gales, the airman had endeavoured to return to Manhattan. On New Year's Day every trolley-car from Newark and every train from Jersey City brought fresh batches of reporters to view the wreckage on the vacant plot at Van Diemen's Avenue. The three people who had

seen the tragedy and who lived just opposite, found their front room choked with newspaper men. The postman counted twenty-six pairs of gums on the verandah. They said they were English people, but had lived seven years in the country. They had not taken out papers. They had never seen an aeroplane before, and had only seen the affair by accident. They could not account for it. They were MacAllister Geoffroy Legge, the well-known artist, and Mrs. Legge, and Hector J. Pedderick, publicity expert. Their photographs were taken, and one of the reporters was caught by Mrs. Legge putting a fifty dollar etching in his pocket; for reproduction: he had no idea of its value.

All day long this went on. The snow, the war in the Balkans, the Chamock Committee, the purchase of the Merovingian Collection of the Tsar by Pierpont Morgan, were all relegated to back blocks while the descriptive giants waded in and covered sheet after sheet with the life-story of Hermann Gottschalk and his sensational death by fire and snow.

At the very moment that the fifth edition of the evening papers was being piled on the sidewalks, at three o'clock in the afternoon in fact, the bright young man of the *New York Daily News* was waiting to cross Fifth Avenue at 32nd Street to reach the Pennsylvania Station and home. He was puzzled over his chief's reluctance to use a remarkable item of news that had come through

from London, an item quoted by their correspondent from *The Morning*, a paper owned by Lord Cholme, the Englishman who had been convulsing the world with amusing descriptions of a mysterious aviator who had invented an aerial telephone and was using it to converse with the private sanctum of *The Morning*. The chief, however, would have none of it. He made remarks about Lord Cholme's sanity and declared that even if a man *had* crossed the Atlantic in an airship, the public would not believe it. The bright young reporter was unable to see the whole game. It seemed to him a great pity not to use it. Two or three weeks before the *News* Sunday edition had published an article on the possibility of a wireless telephone. After all, even Englishmen got busy sometimes and did astonishing things.

He was about to cross the street when he was paralysed to see Mr. Hermann Gottschalk himself, heavily wrapped in furs, drive past in a Russian sleigh drawn by three horses abreast. There was no doubt about it. Every paper of the day had a photograph of the bald head and hairless face, hairless save for a white moustache turned up at the ends and waxed. The bright young man nearly collapsed in the snow. Dropping his grip, he made a spring and caught hold of the silver-plated handrails. The millionaire opened his eyes and gazed placidly at the bright young man swinging himself into the sleigh.

"Mr. Hermann Gottschalk?" said the latter,

opening his note-book. The old man shook his head, and the sleigh came to a standstill. The footman got down and endeavoured to dislodge the reporter.

“Not on your life,” said the young man. “Say, Mr. Gottschalk, I just want your statement. Why in thunder——”

“Come off,” said the footman, pulling. “He can’t hear a word you say. Stone deaf. Come off.”

The reporter sprang away and raced to his grip, hailing a taxi on the way. As fast as possible he travelled back to the *News* building and told his story to the chief.

But that gentleman shook his head. This would not do. This was too much even for New York. The public had been told that Hermann Gottschalk, aged ninety-eight, had gone to Nebraska to see his mother, and they had believed it. Then they had been told that the same man had taken to an aeroplane to escape justice. To inform them an hour later that he was now driving in a Russian sleigh in Fifth Avenue would be absurd. They would not believe it. And it is an axiom of the newspaper business to print nothing, not even the truth, that people will not believe.

But the next morning the *News* unloaded the story gradually, beginning with nine inches of red headlines. It was exciting reading, but it only faintly indicated the excitement among editors and newspaper men when they realized

that a man nearly a hundred years old and stone deaf would not be much use to a committee at Washington. They realized that it would take another fifty years to extract the evidence from him.

So it happened that not only had the Van Diemen's Avenue tragedy nothing to do with Hermann Gottschalk, but the public forgot the matter in a week. The papers were distracted by numerous fresh stories of more piercing interest. A Newport banker and his wife had committed *harkari* in an up-town hotel, and the Paris papers were sending through the piquant rumour that the Pope had been secretly married to a Russian dancer.

But the people in Van Diemen's Avenue, who had seen the aeroplane with the three green lights, did not forget it. Here is the story with which that strange apparition had something to do.

ALIENS



CHAPTER I

THE "SCALDINO"

LONG before any of us three had seen him we had become aware of his existence, and our brains were continually busy about him. His appearance, his age, his gait, his history, his voice, even his ultimate destiny, we conjectured over and over again as one by one the evidences of his existence accumulated and developed in our consciousness. It grew to be quite a game with us, this collection of data, and the joking rivalry filled in much of our leisure before we became acquainted with many neighbours.

I think Bill was the first to notice something unusual about the family next door, something neither English nor American. "What do you think!" she exclaimed, coming in one morning as I was busy writing. "She's got a little iron grate on legs, and there's charcoal burning in it."

"Who? Where?" I asked, coming out of my work with a start. I was composing an advertisement at the time.

"Mrs. Carville," said Bill, pointing to the window.

From the window, across the intervening plot of ground, we saw our neighbour stooping over one of those small portable affairs so popular in Italy and known as *scaldini*, mere iron buckets in which coke or charcoal burns without flame, and which are carried from room to room as occasion arises.

“I thought,” I said, “that she was Italian. That is a *scaldino*.”

“Is it?” said Bill. “They’ll set the house on fire if they use that here.”

Bill is rather hard on Italians, I think, for she has an undying passion for what we English consider to be cleanliness.

“No wonder they are dirty,” she remarked as we stood at the window. Now this was untrue as well as uncharitable, for Mrs. Carville’s premises were continually festooned with snowy linen waving in the breeze. Bill should have used the word “untidy.” I don’t think anyone could be blamed for criticising Mrs. Carville as untidy. One look at her establishment supported the contention to the full.

But we never said, even among ourselves, that *she* was dirty or untidy. Even Bill, that demure reincarnation of the Goddess Hygeia, never used the singular pronoun. It was always “They.” It struck me from the first as a curious persistence of virtue among us, that we should have the grace to discriminate between Mrs. Carville and the environment which, incongruous as it was, seemed

nevertheless to be her choice. So potent is beauty in the souls of men and women.

On revision, that word "beauty" scarcely stands its own in this connection, and for this reason. We three, deriving our entire sustenance from art in some guise or other, had three widely divergent opinions upon the indispensable attributes of beauty *per se*. From my experience of artists, this condition of things is not unusual. We always agreed to differ, Bill rapturous among her flowers and revelling in their colour; Mac catching with a fine enthusiasm and assured technique the fugitive tints of a sunrise through a tracery of leaves and twigs; and I, quiescently receptive, pondering at intervals upon the sublime mystery of the human form, especially the grandiose renderings of it in the works of Michael Angelo. Thus it will be seen that of the three of us, I alone was unprejudiced in my predilections, and qualified, however inadequately, to do justice to Mrs. Carville. Mac was bitter against her because she had cut down a tree. That it was her own tree made no difference. To cut down a living tree was, in Mac's view, a sacrilege. Bill was not only displeased with the slovenly house and taciturn stand-offishness of the woman, but had an additional grievance in the fact that Mrs. Carville grew no flowers and permitted her chickens to wander deleteriously among us.

A brief and passing glance from the street would have given a stranger no inkling of the state of

affairs between us. Indeed Mrs. Carville's domain and ours were un-American in the fact that there had at one time been a fence between us. Even now it is a good enough fence in front; but it gradually degenerated until, at the bottom of the yards, it was a mere fortuitous concourse of rotten and smashed palings through which multitudinous armies of fowls came at unseasonable hours and against which all Bill's lady-like indignation was vented in vain. As we watched behind the curtains a Dorking stepped through and began to prospect among the sumach and stramonium that Bill had encouraged along our frontiers, under an illusion that plants labelled "poisonous" in her American gardening book would decimate the fowls.

"It's like their cheek," said Bill explosively, "to let their . . ." and she launched into her set speech for the occasion. I have frequently observed that there are none so blind as those who appear to see everything. For myself, though trained habit enabled me to make note of the Dorking, my whole conscious attention was riveted upon the little group round the *scaldino* on the back porch. Mrs. Carville was, as I have said, stooping over the brazier. Her movements were being watched not only by ourselves but by her two children. Fortunately they were beyond her, their legs planted far apart, their hands behind them, so that I could see without stint the magnificent pose of the woman's body. Her long arms

hovered over the vessel, the left resting at times upon it, the other selecting long pieces of fuel from a box at her side. The line of her back from hip to shoulder seemed incredibly straight and long. The cold wind that was blowing gustily and which was the ostensible cause of her preparations, pressed her thin dress to her form and showed with sportive candour the fine modelling of bosom and limbs. Chiefly however, I was attracted by the superb disdain in the poise of the head. It was a dark head, coiled heavily with black hair and set back in the hollow of the shoulders. Her face may be called dark too, the black eye-brows and olive skin being unrelieved by colour in the cheeks. Her whole expression was, you might say, forbidding, and I was not surprised when one of the boys received a push as he bent his head over the brazier. There was such an electric quickness in the gesture, such a dispassionate resumption of her former pose that one involuntarily conceded to her a fierce and peremptory disposition. One felt that such a woman would listen with some impatience to complaints about predatory fowls, that she would stand no nonsense from her children either, that . . .

The same thought flashed through our minds simultaneously, and in strict accordance with our differing temperaments Bill voiced it.

“I wonder if he keeps away—on purpose,” she said.

That was the way we always referred to him.

Just as Mrs. Carville was "they" or "them" so her husband was always "he."

"I wonder," I assented.

The brazier full, she rose, the handle in her hand. Pointing to the box, she spoke to her children, who hastily removed it to a shed at the bottom of the yard. Mrs. Carville turned to enter the house, her large black eyes swept our windows in a swift comprehensive glance of suspicion and then she vanished.

I retired hastily to my desk, acutely conscious that we had been, well, that we had been impolite! Bill went away without speaking, and for a couple of hours I was absorbed in my work. Growing weary of the thing, I took up my pipe and went upstairs to the studio.

"Just in time for tea," said Bill. "Have a cookie?"

The studio was in some disorder, and the atmosphere was heavy with the odour of printer's ink. The etching press had been dragged out from the wall, trays of water, bottles of benzine, rags of muslin, rolls of paper, palettes of ink, copper plates and all the *materiel* of etching were lying in considerable confusion about the room, and Mac himself, draped in a blue cotton overall, stood in negligent attitude against an easel, drinking a cup of tea. I had caught the phrase "They're a funny lot," and I divined that Bill's hasty offer of cookies was a mere ruse to put me off the track of a possibly interesting conversation.

“Finished?” asked Mac, passing me a cup of tea.

“Not yet,” I replied. “Another thousand words will do it, though.”

Mac, in accordance with a vow made in all sincerity, and approved by us, set apart one day a week for etching, just as I was supposed to consecrate some part of my time to literature. At first we were to work together, select themes, write them up and illustrate them conjointly. This, we argued, could not fail to condense into fame and even wealth. Our friend Hooker had done this, and *he* had climbed to a one-man show in Fifth Avenue. But by some fatality, whenever Mac took a day off for high art, on that day did I invariably feel sordidly industrious. I might idle for a week, smoking too much and getting in Bill’s way as she busied herself with housework, but as soon as the etching-press scraped across the studio-floor, or Mac came down with camera and satchel and dressed for a tramp, I became the victim of a mania for work, and stuck childishly to my desk. Personally I did not believe in Hooker’s story at all. Hooker’s mythical librettist never materialised. I was always on the look-out for a secondhand book containing Hooker’s letterpress. It suited the others to believe in him, but even a writer of advertising booklets and “appreciations” has a certain literary instinct that cannot be deceived. And so I felt, as I have said, sordidly industrious and inclined to look disparagingly upon a man who

was frittering away his time with absurd scratchings upon copper and whose hands were just then in a most questionable condition.

“ I thought you were going to help me,” he sneered over his cup.

“ The fit was on me,” I explained, and my eye roved round the studio. I caught sight of a piece of paper on a chair. Mac made a movement to pick it up, but he was hampered by the cup and saucer, and I secured it.

“ Ah—h ! ” I remarked, and they two regarded each other sheepishly. “ Very good indeed, old man ! ”

And it was very good. With the slap-dash economy of effort which he had learned of Van Roon, when that ill-fated genius was in Chelsea, Mac had caught the salient curves and angles of Mrs. Carville as she stooped over her *scaldino*, had caught to a surprising degree the sombre expression of her face and the tigerish energy of her crouched body. I studied it with great pleasure for a moment, and then it recurred to me that he had not been with us at the window. I say recurred, though I had known it all along, and my ejaculation, for that matter, was but a sign of triumph over catching him at the same game of peeping-tom that we had been playing in the room below. Yet so quickly and over-lappingly do our minds work that at the same moment I had no less than three blurred emotions. I was pleased to find my friend was guilty, I was pleased with the sketch,

yet puzzled to know how he had come to make it. Suddenly I saw light.

“ You were on the stairs ? ” I said, and pointed with the paper over my shoulder. He nodded.

“ Happened to look out,” he remarked, setting his cup down.

It is my custom to risk a good deal sometimes by uttering thoughts which my friends are free to disown. They may not be quite honest in this, but none the less, according to the social contract, they are free to disown. So, in this case, when I said, “ I wonder if they are really married,” both of these generous souls repudiated the suggestion at once. A red spot came to Bill’s cheek as she met her husband’s glance and flashed the two-fold fire across to where I sat smiling and sipping my tea.

“ Anybody might say that of . . . anybody ! ” she protested, and I saw that certain scandalous and unfounded rumours that had been bandied about the Latin Quarter of San Francisco (before the earthquake) still rankled in a usually placid bosom.

“ Truly,” I replied. “ But here you must admit we have some reason for suspicion. Of course,” I went on, looking into my cup. “ Of course, I am not speaking now as a gentleman——”

“ No, you’re not,” she interrupted, examining her toe.

“——but as an investigator into the causes of psychological phenomena. Placing them upon the

dissecting-table, so to speak, and probing with the forceps of observation and the needle of wit——”

“Of Bunk!” snorted the etcher rudely, turning to his plates.

“But my dear chap!” I urged, “let me explain. I happened to be reading Balzac last night, that is all. You know how stimulating he is, and how readily one falls in with his plans for forming a complete Science of Applied Biology of the human race. Put it another way if you like. What are the facts? *Item*: A grass widow, obviously foreign, presumably Italian. *Item*: Two children indisputably American, one fair, the other dark. *Item*: A *scaldino*. *Item*: Male clothing on the line. *Item*: A reserved attitude toward the intelligent and cultivated neighbours. *Item*: Ignorance of the well-known fact that the Indian Summer is now setting in. *Item*: ——shall I go on? Have we not here evidence sufficiently discrepant to warrant a certain conjecture?”

“Male clothing, you said?” remarked Bill, a certain respect for perspicacity in her manner, “When?”

“The last time I came home with the milk,” I replied. “The moon was shining with some brilliance. As I looked out of my window before getting into bed I saw some one moving over there. A further scrutiny revealed to me a number of undeniable suits of pyjamas which were being taken hurriedly from the line.”

“You didn’t say anything about it before?”

"No, because I attached no significance to the fact before. To tell you the truth I was under the impression that they were doing laundry work and that, to conceal the fact more effectively, were doing the male garments at night. We had not then heard the item I was waiting permission to enumerate."

"Is it one we know or one you're going to spring on us?" inquired the lady, reaching out for my cup.

"You may know it," I replied. Mac was bending over his plate, rubbing the ink in with deft fingers, and I saw his lowered glance flutter in my direction for a moment.

"You mean Mac knows and you don't feel sure whether he's told me," interpreted Bill, shaking the tea-pot. I laughed.

"Into that we will not go," I said. "Suffice it that if he knows it was because I told him."

"I *knew* it was something you were ashamed of" she exclaimed triumphantly. "Go on: out with it!"

"How can I be ashamed of it since I am about to tell you?" I demanded incautiously.

"Why, because your love of scandal is so tremendous that you sacrifice even yourself to it!" she answered.

I took my cup with a head bowed in reverence before such transcendent penetration.

"Thank you," I said. "Here is my item: They correspond."

“*That’s* nothing to go on,” cried the lady, and could have bitten her tongue an instant later. I dared no more than smile. Mac’s hands trembled as he lifted the plate from the gas stove and, giving it a final polish, carried it to the press. “Oh well!” went on Bill irrelevantly, “let us all be honest and say we’re interested. If he exists, he will come along some time.”

The press creaked and the spokes turned. We both paused involuntarily as Mac bent over and lifted the blankets. This was always a moment of anxiety for us two, when the press creaked. It was a theory among us that when Samuel Johnson wrote “*The Vanity of Human Wishes*,” he had been pulling proofs from copper. Bill had confessed to me that she could not help holding her breath, sometimes. He turned upon us with a smile.

“If we’re all going to be honest,” he remarked, “we all ought to know as much as each other, eh? Well then, tell us about the correspondence, old man. What do you know?”

“Miss Fraenkel . . .” I began, and Bill breathed, “I knew it!” I continued, “In the course of a casual conversation, mentioned to me the fact that letters pass between them. In a way, I suppose Miss Fraenkel shouldn’t do it. A postmistress is in a delicate position. And yet why not? One may say without prejudice that a certain man writes to his wife. We might even have assumed it, since we see the postman deliver letters with our

own eyes. Miss Fraenkel, however, overstepped the bounds of prudence when she implied something wrong. Her exact words, as far as I can remember were, 'It is strange he writes from New York.' "

"Does he?" said Bill.

"So Miss Fraenkel says. So you see, your . . . our unspoken thoughts were justified, to say the least. We may recast *Item one* and say, A grass widow, undoubtedly Italian, with a husband in New York, twenty miles away."

"Well, in that case it's no business of ours," said Mac as he spread the heavy viscid ink upon a new plate. "They may have their troubles but it's pretty clear they don't need our sympathy, do they?"

"No," assented Bill.

"But what becomes of our inquiry?" I protested. "My dear Mac, this does credit to your kind heart, but since we are agreed to be honest, let us have the fruits of our honesty. Consider that anyhow we are doing them no harm. You are too gentle. Indeed, I think that we have been stand-offish. Why should not Bill call and—er—leave a card?"

"Me! Call on an Italian?" The voice was almost shrill.

"A neighbourly act," I remarked. "And we may find out something."

"We're a pretty lot, us and our honesty," put in Mac, in some disgust, rubbing his nose with the back of his wrist.

“ My dear friends,” I said, “ I give you my word of honour that is how modern novels are made. If you put an end to espionage the book market would be given over entirely to such works as ‘ The Automobile and How to Drive It ’ and ‘ Jane Austen and Her Circle. ’ ”

“ Then it’s a very shady trade, mean and dishonourable,” said Mac.

“ We agreed upon that, you remember, when my novel was refused publication,” I said laughing.

“ Yes,” said Bill. “ But when they accepted it, you got very stuck-up and refused to write any advertisements for a fortnight and said that whoever had written a good book was one of a noble company, and a lot more of it. It depends on the point of view.”

“ Of course it does, *ma mie*. In this case, the honest point of view is the one we must take. We must forget for a moment that we are English lady and gentlemen——”

“ Never ! ” said Bill firmly, lighting a cigarette.

“ ——and remember that we are students of life. What would Balzac, or Flaubert have known of life if they had been merely gentlemen ? Nothing ! What does a gentleman know ? Nothing.”

“ Oh stop, stop ! ” she cried laughing. “ Go down and get that thousand words finished.”

I went down.

CHAPTER II

HIS CHILDREN

It was a week later, and we were sitting on the verandah looking out across Essex County towards Manhattan. To us, who some five years before had been shaken from our homestead in San Francisco and hurried penniless and almost naked across the continent, our location here in the Garden State, looking eastward towards the Western Ocean and our native isle, had always appeared as "almost home." We endeavoured to impress this upon our friends in England, explaining that "we could be home in four or five days easily"; and what were four or five days? True, we have never gone so far as to book our passage; but there is undoubted comfort in the fact that in a week at the outside, we could walk down Piccadilly. Out on the Pacific Slope we were, both physically and spiritually, a world away.

It pleased us, too, to detect in the configuration of the district a certain identity with our own county of Essex, in England, where a cousin of Bill's had a cottage, and where, some day, we were to have a cottage too. Our home is called *Wigboro' House*,

after the cousin's, and we have settled it that, just as you catch a glimpse of grey sea across Mersea Island from Wigborough, so we may catch the glint and glare of the lights of Manhattan, and, on stormy nights, feel on our lips the sharpness of the salt wind that blows across Staten Island from the Atlantic. It is an innocent conceit, and our only critic so far had been Miss Fraenkel, who had objected to the name, and advocated with American succinctness the advantage of a number. As Bill had remarked mournfully, "It wouldn't be so bad if it was number three or four, but *Five hundred and Eighty-two Van Diemen's Avenue* is horrible!" We had given in to Miss Fraenkel of course, save that none of us had the courage to disillusion Bill's cousin. We still received from him letters addressed in his sprawling painter's hand "*Wigboro' House, Netley Heights, N.J., U.S.A.*", a mail or so late. We never told him of *Van Diemen's Avenue*, nor for that matter had we mentioned our neighbours. Curiously enough it was he, that painter cousin of Bill's, thousands of miles away in that other Essex, who told *us* something that we were only too quick to appreciate, about our neighbours.

We were talking of him, I remember, that afternoon as we sat on the stoop, Bill saying he would be writing soon, and Mac raising the vexed question of the Fourth Chair. You see, we have four rocking-chairs on our verandah, though there are but three of us, and Bill usually claims the hammock.

It was no answer, I found, to suggest future friends as occupants for this chair. It grew to be a legend that some day I should bring home a bride and she should have it. I submitted to this badinage and even hinted that at first we should need but one chair. . . . I had heard . . . nay seen, such things in San Francisco, before the earthquake. In the meantime I had vamped up a very pretty story of the painter-cousin getting a commission to paint a *prima-donna* in New York and coming over to visit us in great state. He might be induced to sit awhile in the vacant chair. It seemed more probable than Bill's legend, for I knew Miss F——, anybody I married, say, would want the hammock. There was one drawback to my dream, and that was the humiliation of revealing to him Van Diemen's Avenue. He is a university man, and from his letters and Bill's description I should say he has a rather embarrassing laugh when he finds a person out in a deception like that. But so far he had not yet received a commission to paint a *prima-donna* in New York, and he still pictures our Wigboro' house standing alone on Netley Heights, looking out across rolling country to the sea. Of course the photos that we send do not show any other houses near, and the verandahs make the place look bigger than it really is. He must be tremendously impressed too, by Bill's courageous declaration (in inverted commas) that at the back the land is ours "as far as the eye can see." It is true too, though the eye cannot see very far.

There is a "dip," you know, common enough to Triassic regions; and as you stand at the back door and look westward the sky comes down and touches our cabbages, fifty yards away. It does, really!

Well, we were talking of him and incidentally of the Fourth Chair, when the children came round the corner of the house and, finding us there, stood looking at us.

That is all; just stood staring at us, with feet planted firmly on the gravel, hands in pockets and an expression of unwinking candour in their young eyes. It was absurd, of course, that we three grown-ups should have been so embarrassed by a couple of urchins, but we were. The cool nerve of it, the unimaginable audacity of it, took our breath away. It was almost as though they were saying, "Well, and what are you doing here, hey?" There was something almost indelicate in their merciless scrutiny. We quailed.

There was, moreover, a deeper reason for our disquietude. We realized, afterward, that those children, one dark and one fair, had been quite unconscious of our existence before. Numberless times they had passed us, even crossing our land on a short cut to the forest road, but without recognition. And though, in a pause between two absorbing interests, in a moment of disengagement from the more important matters of American childhood, they now deigned to favour us with their frank attention, it was rather disparagement

than curiosity they exhibited. We now know the feelings of a Living Wonder in a show.

"Hello," remarked the elder, the dark one, dispassionately, and we almost jumped. The other child fixed his eye on my slippers, which were of carpet and roomy. It seemed to me that the time had come to tell them of their lack of good manners.

"Hello, little boy," I replied. I decided to approach the subject of manners circuitously.

"You ain't so very big yerself," said the elder boy, quite without emotion and merely as a stated fact. I admit freely that this, in the jargon of the streets, was "one on me." My general diminutiveness of person has always been more than compensated, I think, by a corresponding magnitude of mind; but one is none the less sensitive to wayside ribaldry. I have never been able to quench a certain satisfaction in the fact that the children who mocked the prophet were devoured by bears. An occasional example is certainly wholesome, if only to bring young people to their senses.

"You mustn't speak like that," I said gently. "What is your name?"

"What yo' want to know for?" came the answer, and he joined his brother in examining my slippers. The baffling thing was that there was really nothing intentionally rude about these two rather pretty little fellows. They were merely exhibiting, in a somewhat disconcerting fashion,

it is true, the influence of republican freedom upon natures unwarped by feudal traditions of courtesy and *noblesse oblige*. It was baffling, as I say, but encouraging for all that. I felt that if the others could restrain their indignation and I could school myself to pursue the catechism, I should eventually discover some avenue of inquiry that might lead to fresh knowledge of the *ménage* next door. I tried again.

“Well, you see,” I explained, “we would like to get acquainted with you. You tell us your names and we’ll tell you ours. Eh?”

“I know your name, I do,” he said, glancing at my face for a moment. I put out my hand to calm Bill’s restlessness. It appeared afterwards that she “thought she was going to choke.”

“Gee! you do? Well then, you can tell me yours,” I went on.

“Giuseppe Mazzini Carville,” he returned, and before we fully realized the stupendous possibilities which this implied the younger child raised his eyes to our faces.

“Want to know my name too?” he queried, not a quiver of an eyelid to show any self-consciousness.

“Of course,” I said, “what is it?” We waited an instant breathlessly.

“Benvenuto Cellini Carville,” he pronounced carefully, and added as an afterthought, “I’m Ben; he’s Beppo.”

“Fancy giving a child a name like that!”

muttered Bill compassionately. "I call it a shame!" And she leaned over towards the two children. "Do you know my name then?" she asked.

The clear steady eyes rested for a moment upon her face, and a slight smile curved the lips of the elder as he answered.

"Ma calls you the woman with two husbands," he remarked.

"Oh!" said Bill and fell back into the hammock.

"Say Kiddo," said Mac, reaching out a long arm and capturing them, "what do they teach you down in that old school any way, eh?"

They squirmed.

"It is useless to try and force anything out of them," I warned. "Remember the school-teacher is forbidden by law even to touch them." They slipped away from his knee, and stood as before.

"Listen," I continued. "Got a father, Beppo?"

He surveyed me with some slight astonishment.

"Sure," he replied. "Of course I got a father, silly."

"Well, where is he?"

They looked at each other, their arms folded behind them, their toes digging the gravel.

"At sea," said Beppo, and Mac slapped his knee.

"Eh?" I said blankly, for I had not caught the phrase.

"We are a lot of duffers!" muttered Mac.

"The man is a sailor and he's at sea."

“ Oh ! ” I said, and for a moment I felt down-cast at the tame ending of our investigation. “ When is he coming home, Beppo ? ”

“ I dunno, ” he answered indifferently. “ What do you want to know for ? ”

Here was a quandary. I was caught fairly and squarely prying into another person's business. I don't know why, but these two little chaps, with their clean-cut unembarrassed features, their relentless stare and their matter-of-fact outlook upon life, seemed to have in a supreme degree the faculty of inspiring and snubbing curiosity. I think the others, since I had borne the brunt of the ordeal, sympathised with me, for they were silent. I stared at our visitors in some perplexity ; and then in the most exasperating manner they turned away and ran across our ground to a huge hollow stump near the forest path and began to play.

“ Pretty tough, eh ? ” murmured Mac, rocking himself. I began to wonder whether I ought to have been more indignant about that reflection upon my height. Bill looked up and twisted round so that she could see what they were doing.

“ What are they playing ? ” she whispered. No one answered. I was thinking. Sailor—sixty dollars a month rent—Italian wife—letters from New York.

“ I will see, ” I said, and stepping down I walked across to the stump.

I was fully resolved to sift the matter as far as

I could to the bottom. I was aware of the disadvantage of being a small man, for I saw that I should be compelled to climb up to look into the stump. But with small stature is often joined a certain tenacious, terrier-like fortitude. I advanced with firmness.

Ben was nowhere to be seen. Beppo, a stick on his shoulder, stood in a statuesque pose in front of the stump.

“G’way!” he hissed as I came up.

“What’s the game?” I whispered.

“Indians. I’m on guard. G’way!” he whispered back.

“Is this the fort?” I searched for a foothold.

“Yep. This is the middle-watch. What’d you butt in for?”

I scrambled up and looked. Just below me, lying on a soft bed of mouldering tinder wood and leaves, was Benvenuto Cellini Carville, simulating profound slumber. As I clung there, a somewhat undignified figure, he opened one eye.

“Let me play too?” I pleaded.

“Can you follow a trail?” said Beppo’s voice at my side.

“Sure.”

“Well, you go down there,” he pointed to Bill’s cabbage patch, “and be a hostile, see?”

I saw. As I slipped down and hastened away as directed (avoiding the cabbages), it seemed to me absurdly paradoxical that the only way to be friendly with these precocious beings was to be a

“hostile.” I looked round. Beppo stood at rigid attention, and at the studio back window I saw two grinning heads surveying my performance. I was not at all clear in my mind how a hostile should act; it was thirty years since I had read “Deerslayer.” Should I drop on my knees and crawl through the long grass, snooping round the bean-poles and taking the devoted block-house in flank. I swallowed my stiff-necked English pride and began to crawl. Then I saw a better plan. I slipped through the sparse line of dwarf oaks smothered with crimson poison-ivy that bordered the forest path and crept as silently as I could towards the street until I was abreast of the stump. As I paused Beppo was making his round of the fort and espied me. Instantly crying “Hostiles!” he presented his stick, banged, reloaded, banged again, reloaded and banged yet again. I took up a stick and presented it—bang! With amazing verisimilitude Beppo rolled over—shot through the heart. Really, for a moment I had a mad apprehension that in some occult way, some freak of hypnotic suggestion, I had actually wrought the child harm. I stood there breathlessly triumphant and wondering whether it was now my business to rush in and scalp the defenceless prisoners. I became aware of a head and a stick above the stump.

“Bang!” said the garrison. Obviously I was shot. I fell, desperately wounded, and endeavoured to drag myself away into the forest of dwarf oaks, when the garrison hailed me.

“Surrender!” he called, presenting his piece. I put up my hands. He climbed down nimbiy.

“Now you help me bring in the dead and wounded,” he ordered, and together we, the victorious garrison, dragged the slain warrior into the shadow of the stump. All at once he became alive, jumped up and danced gleefully.

“Say, that’s bully!” he chanted. “You play some Indian!”

I looked down modestly and blushed I fear, for I knew that the grinning heads were still at the studio window.

“Well,” I said, picking the thistle burrs off my trousers, “let us sit down for a spell, shall we?” To my surprise, they consented. We went round to the stoop and I took a big rocker. For a moment they stared, as though considering me in the new light of a perfect “hostile.”

“Say,” began Beppo, “what you doin’ in there?” and he pointed to the house.

“What do you want to know for?” I retorted humorously, stroking his dark head. I am fond of children in a way, especially boys. He twisted his head away, but without ill-temper, and looked at me gravely.

“Don’t you work?” he demanded.

“A little, sometimes,” I replied earnestly, feeling for my cigarettes.

“What sort of work?” said Benvenuto, standing in front of me.

"We make pictures," I said evasively. I have a silly reluctance to talk of literature as work.

"Huh!" they remarked, and surveyed me afresh.

"What does your father work at?" I asked cautiously.

"He's at sea," said Beppo.

And that was all they knew. I tried the question in many ways, but they had no other answer. Evidently they had grown up with that phrase in their ears, "at sea," and were satisfied.

"Don't you want to see him?" I suggested. They "supposed so." I left that subject.

"How old are you?"

"Seven," said Beppo. "Ben's six."

"You are very precocious," I remarked, to myself chiefly.

"How?"

"Precocious," I repeated, rising to meet the postman. He handed me several business letters and one for Bill with an English stamp, a fat package.

"Who's that from?" asked Beppo, and I was pulling his ear gently as Bill came out with a rush. The postman went along to the next house.

At this moment my perceptions became blurred. I remember handing the letters to Bill and Mac. I remember the quick scuffle of the two children as they hastened toward their own home. All this is blurred. What stands out sharply in my memory is the figure of Mrs. Carville, her waist

pressed hard against the fence, a long envelope in her hand, gesticulating to the children as they went towards her. I saw her waive them peremptorily indoors and then remain by the fence, regarding me with profound distrust. I made a step forward to speak, for I should have had to shout at that distance, but she turned and swung up the steps of her porch and slammed the door.

“ A letter from Cecil,” said Bill as I took my seat, a little downcast at the encounter. Cecil is the painter-cousin, at Wigborough, Essex, England.

“ What does he say ? ” I inquired.

“ Read it to us,” said she and handed me a dozen sheets of tracing paper pinned together.

I began to read.

CHAPTER III

A LETTER FROM WIGBOROUGH

“DEAR BILL,—At last I find myself with an hour or so to spare, so here goes! How are you all? Well, I hope. I received your little present on the anniversary. Many thanks, old girl. How on earth do you remember the date of everybody’s birthday. Honestly, I should have let it pass without noticing if that wee book had not arrived two days before. So you see, you *are* of some use in the world after all! (This is a joke.) How’s Mac getting on with the etching? Tell him I’ve taken to using only forty per cent. nitric acid in distilled water. This gives very good results for all ordinary work, much more certain than the nitrous and doesn’t make such a stink. There’s no demand just now for modern work, in England at any rate. I can hardly believe what you say about the shows in New York. London’s dead for etchers. Every dealer is clamorous for copies of the old masters. The rotten thing is that it pays better than doing original work, you know. I have a job on now—twenty plates at £50 a plate, simply copying Girtins and Bartolozzis. I shall

do four plates a year. I take things pretty easily, work in the morning, potter round the garden in the afternoon, tennis and cycling when the weather permits. This has been a terrible summer. English weather gets worse, I believe. We had rain for a solid week in July. I was out on a tramp through the midlands and got caught in it, which reminds me of a most remarkable chap I met at the time. I really must tell you about him, because I don't remember anyone who has so impressed his *personality* upon me as this man did.

“It was this way. I had been sketching round about Market Overton, and getting rather sick of the incessant rain, so I packed up my knapsack and started home. It really is much more jolly walking in the rain than sitting in a stuffy inn parlour waiting for it to stop. Well, at Peterboro' I heard the country eastward was flooded and farmers ruined. Of course, my road lay through March and Ely to Newmarket and Colchester, and I wouldn't believe the boys who called to me that I'd be stopped; but sure enough, not two miles east of Peterboro' the road slid under water and people were punting themselves about on doors, and cooking their grub upstairs. In the fields the hay-cocks and corn-ricks were just showing themselves above the water. It made one's heart ache for the farmers. Well, I turned back of course, and took the London road to Huntingdon, which runs high all the way to Alconbury. I was getting

jolly tired and wondering if I should find a decent bed before I reached Huntingdon, when I came to Saxon Cross. At the cross-roads stands a fine inn all by itself, and to judge by the names and addresses in the visitors' book, it is nearly as well known in America as in England. One lady, a Mrs. Virginia Benttler, of Ohio, wrote down that it 'was just like a real home.' I wonder what in the world she meant by that. The Saxon Cross Hotel is not really a hotel at all, being a hunting inn. But it is very comfortable, with brushes hung all round the walls and fine old engravings of sporting scenes in all the rooms.

"At first I only went into the bar-parlour to get a drink. It was rather dark in there, for it was very near sunset and the windows were small, and I had slipped off my knapsack and dropped into a big comfortable chair before I noticed a clean-shaven man with a big hooked nose and gleaming eyes seated in the far corner. It was like the beak of a bird, that nose, and I was so fascinated by it that I didn't answer the landlord when he came in and said 'Good evening.' The man opposite said 'Good evening' too, so I suppose that it must have been just a mistaken idea of mine, but I really thought at first that he had something against me, his glance was so confoundedly malevolent. He was a tall young chap in a Norfolk suit with a soft silk collar and scarlet tie, russia-leather shoes and a watch in an alligator case on his left wrist. A gentleman evidently by

the look of him and when he said to me, in the refined voice of the ordinary university man, 'Are you walking down country?' I made up my mind that he was O.K. and began to converse.

"One thing rather puzzled me, and that was the fact that he and the landlord did not speak to each other. While I was drinking my whisky they both talked to me and I to them, but they did not exchange a word. I thought it was strange that a landlord should ignore a guest like that, especially as the guest didn't look as if he would stand much ignoring. Indeed, there was a sort of glint in his dark eyes as he made the most ordinary remark that struck me as particularly baleful. However, we talked of the floods and my tramp and hunting, etc., and finally I decided to stop the night there. The landlord went off to order supper and my new friend came over and sat down beside me. Somehow or other I found myself talking over old times. On thinking the matter over I have come to the conclusion that it was his use of one or two words like 'tool' meaning 'to run hard,' that led me to accept him as one of us. 'Topping' was another word. Before I was aware of it, and without his definitely stating the fact, I was treating him as a public-school man.

" 'Do you know Surrey?' he asked me. 'It's rather jolly.'

" 'I know Guildford,' I said. 'I was at school there.'

" 'Were you really?' he replied, and he began

to hum ' *As I was going to Salisbury,*' which is Winchester and nothing else as you will remember. That settled it, and I asked him whose house he was in. ' Jerry Bud's,' he told me. ' I was in old Martin's,' I said. ' Did you know Belvoir? He was in Bud's.'

" ' The wine merchant's son? ' he said, and I nodded.

" He gave me a curious look at this, as though he was suspicious of me. ' Seen him lately? ' he asked. ' Not for years,' I said. ' What became of him? ' ' Oh, I don't know,' he said as though relieved. ' I thought perhaps *you'd* kept it up. He went into the army, I believe.'

" We talked on like this, giving each other little items of information about different fellows we knew, and gradually I gave him my own history, what there is of it. There isn't much as you know; Slade, Beaux Arts, Chelsea, and now Wigborough. He wasn't a bit interested, didn't seem to know what the word *artist* meant. Regular stereotyped public-school man in that. And he didn't offer me a drink, I noticed, after we had had a peg or two at my expense. However, when the bath was ready and I got up to go to it, he said, ' I'll take supper with you if you don't mind.' I said, ' with pleasure,' ' charmed,' of course, and all that sort of thing, and went off. I met the landlord as I was coming down and buttonholed him. He told me all about it at once.

" ' Mr. Carville, sir? Yes, that's his name.

Well, it's a rather curious case. I don't know what to make of it myself. He came down here with a party of university gentlemen about a month ago. Very nice gentlemen they were, sir, and were very free with their money, Mr. Carville especially. And then they all went off except him with a motorin' party that spent a week-end here. Mr. Carville he said they was coming back, you see, and he'd wait for 'em. Well, that's three weeks gone and he's still here as you see. He says that he expects a cheque any day, but up to the present——.'

“ ‘ Why, hasn't he got any money ? ’ I said.

“ ‘ Well, at present, sir, there's a month's bill. Bein' a gentleman, of course, I knew it 'ud be all right, so I let it run.'

“ ‘ Perhaps he's overdrawn,' I said.

“ ‘ It's possible, sir,' said the landlord.

“ Well, I went down to supper, full of the poor chap's story, and found him at the table walking into a hefty veal-and-ham pie, and with a bottle of wine at his elbow.

“ ‘ Come on,' he says, ' or you'll be too late.'

“ We went at it and made a good meal, and he accepted one of my cigars. It suddenly occurred to me that I knew nothing definite about the man. He hadn't even told me his profession. He wasn't *Church*, that was clear. He wasn't Navy. I didn't think he was Bar either. Army? Yes, but you know a chap in the army is bound to let something out about himself in the course of conversation. And moreover, you don't find army

men hiding in hunting hotels in July. Carville ? Carville ? And then I decided he was proud and kept quiet for fear I would offer him a loan. Poor chap !

“ There was no one else staying at the Saxon Cross Hotel that night, and we had the big smoking-room to ourselves. And after a time I put it to him point blank : ‘ What on earth are you hanging about down here for, man ? ’

“ ‘ Simply because,’ said he, ‘ I haven’t the cash to pay my bill, and the inland revenue has run dry.’

“ ‘ Where do you bank ? ’ I asked, and he slapped his pocket.

“ ‘ Pa’s bank,’ he replied, ‘ but he is in a bit of a temper with me, I think. If I could only get up to town.’

“ ‘ Why didn’t you explain to the landlord ? ’ I asked him. He looked at me with a scowl. ‘ I don’t explain anything to people of that class,’ he said.

“ ‘ What’ll you take ? ’ I asked him, and he leaned over and put his face close to mine. ‘ Oh, damn the money,’ he said. ‘ The fellow will take an IOU if you endorse it.’ ‘ Nay,’ I said. ‘ Let me pay it, and when your ship comes home, all right.’ He took another whisky. ‘ Will you ? ’ he said. ‘ Will you help a stranger like that ? ’

“ ‘ An old public school man is not a stranger,’ I said. ‘ I think your pals are rather a rotten lot to leave you in the lurch like this.’ ‘ Fair weather friends,’

he answered. 'Young men with too much money. Very decent chaps so long as you have plenty of cash. Very awkward. I have business in town as a matter of fact. Will you really take my IOU for this? It's only a few quid, you know.'

"It was fourteen pounds, and took up the balance of my holiday stock. Rather foolish I know you will say, but after all we ought to stand by each other. And it was worth it. Honestly it was worth it! That chap became the most animated creature in Huntingdonshire when the arrangement was concluded. He opened the piano and sang song after song, he jabbered at me in French, he got on the big table and danced, he took a tumbler and a napkin and did conjuring tricks, he ordered a bottle of brandy and cigars. I was rather tired when I came in, but he would have none of it. He told me stories, and I judged he must have travelled a good deal. He asked me if I knew anything about automobiles. I rather wondered at this. 'I am going to take up an agency,' he said. 'That's why I want to get to town.' It seemed a mad thing for a gentleman to do, and I said so. He darted a fierce look at me over his glass of brandy. 'It takes a gentleman to sell to a gentleman,' he said.

"I didn't lie awake very long after we did go to bed, I can assure you. We took our candles, I remember, and I told him we must breakfast together. The next thing I remember was the chambermaid knocking at my door and saying it

was ten o'clock. Of course he was gone. You've been expecting me to tell you that, I suppose. So he had gone and I was fourteen pounds to the bad, unless he redeemed his IOU. He had told the landlord to drive him into Peterboro'; and as I came down to breakfast the trap returned. Of course, neither of us ever expected to see him again, and when I looked at his IOU in the cold light of the day, it seemed a very flimsy guarantee for my money. There was only one thing about that IOU. It was written on the unused page torn from a letter, and the watermark of the paper was Lydgate Bond. It was the same size as Trojan Club paper too, for you know I belong to the Trojan Club, and Trojans are not men who write to outsiders much. Not on club paper anyway. In fact the very audacity of the man led me to blame myself for doubting him. He had not behaved just as a gentleman should, but on the other hand he had done nothing underhand. There was a damn-you look about him that made it unbelievable that he was a fraud. Soon after breakfast I set out on my tramp, and, going through Stilton and Huntingdon, made for Cambridge. All the way along I could not help thinking about my boon companion of the night before, and wondering if I should ever meet him again. It seemed very unlikely. He was so interesting, quite apart from his peculiar financial position, and he gave one such an impression of indomitable will power, with his hawk-like face and brilliant eyes, that I wished

I had made some sketches of him. But he had not even asked to see my portfolio.

“Two or three days later I reached home, and in the general worry of getting into harness again I forgot my gentleman for a while. It so happened, however, that my dealer, about a fortnight later, asked me to run up and call at his place in the Haymarket, as he had a commission for me and his client wanted to see me. I biked into Colchester and took the train to London. Business over, I went round to look in at the Trojan’s before I took a taxi for Liverpool Street. Just as I turned into Dover Street, an enormous claret-coloured car came up with a horrible noise on the horn, and stopped at the Trojan’s door-step. I know there are plenty of cars of large size about, but this one was overwhelming. Everything about it was huge. The head-light was as big as a dog-kennel, and the steering-wheel was a yard across. As the car stopped a lot of fellows got out of the *tonneau* and the driver followed, taking off his goggles.

“Yes, my dear Bill, it is just as you imagine. The driver was my companion of the Saxon Cross Hotel. He recognised me at once as I turned to enter the Club. He really was a big man and he looked much bigger in his long motoring overall than in his knickerbockers. ‘Great Scott!’ he exclaimed. ‘It’s you! Do come in. I say, you chaps,’ he called. ‘Here’s a bit of luck. A friend of mine.’ I was introduced and he towered over me smiling, his great hook nose dividing his face

and distracting one's attention from his eyes. We sat down to tea, and he told the other men the tale of our meeting, omitting any mention of the fourteen pounds however, for which I was rather glad. I shouldn't like those chaps to think I was a bally usurer. I made a move to go, but he wouldn't hear of it. I was to go to his place to dinner. We went in the car. It was more like an omnibus than a private vehicle. I sat beside him as we flew down Dover Street, across Piccadilly and into St. James. He told me he had sold three cars like this in a week to Lord This and the Duke of That—I forget the names. He told me, moreover, that his commission on each car was four hundred pounds. And when we reached his chambers and I saw his furniture and flowers and pictures and servants' livery, I could quite believe it. He was living at the rate of ten thousand a year. Well, we dined as we were, Carville insisting that as I was up from the country they should bar evening dress for one night. This was rather pretty in its way, and I found he was a curious mixture of prettiness and downright brutal ruthlessness. I found a man I knew slightly among the guests, a chap named Effon, son of the soap man, and he told me that Carville was one of the most extraordinary men he had ever met, that women would almost come to him at the crooking of his finger, and even men of mature age were dominated by him. And, as a matter of fact, soon after Effon told me this, there was a case in point. Carville's

flat looked from the second floor on St. James Street. One of the men who lived at Chislehurst wanted to catch the 12.6 at Victoria and mentioned casually to the servant to bring a car round. 'You won't catch the 12.6,' says Carville. 'Oh yes I shall,' said the other man. 'I bet you a fiver you won't,' says Carville. 'Done,' said the other. It was about twenty minutes to twelve then, and in the buzz of conversation and a couple of games of cards Carville forgot his bet for a moment. Suddenly he saw that the fellow was gone. He rushed to the door and found it locked. Of course we all saw the game, and believed that Carville would laugh and admit himself out-manceuvred. Not a bit of it. He turned on us, one hand on the door handle, and his face grew absolutely black with rage. Honest Injun, I was scared of him then! He bounded across the room, opened the window, sprang out upon the big stone coping and ran along to the next flat. Here he opened the window—(I've heard afterward that the people were just getting into bed)—stepped in, explained he was doing it for a bet, ran to the door, down the stairs, and taking a flying leap from the top step landed with both feet on the bonnet of the car just as it was starting. Of course, he smashed the sparking plugs, ignition gear and a lot of other details. We all crowded to the window and looked out. He had won his bet.

"He came back smiling and assuring the chap that the morning would do just as well for

Chislehurst. The party broke up soon after and we went to bed. At breakfast the next morning he was charming, wrote me a cheque for the money, sitting in a gilt chair and writing on a Louis Seize secretaire.

“ ‘I forgot about you,’ he told me. ‘I had to rush round rather when I came to town, and it put the matter out of my head. You don’t go in for motoring, I suppose, down in Essex?’ I said, no, I was working. He looked at his watch. ‘I race to-day at three,’ he said. ‘Where?’ I asked. ‘I’d like to go to see it.’ ‘Ashby-de-la-Zouch,’ he answered. ‘It takes just three hours to run down.’ Of course, I couldn’t go down into Leicestershire, and said so. He smiled ‘another time.’ We exchanged cards again and his man called a cab for me. A chauffeur came up with a prodigiously long-bonnetted and low-seated machine, and Carville followed me downstairs. He got in and waved his hand. With a spring the car leaped from the kerb—no other word will describe the starting of that car. I suppose it must have been at least a hundred horse power. In a flash it was round the corner and gone. I climbed into my cab and made my humble way to Liverpool Street, eventually reaching Wigborough, and taking up the daily round and the common task.

“ Now what do you think of that chap, Bill? I think you will disapprove, because for all your wild-west adventures, San Francisco earthquakes, etc., you are a steady-going old girl and object to

such rampaging persons as this Carville. But I have been thinking that after all, if one is an artist, everything in the world has a certain 'value.' I don't quite know how to explain what I really do feel, but anyhow men like Carville appear to me as vivid bits of *colour* in the composition of life. Taken by themselves they are all out of drawing, and too loud, but in the general arrangement they fit in perfectly. They inspire one's imagination too, don't you think? I shall never forget that chap's black rage, his blazing eyes, his hooked nose as he stood by the locked door. I wonder what the people next door thought, just getting into bed!

"This is a letter, eh! Well, I must dry up, or I shall never get to bed. If I see any more of my strange friend I'll let you know. Love to all at Netley at usual. When are you coming home to dear old rainy England?

"Yours ever,

"CECIL.

"P.S.—If you could get me some of those jolly little paper fans you sent me from Chinatown last Christmas, please do.

"CECIL."

CHAPTER IV

MISS FRAENKEL

I FOLDED up the thin crackling sheets of paper and handed them to Bill, who took them without comment, and for some time we sat rocking in the twilight, absorbed in our own thoughts.

It must not be imagined for a moment that we, and least of all I, an experienced and professional author, accepted this contribution to our investigations without reserve. A lengthy apprenticeship to life warned us that "things do not happen that way." But just for a few moments (and this was the cause of our silence) we revelled in the delicious sensation of having beheld in one of its most incredible gestures the long arm of coincidence. Swiftly we sketched out the story. Eagle-faced adventurer—marries his mistress—casts her off—leaves her penniless in New York—she blackmails him—he grants her an income—agent in New York takes charge of letters—yes, it hung together—it hung together, coincided!

Personally I was a little disappointed after the first flush of excitement. I thought it a little melodramatic and I abhor melodrama. I wanted

something finer, something with a touch of great sentiment, something commensurate with the beauty and dignity of the woman's bodily frame, something that would explain and gild with delicate interest the expression of sombre and uncommunicative melancholy that hung like a cloud over her face. I felt reluctant to delve further into a history that was footed upon so unsatisfactory a foundation as this enigmatic creature who had blazed suddenly upon the painter-cousin's vision, a mere spendthrift man of pleasure, inarticulate save in his startlingly decadent behaviour. After all, what had he done, this fine gentleman with an eagle face and iron will? Sold a few automobiles to the aristocracy. Pooh! In America he would pass as a hustling business man with unconventional ideas. In grey, feudal old London, no doubt, he appeared as a meteoric genius, a veritable Napoleon of salesmanship, a marvel. But here——!

“Well,” I said, at length, “what do you think of it?”

Bill slipped out of her chair and prepared to go in and get the dinner ready. We dine at six.

“I think,” said she, “that there is nothing in it. It's hardly likely that—well, is it?” she asked vaguely.

“No,” we agreed, “it isn't.”

“Still,” I added, “it is a most interesting commentary upon our own little problem. It only

shows how indefinitely one might extend the ramifications of a trivial tale. Of course the children believe implicitly in the statement that he is at sea. If that be a legend, it is clever. But then—it is impossible.”

“It’s not a common name,” remarked Mac, filling his pipe.

“It’s a very easily assumed one,” I argued. “It’s a name you can’t argue about. It might be Irish, French, Italian, Spanish or American. It tells you nothing.”

Bill paused at the door.

“I don’t suppose he had anything to do with giving the children those awful names,” she suggested.

“Oh, as for that, I have known plenty of mothers who claim that right,” I responded. “That does not amount to much. No. There are two points that seem to me to invalidate the claim of this gentleman to any connection with our neighbours, but that is not one of them.”

“What are they?” inquired Mac. Bill opened the door and went in. I cleared my throat.

“First,” I said, “there is the entirely fanciful argument that such a man as Cecil has described would not be attracted by such a woman as—Mrs. Carville. I can’t explain in so many words why I think so, but I do. I don’t believe she would attract him. If you consider a moment, you will see it. The English gentleman of good family and birth, when he has once broken out of his own

social world, does not show much taste and discrimination in the choice of a wife or mistress."

"Well," said Mac.

"Second, we have the incontestable fact that Benvenuto Cellini, though sharing his illustrious brother's features and histrionic talent, has blue eyes and fair hair. Where did he get them?"

"Something in that," my friend admitted, throwing his match into the darkness. "We'll have to hunt round for a *tertium quid*, so to speak."

"You put it pithily," I asserted. "Personally I am coming to the conclusion that Cecil's story, while certainly interesting in itself, does not help us at all with our own difficulty. I am inclined to think that he is of our nation and fair complexion. Really, when you reflect, it is unjust to assume your *tertium quid* and complicate the story—yet. We have no actual evidence of her—obliquity."

"No," said Mac. "Let's wait."

"We must," I replied. "The children themselves will no doubt provide us with plenty of food for conjecture if they go on as they have begun. We are good friends now, they and I."

"You surpassed yourself as an Indian," he laughed.

"Hostile," I corrected. "Did you notice the realistic way in which Giuseppe Mazzini fell?" He nodded.

"You'll have to be a cow-boy to-morrow," he remarked. "You might suggest rounding up

their confounded chickens and set them to repairing that fence.”

“ I shall be a cow-boy with enthusiasm,” I said. “ Under my breast beats an adventurous heart, believe me. As for the fence, I would rather not get into trouble by interfering with their affairs.”

“ She didn’t seem any too friendly.”

“ Hostile would describe it better.”

“ Still, if you could get a word with her, it might elucidate the mystery ? ” “ Yes,” I said, as the gong tinkled within.

“ Chop,” said he, and we went in to dinner.

We had reached the cheese and celery before Bill contributed a piece of news that impressed us in different ways.

“ I ’phoned Miss Fraenkel this morning,” she said, “ and asked her to come up after dinner this evening. She said she’d be tickled to death to come.”

I said nothing at first, and Mac, annexing an unusually large piece of cheese, grinned.

“ Say,” he said, “ suppose we get Miss Fraenkel’s opinion of the chap with the hooked nose. She’s American ; she’ll be sure to have an opinion.”

“ No doubt,” I conceded. “ We shall see whether we have not taken too much for granted. There’s only one thing, and that is, are we not exposing Miss Fraenkel to temptation by exciting her curiosity yet more about her neighbour ? ”

“ Oh bunk ! ” said Mac. “ Women don’t have to be led into that sort of temptation. They take it in with their mother’s milk.”

“You cynical old devil!” exclaimed Bill indignantly.

“Well, it’s true,” he defended himself stoutly. “I’ll bet you a quarter Miss Fraenkel’s already tried them and found them guilty.”

“Of what?” demanded Bill.

“Oh, ask Miss Fraenkel,” said he. “How should I know?”

“I think,” I said gently, “you are making a mistake, Mac. Consider! Miss Fraenkel is no doubt interested in her neighbours, like any other woman. But you make a big mistake if you imagine that ordinary people, people who are not professionally concerned with human nature, are accustomed to draw conclusions and observe character, as—as we do, for example. I have always thought,” I went on, stirring my coffee, “that Jane Austen made this same mistake in ‘Emma.’ She takes a small community, much like Netley, N.J., and suggests, by the conversation of the characters that they are all as observant and as shrewd as herself. We feel it was not so. Nay, we *know* it was not so, for Jane’s genius in that direction was almost uncanny. Now there is, I am safe in saying, nothing uncanny about Miss Fraenkel.”

“She’s very nice!” said Bill, nodding blithely at me over her cup.

I am loth to give any colour to the suspicion that I am about to confuse my narrative with extraneous details; but I must confess that Bill’s laconic

benison had for me a personal appeal. She was, I felt, entirely and generously right. She had not overstepped the mark at all. Miss Fraenkel *was* very nice, but—it has nothing to do with my story. It is a point of honour with me to put Miss Fraenkel in her place, if I may express it so without discourtesy, and that place is certainly modest and inconspicuous. Miss Fraenkel's light was very clear and very bright, but illuminated only a small area. She wrote an admirable paper and read it clearly and impressively at the Woman's Club on "The Human Touch in Ostrovsky." Indeed for one who had read so little of Ostrovsky it was a most creditable piece of work. It was in her estimate of the English character that she was, I venture to think, less successful, more narrow in fact. You see, she was naturally confused by two facts. In the first place the similarity of the English and American language seemed to her to warrant a certain similitude between the two nations; and secondly, her intimacy with the English people was practically confined to us three, who had been in America nearly seven years, and who, in consequence, had shrouded our more salient insularities beneath a cloak of cosmopolitan aplomb. Neither our speech nor our outlook upon life could be taken as typical of our great and noble-hearted nation. Yet she did take us in that sense, with the result that in her conception of the United Kingdom it was a rather fantastic and clumsily-fashioned small-scale model of the United States.

We had first met her, not in New Jersey at all, but in New York. After the earthquake, which I have mentioned as lifting us and many others from more or less comfortable sockets in San Francisco and scattering us over the Union, we found it a matter of some difficulty to rise to our accustomed level in New York. It really seemed, what with the failure of inspiration and our lack of suitable introductions, that the mighty mill-stream of Manhattan would bear us away and fling us over the rocks to destruction before we could ever get our heads above the surface.

Of those first days in East 118th Street none of us are disposed to speak. We might have gone back to England—surely so dire a calamity, so utter a personal ruin, justified a relinquishment of our purpose. But we had not gone anyway. We could not contemplate the solicitous sympathy of friends who disliked America, who had protested against our emigration in the first place. We did not dislike America, nor did we blame her for our misfortunes. Our friends, even the painter-cousin, could not understand that we did not dislike America. They were misled by our occasional and quite natural sighs for a sight of the quiet English landscape, and our joking remarks about the customs regulations. So we stayed and fought, with our backs to the not over-clean walls of 118th Street. It was slow progress from 118th to 18th Street and from there to a real flat in Lexington Avenue, where it so happened that Miss Fraenkel had, and

still has, a married sister. Bill and the married sister became warm friends, discovering in each other a common dislike of pink, and it was she who introduced us formally; though in a casual way Miss Fraenkel and I met occasionally on the stairs. And so it came about that when we felt able to abandon Lexington Avenue in favour of a purer air and water supply, Miss Fraenkel chanted the praises of her own Netley in the Garden State, and Bill, journeying hither to spy out the land, returned an hour late for dinner, and incoherent with horticultural details.

It will be seen that though undoubtedly competent to criticise Ostrovsky or Mrs. Carville *per se*, Miss Fraenkel's opinion of the painter-cousin's discovery would be interesting only for its novelty and irrelevance. I did not express my conviction quite as frankly as this, since my friend, though in sympathy with his wife's matrimonial plans, could not forbear to indulge in a mild hazing at my expense. I contented myself with opening the piano and pushing him into the seat. It is our custom to have music after dinner.

Only those who have written verse professionally can realise the extent to which music acts as a solvent upon apparently insoluble difficulties of rhyme and sentiment. It had become a habit with me to leave any such problem of prosody to one side and take it up again only when my friend opened his piano. Having completed an opera

some time before, I had at this time no such trouble, and so, as he broke abruptly in that prodigious composition, the Overture to *Tannhauser*, I gave myself up to an unfettered consideration of the mystery of life and the complexity of our multitudinous contacts with one another. It is not enough, I reflected, to say that we make and pass. We make and remake, we pass and, pausing on the brink of oblivion, return to spoil our first fine careless raptures. We make and pass; but the early dawn of our making is reddened by the sunset of another's decline. We are agitated by the originality of our ideas, unaware that they are born simultaneously in a thousand minds, and are woven into the texture of our time-spirit in a thousand-times-repeated design. Von Roon, in Chelsea, used to say that "a man's mind was like a chamber papered with used postage stamps. Examine them separately and they were of no value; they were merely cancelled symbols of forgotten messages. View them as a whole and they formed an interesting and confusing composition." Time, and our proximity to other cancelled symbols is no guarantee of interior understanding. The Great Decorator has arranged us without regard for our individual merits or past intrinsic values, we are but points of colour in his immense and arbitrary arrangement. I was following up this thought, when the brass Canterbury pilgrim that serves us for a knocker was vigorously sounded, and I sprang to open the door to Miss Fraenkel.

She stepped briskly into the room, looked round and smiled.

“Three times,” she declared as I assisted her to remove her jacket. “But I forgive you if you’ll only play that won—derful thing again!”

In person Miss Fraenkel was of middle size, admirably proportioned and situated in tone on the borderland between the blonde and the brunette. By which I mean that her hair was brown, her eye a warm hazel, and her skin of a satiny pallor that formed an effective background for a delightful flush that suffused her piquant features whenever her enthusiasm was roused. And her enthusiasm was continually being roused. To us cold Britons the *abandon* with which she, in common with her countrywomen, gave herself up to the enjoyment of a picture, a book, a landscape, or for that matter of a person, was a most fascinating spectacle. American women strongly resemble champagne. At a certain age they are incomparably stimulating, but intimacy with them involves a sort of “head-iness” that demands discretion; a nervous energy emanates from them that tends to relax the critical faculty. There is, moreover, a tendency to turgescence in their speech that leads the unwary into a false estimate of their intellectual range.

It was some time before the conversation could be guided round to the subject which we three at any rate had at heart. Explosive cries of delight over Mac’s last etching, Bill’s new waist and a Chinese print I had recently acquired, were a

matter of course. In deference to an unuttered request we adjourned to the studio upstairs, for Miss Fraenkel had been from the first candidly attracted by the suggestion of bohemianism in our *menage*. It was not her romantic view of an artist's life however, that distinguished her from any other young and romantic lady, but her frankness and eloquence in acknowledging it. "It must be grand," she had told me in Lexington Avenue, "to be a *grisette*." We had admitted that it must, but had been unable to share her regret that she had not been a man so that she could see *everything*." She was very charming as she was.

Of course she knew of the painter-cousin and indeed, as soon as she could think of it, gave us the needed opening.

"I saw a letter with an English postmark for you," she observed, examining the bottom of a piece of china that rested near her shoulder. "Did you get it?"

"We want you to give us an opinion about it, Miss Fraenkel," said Bill, bringing out the letter and giving it to her. She accepted the packet in some uncertainty.

"I!" she said, "give an opinion? I don't get it, I'm afraid."

"Read it," said Bill.

And she did. We sat round her, as she sat on the broad flat box that Mac called a "throne," in a semicircle, and studied the varying expressions

that crossed her face as her eyes travelled down the pages. It occurred to me after I had retired to my room that night, that an English girl of twenty-one would not have weathered the concentrated gaze of three strangers with such serenity of features. An observant and invisible critic might have imagined us to have been awaiting the decision of a young and charming Sibyl, so intently did we gaze and so neglectful was she of our regard. This apparent coldness was explained to me by Bill as a characteristic of the American woman. "They like to be admired," she told me. "And so they don't mind if you do stare at them."

Miss Fraenkel looked up with a smile of comprehension.

"What a perfectly lovely letter!" she exclaimed.

Bill took the sheets and thrust them into the envelope.

"He must be a very interesting man, don't you think?"

"Surely! oh I should give anything to see his home. You've described it to me, so I know all about it. Gainsborough landscape, and red tiles on the cottages!" She clasped her hands.

"I mean the man my cousin met," said Bill gently. "Carville."

"Oh, him!" Miss Fraenkel looked at each of us for an instant to catch some inkling of our behaviour.

"Same name as——" and Mac jerked his thumb over his shoulder.

Miss Fraenkel's face did not clear.

"We thought," I said heavily, "that this man in England, you know, might have——" I stopped, dismayed by her lack of appreciation. She seemed unable to grasp the simple links of our brilliant theory. We had omitted to calculate upon the indifference of the modern American temperament to names. A foul murder had been committed a short time back by a gambler named Fraenkel, yet she would have laughed at the suggestion that such a coincidence should cause her any annoyance.

"I don't get it," she said, smiling, and we saw plainly enough that she did not get it. We were crushed. I explained in more detail the reason for which we had ventured to connect the two stories. We could see her trying to understand.

"You mean—like as if it was a photo-play," she faltered.

It does not matter now, and I admit that this put me out of humour. And yet it was true. We were really no nearer an actual and *bona fide* solution of Mrs. Carville's story than if we had simply tried to make, as Miss Fraenkel said, a photo-play. The others laughed at my downcast countenance.

"Well," I said, "you said Miss Fraenkel had tried them and found them guilty, Mac."

"What I meant was, Miss Fraenkel had formed her own opinion of the business."

"Yes," she said, "I have."

"Now we shall hear something," chirped Bill.

"Listen," said Miss Fraenkel. "It's very likely an assumed name."

It was our turn to look bewildered.

"Yes?" said Bill. "What then?"

"And——" went on Miss Fraenkel, making little motions with her hands as though she were trying to catch something that eluded her grasp. "And—oh! he's being held for some game in New York. She's got away with it, you see."

Miss Fraenkel waited for this appalling development to sink into our minds. I don't think it was given to any of us at the moment to divine just what had happened to Miss Fraenkel. Even seven years in the country were not sufficient training in American psychology to realize it at once. We sat and looked at her, temporarily dazed by what we took to be a story built upon exclusive information. And she sat and looked at us, as pleased as a child at the success of her manœuvre.

"Why," stammered Bill, blankly through her glasses, "how do you know?"

"I don't know," replied Miss Fraenkel. "I just made it up, same's you." And she included us all in a brilliant flash of her hazel eyes.

We changed the subject after that. In self-defence we changed the subject, for it was plain that when it came to making photo-plays we held a very poor hand. Moreover, we saw that Miss Fraenkel did not and could not take our ponderous interest in Mrs. Carville seriously. To argue that

she ought to was no better logic than to say that, since she was crazy about Chinese prints, she ought to be friendly with the Chinese laundryman in Chestnut Street. We regarded the nations of Europe as repositories of splendid traditions, magnificent even in their decay. Miss Fraenkel regarded them as rag-baskets from which the American Eagle was picking a heterogeneous mass of rubbish, rubbish that might possibly, after much screening, become worthy of civic privilege.

The wisdom of our action was proved by Miss Fraenkel herself, for not only did she make no further mention of Mrs. Carville before she rose to go, but even when I remarked (I escorted her to her home) pointing to the great lantern in the Metropolitan Tower, twenty miles away, shining like a star above the horizon, "that light shines on many things that are hidden from us," she failed to apply the sententious reflection to her own story, merely looking at me with an appreciative smile. She had forgotten our discussion utterly, and I was quite sure that unless we mentioned it, she would not refer to it again.

CHAPTER V

HE COMES

IT was the evening of one of the most perfect days in an Indian summer of notable loveliness. In this refulgent weather, to quote Emerson, who knew well what he spoke of, "it was a luxury to draw the breath of life." Free equally from the enervating heat and insects of high summer, and the numbing rigour of the Eastern winter, the days passed in dignified procession, calm and temperate, roseate with the blazing foliage of autumn, and gay with geraniums and marigolds. On our modest pergola there still clung a few ruby-coloured grapes, though the leaves were scattered, and in the beds about our verandah blue cornflowers and yellow nasturtiums enamelled the untidy carpet of coarse grasses that were trying to choke them. Not far away, down by the Episcopal Church, men were playing tennis in flannels on the courts of yellow, hard-packed sand. The intense blue of an Italian sky lent a factitious transparency to the atmosphere, and the tiny irregular shadows that indicated the colossal architecture of New York seemed to float like bubbles in an azure bowl. Across the

street, a vacant plot of land, neglected because of imperfect title, was cut diagonally by a footpath leading down to Broad Street, where, out of sight but not of hearing, trolley-cars between Newark and Paterson thundered at uncertain intervals.

It was our custom, as we sat on our verandah during these afternoons, to watch the gradual appearance of familiar figures upon this path. We knew that a few moments after the whistle of the five-twenty had sounded at the grade-crossing down in the valley, certain neighbours who commuted to New York would infallibly rise into view on this path. There was Eckhardt, who lived at five hundred and nine, and spent the day on the fourteenth floor of the Flatiron Building. There was Williams, immaculate of costume, who designed automobile bodies and had an office on Broadway. There was Wederslen, the art-critic of the *New York Daily News*, a man whom all three of us held in peculiar abhorrence because he persisted in ignoring Mac's etchings. There was Arber, rather short of stature and rather long of lip, an Irishman who, miraculous to state, admired Burns. There was Confield, an Indianian from Logansport, who had been to Europe on a vacation tour (*No. 67 Series C., Inclusive Fare \$450*) and invariably carried a grip plastered with hotel labels to prove it. We had met these men at tennis and at the Field Club, and in our English way esteemed them. They would come up, head-first,

so to speak, out of the valley, revealing themselves step by step until they reached the street, when they would acknowledge our salutations by a lift of the hat and a wave of the evening paper, and pass on to their homes. They generally came, too, in the order in which I have given them. Eckhardt was always first, for he did not smoke, and the smoking-cars on the Erie Road were generally behind. And Confield, of course, was likely to be last, for he had his bag.

It was so on the day of which I speak. The deep bay of the locomotive came up on the still autumn air, and a cloud of dazzling white vapour rose like a balloon above the trees and drifted slowly into thin curls and feathers against the blue sky. It was, even in this trifling detail, a homelike landscape, for Bill had told us how, from the square hall window of High Wigborough, you could see the white puffs of invisible trains on the lonely little loopline from Wivenhoe to Brightlingsea.

A few moments, and one by one, and in the case of Wederslen and Williams arm-in-arm, our neighbours hove into view out of the valley, saluted and passed. We noted the unusually friendly attitude of the two. What was Williams up to? we wondered. We knew that Williams, the ignoble designer of *tonneaux*, laboured under the delusion that he could paint. Of course he could not paint—we were all agreed upon that—but he had shown us various compositions done during vacation

time — blood-red boulders and glass-green seas. Was it possible that he was convincing Wederslen that he could paint? We shuddered for Art as we thought of it. Their wives were not friendly, though, so Bill asserted. We placed our hopes for Art on that.

For some moments after they were gone, and Confield with his bag had passed from view down the forest path, we tried to contemplate with stoical indifference the prospect of seeing Williams hailed by the servile and blandiloquent Wederslen as a genius. Had he not said of Hooker that “he was likely, at no distant date, to be seen in all the collections of note? His rare skill with the burin, his delicate feeling for nature——” and so on. Of course we all esteemed Hooker and were glad to see him make good; but really, as Bill remarked, “A man who said Hooker had a feeling for nature would say anything.” It was like speaking of Antony Van Dyck’s feeling for nature. Hooker’s Dutch gardens and Italian ornamental waters, his cypresses like black spearheads, his eighteenth-century precisians with their flowered waistcoats and high insteps, were as far from nature as they could conveniently get. So much for Wederslen. We might have pursued the subject indefinitely had not our attention been drawn abruptly to the path.

He came uncertainly, this new figure, pausing when he was only half revealed, as though in doubt of his direction. He wore a Derby hat. and we

saw over his arm a rubber mackintosh. Making up an obviously unsettled mind, he abjured the path and struck straight across towards us, with the evident intention of inquiring the way.

There are many conceits by which men may assert their individuality in dress, even in these days of stereotyped cut. They may adhere by habit or desire to the uniform of their class, they may preserve their anonymity even to a cuff-link, yet in some occult way we are apprised of their personal fancy; we see a last-remaining vestige of that high courage that made their ancestors clothe themselves in original and astonishing vestments. And it is this fortuitous difference, this tiny leak, one might say, of their personality, that stamps them finally as belonging to an immense mediocrity. It is this subtle and microscopic change, a sixteenth of an inch in the height of a collar, a line in the pattern of a scarf, a hair's breadth in the disposition of a crease, that the psychologists of the market-place call distinction, and labour industriously to supply.

But the man who now crossed the street and stood before us bore neither in his apparel nor in his lineaments a single detail by which he could be remembered. In everything, from his black medium-toed boots to his Derby hat of untarnished respectability, from his recently-shaven chin to his steady grey-blue eyes, he betrayed not the slightest caprice which would enable an observer to distinguish him from a particular type. It was

as though he had been conscious of all this and had even sought to avoid the most trivial peculiarities. In height, in feature, in dress, he was so ordinary that he became extraordinary. His intention to be unnoticed was so obvious that it predicated, in my own mind at least, a character and possibly an occupation out of the common run.

“Can you tell me,” he began in a voice that gave no hint of emotion, “can you tell me if this is Van Diemen’s Avenue?”

“Yes,” we said all together, studying him the while. “Yes, this is Van Diemen’s Avenue.”

“Thanks,” he replied, and withdrew his foot from our bottom step.

It seemed as though he was about to depart and leave us guessing, when he spoke again.

“Perhaps you know the house I want,” he said. “Carville’s the name. I,” he added as if in an afterthought, “am Mr. Carville.” And he looked at us gravely, apparently unaware of the turmoil of curiosity which he had aroused.

Some one—I think it was Mac—pointed to the next house.

“That’s it,” we managed to say.

For a moment his eyes rested upon it casually.

“Thanks,” he said again, and then, “Much obliged.” He stepped back to the sidewalk and walked along to the house. None of us can recall exactly what happened when he approached his door, for we were all looking away across the valley,

hastily rearranging our chaotic impressions. It is to be presumed that he knocked and was admitted. When we glanced round a few moments later he was gone.

“Great Scott!” murmured Mac, and looked at us in the growing dusk. Bill rose to get dinner.

Throughout the meal we refrained from any comment. Now that he had materialized, there was no reason, in the nature of things, why we should bother our heads any more about him. In the most natural way he had appeared and innocently demolished the photo-play romances we had constructed about him. It was a warning to us to avoid nonsense, in future, when discussing our neighbours. Miss Fraenkel had fared no better. Evidently he was not “held” for something with which his wife had “got away.” We were all ridiculously wrong and ought to be ashamed of ourselves. And so we were; avoiding mention of him, and devoting our attention to the fish, for it was Friday, and we kept it religiously.

But as I drank my coffee and listened to that exquisitely mournful *barcarolle* from the *Tales of Hoffmann*, the whole episode took on a different aspect. I perceived, as Schopenhauer had perceived a hundred years before me, that our first judgment upon a man or principle is probably the most correct. I saw that I had been carried away by logic and numbers and had discounted my first impression. From the angle at which I now regarded Mr. Carville I could see that,

after all, his case presented certain details which we could not as yet account for. Unfamiliar as I was with the life of the sea, I felt instinctively that men who had their business in great waters would bear upon their persons indications of their calling, some sign which would catch one's imagination and assist one to visualize their collective existence. But Mr. Carville had nothing. I passed in mental review the details of his appearance, his blue serge suit, his dark green tie, his greying moustache, clipped short in a fashion that might be American, English, French or German. His voice had been quiet and deferential, but by no means genteel; nor had it any hint of the roystering joviality of a sailor. More than anything else his gait, in its sedate unobtrusiveness, seemed to me utterly at variance with the rolling swagger which we conventionally associate with seamen.

Grant, however, I said to myself, that he looks a truth-telling man. Grant that he is, as his children said, at sea. Surely there is something romantic in this quiet-eyed man being married to such a woman as Mrs. Carville! Surely a man whose children bear names so bright on the rolls of fame must have something in him worthy of admiration! As the *barcarolle* swelled and died away, I felt this conviction growing within me. I felt certain that so far from demolishing the real mystery, Mr. Carville had only brought it into focus. We had not seen it before. And it promised to be a

mystery on a higher plane than the rather sordid affair we had been postulating.

I decided to sleep on my conclusions, however, before broaching the matter to my friends, and having some work to finish for the morning's mail, I went back to my desk. For three hours or so I worked steadily, page after page slipping to the floor as I finished them. My friends did not disturb me, and when I ascended to the studio for a "crack" before retiring, I found the big room in darkness. So! I mused and descended. A brilliant moon threw a dense black shadow in front of the house. The porch was in gloom, but the street was nearly as bright as day. I stood on the verandah for a few minutes, filling a pipe and looking across at the Metropolitan light where it shone serenely on the horizon. As I struck a match I became aware of a figure moving slowly in front of the Carville house, up and down the gravel walk that ran below their verandah. I threw away my match and stepped down into the moonlight, intending to stroll up and down for a while on the flags of the sidewalk. I often find that if I retire immediately from a burst of writing I am unable to sleep for several hours. The pendulum of the mind should be brought to rest quietly and without shock.

I was not surprised when the figure in the shadow stepped out into the moonlight as I approached. What startled me was the undoubted resemblance to myself in figure and mass. We

were both small men. Perhaps there was a shade more shoulder-breadth on his side than mine, but there was the same slight droop, the same negligible tendency to stoutness. As I turned the matter over in my mind we came face to face.

“ Good evening,” we said simultaneously. He waved his pipe, a corn cob, towards the east. “ New York ! ” he remarked, and we stood side by side for a moment in silence. The simple observation seemed to me to imply a susceptibility to the sublimity of the prospect that we had not discovered to any extent among our other neighbours. To them, apparently, New York was no more than London is to Hampstead ; they had the suburban sentiment in an acute form. Nevertheless I was somewhat at a loss to continue our conversation. It seemed foolish to neglect such a heaven-directed opportunity to meet this man on his own ground and obtain some light upon his career. How should I begin ? Should I say to him, “ Look here, it is very nice, no doubt ; but we, your neighbours, are simply crazy to know who and what you are ? ” That might strike him in various ways. He might take offence, and one could not blame him. He might see humour in it, and a proof of the contemptible meanness of human nature. I decided that I lacked courage to blurt out my desire that way. He was so very much like myself that I could not rid myself of the notion that he might prefer a milder way of approach. And as I sorted out

my stock of diplomacy he spoke of the matter himself.

"You are a seaman, I understand?" I remarked. He gave me a quick glance.

"I go to sea," he replied, "if that is what you mean. Yes, in the legal phrase of the Board of Trade, I'm a seaman, and my number is *Three nine five, eight nine three.*" He laughed shortly and continued to look out towards New York.

"A picturesque life," I hazarded, regretting my total ignorance of it. Again he looked at me and laughed.

"You think so?" he queried. "You think so?"

"I speak from book knowledge only," I said. "It is usually described in those terms." We began to walk to and fro.

"Well," he admitted unexpectedly, "and so it is. I don't doubt that to anyone just looking at it, you understand, it is as you say, 'picturesque.' But when you have a number like *Three nine five, eight nine three*, you have another view of it."

"You have been for a long voyage?"

"Oh no," he said; "Mediterranean and back, that's all."

I began to realize something of the man from this. I had no knowledge of the sea, but I certainly had a mind trained by years of observation and reflection to deduce certain definite *data* affecting human nature. And I realized dimly that a man who regarded a run round the Mediterranean and

back across the Atlantic as a trivial episode scarcely worthy of mention, might have views on literature and art radically at variance with my own.

"I should have thought," I remarked, "that you would have made your home there rather than here."

"There's some who do," he said. "Lots of the Anchor Line men do. But personally I'd rather be here."

"It is very like England," I agreed, as he broke in.

"Sure," he said. "I was just thinking as I came up the hill. I come from Hertfordshire myself. Very like the Northern Heights."

"We always think," I answered, "that it is like Essex."

He pondered for a moment, enjoying his pipe.

"Well, it is," he decided. "You mean looking over Staten Island to the sea? Yes, only they're busier here than along Mersea Flats, eh? Oh yes, I used to know that part when I was a boy. There isn't much between Chipping Barnet and Hamford Water that I didn't know in those days."

"You will go back some day?" I said as we turned. A change came over his face, and he put his hand to his chin.

"No," he said. "I'll never go back there. I'm here"—he waved his pipe—"for keeps."

I looked at him in astonishment.

"Why?" I said, a little indignantly. "Are you not an Englishman?"

For a moment he did not reply to the blunt

question, but looked down at the flags. His feet were cased in red velvet slippers, I noticed, and they struck me as quite indescribably bizarre in the moonlight. His hesitation was too ominous, heavy with unimaginable complexities. His voice was muffled when he spoke.

“No,” he said. “I’m—an alien.”

At first I was impressed by the tone more than the words. It was mournful, with a streak of satisfaction in his condition that I felt was assumed.

“You mean,” I said at last, “that you mean to take out papers?”

He looked at me queerly.

“How long would it take,” he inquired with a smile, “to put in five years’ residence, when I’m in the country about three days every two months? No, I don’t think I’ll bother about papers. When I say I’m here for keeps, I mean those belonging to me.”

“There is a question I would like to ask you,” I said tentatively.

“I shall be very glad to answer it if I can,” he replied.

“It refers to your little boys.”

“Why,” he broke in, “they haven’t been annoying you, have they? I hope they haven’t done that!”

“Not at all. I merely had a curiosity to know why they bear such unusual names.”

He smiled.

“They told you their names, did they?”

"They were good enough to commend me for the way I played Indian," I explained, and he gave me another of his quick comprehensive glances.

"It's rather a long story you've asked for," he said.

"I am interested in stories," I put in.

"Beppo said you made pictures," he mused.

"In words," I added.

He paused again. It seemed to be a part of his mode of thinking, this occasional parenthesis of silence. It was almost as though the man were leading me down a vast and dimly-lit corridor, laying his hand at times up various doors, and then withdrawing it, from some mysterious motive, and continuing upon his way.

"An author?" he said, half to himself.
"Ah!"

It was borne in upon me that neither a wide experience in common everyday psychology, nor even an exhaustive knowledge of sea-life could adequately cope with the bewildering emotions implicit in that "Ah!" In its way it was the most remarkable thing he had said.

"Yes, if you like," I replied. "I am professionally interested in stories."

He felt in his pocket for matches and as the flame spurted before his face I saw the corners of his mouth betrayed a pucker of amusement. I suddenly felt the absurdity of my position. I had been led to expose myself to ridicule. I

might have expected it after the behaviour of his children.

For a moment I was warm !

“ You see,” he said, looking at his watch, “ it’s this way. I’m not a very good hand at yarns, but if you like I’ll step along to-morrow some time and have a talk. I don’t go back to the ship till Sunday night.”

“ We shall be charmed,” I said. “ Come in to tea.”

“ All right,” he answered. “ I will. It must be nearly eight bells I should think, twelve o’clock.”

I pointed to the Metropolitan Light, glowing a deep red. He regarded it with interest.

“ Think o’ that !” he said absently. “ Just think o’ that. Eight bells !” He roused himself. “ Well, good-night to you, sir. I must turn in. I always sleep best in the Middle Watch.”

And he laughed as though at some flash of memory and made his way into the darkened house.

CHAPTER VI

HE BEGINS HIS TALE

THE work upon which I had been engaged during the evening did not engross my mind that night when I retired. Over and over again I endeavoured to measure the distance I had advanced in knowledge of my neighbour since I stepped out into the moonlight. I wished to realize the exact advantage I would hold over Mac and Bill when we met next morning at breakfast. And that was just what I found myself unable to do. Both of my friends were shrewd enough to smile if I trotted out the startling information that he came from Hertfordshire. Of course, they would say, he must come from somewhere. And if I remarked he had been in the Mediterranean, they would fail to see anything amazing in a sailor having been in the Mediterranean. And then, how was I to convey to them the extraordinary impression he had made upon me by the simple statement that he was an alien. Why, they would exclaim, were not *we* aliens too? Were not fifty per cent. of our acquaintances in the United States aliens? No, it was impossible. They would not understand.

And if they would not understand that, how could they be expected to appreciate in all its puzzling simplicity his ejaculation: "An author? Ah!"

It occurred to me with some bitterness that a brutal editor in San Francisco had once complained of my inability to interview people with any success. "God A'mighty! Why the h— didn't you *ask*, man!" And to tell the truth, I am not designed by nature for the cut-throat business of interviewing. To stand before a stranger, note-book in hand, and pry into his personal record, always seems to me only a form of infamy midway between blackmail and burglary. There is to me something in any man's personality that is sacred, something before which there should be a veil, never to be drawn aside save in secret places. An effete whim, no doubt. At any rate it explained why I had enjoyed no success as an interviewer, why I had come away from Mr. Carville without extracting from him his age, his income, his position, the names of his employers, his ship, his tailor or his God. Nothing of all this I knew, so ineptly had I managed my chances to obtain it. And yet I felt that, even if I did not possess any concrete morsel of exciting news, I had discovered not only that he had a story, but that he was willing to tell it. And as I fell asleep a conviction to me that whatever his story might be, however sordid or romantic, I would pass no judgment upon it until I perceived in its genuine

significance, the chapter that lay behind that strange utterance, "An author? Ah!"

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The next morning I slept late, until past seven in fact. It had ever been an axiom with us that the indolence attributed to the "artistic temperament" was a foolish tradition. Creative power undoubtedly comes late in the day and in the still night-watches; often I had planned a whole book while in bed; but there are many things to do in literature and art besides creation—research, reading, preparing of palettes, writing of letters and so on, that can be better done early. So we breakfasted at half after seven as a rule. I managed to bathe and shave before Mac's *reveille* sounded on the piano.

As I opened my napkin I saw that Bill had something of importance to impart, and it came out at once.

"He's mending the fence!" she exclaimed, passing the toast.

"And going about it as though he knew what he was doing," added Mac.

I was glad of this discovery of theirs. It would enable me to introduce my own contribution modestly, yet with effect.

"I wonder," I said, "if he would approve of that tree being cut down." Mac stirred in his chair. The daily spectacle of those two little

boys hacking slivers from the prostrate tree had been very trying to him.

"I judge not," he said with energy. "A man who——"

"I wish we knew the exact relations between them," I interrupted. "I mean, whether they quarrel at all."

"Of course they do," said Bill without thinking. "All married people do—at times."

Her husband looked down his nose into his egg. I smiled.

"True, since you say it," I replied, "but you must remember that just as no two people look exactly alike, so no two couples live on exactly the same terms. Just as——"

"Oh, what do you know about it?" said Bill. "Trust a bachelor to lay down the law."

"Those who look on—you know," I protested.

"That isn't true in regard to marriage," she retorted, "because unless you are married you *don't* look on at all, see?"

I saw.

"I am going to speak to him after breakfast," announced Mac. "He seems a very decent sort of chap. I wonder what he is at sea."

"I had quite a little chat with him last night," I began.

"You did!" they exclaimed. I nodded, enjoying their surprise.

"Yes," I said. "I found you were gone to bed when I finished, and so I went out on the flags for

a short walk. He was out there doing the same thing."

"Go on!" said Bill.

"He didn't say anything about mending the fence," I remarked.

"Oh goodness! Tell us what he *did* say," she implored.

"Well, not much. He comes from Hertfordshire, England."

"He's English then! I thought so," said Mac, relieved.

"He said No," I answered. "That was one of the most curious remarks he made. He said he was an alien."

"Did he, by Jove! So he is; but it's a very strange thing to say," said Mac. Bill regarded me with interest.

"He's going to keep us guessing," she remarked dolefully.

"No," I said, taking another piece of toast. "He accepted my invitation to tea this afternoon, and he is going to tell us about himself."

After all I had overlooked my most telling item. I might have known that the fact of his visit would prove more thrilling than any gossip coming second-hand from me. They wished to speak with him again, this man who had come upon us so quietly yet so dramatically. We had all become sufficiently American to desire "a good look at him." And when Americans take a good look at you they go over you with a fine tooth comb.

They see everything, from a knot in your bootlace to the gold-filling in your teeth. My friends "sat up" as I made my announcement. I felt, that in editorial parlance, I had made a scoop.

"Bully!" said Mac, and Bill, her chin on her hand, looked across at me with approval. After all, again, my lack of enterprise in interrogating Mr. Carville the night before was bearing fruit. It was crediting me with a sportsmanlike reluctance to steal a march on my friends. I had, after all, unconsciously done what we English call "the right thing." I had invited him to tea. Suddenly Bill's eyes became glassy.

"Are they both coming?" she asked in a stifled voice.

"I—I don't think so," I faltered. "I can't say exactly why, but I don't think so. You see," I went on, "the reason he offered to tell me about himself was a question of mine about his children. I said their names were curious enough to strike anyone. He said it was a long story. And he offered to step over himself. Now," I felt more certain of myself now, "the story of his children's names may take two directions. If *he* named them he will not want his wife to hear him tell about it. If *she* named them, which is not likely, why, he would scarcely take the trouble to come over and tell strangers about it, would he?"

"I'm very glad to hear it," said Bill.

"So am I," I agreed. "I think it is best to

get acquainted with families on the instalment plan, don't you ? ”

“ Rather ! ” said Bill, and held out her hand for my cup.

It was a perfect morning, clear and crisp, and the long sunlit vista of Van Diemen's Avenue tempted us sorely. We went through our daily struggle. Those people who work by rote, who are herded in offices and factories, and who are compelled by the laws of their industries to remain at their posts whether the sun shines or not, often regard the lives of free lances like us as merely agreeable holidays ; they would certainly be somewhat staggered to find the enormous will-power involved in resisting the calls of the open road. There are so many subtle arguments in favour of abandoning the desk for just once. “ It is such a glorious day, it is a shame to be indoors,” “ one's head is muggy ; a good walk will clear the ideas,” or “ it doesn't do to stick at it too long you know : give it a rest.” (This when you have not written a line for a week !) And so on. We knew them all, these specious lures to idleness, and strangled them with a firm hand each morning after breakfast. Well we knew that on a dark dismal rainy day we would hear the Tempter saying, “ who could work on a day like this ? Leave it until the sun shines in the window. Try that interesting novel you brought home. After all, you know, you must read to see how the accepted masters do it. Read for technique . . . ”

By nine o'clock we would all be at work.

So it was on this bright morning in October. I remember being rather struck with the excellence of the work of the preceding evening. It was not great work, you may say, not by any means in the category of immortal classics. It was not even signed, being an appreciation of a certain proprietary article in common use and extensively advertised. There was to me a quite indescribable humour in the fact that this essay in admiration was eventually published in French, German, Swedish and Polish, running into a six-figure issue, while my last novel, a sincere piece of literature, hung fire, so to speak, and never got beyond the publisher's preliminary forecast of a thousand copies. Was I not angry? Far from it. I was no puling undergraduate with a thin broad-margined book of verse to sell. The public was at perfect liberty to buy what it pleased. If they wanted my work, the work I loved and toiled to make as perfect as possible, they would get it, all in good time. For the present I was content to wait and do the thing which could be translated into Swedish and Polish, into dollars cash. It is customary, I know, to rail at the American public, to accuse them of a material mania. An artist is better employed, in my humble view, in trying to understand them, for believe me, they are not so vile as the precious *littérateurs* and others would have us believe. Bitterness is no preparation for sympathetic study. And without sympathy our

works, however clever and lovely, are but Dead Sea apples, crumbling to ashes at the touch of a human finger.

It must not be supposed that we had arrived at this way of thinking by a sudden leap. Again, far from it! My friend and I had been undergraduates, and very proud of ourselves into the bargain, long ago in England. But we had travelled since then, in more senses than one. We had known comfort and we had known the mute impressive numbness of despair. We had made "scoops" at times and celebrated them with joyous junketings. Once we had dined at Delmonico's, a meal of which the memory is still an absurd chaos. We had, moreover, confronted America with a blank wall of unyielding British prejudice. We had entrenched ourselves behind our conception of the thing to do and stupidly refused to do anything else. And we had been beaten to our knees. For it meant eventually either submission or flight. And we never had any intention of flight. We had fixed it firmly in our minds that we would return triumphant to England, some day as yet far off. We were aliens, yes; but we meant to win through at last, to make our dream come true; our dream of a cottage, with honeysuckle and roses, "far from the madding crowd."

And so we realised at length that, after all, the country was there before us; that they had not asked us to come; that we might as well do things

the way they wanted. All this was sound physic for us. It made us, in the true sense of the word, cosmopolitan, made us broad in culture and stimulated that deep human sympathy and understanding which lay at the root of that impatience with which we awaited the story of our neighbour.

I was typing a letter about three o'clock when I heard Mac's quick step on the stairs and the opening of the door. It is his custom to take advantage of his view of the path from the studio window to forestall the postman, and I took no further notice until I heard the hum of conversation. And so I was the last to appear.

He was standing in the middle of our room, his back to me, his Derby hat in his hand, looking curiously about the walls. I saw his glance held for a moment by the old English clock with its swinging pendulum and weights. It passed on to the chimney-piece loaded with antique silver, bizarre brasses, candle-snuffers and snuff-boxes. It moved over to the bust of Bill that Von Roon had given her when she was married, a miracle of cunningly-arranged shadows. It fell away from water colour and etching without hint of ulterior interest, and came to rest upon the book-shelves. There was more than politeness in his glance at the books, more than mere curiosity. There was, plainly enough, connoisseurship. In the flicker of an eyelid you can tell it. He turned to meet me as I entered the room,

"I'm glad you've come," I said, shaking hands. His clasp was firm, almost athletic. "We tea at four, but I don't think I told you that."

"No," he said, "you didn't. I always have tea at three and it didn't occur to me that the custom might be different."

"Don't apologize," said Bill. "It only takes a minute to make. Do you like it strong?"

He smiled.

"It's the only way I get it, at sea," he said. "Strong! Boiled would be a better word for it."

"We like it strong," said Mac. "Sit down please. Here, I'll take your hat."

He sank back in a chair and looked about him. For the first time we saw him without a hat. A wide head, full over the temples, and with thinning hair on the brow, it was in no wise unusual. The head of a professional man, shall I say? His hands lay palm downward on the arms of the chair, the knuckles white, the broad flat nails imperfectly manicured.

"You've got a snug little place here," he remarked. "A very snug little place. It's very old fashioned. I got quite a start when I stepped into—into the room from the street. Like the cottages in England. Art curtains, too!"

The tea came in then, and Bill offered him a cup. I think I was a little disappointed in his remarks. They were like his first impression on me the day before, so commonplace, so laboriously undistinguished that again the conviction was forced

upon me that it was a pose. Had I expected too much? Was he merely a self-satisfied egoist, clever enough to perceive our interest and impose upon it. Bill endeavoured to clear the air. The mention of "art shades" always made Mac restive.

"Do you like pictures?" she asked.

He gave her one of his quick glances.

"Some," he replied. "I believe, if I'd been taught, that I could have done something in that line," and he pointed with his saucer towards a water-colour, a drawing of the Golden Gate from Russian Hill.

I hardly knew what to make of this new development. I really did not believe he had looked at it. Moreover the drawing was not clamant with noisy daubs to attract the attention. It was not even recognizable as a view of the Golden Gate. It was a study of colour-combination, in an unusually high key, of interest to artists, but not to the public. Only the *cognoscenti* had remarked that picture before.

"You like it?" I said, taking it down and handing it to him.

"Ah!" he said, setting his cup and saucer on the floor. "Yes, that's it, that's it." He studied it. "That's what I should have liked to tackle. Sugar-plums, eh?"

We looked at him in astonishment, and he assumed an attitude of apology.

"I beg pardon," he said. "What I meant was

it reminded me of old Turner, you know, messing about with coloured sugar-plums."

"A colour-scheme?" said Mac, light dawning in his puzzled face.

"That's it, that's the word: colour-scheme," said Mr. Carville. "I'd forgotten the word." And he handed the drawing back. "You wonder at a seafaring man coming out here to live?"

"It's a very healthy district," I suggested.

"Mrs. Carville don't like New York, that's all," he said simply. "Personally, I shouldn't have bothered. But she's quite right."

"I should think it was better for the children too," said Bill.

He nodded vigorously, packing the tobacco into his pipe.

"Fresh air," said Mac, who slept out on the porch half the year.

"Oh there's plenty of fresh air in Atlantic Avenue," he said. "I had something else in mind." He looked thoughtful, and then his face lighted up with an extremely vivid indignation. It died away again in a moment, but it transfigured him. "Automobiles," he added.

We nodded, understanding him perfectly. We had seen them, in New York as in Brooklyn, careering at maniacal speed among the children at play. Bill, who loved children almost as much as flowers, had come in one day in Lexington Avenue, white and sick, and told us brokenly of something

she had seen. So we nodded and he, seeing that we understood, said no more.

“Have you lived here long?” I inquired.

“Both the kids were born here,” he replied. “Yes that’s nearly eight years since we came. You see—but it’s a long story. I don’t know whether you’d be interested——”

Bill rose.

“Let us go outside,” she said. “It’s beautifully warm.”

We went out.

“You must take the Fourth Chair,” said Bill, looking at us.

We explained to him the legend of the Fourth Chair.

“You see,” I added, “we were expecting you. There is fate in this.”

For a long time he sat quietly looking across the valley, as though pondering something.

“I think I might as well begin at the beginning,” he said at last, “and work up to the kids’ names gradually. Though as a matter of fact I could tell you in two words the reasons for giving them such un-English names, it wouldn’t explain how I feel. And that I take it is what you are after?”

“Begin at the beginning,” I said.

“So I will. I told you I was born at sea. My father was a merchant skipper of Boston. I don’t remember him very well, for he died when I was seven, but I have a vague sort of an idea that he was a big man with big dark eyes and a great

nose like the beak of a bird. *He* had run away to sea when—well, Napoleon was Emperor of the French when he ran away to sea. Sailors had pigtails and all the rest of it. His brothers did the same. At one time, in the 'sixties, there were six skippers ploughing the ocean, all Carvilles, all big black-whiskered men. You may hear of them yet in the ports out East.

“My father married four times. There was one peculiarity, or fatality if you like, about the Carvilles, and that was their failure to beget sons. Daughters came right along all the time. I have fourteen cousins, all married, and all got boys! The first three wives my father had only produced two daughters, who died before their mothers. You can understand that those six big men took it badly there were no sons. When the third wife died, childless, my father had given up the sea for a while and had invested in a ship-yard at St. John, New Brunswick. It was there that he met my mother.

“I can't go into details I never knew, so all I can say is that my mother was French Canadian. They had a big farm away up the Petitcodiac River and the girls used to come down to St. John to finish an education that began in Moncton and really ended, in my mother's case, in London, England.

“They built ships in those days in St. John, and some of the best were my father's work. As I said, I don't remember him very well, but you will

understand how I felt when one day, about nine years ago, we put into a little Spanish port for coal, and they made us fast to an old wooden hulk in the harbour. As we came round her stem I was leaning over the side and I saw the brass letters still on her square counter, *Eastern Star, St. John, New Brunswick*. That was one of my father's finest models. Pitch pine he made her of, and she's beautiful yet, for all her disgrace. I climbed aboard of her while the Corcubion women were trotting to and fro with the coal baskets, and looked round the poop. There was the cuddy as good as ever, teak frames, maple panels, pine flooring. That old hulk brought my old father before me as no daguerreotype could do. There was his name cut on the beam, *John Carville*. It may seem absurd to you people, but do you know, I realized then, as I looked up and saw my father's name on that beam, nearly smothered with countless coats of varnish, I realized how a young man of family feels, a Cecil, say, a Talbot or a Churchill, when he sees his ancestors' names in the history books. My father had done something, he was something. I don't know anyone who can better that title: a builder of ships.

“And my father did more than that, he sailed them and owned them. So far he had been under the Union flag, but this time, when he married my mother, and his finest masterpiece, the *Erin's Isle*, was anchored in St. John Harbour ready for sea, the Red Ensign was flying at the gaff.”

“Did your mother go too?” asked Bill.

“Surely! you think that strange? Well it was that or a life away at the back of everything; life on a farm, with a visit once a year to St. John. You like the country, don't you? Yes, but if you'd been down in the back-woods, if you'd lived in the thrifty way French Canadians have picked up from the Nova Scotians, and *improved*, if you were young and wanted to see something, you'd risk your soul to get away from it. You think a woman would have an awful life at sea. My mother jumped at it. She married a man who was sailing as skipper before she was born, and jumped at it! Taking everything into consideration, I don't blame her. You see, she had ambition, my mother had. Her education had been good enough, and she wanted to find a sphere where she could use it.”

“And so she went to sea?” said Bill in gentle sarcasm. Bill's aversion to the sea amounts almost to malevolence. She is a bad sailor.

“For the time being, and to see the world,” said Mr. Carville. “She had seen nothing, remember. Well, she saw it. They were away five years. You can imagine my father's feelings when the first child was a girl. She was born off the Ladrone Islands in the Pacific on the way to Hong Kong. I suppose he got over the disappointment somehow, for I never heard my mother say anything about quarrels except on the subject of living ashore. I told you my mother had ambitions.

She wanted to live in England and have an establishment. But my father couldn't see the use. If she wanted to live ashore, he argued, why couldn't she live in Hong Kong or Bombay or Colombo until he was ready to retire? She would see him just as often. No, she had no intention of doing that. She saw exactly how much ice a skipper's wife cut in a community of skippers' wives. She was after higher game. She settled it finally that if she couldn't live in London, England, she'd stay aboard the ship all her life.

"She got her way, but not all at once. One voyage she left the ship in Bombay and travelled across India, rejoining at Calcutta. Then she lived in Antwerp a good while, but got sick of it and shipped again when the ship sailed for Callao. That was the last of her voyages, my mother's I mean. For all I know the *Erin's Isle* swims yet. My sister was drowned and I was born before she dropped her anchor in London River."

"Drowned!" said Bill; "a little baby?"

"Going ashore in Callao," said Mr. Carville, turning to her, "there was a 'roller' started. I believe it's caused by the sea-bed shifting; slight earthquake in fact. The roller was a big wave and struck the ship's boat as they were rowing across the harbour. Accidents will happen, no matter how careful you are."

"Yes," we said quietly, "they will."

"They went from Callao to Brisbane and loaded again in Melbourne for home. My mother used to

say she thought they would *never* get round the Cape of Good Hope. My father had done the voyage once in sixty-two days, almost a record; but this time everything went dead wrong. They were driven as far as the Crozets, somewhere down near the South Pole, I believe. The grub gave out, and even my mother had to eat bread from corn that was ground in the coffee mill. The crew got restless and sulky. I've often tried to imagine it, the Skipper and his two mates, talking it over in the cuddy, keeping the men working to stop their thinking, running for days under reefed courses and double reefed topsails. And all the time with something else on his mind, something that materialized finally, into *me!*

“My mother told me that my father nearly went crazy with joy when I was born one Sunday morning, 18 south, 21 west, at seven bells on the star-board watch. They were in the trade then, spanking along almost due north for Fernando Noronha. It was rum for all hands that morning, almost the only soft thing left on the ship, and a little tea. The tea came in handy for their pipes, my mother told me. Poor chaps! They were dying for a smoke. Well, I have always got a good deal of satisfaction from knowing everybody was glad I came into the world. My father was dancing mad to get home and tell all the folks that the curse was lifted. He promised my mother anything; a home in London was one thing. He said he would quit the sea, for another. And he kept his word

too. He was going on fifty-five, and had been at sea for thirty-eight years. Think of that! I've been at it for fifteen years now, and it seems an infernally long time. Thirty-eight years!

"So they settled in London, England. I don't know whether you people can see it plainly, but if you think a little you will realize how strange those two felt in London, with their Saratoga trunks, their sea habits and their American prejudices. Can you?"

He looked from one to the other as we sat there, our chairs twisted a little so that we could see his face. The question was a shrewd one. I remember wondering if he was aware how vividly it brought back to our minds our first few weeks in San Francisco, our mistakes, our petulant anger with strange habits, our feeling of awful homesickness. Again we nodded silently.

"For a time they were up against it, you may say," he went on, "and they didn't dare to move away from their lodgings in the East India Dock Road. It was natural for my father to think he ought to live near the ships. The custom of living in the suburbs, commuting as they call it here, hadn't begun in the seventies. It was my mother who fired his ambition to live further out. It would have been all right and everything might have been different if his ambition hadn't been fired in another direction at the same time.

"My father had done well on the whole. He had saved for years and kept his money in banks or

in ships, which he understood. But now, when the *Erin's Isle* was sold and he found himself worth about fifty thousand dollars, he began to invest in all sorts of queer ventures. He wanted to double his fortune before he died. Others had done it, men he met in Leadenhall Street and on the Baltic; why shouldn't he? You see, he had got hold of the *masculine* part of my mother's ambition all right. She wanted to have an establishment, like a lady; he wanted to found a family in England. The money he was to make was for me. I was, he had settled, to be an engineer. He saw, that with steel coming in, engineering was to be the great gold-mine of the future. So he would provide the capital by which I was to build up a huge fortune. The Carvilles were to be big people, understand; 'my son was to be Prime Minister some day.' Humph!"

There was no bitterness in the exclamation, only a veiled irony, a detached amusement, at this memory of a dead ambition. We did not interrupt.

"They moved out just a little way, to Mildmay Park. You must remember that my father had no friends outside of business friends, and he had no idea that he would gain anything by moving west. My mother disliked what she saw of Kensington and Bayswater, and they thought in their simplicity that places with names like Mildmay Park, Finsbury Park and finally Oakleigh Park, were good enough to begin on. Each move was a little

further out, a little bigger house and a little higher rent until at Oakleigh Park, when I was six years old, it was a big semi-detached villa, with a garden and tennis-lawn and professional people for neighbours. That year my brother was born and my father began to die.

“ You will laugh, I suppose, at the folly of it, but in her own way, my mother was setting up to be a fine lady. We had a cook and housemaid, and a nurse for me, and fine things I learned from her ! We had a hired landau on Saturday afternoon to go drives in, a pew in the church, and sometimes people to dinner. She even got my father to send to Dublin to find out the Carville ancestry and coat-of-arms. She did, that’s a fact ! So you see, she understood perfectly what was meant in England by keeping up a position. As I said, if my father had not got a sort of mania for turning his money over, the scheme might have gone through.

“ He began to die when I was not quite six, and he went on dying and at the same time investing money until I was nearly eight. Imagine it ! A great big man, as irritable as a child, slowly rotting away inside with cancer and two helpless little children, one a baby. All the time it was doctor after doctor, each one recommending a different cure ; all the time it was investment after investment, the estate getting more and more entangled. He went to Baden one autumn and came home worse. He tried Harrogate in the spring, but it

was no use. He came back, went to bed and never rose from it. Mind you, all the time the cancer was eating his body, this other cancer was at his mind. He plunged into the craziest schemes for getting twenty per cent. interest. Nothing my mother could say was able to make him see the madness of it. She wanted him to buy land, but he said no one but a fool would buy land unless they had a fortune to keep it up. At last, one January, it was over and done with. He died, and we had a grand funeral, and the real business of life began for us.

“ For me it took a shape that I never got used to for all the years I was kept at it—school. For the life of me I can't see what use it was to me or to anyone else. What does a child learn at school that's of any use to him? You'll think I am talking like an ignorant fool, I dare say, but hear me out. Between eight and seventeen I went to six different schools. The country in those days was spotted with them. Some were called colleges, some academies, one was called an 'Ecole' of something or another. Each one I went to had a different badge, a different coloured tassel, a different set of rules and subjects. Barring the last one, which was down in Essex, near Maldon, they were simply swindles. A mile from our house was a board-school, but it would not have been keeping up our position to send me there. I learned to read and write, but Great God! curiosity will make a child do that. If he isn't curious to

learn what's the use of him learning? He just forgets it, as I forgot it, as you did too very likely, forgot it and learned it again when you needed to. A child ought to be outdoors learning the names of flowers and trees and birds. I know what I'm talking about, mind! You may fancy that if a boy is going into the professions as I was to go, as I did go, he ought to be schooled. Well, when I entered my profession at seventeen, I had to begin at the bottom for all my schooling. I know as much of 'professions' as most men, and I say of schools, I have no faith in them. The men who teach them know nothing. They're frauds and they know it. All that these schools did for me was to teach me the importance of keeping up a position.

“ While I was at school, my mother was having the time of her life with the estate. My father had left things in a condition that promised to swallow up the assets before she could understand how much she was worth. I have a list somewhere of the companies he had invested in. It's a very amusing list. I remember some of them. There was the Great Eastern Railway, the Queensland National Bank, a ginger-beer factory, a canned fruit factory, a dry-dock in Rotherhithe, and a patent nail-less horse-shoe concern. His mind was gone or he would never have touched some of them. Even the railway paid nothing. They had spent a million sterling on a new local line, and for four years had paid half-a-crown per cent. As

soon as my mother sold out, of course, they began to rise.

“ Somehow or other, she did eventually get them straight. When the stocks were sold out and the gold bricks thrown over the side, she found there was about forty thousand dollars, say, left. That isn't much to bring up a future Prime Minister on, and besides, there was my brother. He took more after my father than I did. I was mother's boy, but he was a dark daring little devil without much respect for either of us. I don't know quite how it began, but between us there grew a feeling that can't be called brotherly love. Perhaps he realised that, according to my mother's ideas of founding a family, I was to be first and he was to be—nowhere. As it happened this was not just. He was clever from the very first. I was to be an engineer, and he was to do—well, anything that came along. But he had the talent for engineering; I hadn't. I liked it, same as any boy does, but while I couldn't do a simple division sum without making a mess of it, he could do it in his head, and standing on his head for that matter. Whatever he tried, that he could do, whereas my range has always been quiet and limited. I liked reading. He never seemed to be in the house long enough to read anything, but he knew more than I did. He does now.”

“ Where is he now ? ” I asked. He laughed.

“ That's more than I can say. I'll get to that presently. What I want you to understand is the

feeling we brothers had for each other. He didn't detest me, you know. He didn't take the trouble to do that. He simply laughed at me. He made friends with board-school boys and even errand-boys. One day my mother saw him out in the baker's cart driving it round the neighbourhood. It was a sore humiliation for her, I'm afraid. He didn't care. There were girls, too, even when he was only ten or eleven. Humph!

“All this time I was growing up in this sort of life, the life of the professional classes. When I left school, at seventeen, neither my mother nor I had much idea of the way a young gentleman became an engineer. She had no relatives in England, my father's brothers were either at sea or dead, and my father's business friends dropped away when he died, a way business friends have, I've noticed since. We were aliens still as far as real friends went. And then one day we saw an interview in a paper called the *Young Pilgrim*, one of those mushy papers for young people that do a lot of harm, in my opinion. It was an interview with Sir Gregory Gotch, the great engineer. My mother, who had a good deal of practical enterprise, decided to write to him and ask him. I've often wondered what he thought of that letter. It ran something like this: *Mrs. Carville presents her compliments to Sir Gregory Gotch, and would be obliged to him if he would inform her of the best way to article her son (aged seventeen) to the engineering profession in a manner suitable to his position.*

Something like that. You can understand from that that my mother had grasped the principle of gentility all right. It went down, too, for in a few days we had an answer, in which the great man gave the names of three or four firms in London that he recommended as reliable and old-established. We selected one, and apparently Sir Gregory's name was an open sesame there, for we had an invitation to go into the city and see them at once.

“ We went, the gentlemanly youth and his lady-like mother, and saw the heads of the firm. We discovered then, that there were two ways of learning engineering, an easy way and a hard way. People say there's no royal road to learning. Like most proverbs, it's a lie. There's always a royal road, if you happen to be king of enough money. I might be an ordinary apprentice or a special pupil. If I was apprenticed I should have to start at six o'clock in the morning and work just like the men. I would stay in one shop for seven years and be turned out an expert mechanic. And I would have to wait six months for an opening, as they were full-up. If I came as a pupil, however, I would be allowed to spend so much time in each shop, including the offices; I could start at nine o'clock in the morning and finish the whole business in three years. The premium was nine hundred dollars, and I could start that minute. They didn't seem to care how soon they got that nine hundred dollars.

“ We talked it over in the train. Of course, I was all for the royal road and had plenty of good arguments in favour of it. What I want you to notice is that my mother was in favour of it, too ! Think of it. She had been brought up in a hard school. She knew what it was to live sparingly and how useful early discipline was. She had told me often that all great men had a hard struggle. Therefore, how could I be a great man if I didn't have a hard struggle ? And yet she was so obsessed with this notion of gentility that she deliberately gave me a soft time. She paid out three hundred dollars every year for three years . . .

“ That time was what you might call a comedy of errors. I am not going to admit that I idled, for it is not true. I was ambitious. Since I was to be an engineer I went at it bald-headed. I went to polytechnics and night-schools, I spent whole nights in study, and did everything that any young chap could do. The whole of my efforts did not amount to a row of rivets. Why ? I was up against the gentility again. I met the professional classes face to face.

“ There were three other chaps there as pupils, and it so happened that they were every one from the great public schools. One was from Haileybury, one from Eton, and another from Winchester. When they found I was not one of them they ragged me, of course, which was good and proper. I often think the ragging in public schools is one of the few useful things they do there. When these men

found I intended to study my profession they thought I was stark mad. They were all nice young fellows and had money coming to them. Why should they bother? They thought I ought to look at it in the same light. Eventually I did. It was three to one. I found out that any amount of study and genuine merit would not carry me along in a profession. It was all well enough to be an engineer; but the main thing was to be a gentleman. Gradually I dropped the study, took afternoons off to go down west and began to worry my mother for more money.

“So it went on for the three years, my mother patiently waiting for me to get through my time and start in earnest as a professional man. My brother was at school, the one near Maldon, and was giving her a lot of trouble. I only saw him during the vacations. He was a big fellow, while as you see, I’m rather on the small side. I don’t know that that should cause anybody any amusement! But because I was twenty and he was thirteen and nearly as tall as I was, he was for ever laughing. It seemed to him a huge joke. And as I thought about it the idea came to me that even nature was on his side and against me. It almost seemed as though she’d not only given him the brains, but the stature to be the great man my father and mother longed for. He was good-looking too, I remember, even then. My mother had to pack off a servant that vacation, a silly giggling little girl.

“ I couldn't very well say anything to him, because I was getting into hot water myself for spending money. And when he wrote in mid-term for an extra sovereign, my mother blamed me for setting him a bad example. Lord! I didn't have a sovereign a year when I was thirteen. Times had changed.

“ I had been drifting along for some time, expecting when my time was up to be put on the staff, as was usual with pupils. They usually gave us a job until we could use our influence to get an appointment somewhere. But in my case it didn't happen so. The day my three years' term was up, a beautiful spring day, the junior partner informed me that I could consider myself finished, and handed me a reference that, for all the use it was, might have gone into the waste-paper basket then and there.

“ I was staggered. I had no idea of how to get a job. Why had I been pushed out? Simply because the firm had found out I had no influence with Sir Gregory Gotch, no standing socially at all. I was an alien in their ranks. I went out of that office with all the externals of a gentleman and a public-school boy, but inwardly an outsider as you may say. One thing I had though, and that was the firm conviction that 'pull' and not merit counted. I had to get some one to 'influence' a job in my favour. It would not have been gentlemanly to answer an advertisement!

“ My mother thought at once of one of my uncles,

who had retired from the sea and was now a marine superintendent in Fenchurch Street. I called to see him; but he was abroad attending to a damaged ship. I think it was a month before I happened to meet the Winchester boy who had been in the works with me. Quite by accident it was. Let me see now——”

Mr. Carville paused again, and leaning over to one of the geranium tubs knocked his pipe out. Suddenly he laughed.

“Why,” he said, “I’m telling you the whole story.”

“That’s what we want you to do,” I said, and the others nodded.

“The trouble is, you know,” went on Mr. Carville, “one thing leads to another. You can’t understand what I am without knowing how my brother and I came to be so—antagonistic. And to explain that it’s necessary to show you how I grew up in this professional, easy-going, snobby atmosphere and took it all in, while he, my brother, cut out his own course and went his own way in defiance of everything. I remember now! I saw that Winchester chap—his father was a wine-merchant and Master of the Tinkers’ Company—at Lord’s. I had nothing to do, and instead of hunting round to get a job, I went to Lord’s to see the cricket. There was old Belvoir clumping away at the nets. Engineering! Pooh! He had eight hundred a year his aunt left him—catch him practising as an engineer. He was going on a tour of all

the Mediterranean watering-places with an M.C.C. team. Well, we had lunch in the pavilion, and I mentioned in a jolly sort of way that I'd been jounced out of the office. He said it was 'a bally shame.' Oh, I did envy that chap his eight hundred a year! Life seemed to him one long sweet song. Cricket, Riviera, dances, clubs, country houses, everything. He was fenced in on every side, safe from the vulgarity of the world. He was hall-marked—a public-school man. He was a citizen of his world, I was an alien. He was rich. I had not even a savings-bank book.

“I was going away after the match when I discovered he had been thinking about me. That was Belvoir all over. He was a gentleman, and a gentleman to my mind is like an artist in one thing only, he is born—and then made. That was Belvoir. He had privileges as an English gentleman, but he had also duties. We had been together in the shop as pupils; that gave me a claim on him. He said he had an uncle in Yorkshire who was chairman of an engineering firm, and he would write to him. More than that, he did write and I got an appointment in their London office in Victoria Street. Good old Belvoir! Remember Spion Kop? That was the last of Belvoir. Lord's, Riviera, clubs—Spion Kop . . .

“I settled down into that berth in Victoria Street as a cat settles into a cushion. I was warm, comfortable, well-paid, well-dressed and had all I wanted in reason. I lived at home and commuted

to the city every day, travelling first class, living first class. I settled down. I was on the way to what my mother and father had in view, a comfortable position.

“My brother was at school, of course, down near Maldon. I never really got hold of my mother’s private opinion of her second son. It was a mystery to me why she gave him so much pocket-money. I came to the conclusion afterwards that since she considered it her duty to give me a good start and put by all she could for my capital in business, there would be very little later on for my brother, so she was giving him tips now instead. She was able to say, ‘I never stinted you at school, Francis.’ It might have been better for him if she had. And yet, I don’t know. I’ve come to think that men like my brother go their own road anyhow. Their hereditary nature is so strong that environment makes no difference, you might say.

“The main difference between us, when I was twenty-two and he was fifteen, was the subject of women. That sounds strange, I suppose. But go back. What did you know about women at fifteen? Or about yourself? My brother knew no more, but he *acted* on the little he did know, we were afraid. Especially we who grow up in such a social life as I have been talking of; we are afraid. My brother was never afraid of anything. If he wants a thing he makes one bound and grabs it. If he hates a thing he makes another bound and

hits it. I've seen a man flinch just because my brother looked at him. As for women, humph! He had only to hold up his hand.

"Now I don't offer it as a proof of virtue, but at twenty-one I had not bothered with girls much. I will explain in a minute why this was the case. For the same reason I did not smoke or play cards. Let me get back to my brother.

"One mid-term my mother got a letter from the head-master saying he regretted that he had been under the painful necessity of expelling Francis Carville from the school. He had been caught *flagrante delicto*, as the old chap said, and one of the maids had been dismissed. You can imagine how a thing like that upset my mother. Old Dominion morality was pretty strict I have read, and in any case when these things happen in your own family it is very different from reading about them in the Press. But what raised our worry still higher was the curious fact that although he had been expelled and put on the London train at Maldon, he hadn't turned up."

There was another pause as Mr. Carville struck a match. It was nearly dark and we watched his face reflecting the glow. Suddenly Bill realised the time and rose.

"Won't you stay to dinner?" she asked.

"No thank you," he said. "Mrs. Carville's going into Newark this evening, I believe, and we're going to take the boys to a show." He rose. "I must be going. Good-night."

“Come in and finish your story,” said Mac.

“All right. Good-night and thank you.” He lifted his hat and stepped off the porch.

CHAPTER VII

DIAPORESIS

THE discussion at dinner that evening was unexpectedly animated. We all had our theories to propound, our notes to compare and our criticisms to offer. To this I contributed my share, but reserved a conclusion to which I had been approaching all through the tale. I wished to submit it to the tests of coffee and music, to become more familiar with it before I exposed it to Bill's shrewd scrutiny and Mac's sardonic judgment.

To my surprise they insisted upon the strangeness of the story.

"To my mind," I said, "the story can scarcely be called strange, so far."

"I wonder where his brother got to after he was expelled," said Bill.

"Do you think Cecil's man is the brother?" asked Mac.

"You mean interesting," I continued.

"Well," said Mac, "interesting if you like. That don't make it any the less strange. Is Cecil's man——?"

"The really strange part of this man's story,"

I declared oracularly, "is the fact that he is telling it; mark that! And a stranger thing still is the way he is telling it!"

"Ex cathedra!" said Mac, grinning and bowing to me.

"Explain it all over again," said Bill.

I did so, but they saw no brilliance in my explanation. They were artistic, but not artistic enough to appreciate the nuance of the story-telling art. Perhaps this is nothing against them. Each to his trade. And yet—*sugar-plums!*

It pleased my friend that evening to undertake the rendering of a work which, unfortunately, can only be butchered on a piano. Of all Wagner's music the *Walkuren Ride* is least adapted to our homely instrument. Nevertheless the wild clatter, the exciting crepitation of the treble, the thunderous booming of the bass, and above all the tremendous crash with which it ends, always stimulates me to fresh mental effort. I saw plainly, as I listened, that my surmise was correct. I saw that I had no need to wait for the explanation of the phrase: "An author? Ah!" I saw, in short, that Mr. Carville, whatever he might be in the eyes of his wife, his brother, or of the world, was a potential artist. As I recapitulated to myself the various points in his tale, the careful balancing of his narrative with sententious criticism of life, the occasional fiction, to give verisimilitude to trivial events (the incident of Belvoir for example), and particularly his abrupt departure in

the dusk, leaving us guessing, I felt certain that for me his tale would have a denouement of peculiar interest. Already I perceived the deliberate attempt of the man to convey the obscure and rare emotion which dominated his intellectual life.

Afterwards, in the studio, I suggested that the story of Turner's sugar-plums might throw some light upon Mr. Carville's story.

"How?" said Mac, who is reluctant to see profane hands touch the master-colourist's memory. I explained again.

"He is taking a lot of romantic episodes, mixing them up, adding a little imaginary landscape and offering it to us," I said. "We asked for a story. We shall have it, says he."

"He's such an ordinary looking chap," began Mac. Bill laughed.

"So am I," I retorted with a grin.

"You know what I mean," he protested. "I meant ordinary in voice and general tone. But if what you say is true he must be a damn clever chap."

"An artist," I agreed.

"I can't make him out," said Bill, sewing busily. "What in the world has all this to do with his children? I want to know where they met."

"So you will, dear lady, never fear," I said smiling. "I think Mr. Carville understands your desire perfectly."

"Oh, I know I'm a very simple person——" she began.

"By no means," I cried. "Mr. Carville would

never suggest such a thing. But think for a moment! Is it not a fair guess that a man like our neighbour, who has had such a varied career, who can divine *my* interest in him as an author, and Mac's as an artist, will be able to fathom the reason why you watch him with a tense and silent stare."

"Did I stare?" she said. "I'm sorry."

"We all stared," I returned. "Anyone would."

The telephone rang and Mac went to answer it. We could hear his voice plainly on the staircase.

"Hello! Who is it? Oh, good evening, Miss Fraenkel—yes do. We're not going out to-night. How long will you be? Right. Good-bye."

"She'll be up in half an hour," he said, going back to his easel.

I was by no means certain that Miss Fraenkel would be able to help us to forecast accurately the future instalments of the Carville history. Of course if we could induce her to assume that the painter-cousin's strange companion was Mr. Carville's brother, she might begin to treat the subject with the necessary seriousness. But I had no hope of this. I was too conscious of the extreme subtlety of Mr. Carville's art (we may grant him that now in advance) to think that we could transmit its fascination to Miss Fraenkel. She would probably be astonished at the continuance of our curiosity.

She was. She began the moment she arrived, to tell us the vicissitudes of a cause to which she had been rapidly and earnestly converted, the

cause of female suffrage. It was evident that her reason for calling was to "let off steam," as Mac irreverently phrased it afterwards. A number of millionaires' daughters had drawn upon themselves the eyes of the world by tramping on foot to Washington to plead for the vote. Miss Fraenkel's eyes dilated as she told us. We had seen the account of what the *New York Daily News* called "The Hike of the Golden Girls," but our eyes had not dilated. We had even acrimoniously hinted that the millionaires' daughters were seeking notoriety rather than a relief for civil disabilities by this undignified tramp across New Jersey and Maryland. But to Miss Fraenkel we said nothing of this. Even if we had been averse to Miss Fraenkel having a vote, we would have said nothing. Only Bill suggested with a smile that the leading "hiker" need not have offered to kiss the President when he good-humouredly granted them an interview. Miss Fraenkel could not see it. There was no divinity that she knew of to hedge a president from a kiss.

"What about the President's wife?" asked Bill.

"Why, *she's* one of us!" cried Miss Fraenkel. "She approves!"

"Of kissing her husband?" asked Bill.

But Miss Fraenkel's mind was fashioned in water-tight compartments. She could not switch her enthusiasm from the vote long enough to appreciate this lapse from good taste. Her mind did not

work that way. We would have to begin at the beginning and lead up to kissing as a moral or immoral act, before she could give it any serious attention. And when she asked Bill to join the local league I interposed, lest the harmony of the evening should be violated.

“We want your vote on another question,” I said, and recounted the events of the afternoon. She listened with apparent attention, playing with a string of beads that hung round her neck. Long before I finished I saw she was ready to speak.

“I’ll go right in and ask her if she’ll join!” she said.

“They’ve gone to Newark,” said Mac.

“To-morrow, then.”

“Well,” said Bill. “Come up here to-morrow. He’s coming in to tell us some more. You’ll meet him first and he can introduce you to his wife.”

“That’ll do first rate! I’m just crazy to get all the members I can.”

The conversation rambled on irrelevantly after that, and we realised that for Miss Fraenkel at least, the story of Mr. Carville’s life was not absorbingly attractive. We enjoyed her visit, as we always did, but her influence, in her present pre-occupation, was feverish and to a certain slight degree disturbing.

The problem that presented itself when I retired that night was immaterial, perhaps, but new. I wondered quietly in what manner Mr. Carville would regard Miss Fraenkel. Doubtless I was

over-exacting, but I desired to discover, in our neighbour's attitude towards the lady, some clue to his attitude towards us. I felt vaguely that his candour was not at all a mere casual fit of communicativeness of which we "just happened" to be the recipients. If this were the case, it would infallibly appear in his manner towards our voteless friend. It would be . . . but no. My vanity did not carry me that far. The vanity of a man of forty is generally a steed broken to harness; it will not prance far into the unknown. I decided to wait until Mr. Carville decided the matter for himself.

* * * * *

The spectacle, while I was shaving next morning, of Mr. Carville proceeding sedately down Van Diemen's Avenue with his children, gave a fresh vagueness to his image in my mind. It was as though a hand had been passed over the picture, smudging the outlines and rendering the whole thing of dubious value. A model father! In my bewilderment I nearly cut myself. And yet, supposing, as I had been supposing, that Mr. Carville had set out with the definite object of contrasting himself vividly with his prodigal brother, would he not eventually take up the rôle of dutiful parentage? The extraordinary thing was that the model father should be also the artist.

I determined to abandon the Carville problem for an hour or two after breakfast in favour of

Maupassant. It is my custom to read once a year at least, the chief works of that incomparable writer. The forenoon of our Sunday has this peculiarity : no moral obligation to work is imposed by our unwritten laws. If, on Sunday morning, I am discovered by Bill leisurely turning over a pile of old magazines, or reading a story, I am not greeted with "Do you call that work?" On the contrary, she will probably sit down beside me and indulge in what may be charitably described as gossip. Mac, too, will leave his palette and boards in peace, will lie luxuriantly in the big rocker, or spade on shoulder, disappear among the shrubs at the lower end of the estate. We neglect collars and appear brazenly at breakfast in shirt-sleeves on Sunday mornings. It is for us a day of rest from the insistent badgering of ideas. Our minds go into negligé; we forget editors and advertising-managers for a while. Imagine then our dismay when I reported my view of Mr. Carville in his brushed blue serge and Derby hat, his glazed linen collar and dark green tie, passing sedately down the Avenue, a neat child in each hand. There seemed to be no rift in this man's armour of respectability. He seemed determined to maintain a great and terrible contrast between his inner and outer life. O supreme artist! I stretched myself on my sofa and opened Maupassant :

"*Monsieur,*" I read. "*Doctor James Ferdinand does not exist, but the man whose eyes you saw does, and you will certainly recognize his eyes. This*

man has committed two crimes, for which he does not feel any remorse, but, as a psychologist, he is afraid of some day yielding to the irresistible temptation of confessing his crimes."

I laid down the book, drawn by the aptness of the text to my problem. Had Maupassant given me the key of the whole enigma? Was this astonishing genius, who had so wrought upon our imaginations, was he a criminal irresistibly driven to tell us the story of his evil life? Were the police of Europe and America even now scouring the surface of the globe for him? That brother, that dare-devil gentleman of the painter-cousin's letter, was a fitting accomplice for him, the quiet, unobtrusive, impeccable "seaman." He had a number, what was it? Three-nine- (fool not to write it down!) three-nine-something. Was that his number during his last imprisonment? Had he spoken in terrific hyperbole when he admitted that no doubt it was "a picturesque life"? Good God! How blind we had been! And Miss Fraenkel's shot in the dark, was it after all the truth? Had he really been "held for something"?

I let my pipe go out, so possessed was I, temporarily, with the diabolical possibility. A double knock at the door sent the blood to my heart. I rose, and passing into the front room opened the door. Mr. Carville stood in the porch in an attitude of profound meditation. The sight of him, phlegmatic and isolated from all emotion, restored the balance of my mind somewhat. We shook hands

and he still stood there, trying to remember something.

“Another fine day,” I said. “I saw you out early this morning.”

He nodded absently, and then his face lightened.

Somewhat to my surprise, if any further surprise was possible, he lifted his steady grey-blue eyes to mine, raised his right hand as high as his shoulder and began to recite.

“When that the Knight had thus his tale i-told,
In al the route was ther young ne old
That he ne seyde it was a noble story,
And worthy to be drawnen to memory.” *

And extending a finger he pointed to the little brass Canterbury Pilgrim that served us for a knocker. “They told stories too, eh?” he said smiling.

“You read Chaucer?” I murmured, staggering to a chair in the porch.

“Why, sure!” he said, “don’t you?” And he took out his pipe.

I did not pursue the subject, even when I had recovered my poise. The clever application of the Chaucerian verse to his own case was crushing. I said nothing of it to Mac when he appeared with a pair of shears intended for the borders.

“Hullo, Mr. Carville,” he said. “Come to finish the story? Wait till I tell the wife.”

* Prologue to “The Miller’s Tale.”

“ Now where’s the hurry ? ” said our neighbour deprecatingly, and sitting down he began to cut up some tobacco. I looked across at New York, still surrounded in diaphanous mist, and endeavoured to adjust my mind to the immediate business. Since dinner the night before I had been indulging in somewhat frothy speculation. It was only fair that Mr. Carville should have the floor and speak for himself. Bill came out and nodded brightly. None of us suggested waiting for Miss Fraenkel. I think we were anxious to hear a little more of Mr. Carville before Miss Fraenkel arrived ; a sort of presentiment, if you like.

“ Do tell us about your brother, Mr. Carville,” said Bill. “ What happened to him ? ”

Mr. Carville struck a match and puffed away in the conscientious manner demanded by a corn-cob.

“ Why, of course,” he said, carefully expelling a jet of smoke from the corner of his closed lips, “ he came back, my brother did.”

Bill looked at him in tragic annoyance.

CHAPTER VIII

HE CONTINUES HIS TALE

“It was like this,” he went on. “Apart from a general dislike of doing things that boys consider ‘bad form’ my brother had no scruples at all. For instance, if a stranger cheeks you, you *feel* as if you’d like to hit him. My young brother *did* hit him. What was still more to his advantage he gave people the impression that he was always ready to jump over the table at them. My impression is that the old Head didn’t dare flog him and had been glad to find an excuse to get rid of him. It didn’t occur to the old chap that my brother wouldn’t come home. He little knew my brother!

“Several days passed and we began to get anxious. My mother telegraphed the Head and the railway company. No good. Now it’s all very well for well-meaning people to say ‘tell the police,’ but when you are up against a private disgrace, you think pretty hard before you walk into a police station. My brother was fifteen and big for his age. Why, he might disguise himself anyhow. The week-end came before we made

up our minds that the police would have to be notified. I went to Scotland Yard on the Saturday afternoon with a reward and description. I don't pretend that I felt very anxious about him. He had never sought either my friendship or my protection, and we looked at life from totally different angles. To me there was something common and dirty about an intrigue with a school-slavey. My brother, I thought, should have been above that sort of thing. But he wasn't and he never has been. With him a woman is just a woman. He raises his hand and they come running, and apologising if they're late. So after I had been to Scotland Yard, I stayed down West, went to a theatre and looked in at *El Vino* for a glass of port afterwards. *El Vino* in those days had a curious reputation, quite different from the Continental or the Leicester Lounge. No one would ever suggest you were a loose fish because you drank a dock-glass in *El Vino*, though there were women there every night. Just as I was lifting the glass some one gave me a slap on the back. It was my young brother.

“‘Hullo, Charlie!’ he says. ‘Fancy *you* here.’

“‘What are *you* doing here?’ I asked him. I realised he was as tall as I was. ‘Why aren't you at home?’

“‘I'm coming home with you, Charlie boy,’ he says, looking round at the girls. ‘All the old talent here, you see!’

“I own frankly I was disgusted. I was so disgusted I never went into that place again. We got the 12.20 at King’s Cross and it was a quarter past one in the morning before we arrived at our house. Here was a nice state of things; the elder son finding his fifteen-year-old brother in *El Vino*, and coming home with the milk. That was my brother’s way all along. He made everything I do seem a black sin. I left him to tell his own story and turned in.

“The next morning he went on the carpet. My mother gave him a pretty hot talking to. She told him he was a disgrace to the name of Carville, that he’d begun bad and would go to worse. She asked him how she was ever to get him into a position if he left school like that and for such a reason. He took out a cigarette-case and helped himself. ‘No need to worry, mater,’ says he, ‘I’ve got a position already.’

“And so he had! He’d gone into the city and got a position in a big wholesale house as a clerk. Ask me how he did it and all I can say is ‘Personality.’ He could do anything with anybody. There he was, fifteen, with a guinea a week to start. And I was twenty-two and only getting a few shillings more.

“After the first shock my mother resigned herself to the inevitable and hoped for the best. And for a couple of years we managed to rub along without any scandals. In our several ways, my brother and I were busy with life, as far as we knew

it. He went up to the city every day, and played football and cricket, but the serious business of his life was girls. He seemed to have hundreds. If I saw him in the Strand, on Saturday, he would be with three or four. If I met him on Hadley Common, on Sunday, he would have three or four there, but fresh ones. He had them in the trains, he lunched with them in the city. Barring the few hours he spent in our house at night he lived chiefly on girls. There were a score or so in the house where he worked, a wholesale business in Wood Street. It was a mania, you might say; but it was the girls who had the mania, not him. He spent all his money as he got it on them, he borrowed more and spent that. One thing particularly annoyed me just about this time, and that was his free way of borrowing my clothes when they fitted him. Vests and ties especially. You may think it a trivial matter, but to me there was something exasperating in seeing one's brother on a park seat in the dusk, with his girl's head leaning on one's own fancy vest! He would just shy whatever he had borrowed on the bed and leave me to pick the hair off it. What they call a *Superman*, I believe, nowadays. I had another name for him.

“Apart from these annoyances, I was sliding along a well-oiled groove in life. It generally happens that a young man in such a position as mine marries and settles down for good. Now it may have been that my brother's wholesale dealings

with girls threw me to the other extreme. I don't think that had much to do with it. I think, now, that I had a natural bent towards Culture.

"Don't misunderstand me," said Mr. Carville. "I use that word without any doubt of what it means. I know George Du Maurier's sneers. Culture means an instinct for the best. I had that. I have it now.

"I don't say that culture is opposed to marriage. That would be nonsense. But it may seriously interfere with marriage. A young man in the twenties has no irresistible desire for matrimony. As a rule I mean. And if sport or business or, as in my case, study, takes up his attention, he will put it off for a while. That's what happened to me. I had access to books. I had an easy job and no great responsibility. I knew nothing about the world really; I only read about it in books. It seemed to me a splendid thing to be a learned man. I became a book-worm, reading several hours a day. What was I aiming at? Upon my soul I can't say. It was just blind instinct leading me on to read the books that since then have become part of me.

"My work was, as I said, light. The firm I was with were specialists in certain machinery, and I was assistant to the London manager. I had to plan out and make estimates for various plants, and travel about the south of England getting orders and superintending erection. I can tell you it just suited me, those journeys by train. I always

had my book with me, and as soon as I had been over a job, I forgot all about contracts and went back to Pater, or Gibbon or Flaubert or Emerson, whoever I happened to be reading. In the evenings I used to try and imitate what I had read.

“But what could I write? What did I know? Nothing! I had never been anywhere, I had never met anybody in particular, I had never been in love. I had never woke up. I was in a sort of trance, surrounded by the traditions of the genteel professional class. Of course, in a dim way I knew that my mother expected me to be something exceptional, but I was too comfortable to make any effort. It seemed to me I was quite unconventional enough in being such a reader and in keeping clear of girls. I wonder where I would have landed, supposing I had never woke up.

“My brother was going his way all this time, when all of a sudden he roused me up again. For a long time he had been earning twenty-five shillings a week and spending forty, and my mother had been making good the deficit. She had just given him a five-pound note to pay for his quarterly season-ticket on the railway. He didn't pay it. Just went on travelling to the city with the old one. Of course, a lot of people had done that trick and the Company were wise to it. My brother was caught and summoned before the Lord Mayor at the Mansion House. You can believe my mother was distressed. It wouldn't

have been so bad if he had only held his tongue and let her pay the forty shillings fine and costs. No! he had to give the Lord Mayor a piece of his mind. And that made the evening papers feature the amusing incident, as they called it.

“I must admit the boy made out a very good case. He told the Court, his father, his brother and himself had been travelling over the line for something like sixteen years. Altogether we had paid the railways two hundred pounds in fares. ‘Now,’ says he to the Court, ‘if I had done two hundred pounds worth of business with a firm, they wouldn’t be down on me for being a day or two late with a small account of five pounds, would they? They’d be glad to accommodate me. But the railway wants to put me in prison.’ Well, the Lord Mayor happened to be a shareholder in the railway, and of course he couldn’t admit that at all. He fined him the regulation forty shillings and several pounds costs. But as I said, this peculiar argument of my brother’s got the case into a prominent position and everybody saw it. His employers saw it and cashiered him the next morning. My uncle, who lived at Surbiton, saw it and wrote to my mother.

“The first I saw of it was in the papers. I remember feeling sick and giddy all over when I saw our name in the police court news. ‘*The Seamy Side*’ they called it. When I got home my brother and my mother were having it out. He didn’t care. It was all over for him, he

admitted. Better let him start afresh somewhere else. My mother wanted to send him to Canada, where she had relatives, but he said he'd be damned if he went to Canada. He was sick of clerking. What did he want to do? I asked him. He said he was going in for engineering. I smiled at this, and he rounded on me. 'Oh I don't mean your engineering,' he says. 'I mean something that's worth while.' Very sneering he was.

"Well, do you know what he did? He got fifty pounds out of my mother to start with and disappeared. That's all. Simply vanished without a word. In a way it was a relief. We gave out that he had gone to Canada and the scandal died down. A month later my uncle wrote and mentioned that Frank had called on him and borrowed fifty pounds to go to New Zealand with. I don't know how he managed to do it, for my uncle doesn't let go easy at all. He has had to work for his money too hard. Personality, I suppose. If my brother had had a five minute personal interview with the Lord Mayor I daresay he would have got the old chap to pay the fine for him.

"After this little brush-up my mother and I jogged along for a few years as quiet as before. I was still in my job as manager's assistant, and still reading away into the classics. I was about twenty-five when all my ideas and prejudices slid away over side and I found I had got the disease we call love. It nearly killed me."

Mr. Carville paused and leaned over to knock

his pipe against the geranium-tub. We did not interrogate him. There was something numbing to me in the thought of this quiet ordinary little man telling us in a quiet matter-of-fact tone that love had nearly killed him. We had no comment worthy of the fact. He looked across the valley for a moment as though lost in retrospection.

“She came home from a convent in Brussels,” he continued, feeling for his little brass box, “and to use the slang of our professional class, her people knew my people. That was the way we talked. If a thing was good, we called it ‘ripping.’ If it was unpleasant, we said it was ‘beastly.’ I believe the slang has changed since then, but the silly artificial spirit of it will never change. Why can’t educated people speak English?”

“She came home from a convent in Brussels. Her home was about a mile off, a big house in East Barnet, and she called with her mother one day when I happened to come home from a journey early. She gave me a look. . . .

“You see, she wasn’t beautiful. She was well-dressed and well-mannered and she had grey eyes. Beyond that I haven’t any distinct memory of what she was like. And the astounding thing to me, when I look back on that business, is the utter lack of any common interests. How *could* I expect her to take any notice of me. I was a book-worm. I couldn’t do any of the social tricks she admired. I knew as much about music as a cow, and considered tennis a bore. And yet I wanted her. I

wanted that eighteen-year-old girl as I've never wanted anything since. I made myself a door-mat for her feet, I took her impudence and said nothing, I waited for her and made no complaint when she forgot to keep an appointment. My mother saw it and did her best to help me (though it wasn't much) for she wanted me to get married. This would have been a good match, for it so happened that 'her people' were in a position to advance me in my profession, as I called it.

"And strange to say, my persistence did make some impression. I did make some headway. I chucked my books to one side, went in for tennis, and even took girls up the river to Kingston and Bourne End, she being one of them. It made a hole in the little bank account I had started, but I suppose it was worth it. I met a lot of pretty girls; but I was not after a pretty girl; I was after her. The river was a lot in my favour, I believe. It so happened that Belvoir's young brother, a Charterhouse boy, whom I knew slightly, nearly ran our punt down one Saturday with his launch. It made a big impression on Gladys, my knowing young Belvoir. You see she had been at school with Belvoir's cousin, so it all worked in. In a way I suppose I was happy . . . yes it's a wonderful thing, a tremendous thing to be in love; but all the same, I wouldn't like to go through it again!

"So it stood, when one day in the autumn, the whole thing capsized. My brother came back.

"He didn't come back like any other prodigal

I ever heard of. No, he came back in his own way, like a conquering hero, which he was. He came back on an automobile.

“ You laugh ? But you must remember that in those days there weren't fifty automobiles in England. When my brother came up the London Road with a whiz and a bang, a long trail of blue stench coming out of the back of the machine, I really think that was the third or fourth time I had ever seen such a thing. Well, there he was, a great big chap with a hooked nose and flashing black eyes behind the goggles. Where had he been ? Neither to Canada nor to New Zealand. He'd been to France. He'd gone there and learned the motor-car business in one of the first shops ever built. Picked it up you may say, as he picked everything up, but he got it none the less. He'd seen the possibilities of the thing, and here he was appointed London agent for the French firm at three hundred a year. He laughed when he saw me. ‘Hullo, Charlie!’ he sneers, ‘How's the puff-puffis?’ He sneered at everything about me. I had learned to read French pretty well and knew my classics in the original, but here was my young brother sneering at me in French *argot* which he knew I couldn't resent because I couldn't understand it.

“ He would come down to the tennis club that evening, though I didn't want him. Somehow I dreaded introducing him to Gladys. There was no need for me to worry. He introduced himself. In another five minutes he was talking French with

her, and she was screaming with laughter at the stories he told her. He saw her home . . .

“You can understand that the next day I was in a bad condition for work. And it so happened that I had a job that needed all the concentration I could give it. I don't remember a single detail of it. I had been neglecting my work then, like all young chaps in love, but on this occasion I made a costly mistake. I marked the driving pulley on a line-shaft a foot too small. The aggravating part was I sent it to the head office in Yorkshire without revising it and *they* got on to my boss. He took the bit in his teeth and went for me. He gave me a week to find another job. I was ‘down and out.’

“I was paralysed for a while. I didn't know where to turn. The bottom had dropped out of my world for good and all. Another job! Why, I knew men in that employ who had held their jobs for forty years.

“I said nothing about it at home. My brother, with his three hundred a year and his French *argot*, made home unbearable and I thought of clearing out of it. But where could I go? You see, if you work for some specialist for a number of years, the only job you can move to is a position with another specialist of the same line. And this business I was in was run by about six big firms.

“Still, the thought of clearing out held me. I saw that if my brother was going to live at home,

I'd have to go. And Saturday came round and found me wondering what to do.

“At times I used to go over to my uncle's at Surbiton. It was my duty to pay respects, so to speak. His family had a grudge against my mother, because if my father hadn't married her, they would have inherited his money, so that there was not much love lost between them. But occasionally my old uncle would ring me up and ask me to go down with him. He did this Saturday I speak of, and as there was no one else in my office at the time I told him my trouble. And he laughed! Humph!

“The inhuman old shell-back laughed! And yet, if you'll believe me, when I heard the old chap rumbling at the other end of the wire, it cheered me up. I began to think, ‘Why he may have influence. He may get me a job.’ You see the vicious state of mind of the professional class! When I mentioned the possibility to him, he said, ‘I can get you a job all right. How'd you like to go to sea?’

“I nearly dropped the receiver when he said that. Go to sea! People in residential suburbs didn't go to sea!

“‘Eh?’ I said. ‘What d'you mean?’

“‘What I said,’ he bellows. ‘Go to sea.’

“‘I'll come round and talk to you,’ I said.

“I went round and found him in the office. He was a fierce old chap, burnt black with sun, and with hair grey as the sea. He was enjoying his life

apparently, bossing things in that office. But he told me at once that he could do no more than give me a chance to start at the bottom. I must work up and pass the Board of Trade tests for each grade. I give him credit for painting the picture as dark as he could. He even suggested I should try and get another draughtsman's job if I was afraid of going through the mill. But I didn't know enough to be afraid, and asked him off-hand when he would need me.

“ ‘ We don't need you,’ he said, as if surprised. ‘ We can get a couple of thousand young fellows to-morrow if we want them. It's up to you.’ ”

“ That was the first slap in the face. I sat there in that great gloomy vault of an office in Fenchurch Street, looking at the half-models of ships and a map of the docks at Monte Video on the walls, and wondering what I should do. I was not hesitating, you understand, because of pride. No, that was gone. My brother, when he saw Gladys home, had done for that. It was more like a fear gripping at me. I was scared at letting go of my professional easy-going life. I'd never been on a ship since I'd been born on one. I knew nothing about marine engineering. I hesitated because I was afraid.

“ ‘ When shall I start ? ’ I asked after a while.

“ ‘ The *Corydon's* in the river now,’ said my uncle. ‘ They want a Fourth : can you get down to-night ? ’ ”

“ ‘ To-night ! ’ I said. ‘ I've not given notice yet ! ’ ”

“ ‘ Phone from here,’ he says.

“ ‘But I’ve nothing packed,’ I whimpered. And he laughed.

“ I know now why he laughed. Partly because a landsman is always rather a comic figure to a sailor, partly because he knew how I had been brought up. He had never agreed with the theory of gentility which had taken such a hold of my mother. He was as out of place in his Surbiton home as a bear in a back-yard. His daughters, my cousins, couldn’t make him see the importance, in England, of gentility. When he and my father and all the rest of them had been boys on that New England farm, they had had to collect the stones off the land to build the houses with. No stones, no dinner. And now he had a house in Surbiton, and was laughing at me, who had never lifted a stone in my life. Even in the works where I was a pupil, we had always had a little private lavatory to wash and change in. He laughed at me. He believed one trip would be enough for me. He didn’t believe for a minute that I would stick to it.

“ But I was making up my mind. Somehow or other, in spite of my twenty-five years in cotton-wool, I had imagination enough to see in my uncle’s weather-beaten old face something that was not in the city faces I saw every day. He had come into London out of an alien world. Then, I argued, there are other worlds beside this one! I had not realized it before! All the time I was snug in my little job in Victoria Street men were out on the sea, out in the heat and cold and wet, living in a

totally different world to mine. You may think it a foolish and common enough idea, but to me it was dazzling, blinding. It took hold of me. I could think of nothing else. I said, 'I'll go, but I can't go to-night, I've nothing to wear.' So my uncle told me to go to Cardiff and meet the *Corydon* at Barry Dock.

" 'What's she like?' I said, standing up. He took me into another office and showed me a beautiful model of a steamer.

" 'There she is,' he says. 'That's the old *Corydon*. I commanded her for three years.' I can tell you I was pleased to think I was going to sea in such a fine ship. Humph!

" I went home and had a talk with my mother. All *her* ideas were capsized too. Here was her eldest son, the quiet, studious, respectable elder son, out of employment, while her harum-scarum disobedient Frank was getting three hundred a year and with good prospects. She was all bewildered by it. You can't blame her. She looked at me when I told her what I was going to do. 'Take plenty of socks,' she said quietly. 'You'll need them at sea.' And I suddenly remembered she'd done the very same thing I was to do, long ago; broken out of her life and made a fresh start—on the sea.

" And what had happened to me? You'll think I was a pretty cheap sort of a lover to let my brother cut me out so easy as that. You'll say I never really loved her. Who can tell that? Who

can say how much or how little he loves? Yes, yes, I loved her. But what, I ask you, is the use of a man mooning his life away for a girl who has never given him a minute's thought? It is a waste of time and energy and life. When that view of worlds outside of mine broke on me the love-trance broke. I said to myself: 'I am young; I will go out and see things. Well, I went out and I saw things, and I don't regret it. But there's one thing we never see again, and that's the illusion of first love.

"I begged my mother to say nothing to Frank about me until I was gone, and a day or two later I slipped away to Paddington with a couple of grips and took the train to Barry Docks. It will give you an idea of the quiet life I had led when I tell you this was my first long journey. I had been to places within one hundred and fifty miles of London, but never farther. I felt lost when they turned me out on the platform at Barry in the rain and dark. A sea-port is not a very attractive place to a landsman.

"The next twenty-four hours were strenuous for me. More than once I wondered if I could live through it. When I got to the dock I walked up and down looking for a ship that resembled the model of the *Corydon*. There weren't any. I asked a man in a blue frock-coat if the *Corydon* had come in.

"'Aye,' says he. 'Here she is, just abaft of ye,' and he pointed to a rusty, dirty old tub with

a battered funnel and a bridge all blocked with hatches. That the beautiful shiny *Corydon*? There was the name on her stern — *Corydon, London*. She was loading coal from a big elevator. Her decks were piled high with it, and where there wasn't coal there was mud, black oozy mud, and ashes and ropes and sappy hatches. I climbed up the ladder and one by one got my grips aboard. And I stood there in the rain, my gloves all black with the coal on the ladder, my nice mackintosh barred with it, and my boots slipping on the iron plates. No one took any notice of me. Men went to and fro in oilskins and shouted, but they didn't seem to see me. Just for a moment I thought of bolting! Humph!

“Finally I spoke to one of the men, saying I had a letter for the chief engineer. He took me round into a dark alleyway under the bridge-deck aft and shouted down: ‘Here comes the Second,’ he says. ‘He’ll fix ye.’

“Well, he came up, that Second did, not very pleased at being disturbed. ‘What is it?’ he says. He was grease from head to foot, as though some one had been rolling him in a sewer.

“‘I’m the Fourth Engineer,’ I said. ‘Oh, are ye,’ says he, ‘I thought ye were comin’ this mornin’. Better get a boiler-suit on and give a hand. We’re goin’ to sea to-morrow noon.’

“He took me along the alleyway and unlocked a door. ‘There,’ says he, ‘there’s your room. Ye share wi’ the Third.’ It was a smelly little

hole, and so dark I could scarcely make out the bunks.

“ I haven't a boiler-suit with me,” I said, and he looked at me. He was a younger man than I was, and I felt it would be strange to have to take orders from him. ‘ Oh,’ he says, ‘ you're about my size, I'll lend you one.’ I couldn't help thinking as he went into his berth next to ours, that if he was the Second and I was the Fourth, what on earth would *I* be like when we got to sea ?

“ And then he took me down below.

“ That was my introduction to my new career. No handshakes, no good night's rest—nothing. I got into the Second's boiler-suit and followed him down. We had to work all night. The Third was down there all the time under the boilers. He was an old chap ; must have been sixty, with a moustache that was dirty brown at the tips and grey at the roots, and a crease down each of his cheeks that was always twitching while he chewed. He was lying on his side in a puddle of water, a slush lamp close to his head, working a ratchet-drill into the shell of the boiler. I had to crawl in alongside of him and help him. *Me!* And I'd been writing ‘ fitters' instructions ’ in the office for three years. It was a come-down.

“ And yet, something inside of me responded to the call. Say it was romance if you like, say it was sentiment, say it was just foolishness. Something inside of me answered to the call. We worked all that night, patching that bad plate on the boiler.

The other boilers were under steam, so you can believe it was hot down under there. My hands were all soft with office work, and in the first few hours I got cuts all over them, and the salt of the boiler-seams got into them and made them raw. What a time it was! It wasn't long before I was as dirty as the rest of them. I forgot all about time or food or sleep; just fetched and carried as I was told. Once the Second, who was screwing the holes we drilled, asked me if I had been to sea before. I said 'No,' and both of them said 'Oh Lord!' I can't blame them now. I've said it myself since, when I've found a new starter on my hands.

"The Chief came down about three o'clock in the morning and looked through the hole in the boiler casing. He was a little man with a glass eye. 'Is the Fourth there?' he says, sucking at his pipe. 'Yes,' I said, and he raps out, 'Yes what?' Humph!

"When the patch was on we had to get the boiler filled and the fires away as soon as we could. I tried to get some information out of the old Third, but he just chewed and spat. When I asked the Second he says, 'Oh Hell, I can't stop to show ye now. Take a hand-lamp and go and see the run o' the pipes yerself.' I was nearly dropping for sheer sleepiness, but I made up my mind I would not give in. At breakfast time the Chief said we'd missed a tide and couldn't get away till midnight, and I thanked God. But it's a funny

thing about a steamer, that the more time you have the more work there is to do. We had stores to get stowed away, and as soon as that was done a steam-pipe split on the fore-deck and we had to go in the rain and patch it. I didn't know where things were; I didn't know the names of things; I didn't know how they should be done. I'd been a gentleman for six years, never soiling my hands except to clean my bicycle. When the Second said to me at tea-time, 'You'd better knock off and turn in. You'll be on watch to-night,' I began to realize what I was in for. I sat on the settee in our room and tried to think. No wonder my old shell-back uncle had laughed. My clothes were lying all round. I had no bedding, nor sea-gear, and I didn't know where to get it. Suddenly the door opened and the Chief came in.

" 'Haven't you a letter for me?' he says. I gave it to him. 'Captain Carville's nephew, I see. Coming for a trip, or are you going to stick to it?' I looked at him.

" 'I'm going to stick to it if it kills me,' I said. 'I'm here for keeps.' He nodded. He liked that.

" 'Got any gear?' he says. I said, 'I've got nothing except an extra suit and some pyjamas.'

" He told me to get washed and go ashore and buy some bedding. 'I don't know how you'll get on with that old Third,' he says. 'The last Fourth left because of him.'

" 'I'm not going to leave, sir,' I said. I wasn't

going back for anybody. I was going to find out something about life, right away from everybody I'd ever known.

“ ‘Bully for you,’ says he, and with that he went away. I went ashore and bought myself some gear, and by the time I got back it was eight o'clock by my watch.

“ Never shall I forget that night. I'd meant to write my mother and uncle and tell them I was all right, but I was too tired and worried. The old Third came aboard at ten o'clock with a skinful, and the Second was rushing round cursing me because there was nobody else to curse. The firemen were drunk and the donkey-man was drunk. And at eleven-fifteen the gong sounded for slow-astern. I stood by the telegraph and worked the handle, and do what I would I kept shutting my eyes. My God! I thought, shall I ever sleep again? The old Third stood near me, his eyes all bloodshot, the crease in his cheek working, his dyed moustache all draggled, his breath—Humph! He was cunning enough to pretend he was all right, helping the Second with the reversing gear. Now and again the Chief would come down and give an order, his glass eye fixing me in a queer way. I never got used to that glass eye. It wasn't part of him, so to speak, and it distracted one's attention. The Chief himself would be talking quite friendly to you, when you would suddenly catch sight of that glass eye glaring at you, full of undying and unreasonable hate. He would be roaring with

laughter at some joke, while all the time the glass eye seemed to be calculating a cold-blooded murder. It was strange enough in its socket ; but I tell you, when I ran up to call him for a hot bearing one night and he looked across at me with one bright blue eye and the other bloody-red and sunken, and I saw the glass thing staring at me from the dressing table—Humph !

“ At last, about one o’clock in the morning, we were outside, and he sent me up to see if the pilot had gone. Just as I stumbled up on the bridge-deck I saw the pilot going over the side, down a rope ladder. Oh, didn’t I wish I was going with him ! She was beginning to roll, you see.

“ And yet, though I was in the depths, so to speak, up to the eyes in it, as I stood there in the rain and wind, the sweat bitter cold on my body, I saw the coast-wise lights, and realised with a sudden jump of the heart what I was doing. I was out at sea. And I’d been born at sea. Twenty-six years in cotton-wool ! Can you realize what I had done ? Somewhere inside of me there was something answering the call. I was going back through toil and sorrow to my own. I was away at last. I went down again into the engine-room and told them that the pilot was gone. The Second says, ‘ Get yourself turned in, then.’

“ I could have put my head on his shoulder and cried for joy !

“ Well, I’ve said enough to give you an idea of the sudden turn in my fortunes. A week ago I

was in love, and comfortably tucked away inside a cozy corner of the professional class. My brother was a mysterious prodigal. Suddenly he butts in, and all is changed. He's snug and safe in a good berth, he's taken up the tale of his girls just where he left off, and I'm out at sea, Fourth Engineer of a rusty old freighter bound for a place I'd never heard of: Port Duluth, British Namaqualand. Well, let him marry her and be hanged! I thought; I'm out of that world. I was resolved not to go near London town till I'd worked out my probation on the *Corydon*. I saw that I was back in the Third Form at school again. I saw that my ship-mates knew nothing about culture or public schools or art or gentility. I saw they knew their business, and if I would be willing and quick to jump, they would teach it to me. My only real trouble was that old Third. If he'd only been a little cleaner in his habits! He would lie on the settee when he was off watch, the creases in his cheeks twisting, his blood-shot old eyes fixed on the toes of his red slippers and then—biff!—he would spit on the floor. But even that I could have stood if he'd been more cheerful. He never smiled, only creased his cheeks a little deeper. In time I learned why the last Fourth, a gay young spark of twenty-two, had fled out of the ship. This old Third, old Croasan his name was, didn't care what happened to him. His children were grown up and run away; he was too ignorant to get a certificate, and he was just waiting for a ship to go to the bottom

and take him with her. When the Second told me that I didn't believe him. I held, as most people hold, that even a man a hundred years of age will fight like a tom-cat for his life. But I found that the Second was right!

“ We struck bad weather as soon as we got into the Bay. The *Corydon* was loaded to her summer draught and here was a westerly gale coming on her bow, and later on her beam. She rolled day and night, shipping big seas all the time. This rolling washed the bilge water up on the plates in the stoke hold and lifted them, so that the small Welsh coal, like the Lehigh stuff you get here, was washed into the limber and choked the pump suction. Very soon the bilge began to fill. The old ship was leaking like a basket any way, and she took a heavy list to port. All my watch that night, from eight o'clock till twelve, I was on those bilge-pumps trying to make them draw, while the Chief looked after the engines. It was no joke, with her listed over like that, the platform under water and green seas coming down through the skylights. I thought of my pleasant home at Oakleigh Park then, the quiet autumn streets, the bright fire in the dining-room and the cosy warm bed. Oh yes, I thought of it, but not with regret. I was out to win through, and all hell wouldn't have made me desert!

“ At twelve o'clock it was pretty serious. The Chief had the Second out to help with the pumps and sent me to call the old Third. It was his

watch on the main engines, you see, twelve to four. Our berth was flooded. There was a couple of inches of water on the floor, and at every sea the water flew through the leaky joints of the dead-lights, all over old Croasan. To and fro on the floor my slippers were floating and a torn magazine swam into the room from the alley-way as I opened the door. The oil from the lamp was dripping on to the drawer tops, and every time she gave a deeper roll the light flared. I put the magazine under it to catch the drip, and as I did so I caught sight of a picture in it, a picture of two men standing on the deck of a ship in a storm. Underneath were the words, 'I think she's sinking.' Curious, wasn't it? That's just what I thought. I turned to old Croasan. He lay in his bunk just as he had come off watch at six o'clock, his dungarees shining with grease, his tattooed arms grey with dirt. He looked eighty years old as he lay there with his bald head against the bottle rack, the pouches under his eyes marking dark shadows on his creased cheeks. I shook him, and he opened his eyes for a second. I hardly knew what I was doing, I was so crazy with sickness and bruises and incessant toil. 'Mr. Croasan,' I shouted at him. 'Eh!' says he, without opening his eyes. 'Oh,' I said, 'I—I think she's sinking.' He opened his eyes for about two seconds and then said to me in a terrible voice just as a big sea crashed over our heads and the ports spurted, 'Let her sink and be damned!' he says and never stirred. I left

him there. I ran back to the engine room. I felt I couldn't stay and argue the point with a man who would not make a fight for us, for himself.

“The Chief decided to cut holes in the suction pipe just under the water-line. Then when the pumps sucked them clear, we bound them up with jointing and cut more holes lower down. Oh! it was grand! For fourteen hours we went on doing that, up to our shoulders in the bilge, the grease caking on us in a fresh layer every time we climbed out to get something in the store. The weather eased a little off Finisterre and we got her righted. We went up to the Chief's room to have a nip of whisky.

“‘Ye see,’ said the Second. ‘Ye see, mister, there's some as dinna care.’

“Old Croasan came out of the bunk when the trouble was over. I felt too proud of what I'd been through to be hard on the poor old chap, proud of being in the thick of it. I was seeing life at last. This was what I'd come for. ‘Ah,’ says the Chief, his glass eye fixing me over his whisky glass, ‘you'll be marked if you stay on the *Corydon*.’

“I was. It took that old box of misfortune thirty-two days to make Port Duluth. Every day we had some breakdown or other. She was like a good many other ships that fly the Red Ensign, worn out. But did I grumble? Not on your life. I looked at it as any man will who's got sand in him. It was a fight. There was no fighting in Victoria Street; it was simply riding through life

on rubber tyres. Books, art, comfort, philosophy, all these things are well enough; but the *Corydon*, the rusty, leaking, treacherous old *Corydon*, with her starting rivets and banging old engines, she was the real thing, the thing to mark a man and teach him what he's made of.

“Four voyages I made in her, each one worse than the first, I believe; four voyages across the line, but I stuck it and put in the necessary twelve months' service for my certificate. I only wrote short letters to my mother, just to let her know I was alive and fit. I was saving money and looking forward to a spell in London. All the other people I knew I let go. I realized I had only been an alien in that genteel professional world.

“And so, one day, a year after I'd set foot on the deck of that old ship, I said good-bye to the men I'd sailed with and took the train to Paddington. How strange I felt I can't explain. As the cab took me down the familiar streets and I saw the old familiar sights, I felt—well, you'll know when you go back! Something had snapped. I was in it, but not of it. I saw the young men walking in the streets, with their high collars and nice clothes, their newspapers and walking-sticks and gloves. What did they know? I'd been like that, just as ignorant, just as conceited and narrow-minded. And I thought of the *Corydon* and the blue tropic sea!

“I took a room at a hotel and went out to see my mother. I did this as a duty, mind you. If my

brother was there still I had no intention of staying long. There was no room for the two of us in the same house. And of course, I had a great desire to know if they were married. Humph!

“ I found my mother living alone. He was gone again! She, Gladys, was gone too. They hadn't been married, not a bit of it. He never had any intention of marrying her. It was very difficult to get the actual story out of my mother. She didn't know much, and she was reluctant to tell me even that. But I found out at last that she, Gladys, had followed him. Nobody knew where. He had given up his agency and started on a tour for some patent tyre company. And she, at the lifting of his finger, had gone after him.”

Mr. Carville paused and looked towards a figure coming into view on the path. It was Miss Fraenkel. I looked at my watch. It was twelve o'clock.

“ Miss Fraenkel is coming up to lunch,” I said to Bill. “ Will you join us, Mr. Carville ? ”

He stood up shaking his head and brushing the tobacco ash from his vest.

“ I'll look in afterwards,” he said, “ but I told the wife I'd be back to dinner. Pig's head and cabbage,” he added, smiling.

“ Where was she, all the time, Mr. Carville ? ” asked Bill.

He laughed and stepped down from the porch.

“ I will tell you this afternoon,” he said, and reached the side-walk as Miss Fraenkel crossed the street. He lifted his hat absently and passed on,

and she, pausing for a moment, gave him one of those swift and searching glances with which her country-women are wont to appraise us. She came on up to us.

“Why didn’t you come sooner?” said Bill, “we’ve been expecting you.”

“I’ve been getting signatures,” she replied. “Is that him?”

“Yes. He’s coming back after lunch.”

“Did you tell him that I want to get his wife to join?”

We were silent. We had forgotten all about Miss Fraenkel’s suffrage. She scanned our faces with an eager look in her hazel eyes. I made an effort.

“We thought,” I said, “we thought that perhaps you would be able to explain better than we could how——”

“Why, what have you been talking about, then?” she asked.

“We haven’t been talking,” I replied, looking at the little brass pilgrim on the door. “We’ve been listening.”

And then we went in to lunch.

CHAPTER IX

WE AWAIT DEVELOPMENTS

IF it were necessary to epitomise our attitude towards Mr. Carville during that lunch, it might perhaps be discovered in the one word "doubt." Without accusing him of intentional deception, he had certainly led us to believe that he would explain to us the many points of interest which his previous history had raised. We had felt quite sure that in the course of the morning we should learn of his meeting with his wife and the reasons which led them to make their home in the United States. We expected to have the mystery of the prodigal brother co-ordinated with the painter-cousin's story. We—but of what avail was it to grumble? He had set out to tell his tale in his own way and it was only right that we should permit him to do so.

In one thing I agreed with Bill and differed from Mac—the question of "Gladys."

"So her name's 'Gladys'?" said he, when he had brought Miss Fraenkel's knowledge up to date.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Bill. "Oh, no!"

"He said so," persisted her husband.

“No,” I said, “so far he has not mentioned Mrs. Carville.”

He came round to our view in the end, when I reminded him of the *scaldino*. Personally, the idea was incredible. When I thought of Mrs. Carville bending over the brazier, of her dark, noble face with its large tragic eyes, and then of the smart convent-bred miss who was called Gladys—absurd!

Miss Fraenkel remained faithful to her mission throughout the meal, and enlisted our sympathy by recounting the struggles of Mrs. Wederslen to capture the league for her own social purposes. It was an old story, this of the ambition of Mrs. Wederslen. Mrs. Wederslen seemed to think that in a community of artists the art-critic's wife is queen. Mrs. Williams had rebelled against this, and there was tension between them. Mrs. Wederslen had even made the insane experiment of trying to patronise Bill. There had been a meeting, a few words on each side, and the rest was silence. Without any definite verbal information on the point, Mac and I knew that Bill's tongue would be stilled in death ere she would speak charitably of Mrs. Wederslen. And here was Miss Fraenkel's piquant features aglow with a flush of indignation and her hazel eyes aflame with ladylike resentment, because that imperious woman was endeavouring to assert her sovereignty over the league. In the great problems thus raised it seemed likely that the smaller matter

of Mrs. Carville's allegiance might be swamped. I endeavoured to bring this discussion into alignment with my own imaginings, a common human weakness.

"But perhaps she's like me, hasn't got a vote," said Bill.

"Well," said Miss Fraenkel, "she may have some day. And anyhow, the great thing is to spread the light in dark places. We want every woman to know her power. Mrs. Wederslen——"

She began again. Mrs. Wederslen had done the one thing needful to rouse Miss Fraenkel's feelings towards her to the temperature of Bill's: she had expressed her opinion that civil servants should be debarred from political activity. In spite of my efforts, the conversation became sectional. Mac motioned me to join him on the porch for a smoke.

"What do you think?" he said, when he had lighted up.

"The time is past for imaginative forecasts," I replied. "It is obvious that Mr. Carville, having been tremendously interested in his own life, is determined to tell us all about it. Before lunch I hardly knew what to think, but now I feel fairly certain that he will bring us safely to the conclusion."

"There never is a conclusion to stories in real life," said he.

"Well, you know what I mean. He'll account

for the facts as we see them, anyhow. His wife, his brother, his living here, and so on."

"And Gladys," added Mac.

"Ah! I expect we've heard the last of Gladys. She was evidently an early flame, since gone out." I struck a match.

"I say, old man."

"What?"

"What a tale his brother could tell, eh?"

"Possibly; but perhaps his brother has not the faculty," I said.

"No. Here he comes!"

Mr. Carville appeared on the sidewalk, his Derby hat on his head, his corn-cob in his mouth. For a moment he turned, and, looking back, flung out his hand with a gesture expressive of petulance and dismissal towards an invisible person at his door. And then he came towards us sedately, caressing his pipe, eyes on the ground, and seated himself in the Fourth Chair in silence.

"I was wondering," he said at last, "if after all you'd just as soon I didn't tell you all this about myself and got right on to my married life. Eh?"

"Speaking for myself," I said hastily, "no! Please tell your story as you have it in your mind. Don't edit it. *I'll* do that."

He gave me one of his quick looks and smiled.

"Right!" he said, and shook himself straight in his chair. "I'll get busy. I've got to get the five o'clock train, and the wife—she said she'd have a bit of tea ready for me at four."

He sat at the far end of the verandah, the furred hammock tickling his ears, and he shifted the chair so that he faced north, looking towards his own house. As he opened his mouth to replace his pipe, Bill opened the door and led Miss Fraenkel out to be introduced.

It was a ceremonious bow with which Mr. Carville greeted her as he rose. He did not offer to shake hands, as middle-class people generally do, to their credit. He gave her one square look and then dropped his eyes, and I couldn't detect him even glancing at her again. He seemed to have made a brief examination and then dismissed her from his memory.

The problem of chairs was instantly solved by Bill. She opened the window and she and Miss Fraenkel sat inside. Mr. Carville studied the toe of his plain serviceable boot while these arrangements were being carried out. He sat motionless in the Fourth Chair, and I could not help feeling that the business of transferring Miss Fraenkel established Mr. Carville's inalienable right to his seat.

"Full speed ahead!" said Mac jocularly.

"I ought to explain," said Mr. Carville, "that as the years had gone by, my mother and I had ceased to have very much sympathy with each other's way of thinking. We had lived together, as was natural, but we had gradually lost sight of the career my father had outlined for me. And when I had lost my job in Victoria Street, really

that was the last link that snapped. I had no fancy for living in Oakleigh Park, especially after what had happened to Gladys. You can understand that.

“Another thing. I had become in a small way an author. Don’t imagine that I’m setting up myself with you, sir. Not at all. I understand, I hope, now, the difference between writing a book and being an author. It was this way. To me, breaking into sea-life so sharp and sudden-like, there were many things I noted that most men would never heed. I don’t heed them myself now. But then I did. And in port on Sundays, and sometimes at sea when I couldn’t sleep on the middle-watch, I’d jot down little thumb-nail sketches, you might call them, of the things I saw. ‘Cameos of the Sea,’ I’d put on the top. The whole thing wasn’t as long as some of the chapters in Gibbon’s ‘Decline and Fall,’ and, to tell you the truth, I had no great opinion of them. I only mention them because of what happened. I had the sheets tied up in brown paper in my sailor-bag.

“Well, I told my mother I wanted to live in London awhile, and as I needed to be within reach of the Board of Trade Offices until I had passed my exam., she saw no good reason for objecting. The next day, as I was walking up the Strand, one of those streets in London that I’ve never seen anywhere else, I caught sight of an old gateway at the end of a passage. There was

a date 1570 or something as old on the arch, and as I strolled in I remembered I'd called on an architect who lived there in the old days, when I was in Victoria Street. It was Clifford's Inn. I was looking round at the old houses and wondering if I could hire a room or so there, when a girl came down one of the staircases.

“Well, I didn't recognize her at first. I remember wondering why she jumped back when she caught sight of me. ‘Hullo!’ I said, ‘what are you doing here?’ ‘I live here,’ she said; and sure enough there was her name on the wall, bracketed with another one: *Miss Gladys Sanders and Miss Octavia Flagg*.

“‘You!’ I said. ‘You live here?’ She nodded and asked me if I would come up. We went up the dusty old stairs to the top floor, and she took a key from her purse and opened the door. I felt there was something pretty brazen about all this. This wasn't the sort of thing to appeal to Oakleigh Park, I was quite sure, and said so. ‘Oh, I've done with Oakleigh Park,’ she said, ‘and they've done with me.’ And then her friend, Miss Flagg, came in, a thin woman of about thirty-five, with a green dress and rather untidy hair. I said thin, but so was Gladys. It almost seemed to me, when I'd seen them a few times, that there was some fierce fire inside of those women, wearing them thin and showing through. Neither of them were beautiful; they didn't try to be. They just

lived for—what do you think? I'll tell you in a minute.

“At first I was all abroad at the sudden meeting. A minute before Gladys came down that staircase, if you'd asked me whether I cared for her I'd have said no; it was all burned up long ago. But now I'd seen her again, thin and sallow and changed as she was, it had all come back with a rush. Do you know that kind of love? It's because of the way it rushes back on you, knocks you down and tramples on you, makes you feel mean and degraded and ashamed, that I pray God it may never happen on me again. I like to think a man may never have it but for one woman. Sometimes, away out East, when I've been drowsing in a hammock, listening to the sweat dripping on the deck and watching the blue hills in the distance, it has come upon me. Sometimes in dreams I've seen her face clearer than I ever saw it in life. . . . You know them, perhaps? . . . Dreams so vivid that one's brain and body ache with the pain of it? Ah!”

He paused and none offered to speak. I sat facing him in some astonishment. There was to me something fundamentally shocking in a man making such a confession. If it had been dark so that the words floated to us invisibly; but in broad day! Perhaps more convincingly than anything else did this impress upon my mind Mr. Carville's deliberate intention to fashion for us a tale from the agony of his life, to give us,

with such art as he possessed, a picture of an obscure and alien romance.

“Miss Flagg, it seems, was a journalist, and Gladys—well, she was a journalist too, I suppose. From what she told me I gathered she did translations for different agencies, and earned a little that way. When I told them what I’d come in for, they said there was a flat in Serjeant’s Inn just round the corner, which was to be let furnished. I told them I was going in for an exam. and afterwards I was going to take my little papers to a publisher. Miss Flagg lit up like a bonfire at this, and says she, ‘I’m a literary agent. Do let me read it; I may be able to place it.’

“I looked at her. To my mind she didn’t seem the sort of woman who would understand the things I’d been writing about; old Croasan and the Chief with the glass eye, the firemen and all the rest of them. However, I said I’d let her have it if she liked. Gladys looked at me when I came out as an author. She’d never had any opinion of me, you see. She liked *clever* people, people with flash and glitter, who could dance and talk with a spatter about everything—like my brother. You can believe I wanted to know why she’d left him, if she’d ever gone to him. I said, ‘I thought you were going out when I saw you,’ and she took the hint. We went down again and out into the Strand.

“‘Is it any use?’ I said, and the big Law

Courts' clock boomed out over our heads. It sounded like NO in my ears.

"She shook her head. 'Quite impossible,' she said. 'Well, where's Frank?' I asked her.

"She didn't know. He'd dropped her just the same as he dropped anything else he had no use for, without a word. And I think it was shame more than because she didn't care for me that made her say it was impossible. I don't know—what is a woman's pride, anyhow? See how he'd treated her; worse than I'd treat my dog. And yet when he came back, flush with money and with flash friends, and he lifted his hand, she ran to him, *ran!* Explain it if you can. I can't.

"That was later. I got my flat and passed my exam. all right, and my uncle in Fenchurch Street said I could have a job as soon as I liked. But I thought I'd wait a bit. I was seeing London from a fresh angle, you might say; seeing it as an outsider, as an alien. I had about a hundred pounds to spend, and in a modest quiet way I enjoyed myself. The razzle-dazzle of London doesn't appeal to a man much, when he's been on the bend in seaports. Humph!

"And Miss Flagg took my manuscript and went crazy about it. She said she sat up all night to read it. Knowing what I do of women now, I think she was a liar. Besides, anyone could read it in two or three hours. The point is she told the publisher that lie, and he believed it. Her enthusiasm was contagious. He said it was fine,

and gave me ten pounds for it. Miss Flagg said it was a generous offer and raked off a sovereign for her commission. I often wonder how authors bear up under such generosity. But of course I know nothing about the business side of it. Only for a short time did I get bitten about the idea of being an author. I found I had nothing to say. Miss Flagg told me she knew a man who 'did fiction' at the rate of twenty thousand words a week. She might have lied, but then, how do I know? Anyway, I saw it wasn't in my line—'fiction.'

"You see, when I went to their flat and met their literary friends and heard them talking about their work, I felt out of it. I was an alien in their world. I had no interest in the details of book-writing. I'd just put down what happened to come into my mind. I wondered what they wrote about. Love, I suppose. I'd sit and look about me and try to imagine what those people would have thought of the old *Corydon's* engine-room. Humph! Do *you* know what those thin, half-fed men and women thought the most important thing in the world? Not husbands and wives and children, not war, nor even courage; not books nor pictures; nothing of this. No; they were wearing their souls out clamouring for a *Vote!*"

We sat very still. You could have heard a pin drop.

"There was Gladys. She was only nineteen,

and ought to have been helping her mother at home ; but no, she was emancipated, as she called it. Her experience with my brother taught her that the *Vote* was necessary. Miss Flagg told me that unless women got the *Vote* England would drop behind. They all said that. To me it was amazing. It showed me how far I'd travelled away from the old ideas. It angered me to see women acting like that, spoiling themselves, making themselves ridiculous and ugly, all for that !

“ I'd been home a couple of months, not more, when I began to get restless. My mother asked me why I didn't get a job on shore. But I couldn't see myself going to Victoria Street every day, clean collar and umbrella, sitting at a desk dictating silly little letters to silly little people. Those who wanted it let them do it. I went to my uncle and asked for a job. His eyes twinkled when he said, ‘ Well, the *Corydon's* chartered for the Mediterranean, and they want a Second.’

“ ‘ When shall I join ? ’ I said.

“ ‘ Oh, I was only joking,’ says he. ‘ We'll get you a better ship than that now.’

“ ‘ No,’ I said, ‘ I'll go back to the *Corydon*. I know her and she knows me. When shall I join ? ’ ”

Again Mr. Carville paused, and appeared to be lost in thought, oblivious of our presence. An expression of gentle earnestness had settled upon his face, almost melancholy. I imagined for a

moment that he was endeavouring to arrange his thoughts.

“I do hope,” he remarked, without looking at us, “I do hope that anything I’ve said hasn’t given offence.” He turned to us with a slight smile. “I mix up so little with genteel people nowadays—you see?”

I nodded vaguely, and he relapsed into thought again.

“I was thinking,” he observed presently, “as you are so quiet, I might have said something. I remember that was the way they signified dissent, so to speak. And—I wouldn’t like to offend—anybody.”

“Pray go on,” I said. “We are not genteel in that sense of the word.”

It was plain that, apart from any scruples concerning our gentility, he had some difficulty in picking up the thread of his story. It was a relief when he began to speak.

“I come now,” he said, “to a time that I hardly know how to describe. The next few years, taken together, were my *Wanderjahre*. You know Wilhelm Meister, of course? My apprenticeship was over, but I wasn’t a man yet for all that. There’s an intermediate stage, what we engineers call being ‘an improver,’ in a man’s life. It seems strange that I should speak of myself so at twenty-seven, but there it is; I was late maturing. Again, I like to think that the Dutch are right when they use the same word for husband and man. Until

he is married a Dutchman is not a 'Man.' That's how I looked at it!

"When I rejoined the *Corydon*, the Chief said the Second was going to stay on one more trip, but old Croasan was clearing out and I could go Third. I wouldn't mention these details, only they are important, because—well, you'll see.

"Old Croasan was going ashore when I joined. Didn't even shake hands with the Chief! I thought he was going home to the bonny Scotland he always shouted about when he was canned, but the Second says, 'Na, na. He'll never go back to Grangemouth,' and Chief says, 'He'll get a job all right, all right.' Well, I was busy enough with my own concerns, and, as usual, there was a-plenty to do on the *Corydon*; but one evening I was up at Cully's Hotel talking to Miss Bevan, when in walks a smart, tidy-looking man of, say, forty-five, and calls for a bottle of Bass. I wouldn't have given him more than a passing glance if he hadn't looked me in the eye. 'Eh, lad,' says he. 'Will ye have a drink?' 'Croasan?' I said. 'Ah, it's me,' says he. 'Ah'm away the morn in yon big turret.'

"I was that astonished I couldn't reply, and he drank up his beer and went out with a wave of the hand. Miss Bevan asked me if I knew him. 'Sure,' I said, 'but he was old and grey three days ago.' It was my first experience of a sea-faker. He'd been up to Cardiff, had a Turkish bath, hair-cut and shave, and the barber had

dyed his hair and moustache. Then he'd gone round to the offices and eventually got a job. Of course, the first green sea that went over him would add twenty years to his age, but he'd be signed on then. The Chief laughed when I told him. 'And you'll see him in Genoa,' he says; 'yon turret steamer's goin' there too.' I did see him. In a way, he introduced me to my wife."

Mr. Carville paused and struck a match. Bill's head appeared at the window.

"Oh!" she said, "I thought you were never coming to it!"

He proceeded, carefully putting the burnt match on the window-sill and blowing great clouds.

"The run to Genoa from the Tyne," he said, "takes a fortnight. It was during that voyage that I began to see how I stood with regard to Gladys. I suppose you read Ibsen? I used to, on the *Corydon*, and one of the most remarkable of his plays, in my opinion, is *Love's Comedy*. You remember the moral of that play was that a man should never marry a girl he is madly in love with. It sounds wicked if you put it that way, but old Ibsen had sand. He knew, as I knew, that a young man may be in love with a girl who is not suited to him. He knew that there isn't much difference between that sort of love and hate. He knew that you can have a contempt for a girl and her ideals and yet love her. That sort of love is like those big thin bowls they showed me in

Japan—beautiful, expensive and awful frail—no use at all for domestic purposes. I thought this out on the voyage to Genoa, and put Gladys, so to speak, on a shelf, where she is now. And as I thought it out, I saw how I stood. I saw I was not only an alien wherever I went, but I was alone. I began to be afraid. I used to look ahead and tried to see myself in twenty years' time, alone. It is not good for a man to be alone. That's how I felt when we reached Genoa.

“Those who know best often say that sailormen know less about foreign countries than many people who have never travelled. I daresay that is true of many of us. It is very likely true of any uneducated people who go abroad. Most men who go to sea have very little education. They have no knowledge of their own country, let alone others. To a certain extent I was different. I had always wanted to see Italy. Years before, when I was in Victoria Street, I had read about her history and art. I had even learned a little of the language. And so, when we came into Genoa, and I saw that beautiful city, with her white palaces and green domes and fort-crowned hills, when I remembered what she'd been, and saw what she was, I could hardly wait till nightfall to go ashore and see it all at once!

“Since then I've been to nearly every port in the Mediterranean, from Gibraltar to Smyrna and from Marseilles to Tunis, but I never experienced anything like that first night ashore in Genoa.

The next day the Chief asked me where I'd been, and I told him. 'Why,' he says, 'didn't you go into the "Isle o' Man" or the "American"?' No, I hadn't been in any of those places. He said they'd have to show me round.

"That night I went with them, leaving the new Fourth in charge, and I learned why sailormen know so little of foreign places. All along the Front, as they call it, were scores of dirty little bars with English names. I wouldn't mention them at all, only it is necessary in a way, as you'll see. We went into several and had a drink, and the Chief was known in them all. Finally the Chief says, 'Let's get on to the "Isle o' Man,"' and we went out and walked along the Via Milano a little further. The 'Isle o' Man' was rather bigger than most of these places, and had a very comfortable room with plush settees and marble tables shut off from the main cafe. It was kept by a big, heavy, red-haired woman, about fifty years old, who came in and sat down by the Chief and talked about old times. I found she was married to a steward in the Hamburg-American Line, who ran this show on the side. It was a mixed company in there, skippers of all nations sitting round and drinking; and a tall young chap, with a velvet coat and long hair, was playing a piano and singing songs. After every song he would come round with a tin saucer and collect pennies from us. I remember thinking how strange he looked. He had a noble face, I should call it;

he looked like a gentleman and spoke like one, and there he was, collecting pennies! I was watching him coming round to our table when a girl came in, a tall, dark young girl, with a tray of glasses. 'Hullo!' says the Chief, 'that's not Rosa, is it?' The old woman nods and says, 'That's Rosa all right, Chief.' And he called out to the girl to come over to us.

"She came at once. 'Here's a friend o' yours, Rosa,' says the old woman, and the girl looks at the Chief and smiles a little. 'Why, she was only so high last time I was here,' says the Chief. 'She has shot up.' 'Yes,' says the old woman, who was called Rebecca, 'she'll be a fine woman one o' these days.'

"They told me about her as we went back to the ship. No one knew who her parents were. She had always been at the 'Isle o' Man,' and sailormen had petted her because she was a nice little thing and would rap out a bit of slang without knowing in the least what it meant. But now, as the Chief said, it was a different matter. She was 'too big to kiss now.' One point in her history I was very interested in, and that was the fact that neither the Chief nor anyone else I ever heard speak of her ever suggested that she wasn't straight. I liked that. There she was, living among all the draggled, dirty seaport crowd, and yet the seafaring men that took their drinks from her believed she was straight.

"I was coming down from the theatre one

night about a week later, and I thought I'd look in at the 'Isle o' Man' for a drink before going aboard. There was a good few in there, Greek and Norwegian skippers; and a Belgian engineer was sitting across from me with old Croasan. The piano was going with *Little Dolly Daydream*, *Pride of Idaho*, when in comes Rosa with her tray. To get past she had to squeeze between old Croasan's table and the piano, and I saw him take hold of her waist. She was hampered by the tray, and he was pulling her down on his knee.

"I don't think it was all gallantry that made me do what I did. I'd never been a whale on that sort of thing. I'm not built on those lines. I think it was a feeling that has always possessed me very strongly when I see an old man with a young woman—disgust. To me it is a horrible sight, the lust of an old man. You can argue as long as you like, but that is one of my fixed eternal prejudices. I feel sick when I see an old man giving way to it. I feel that somehow or other he is debasing humanity. That was the real reason why I jumped up and went over to Croasan.

"He looked up at me as I stood over the table. I could see the crease in his cheeks, the sag under his eyes, and the grey roots of his dyed moustache. He looked up at me as I raised my hand. 'Let her go,' I said, shouting at him above the jangle of the piano, 'let her go, Mr. Croasan.' He was holding her down on his knee.

“ ‘Mind yer own affairs!’ he says to me, showing his teeth, great dirty yellow fangs; ‘Is she yours?’ he says. The Belgian engineer sitting near him laughed at this and looked up sneering at me. ‘Let her go,’ I said again. ‘Rosa’s a friend of mine,’ says he, still holding her. Just then I saw Rebecca’s head over the piano, and as I looked down again I saw a peculiar expression on Rosa’s face. Her eyes were on me and she seemed to be thinking ‘What are you waiting for?’ It all happened, you know, in two or three seconds. I waited no more. I put the flat of my hand across Croasan’s mouth, hard. He jerked back to avoid it, and the tray that Rosa was trying to set down on the table, so that she could get at him with her nails, went all over him. The old woman came round the piano and saw him. Croasan started up and I hit him again, and he fell over the Belgian.

“ At first I thought I was in for a big row. But Croasan had more experience than I had. He’d been in rows before. When he started up it was not to hit me, but to get out. He crawled under the table between the Belgian’s legs and ran to the door. The others were crowding all round me, arguing and shouting. The young chap at the piano was standing up and looking over the top, and Rebecca was trying to calm them. ‘Easy, gentlemen!’ she kept on calling. Rosa had disappeared. Then the Belgian jumped up and shouted, ‘Ee interfere wis my frien’!’ pointing at me, and marching out.

“When we got quiet again I began to explain to Rebecca what had happened. Do you know, I thought that was the real danger. I thought she would be the one to get on to me for interfering. Rebecca was a woman who looked more evil than she really was. She sat down at my table, and while I told her and the piano jangled away again, she kept patting my arm and saying, ‘Yes, yes, I know.’ What did she know? Why, the simple fact that Rosa was no longer a little girl to be petted, but a grown-up girl to be insulted. I learned a similar thing had happened once or twice in the last few months. You see, the girl was neither in one class nor the other. A young Genoese will not look at a girl who lives in those houses along the Front. He thinks they are all rotten bad. As for the foreigners she met in the ‘Isle o’ Man,’ I needn’t tell you what an average Englishman thinks of foreign women.

“I told the Chief about it next day, and he looked up sharp from his plate when I mentioned Croasan. He said hard things of Croasan. ‘Think of that!’ says he. ‘An old chap wi’ married daughters!’ ‘Huh!’ says the Second. ‘They’re aye the wurrs’t. But I’m glad ye punched him, mister,’ he says. ‘Many a time I’d ha’ done the same, only we were on articles. Rosa, too!’

“‘Ay,’ says the Chief, ‘but Rosa’ll have to put up with men clawin’ her now.’

“It was my intention, to avoid trouble and talk, to keep away from the ‘Isle o’ Man’ for the future, but

it turned out otherwise. I'd got leave from the Chief on Thursday afternoon to go up to the Cathedral of San Lorenzo to see the Holy Grail. They keep it in the Treasury there and show it on Thursdays for a franc. Most Englishmen laugh at these tales of the Church, and even Catholics I have met tell me they don't believe in miracles. I don't know why; I'm interested in them. Sometimes I get a glimpse of the state of mind in which they are reasonable and necessary things. The more we learn the less we know. They say that saints, because they led good lives and kept away from evil, were able to perform miracles. Why should a statement like that annoy anybody? Good is a power and evil is a power. Why deny it? I read a book the other day in which the author, a German with a name like a lady's sneeze, denies the existence of good and evil. Humph! It's a long time since I read Hegel, but I don't think he was ever as mad as that!

“I was coming through the church after quitting the sacristan, when I caught sight of a girl kneeling on the steps of the Chapel of St. John. I suppose you know that the Precursor is buried in this church? They show you a silver box with a chain round it, the chain that bound him in prison. There were other women in the church, but this girl was not in the chapel, only kneeling on the step outside. Women, you see, are not allowed to enter that chapel; on account of Salome, I suppose. I saw this girl kneeling on the step and

crossed over to see what she was doing. It was Rosa, saying her prayers. There is a difference between a Catholic and a Protestant praying. You may have noticed it. A Protestant shuts his eyes and thinks hard about the money he's making or the automobile he's going to buy. A Catholic plays about with his beads and chatters all the time while he's thinking of religion. Protestants are scandalized when they see how Catholics make a sort of rough-house play-ground of their churches—children playing on the floor during service even. They can't understand how Catholics manage to reverence a thing and yet not hate it. Englishmen always draw wrong conclusions about an Italian's relations with God. You see, most Englishmen feel about God as they used to feel about Queen Victoria. They respected her and felt she was necessary, but all the same they felt exasperated with her for being so particular at times! Humph!

“Well, Rosa looked up and recognized me, smiled and went on praying as fast as she could. I bowed. Of course I had my hat in my hand, so I had to bow. I saw her go red, and I thought I'd done something she disapproved of. I stood there hardly knowing what to do, and she bent her head to finish her prayer. She told me afterwards that it was the first time anyone had ever bowed to her. She turned red because she thought I was mocking her, and then, I suppose, with pleasure. That was the beginning of our courtship.

“Of course, in one sense, it was an unusual courtship. It happened to come about by a number of accidents. If I hadn't hit old Croasan she would never have looked at me, for I'm not a very conspicuous figure at any time. If I hadn't met her in the church just as she was praying for my soul, because I'd acted kindly towards her, I might never have seen her again. And so on, if—if—if. It was in that sense unusual. But in another sense I don't suppose there was ever a more commonplace affair than this of Rosa and me. If we'd lived in Brixton we couldn't have been more respectable! Humph!

“For some mysterious reason or other Rebecca took a fancy to me. Mind, I was only third engineer of the oldest tramp in Genoa. If I'd been Chief, then I could have understood her making a fuss of me. But I was Third. I have an idea Rebecca had seen better days. Now and again she dropped hints that pointed that way. She had a manner too, when she was sober, and had been cleaned up. The men who drank in her bar little knew how she was transformed when she dressed herself to go up town. They little knew, either, how very like the house upstairs was to houses in Brixton or Hartlepool or the Paisley Road. Middle-class people are the same all the world over. I expect they have fringes on their curtains even in Honolulu! Rebecca had, anyhow.

“The news made a bit of stir among the ships for a while as might be expected, and gradually

spread right through the Merchant Service. 'Rosa of Rebecca's was engaged to the Third of the *Corydon!*' By George, that *was* a morsel of gossip. Miss Bevan had heard about it in Barry; Polly Loo in Singapore heard it, the girls in the Little Wooden Hut at Las Palmas heard it. It went round the world, that Rosa of Rebecca's was engaged.

"For three years we traded as regularly as a mail boat to Genoa with coal, then across to Cartagena in Spain for iron ore and back to the Tyne. I was Second, of course, and I passed for Chief when my time was all in, just taking a few days off to go to Shields for the examination. I might have got another ship, but I was pretty comfortable by now. I knew my Chief and my engines, and I naturally wanted to keep on the Genoa trade as long as I could. In those days they took weeks to discharge, and so I used to have quite a spell with Rosa. She was never bothered with 'men clawin' her' as the Chief expressed it. I used to take her up to the Giardino D'Italia to listen to the band and to see the movies, or we'd take the Funicular up to Castellaccio and have a bit of dinner at a little trattoria near the Righi, where you can look out across the sea. I learned to speak the language pretty well, and it was my intention at first to settle in Italy. But Rosa would not hear that. She wanted to get away from the associations of her childhood. You may wonder who she was. So did I. I'm sorry to say that I have never found out.

“After all though, what does it matter? It’s natural, of course, for people to gossip and speculate, but what does it really matter? I thought at first the Chief was right when he said he was certain Rebecca was her mother. But Rebecca told me that it was her heaviest punishment that she had had no children. You can’t tell . . . To me at any rate it didn’t matter. In fact, to me there was a sort of satisfaction in being engaged to a girl who knew nothing of England, who was an alien like me; a sort of satisfaction in marrying ‘beneath me,’ as the saying is. It seemed to be paying out Gladys, and doing something that, if he heard of it, would annoy my brother. Humph!

“We were sitting on the bastion at Castellaccio one evening, and I was looking through the evening paper when I saw a little item of news that interested me. I can’t say I was surprised. A man like my brother makes you feel that you ought not to be surprised at anything he does. Moreover, I felt I had cut myself adrift so completely that in all probability I should never see him again. I was not surprised, only interested. My brother, ‘Mr. Francis Carville, an Englishman,’ was arrested at the tables at Monte Carlo.

“I thought to myself, ‘He’s done it now.’ He had. According to the *Corriera de Sera*, he had done it very completely. Meeting an English lady of high rank at Biarritz, he had represented himself to be a director of a big motor-car syndicate, and she had believed him even to the extent of giving

him five or six thousand pounds to invest. He'd invested it all right, at Monte Carlo. The paper went on to say that he was staking his last fifty-franc bill when he was arrested. In due course he would be taken to England under an extradition order.

“ In due course he was. The Press took no great notice of the affair because during his remand the public forgot it. The ‘ lady of high rank ’ desired the court to take a lenient view of it. Her name was not given out. I can imagine very well why she did not wish it to appear. I knew *my* brother. He had held up his hand and she had run to him. He got three years.

“ For us there was nothing to do. I wrote to my mother saying that if she wanted, I'd leave the sea for a while and live with her. My uncle wrote me saying my mother was dead. Shock, I suppose. I went to London from the Tyne and had a long talk with my uncle. He was terribly upset. He had seen my brother, but there was nothing we could do for him, he said. He was down and out, and he didn't care. It seemed a poor ending to our parents' fine dreams for our future ; him in gaol, me ploughing the ocean . . .

“ But, worried as my uncle was about my brother, he seemed absolutely staggered when I told him of Rosa. He had never dreamed I would do such a thing. He asked me where I was going to live, and I told him, ‘ certainly not in England.’ I said I would prefer myself to live in Italy, but Rosa

objected. He thought a bit and finally told me that the *Callisto*, running between Genoa and the River Plate with cattle and grain, would need a Chief soon and I could have the job. Poor old chap! He never denied I had a right to marry whom I liked, but he couldn't understand a Carville marrying a foreign woman who didn't know who her parents were!

"In time I joined the *Callisto* in Genoa. Rosa was glad when I told her about my new job. We agreed to wait a year or so until I was fixed in my job and then think about settling. She was a quiet girl always, and we had got accustomed to each other's ways and habits. That's one of the secrets of living with a woman. It isn't being just considerate. That's necessary of course; but what a woman does hate is being startled with some fresh habit or idea. It spoils her illusion that she knows all about you.

"Yes, she was a quiet girl and took me very much as she found me. Sometimes she would get a fit of curiosity about England and ask me about my family. Had I brothers, sisters? I didn't say anything definite. You can't, you know, in a case like mine. I told Rebecca just the plain truth, that I wanted to marry Rosa, and if she needed any reference write to Captain Carville, Superintendent of the Calydon Steamship Company. Nobody I knew on the ship or in Genoa connected me with the case in the papers. There are some, I know, who would never be able to keep such a

tale to themselves. There was a dare-devil glamour about everything my brother did that fascinates some minds. But I was cured of glamour. My experience with Gladys had filled me up with romance. It is too unsettling. It leads to—well, look at my brother. Perhaps there's some Puritan blood in my veins; but I feel that passion in itself is evil. I wanted no more of it. I wanted a quiet place of my own. Some day, I fancied, I might write another book. At night, when all ran smooth, I'd jot down odds and ends . . . I may use them some day. I shan't fret, though, if nothing comes of it.

“ I liked my new job. The *Callisto* was a much bigger ship than the *Corydon*, and more modern. Certainly cattle are very unpleasant cargo, and when we came into Genoa Harbour and the ship was being cleaned up, you could smell her clear away to the Galleria Mazzini! But at sea, on the long run south to Buenos Ayres, it was none so bad. I was looking forward to my marriage, you see. I was saving money and I was beginning to forget the past. It is easier for a seaman to do that than for anyone ashore. A sailor's past is all in pieces, so to speak. He can drop it bit by bit. But when you live ashore in one place, your past is like a heavy log that you're tied to and can't quit.

“ Anyway, one night in Buenos Ayres, when I went ashore to mail a letter to Rosa, I was in good spirits. I reflected that, after all, my

father's dreams of founding a family were not necessarily impossible. My brother's behaviour had nothing to do with it. I was going to marry Rosa. If we had children they would have a chance. But just as Rosa would not hear of Italy, so I was resolved with all my might against living in England. My children should never come under the influence of that gentility that had spoiled our early lives. For the old families in England who have been steeped in it for centuries, for men like Belvoir, for instance, I dare say it is an admirable plan. But not for me nor for mine. I had been writing about it to Rosa and I'd put at the bottom, 'America?'

"Another thing I wanted to do ashore was to call at the Sailors' Home and see if they could give us a Mess-room Steward. The young fellow who had shipped that voyage had deserted. They are always doing it in the Argentine. Wages are very high and they all think that they can do well up country. They sign on just to get their passage free. The ship was in Number One Dock, loading grain, and I walked across the bridge, up San Juan and took a trolley car along *Balcarce* to the *Plaza de Mayo*. It was a fine evening in September, quite cool after dark. I was rather pleased with myself, too. The boilers had opened up uncommonly well; the Second knew his work, and I had nothing to do but keep an eye on things in general. I posted my letter, and after walking up and down the *Avenida de Mayo* for a while,

went down to the *Parque Colon* to get a car back. The trolleys of Buenos Ayres are a bit puzzling to a stranger because the routes go by numbers. I knew nothing about the car I wanted except that it had the number 'Forty-eight' on the bows.

"The *Parque Colon* is a large place running parallel with the Number Three Dock, full of big trees, and the avenues through it are rather dark. Considering how close it is to the busy part of the city it is lonely. Men had been found on the seats—dead! I daresay you have heard of Buenos Ayres. Like any other city where money can be made quickly, like London, like New York, Buenos Ayres is full of crooks. I believe they do their best to keep the place clean, but at that time it was pretty bad. The Skipper warned me to carry a revolver whenever I went ashore. Personally I'm against firearms. You generally find, after a row, that the dead man had a revolver in his hand. Unarmed strangers are not often touched.

"Number Forty-eight was a long while coming. Car after car came down the steep incline of *Victoria* and turning round eastward rumbled off along *Paseo Colon*. I walked a few steps down one of the dark avenues and sat down on a seat to finish my cigar. It was like walking into a dark room. I could hear the roar of the city, yet at the same time I could hear some local sounds plainly. A musty smell came up on the breeze from the river. Suddenly I heard the long deep note of a steamer's

whistle: the Mihanovich Mail Boat leaving for Monte Video. I sat there quietly, thinking of nothing in particular, just glancing up now and then to note the numbers of the trolleys. At the sound of the whistle, though, I fell to thinking of Mihanovich. What a romance that man's life must have been! They tell me that about forty years ago he'd landed in that place, a Russian Pole, ignorant of the language, without any money or friends, a low-down beach-comber. And here he was, a millionaire. Every tug on the river has his big M on the funnel. He had fleets of steamers, mines, railways, banks; and he was even tendering for the contract of the new docks the city wanted. No wonder others came to make their fortunes. No gentility needed to make *him* succeed. And thinking of him, somehow I began to wonder if my brother might not make good out in the colonies say, some distant part of the world. Some time before this my uncle had told me that Frank had been released. Good behaviour had reduced his time to about twenty months. Surely, if he started in some place where they didn't ask too many questions he might get another chance. And I hoped so. I had no malice against him. He was one of those who can't keep their nature down; women were the curse of him. Well, perhaps prison had changed him. My uncle had said that he was 'changed,' but that might be for the worse. And just when the old chap was deciding to pay the passage out to New Zealand—

buy him a ticket and see him on board—my brother had vanished again.

“Mind you, the interest I took in the matter was, you might say, purely dispassionate. I turned the case of my brother over in my mind as you might turn over the problems of a book you are half through. I’m not sure that at the moment when I was interrupted I was not smiling at the insane life he had led. For me, in spite of my sea-going business, life was settled, sedentary, monotonous. You can blat if you like of the romance of the sea, you may call it picturesque, but you can *not* call it melodramatic. Personally I dislike melodrama. I dislike violent passion of any sort. I was thinking of all this and, as I say, smiling, when I heard tip-toes behind me, and before I could turn round I felt my throat held between two hands and my head pulled sharp over the back of the seat.”

Once again Mr. Carville paused, opened his little brass box and took therefrom his piece of twist. With meticulous precision he pared and pared the required amount for his pipe, and began to roll it between his palms, his eyes fixed reflectively upon the geranium tubs. He had pushed his hat back a little, and above his steady grey-blue eyes there shone a pink unruffled brow.

“Once or twice in my life,” he went on, “I have had a severe shock. Let me explain what I mean. To a man brought up as I had been, in a genteel way, he gets unaccustomed to physical violence.

At school fighting was barred very strictly. In the works we pupils had no need to speak to the men at all. The first time I was ever struck was when I was a pupil. One of the apprentices thought I had been at his tools, came up and hit me a terrific blow on the chin. To anybody used to fighting it would have been nothing. It made me ill for a week. Of course, at sea I'd grown a good bit harder, but I'll never forget the first time a fireman went for me. There was always with me a feeling of outrage so to speak, a feeling not at all towards the man who struck me, you understand, but against myself, against a world that had made me what I was, soft and unskilled. That seems to me a peculiar weakness in our genteel civilization. You go along, for years perhaps, living a quiet, orderly, intellectual life, protected by law, by the Army and Navy, by the Police and by all 'the conventions of good society,' and then suddenly a man comes up and gives you a punch on the jaw! A very weak place in our civilization, I think?

“It seemed to me that my throat was held for a long time, in that grip. As a matter of fact it could not have been more than a couple of seconds. But it seemed long. It seemed to me as though the pressure, which was choking me to begin with, increased and increased. The power of it was not like the power of a machine, but evil, personal, spiteful. I remember I shut my eyes. I remember hot breath on my face. And then I remember a blank. In my memory it is like a space between

inverted commas, without anything written. A blank. . . .

“ My head had slid down against the back of the seat, my knees were all cigar-dust, and my hat had fallen off, when I opened my eyes. I heard someone say, ‘ Sit up, for God’s sake ! ’ and I tried to do as I was told, to ‘ sit up for God’s sake. ’ Somebody was sitting beside me, pulling at my shoulder. Now and again I heard him say, ‘ You damn fool ! ’ He was angry with me then. I wondered what I’d done to make anybody angry. I tried to think. I’d been sitting on a seat in the *Parque Colon*. Very good. Why was I a damn fool ? I decided to argue the point with this chap. I struggled up and felt for my hat. I heard him say, ‘ Listen, you fool ! ’ There he was again. Always a fool. Then he said, ‘ Well, *look* then, if you can’t hear, ’ and he struck a match and held it before his face. Humph !

“ He pinched the match between his fingers and we were in the dark again. He said, ‘ Well, Charlie, old man, that was a near squeak for you, a damn near squeak. What the devil d’you go sitting round a place like this for ? ’

“ I remember being very much amused at this. He was actually angry with me ! He had nearly choked the life out of me, and he was angry with me ! I had nothing to say. My tongue seemed glued to my teeth. I brushed my hat and began to look for my cigar. What I was really looking for was my wits.

“He went on talking. ‘Charlie,’ he says, ‘I’m desperate. I’m down and out. For God’s sake give me some money? What are you?’ he says, ‘what are you doing here? I thought you were a sailor. You look prosperous. Give me—lend me some money, or I’ll have to take it.’

“While he went on like this, sometimes threatening, sometimes whining, I was collecting my faculties. The feeling that some one had wrapped copper wire tight round my neck was going away. I found my cigar. I struck a match, and by the light of it I saw my brother again.

“Yes, he was down and out. He had not had a shave for a week, his hat had been picked off a rubbish-heap, his trousers were muddied and torn at the knees, his coat was buttoned up to hide his black hairy chest. He had no shirt. He was down and out.

“I settled in my mind what had happened before I spoke. This brother of mine had apparently made an exception in my favour. He had crept up behind me with the deliberate intention of strangling me and picking my pocket. Seeing my face he had decided that he could pick my pocket without strangling me.

“The curious thing was that I had no feeling of anger towards him. What filled me with a sort of panic was the fact that my brother had come back into my life. I hadn’t realized it so plainly before, but he scared me. I suppose he saw something of this in my face, for he says, ‘Charlie, let bygones

be bygones, old man. Help me make a fresh start !’

“ ‘Hold on,’ I said. ‘The last time I saw you, Frank, you had bags of money. You had my place in the house——.’ ‘Oh, dry up!’ he says, ‘never mind what I had, look at me now. Charlie, look at me. I’ve walked every foot of the way from Rosario. I’m broke, cleaned out, desperate. I’ve nothing to lose.’

“ ‘You never had,’ I told him. ‘What do you want me to do?’

“Well, what do you think he asked me for? Nothing less than fifty pounds. He seemed to have a mania for fifty pounds. He couldn’t demean himself, even in that state, to make it less. You might say he thought in fifties. ‘Good God, man!’ I said, ‘do you think I’m made of money?’ ‘You look prosperous, Charlie. Give me what you have and I’ll take the rest to-morrow.’ ‘I’ll do nothing of the sort,’ I said. ‘Here’s my car.’ And a Number Forty-eight came down Victoria. ‘Is it?’ says he. ‘It’s mine too, then,’ and he follows me up to the track.

“When I had sat down in the car I began to think. I didn’t know what to do. Evidently my brother had been so absorbed in his own life, so indifferent to anything that had happened to me, that he didn’t even know what I was. That didn’t prevent him asking nearly three months’ wages of me, though! Now, if he saw me go down to the ship he would never let me alone. He sat there

in the car near the door, his hands hanging over his knees, his head bowed to hide his chest, the paper ticket twisting in his fingers. That my brother! It came to me with a sudden shock, a spasm, that, as usual, right was on his side. I *couldn't* leave him like that. And yet what could I do? If I gave him money he would only prey on me again. Never mind: it was my duty to aid him. When the car stopped at the end of *Paseo Colon* I had made up my mind. I dropped off and waited in the dark shadow of the buildings opposite the *Parque Leyema*. He came up to me. I could see his lips trembling and his hands clutching. 'Charlie, don't you play me false, don't you play me false! My God, Charlie, I'll kill you—I'll do something with you, if you play me false.' It was like a child in hysterics. I didn't realize it immediately, but that was just what was the matter with my brother—hysteria. 'Easy,' I said, 'where can I take you? I'm not known here.' 'Take!' he says, 'to your own house of course.' 'Listen,' I said. 'Do you hear what I say?' He nodded. 'Well,' I went on, 'I'm the chief engineer of a steamer in yon dock. If you come down with me, don't forget there's a sentry with a rifle on that bridge we've got to cross, there's two more patrolling the quay, and there's another armed watchman on board. And Frank,' I added, 'when a man runs here, they shoot. They find out if he was a criminal afterwards. Understand?' He looked down on the ground, his shoulders

moving in a sort of convulsion. 'Come on,' I said.

"He followed me like a shadow over the bridge, along the quay and up the gangway. The watchman saw us come aboard, but otherwise the dock was deserted. My room was on the starboard side, the second door in the alleyway. I looked along and down in the engine-room. The Fourth was down below reading a novel on the bench by the dynamo. All the rest were still ashore—up at the *Bier Convent* or the *Apollo*, I suppose. I opened my door and Frank stepped inside.

"'Now,' I said, shutting the ports, 'you're safe.'

"He sat sideways on the settee, shading his eyes with his hands. Now that I saw him in the cold glare of two thirty-two candle-power lamps, he was awful. I took off my coat and set to work. From a drawer I took out a suit of underwear, socks, a suit of blue dungarees, a flannel shirt, an old cap and a pair of bluchers. I rolled these up in a big bath towel and handed them to Frank. 'Frank,' I said, 'listen.' He nodded. 'See this key? It fits the bath-room. The bath-room is the last wooden door in this alleyway. Go down there, open the door, take the key with you, lock yourself in, switch on the light, have a bath from head to foot, put these clothes on, roll up those rags in the towel and bring them back. If you meet anybody take no notice, act as if you belonged. Here's some soap.'

"I looked up and down the alleyway—no one

there. Up and down outside the watchman slouched on the iron deck. Down below was the drone of the dynamo and the wheeze and whine of the Weir pumps. 'Go on,' I said. 'Mind, the last wooden door on the right. Don't go round the corner. Understand?' He looked at me for a moment and then flitted away down the long iron tunnel. I saw him poke about with his key, his body all crouched, the white bundle sticking out behind him. And then he vanished, and the door, heavy teak, slammed.

"I went into the mess-room then, to get some food. The steward as a rule left supper out for the juniors on duty, but as our young fellow had deserted I had to get the joint out of the pantry and carve some cold meat myself. I remember wondering what the Fourth would think if he came up and found the Chief nosing round the provision locker. There's a certain dignity, you see, that you mustn't lower before subordinates. However, he was too busy reading down below. I got a big plate of sandwiches and a slab of currant cake and went back to my room. I had a neat little mahogany dumb-waiter near the settee and I put it up and covered it with a linen towel. I spread the grub on it, and alongside of it I put a flask of whisky and a syphon of soda. I got quite interested. I had no idea of what to do with the man when he was washed and fed and clothed. I got down a box of cigars and set him alongside of the whisky. After all, he was my brother. I thought of the 'lady of high

rank.' If she'd seen him as I saw him, she would have been satisfied. What would Gladys think of him? It may have been wrong, but I was rather pleased with myself. I was tickled to be able to help my brother. I knew that it was risky. I had no right to bring him aboard. I sat down to wait, when I saw that I'd forgotten to tie up my canary, and I was hunting for the calico I used at sea when the door opened and my brother came in with a rush.

"It almost seemed as though soap and water had had a magical effect on him. Literally, he wasn't the same man. His arms and legs stuck out of the dungarees, his hair was still damp and hung between his eyes, and his big hooked nose was dark red with towelling. He stood there, his hand on the brass knob, looking at me pinning a piece of calico round my canary.

"He looked at the little dumb-waiter spread for his supper and passed his hand over his face. 'Charlie,' he says, 'I must have a shave first. The pangs of a guilty conscience,' he says, 'are piffle compared with the miseries of a beard. Have you a good razor?'

"I had in my room a fold-up wash-stand and shaving-glass. I opened it and pointed to the razors. 'There's no hot water,' I said. 'No hot—Why Charlie, you don't expect a chap to shave in cold, do you. Good God, man!'

"I give him credit for any amount of admiration for my little arrangements. I got out a little

tripod spirit lamp with a copper-kettle that Rosa had given me ; he was delighted. ‘ ’Pon my soul, Charlie, you’re an ingenious devil ! Fancy you living here all so snug and I knowing nothing about it ! Like Noah in his Ark, ’pon my soul.’ When he began to lather he kept up a running fire of remarks, mostly insulting. ‘ And what are you here, old man ? Admiral ? Lord High Muck-a-Muck ? They put you up a jolly sight better than they did me in the second cabin of that infernal liner I came over in. Heavens ! Old Uncle Christopher wanted me to go to New Zealand. He was cracked about New Zealand ; dippy, ’pon my soul. When I asked to see the manager of the affair, you know, the Skipper, they showed me an underbred brass-bound official called a *Purser*, who said he’d put me in irons if I wasn’t civil. Oh, this world has some bounders in it, Charlie, my boy. What do you get here, Charlie ? Pretty good screw, I suppose ? ’ And so he ran on. When he had finished spilling the talcum powder all over the floor, using my brushes for his hair, he turned round and looked over the provisions.

“ ‘ Frank,’ I said, ‘ when you’ve had something to eat and drink, I’ll have a talk with you.’ ‘ With pleasure, my dear chap,’ says he. ‘ But what a meal ! Mutton and sandwiches, cake and whisky. Is this your usual feed, Charlie, may I ask ? No wonder you look dyspeptic.’ ‘ We’re out of pheasant,’ I said. He looks at me and bursts out

laughing. 'Charlie, my boy, I wonder how much you really will stand.' 'I'll tell you presently,' I said, and went on smoking.

"Dyspepsia didn't scare him much. He went across my dumb-waiter, eating every crumb, drinking every drop of the whisky and soda. Then he took a cigar, snipped it in his big teeth and held out his hand for a match. And then—he was sitting on my red plush settee, while I was in my arm chair—he swung his feet up and lay back on the cushions, puffing the smoke up in great clouds. 'Quite a reader!' he says, waving his cigar towards my book-case. 'You were always a chap for worming.'

"'Frank,' I said, 'we've a long account to settle. Somehow or other we've always been antagonistic. Why?'

"'How do you mean?' he says.

"'What have I done to you, that you should be always turning up and queering my pitch?'

"'Oh, you mean Gladys,' he says laughing. 'No,' I said, 'I don't mean Gladys particularly. I mean everything. Every time we come together you do me a bad turn.'

"'How can I do you a bad turn now?' he inquires blankly. 'I don't know,' I said, 'I don't know.'

"'I can tell you how you can do me a good turn, old man,' he says, sitting up. 'Can't you get me a billet, here? Just to get home, you know.'

"'We don't go home,' I said. 'We're on a time

charter between here and Genoa.' 'Oh, that'll do,' he says. 'I can go home from there easily enough.'

" 'I can give you a fireman's job,' I said, 'or a greaser's.'

" 'A greaser's!' he says, his eyes sparkling at me. 'You say that to me, Charlie——' 'Easy,' I said, 'if you shout you'll have some one in here. All the jobs I can give you are inferior. You have no rating on a ship, Frank. I've had to work five years or more for this job. Your automobile engineering is no use to you here, you know. You're down and out you said just now.'

" 'Yes,' he said, 'that's a fact. I must be humble and take anything. Anything, Charlie.' 'Well,' I said, 'I can give you a light easy job as steward here for the engineers. If you hustle round you can pick it up. You'll have to swallow all your pride, you know, as I did when I came to sea. You'll have to make beds, tidy up the rooms, lay the table, wash dishes. Will you do it? The last one has just deserted. I was going to get one to-night if I hadn't met you.'

" He lay on the settee a long while, smoking and looking angrily at the books in the case.

" 'Mind,' I said, 'this is on condition that in Genoa you clear out and leave me in peace. It's on condition you sign on under an assumed name. I've a position here. If it was known—you understand. I'm the chief engineer and it might cause trouble.'

“ ‘Charlie,’ he says at last, ‘you’re a good chap and I’m a rotter. I’m a bad egg, a rolling stone, flotsam, garbage, punk, anything you like that smells to heaven. I hate myself sometimes. It’s hate of myself that makes me desperate. But, give me this chance. Perhaps a sea-voyage will brace me up. Genoa, you say? They speak French there, don’t they?’

“ ‘No,’ I said, ‘they speak Genoese.’ I couldn’t help being a little sarcastic about that. ‘But you’ll find they speak English at Cook’s office.’

“ He looked at me for a while, his big eyes blinking through the smoke. He was thinking, I suppose. There’s no doubt he has a remarkably active mind. I could feel he was taking in the situation. Suddenly he put his arms up and stretched, his feet crushing against the end of the settee.

“ ‘Charlie, my boy,’ says he, ‘I’ll winter in Italy, that’s what I’ll do. It’ll be a change after Rosario,’ he says.

“ ‘You can do as you please,’ I told him, ‘when you’re paid off.’ ‘Until then, you’ll have to do what the Second Engineer tells you. Understand?’

“ ‘Oh, yes, Charlie, I’ll be as humble as dirt,’ he says.

“ Well, he was. I sent him ashore with a few Argentine dollars to get a bed for the night, and the next morning he comes down to the ship, as meek as milk, and asks the Second for a job. I’d told the Second about him, saying he’d been recommended to me by people ashore and so on.

I can't say I was very sanguine about the experiment. About the time in port I mean. At sea I had no fears. I knew that the discipline of the sea would be more than a match for any brother of mine.

“I began to wonder, as the days went on, what had become of the man who had sprung up and nearly strangled me that night. It almost seemed as though there was some mistake, as though my brother had vanished into the night and some other beach comber, with a big nose and dark eyes, had applied for the job. Never by any sign did he let on that he had seen me before. When I took him to the cabin for the Skipper to sign him on, he gave the name of Frank Freshwater, without batting an eyelid you might say. When he'd gone out again the old man says to me, 'Looks as though he'd been a gentleman, years ago.' I said I believed that was the case, which was the reason folks ashore wanted to help him. 'Ah,' says he, blotting the articles, 'I expect he'll run off before we sail, Chief. These gentlemen are slippery customers.'

“My brother didn't run off. Perhaps my pity for him was thrown away. Perhaps he'd been a waiter in some hotel—he never told me anything definite about his life. Anyhow, he soon got into the way of doing the work of Mess-room Steward. It was wonderful acting. 'More tea, Frank,' I'd say, and he'd jump for my cup—'Yes sir, yes sir.' It got on my mind. Sometimes when I was sitting

in my room smoking and reading, I would hear him behind me setting something straight, making the bed perhaps, filling the water bottles, or cleaning the brass-work on the door. He'd never speak to me unless spoken to. If I said, 'Frank, how are you getting on?' he'd say, 'Very well, thanks,' and go out. I would sit there, wondering what had got hold of him. Was he pulling my leg?

"And at sea it was just the same. I expected a change at sea. Not a bit of it. In a way, you know, it's a lonely life I had at sea. It must be, on a ship where there's brass-edging and rigid discipline. The Skipper would take his walk up and down the bridge deck, and I would take mine up and down the awning-deck aft. And having the curious thing locked up in my breast, so to speak, it got on my mind. It sounds strange, but I began to wish my brother would speak to me. I began to recall how, when he was a little chap with long brown curls, he would bawl and storm because his bricks fell down. After all, we were brothers, eh? This politeness of his was too glaring. I felt that if he were to drop in in the evening, after eight bells say, I would let discipline slide enough to have a chat. But no! It was he who stood on his dignity. He would stand there at meals, watchful of my slightest want, watchful of everybody's wants, never saying a word, rigid as a statue. When his work was done he'd disappear into his own room, which he shared with the Second Cabin Steward in the port alleyway, and I wouldn't see

him again until seven bells in the morning, when he'd come in with my tea, open the wash-basin, draw the water, set the towel, light the spirit-lamp, lay out my razors and say, 'Twenty past seven, sir.' Me, his brother!

"It gave me an insight, more than anything else could have done, into my brother's character. I saw that his failure was not due to weakness, but to strength. He went his own road. He had his own morality, his own code. Indeed, he almost convinced me that perhaps for *him*, Good and Evil didn't exist. I used to wonder what he was thinking about while he stood waiting on us, listening to our engine-room gossip, our talk of ships and the sea. Most of it must have been Greek to him, of course. If I stole a look at him, he would glance round the table, as though I had asked for something. It got on my mind.

"Twenty-five days of that sort of thing was big enough. A better mess-room steward never shipped, the Second said. Even the Skipper, just before we reached Genoa, remarked to me, 'That gentleman of yours is shaping very well, I hear.' The Mate told me the Head Cattleman said he believed that mess-room steward was a toff of some sort who'd got down on his uppers for something. Everybody noticed that my brother had the way of it. Nobody ever imagined me to be a toff. Humph!

"As we came up the Gulf of Lyons I was thinking of seeing Rosa again, and so perhaps I gave less

attention to Frank. But just as usual, the morning we arrived, as I was sitting in my room about five o'clock, waiting for the stand-by gong, he came in with coffee and toast. 'I suppose you're for the beach now, Frank,' I said. 'Oh yes,' he says, 'as soon as I'm paid off!' 'You've done a damn sight better than I expected,' I said, and stopped because he was looking at me in a peculiar way. He drew the bunk-curtains close, shifted the mat straight and went out. Humph!

"I was busy for a good while down below after we were tied up, for the Second was scared of a bad place in one of the furnaces. When I came up and sent the Third to call Frank, he came back and said he'd cleared out. 'Went ashore with the Old Man, sir.' Well, I thought, he'll be down to say good-bye, I suppose. I turned in, so as to be fresh in the evening for Rosa.

"It was a beautiful night at the end of October. Genoa is always beautiful to my mind, but that evening it was *La Superba*, as the citizens call it. Right round the bay the harbour lights twinkled, and up above the lights of the city seemed like a necklace of diamonds, hung against the night. As the boatman rowed me ashore I felt satisfied with myself. I was going to see my girl, and if I thought of my brother at all—well, I'd done the right thing by him. I wished him well. I intended, since he had made good, to give him some money to get home to England in comfort, if he wanted to go. Yes, I was very pleased that night.

“It wasn’t long before Rosa and I were in the trolley car that runs along the *Via Milano* up to the *Piazza de Ferrari*, where all the cafés and theatres are. I bought tickets for the *Verdi* and then we went to *Schlitz’s*, a big German restaurant in the *Via Venti Settembre*. I like restaurants, you know. Old Sam Johnson wasn’t so far out when he voted for a tavern. That’s one thing this country can’t either import or invent—a tavern. They have the same name; every public house is called a cafe; but what are they? Simply *pubs*.

“We were coming up the *Via Venti Settembre* again to the *Verdi*, under those arches, when I saw my brother. He was standing by a little table set out by the kerb where an old woman was selling lottery-tickets. It used to be as much to the Italians as horse-racing is with English people. The evening papers had the winning numbers in the stop-press column. I saw my brother put down a bill, and the old woman gave him a bunch of tickets. And then he looked up and saw us.

“I ran right into trouble, you know, this time. Somehow or other, I’d forgotten Rosa. I didn’t simply not try to avoid him, I waited for him to come up. It seemed only the right and proper thing. He came up, lifting his cap. He’d bought a suit of clothes and a pair of those long-toed foreign boots, but he still had the old cap I’d given him. Those clothes fitted him well, I remember, but he was a well-made man and easy to fit. The

coat had a waist to it, and he was a fine figure of a man as he came up.

“I got a sort of panic at the moment he spoke. ‘I’ll see you to-morrow. I’ll see you to-morrow,’ I said, and tried to draw Rosa away. She looked at me in surprise. ‘Who is it?’ she asked me in Italian. ‘Never mind,’ I said. ‘Come away.’ ‘I’ll see you to-morrow.’

“‘Why, Charlie!’ he says. ‘You aren’t going away without introducing me, surely.’

“I was in a cleft stick. All of a sudden the memory of what he had done with Gladys had rushed over me. I pulled Rosa away. ‘To-morrow,’ I kept saying to Frank. ‘See you to-morrow.’ He didn’t understand, apparently; kept up with us, his lottery tickets in his hand, trying to look into Rosa’s face, and she hanging back looking at him. In this way we came up to the *Verdi* doors, and I started to go in.

“Women are obstinate sometimes. Rosa kept looking at him as he walked beside her, and before we were inside the vestibule he had explained that it was strange I wouldn’t introduce him, seeing we were brothers. She looked at me. I couldn’t deny he was my brother. All I could do was to say, ‘Go away, Frank, go away!’ But he didn’t go away. He stood beside us in the crowd in the vestibule looking down at us, laughing, and talking, absolutely at his ease. As usual he was putting me in wrong before some one I knew. ‘Why,’ he says, ‘even that silly blue-nosed old bounder of a

captain of yours has given me a good character. Come on, Charlie, be a sport. 'Pon my soul, Charlie, I never knew you were much of a man with the girls. Sly old dog, eh? Going to sea all this time and spotting all the hot-house fruit, eh?'

" 'Frank,' I said, 'this lady is my future wife.'

" He fell away from us in his surprise, looked from Rosa to me and back again, quick, like a bird, and then burst into a roar of laughter.

" My brother Frank is one of those men who simply cannot believe in women. They honestly do not believe a virtuous woman exists. They strike you as vicious and coarse, these men, just when they are trying to be most charming. To my brother women were hot-house fruit. You can't blame such men altogether, because women themselves foster the idea. They act more like lunatics than sane people. Their heads are turned. No, you can't blame the men entirely.

" My brother was perfectly sincere when he burst out laughing at me. He didn't believe me for a minute. The idea of my 'walking-out' with a young lady in Genoa was comic. It was of a piece with all the rest of my damn foolishness. I never attempted to explain my feelings to him, and I don't suppose he understands to this day the terrible pain his laugh gave me. You can realize, when I'd been known to Rosa so long, that it would.

" My brother, somewhat to my surprise, left it at that. He threw up his hands, still holding the lottery-tickets, and turned away. We went into

the theatre, and when we were fixed in the *poltrone*, seats where you can have a little table brought to you for the drinks and ices. I was able to explain something of my brother's record to Rosa. Everything I told her about him interested her. Compared with my own history it was a story of adventure indeed. She would ask questions to lead me on. 'What did he do then?' When I told her simply that I'd met him 'down and out' at Buenos Ayres, she was so sorry. The mere trifling fact that he'd robbed one woman and swindled half-a-dozen others didn't matter. Of course I couldn't tell her the details of Gladys' story—he had me there! And I wouldn't lower myself to sneak of him, how he tried to choke me. After all, I believe that was a mistake. He wouldn't do that to me knowingly. So that you see, when you come to look at the tale I told Rosa, what wasn't downright pathetic and unfortunate was romantic and daring. Rosa was a quiet girl, but she swallowed that story like a Charlotte Russe. We didn't quarrel over the matter, but I could see she was thinking of my brother, a fine figure of a man, by the way.

"I am quite sure now, after all these years, that it was what we would call just a passing interest. All women have their sudden romantic likings for strange men who catch their imaginations. I remember taking tea one afternoon in the house of a friend on Clapham Common. His sister, a middle-aged woman, and a friend of hers, middle-aged too, entertained me until my friend came in. These

two women, fat and forty, could talk of nothing else for some time but a wonderfully nice 'bus-conductor they had spoken to coming back from Richmond. 'Oh, he *was* such a nice man!' they said, and then they'd look at each other. I was younger then and slightly scandalized. Women are queer. I suppose in a week they'd forgotten his very existence; but at the time, 'Oh, he *was* a nice man!' So it was with Rosa. Frank had filled her imagination, as he always did; but if she had not seen him again it would have passed like a mist.

"I don't blame her, nor even Frank, now. It was a tragical accident, and very nearly wrecked my happiness. You may say I ought to have left him in Buenos Ayres. I thought so at one time; but I believe now it would have made no difference. We were bound to meet some day. It was fate.

"I saw Rosa home and went back to the ship. The Old Man was going aboard just as I came to the gangway and asked me to go down and have a drink in his room. He was very excited about some lottery-tickets he had bought. Skippers and chiefs go in for these things a good deal. One captain in that employ won a cool ten thousand dollars in Bahia Blanca. It was the thing to do. Up in the agent's office the clerks would talk over the lottery drawings, and each skipper would be anxious to do the same as the others—you see? Well, my Old Man had bought fifty tickets. He was full of a system by which he picked them.

Every third one, then every third one again. A mad idea! I thought of my brother waving his bunch, thought of his picking them up without even looking at the numbers. I said to the Old Man, 'Cap'n, you haven't a single good number. I expect the man who's got the lucky one is up in the city now.' 'Why, how do you know?' he said, passing the soda. 'I just feel it,' I said. He was worried about that. Gamblers have the most peculiar notions.

"Well, he sent the third mate ashore just before tea to get the *Sera*. 'Come on, Chief,' says he, coming into my room where I was washing, 'let's go through the numbers. I'm just crazy to prove you wrong.' 'Where did you buy them?' I asked. 'Outside the *Verdi*,' he told me. We went through them. I read out the numbers of his tickets while he compared them with those in the paper. His highest number was some two hundred thousand, two hundred and fifty-one, I remember. And the last winning number in the paper was that same number of thousands, two hundred and fifty-two. He dashed the paper on the floor. 'Darn!' he says, 'why didn't I take one more. Think o' that, Chief!' What was the use of thinking of it? 'I'm not surprised,' I said, 'though it is aggravating.' Humph!

"Half way down that splendid new street, one of the finest in Europe, the *Via Venti Settembre*, and not far from Schlitz's Restaurant, is Bertolini's Bristol Hotel. Rosa and I were walking down

past it that night, on our way to *Acquasole*, where there was a band, when Frank came out. A cab stood at the kerb, and he was making for it when he saw us and bore down on us. He was dazzling. He had a big ulster and he was in evening dress. 'Now, Charlie, my boy, this is the limit. I was coming to see you. Come and dine with me at the *Roma*,' and he dragged us to the cab.

"Yes, his luck was back. He'd picked up the winning number, the one the Old Man had left. Ten thousand francs! He wasn't going to wait for the State to shell out. He just went to the Russian Bank in the *Piazza Campetto* and discounted the ticket for cash. In one flash he'd earned more than I earned in a couple of years. Yes, he was going to winter in Italy, he said. Naples, Rome, Florence, Bologna, Venice; then Paris and London. Before I knew what I was doing I was standing outside of the *Roma* watching him help Rosa out of the cab. He carried things with a rush. Nothing too good for him. This was his natural element, luxury, excitement, whiz and snap. What a man!

"Again, I say, I don't blame Rosa. What girl wouldn't be fascinated by such a man? I had never realized before how charming a man could be. What had I to offer a woman to compare with him? In a few hours he had picked up enough Italian to patter with. Rosa spoke English, it is true, but what jokes he got out of his Italian! How he talked! There was I, just as I am now, blue serge

and rather a plain little man, nothing special anyway. I was forgotten. The waiters took no more notice of me, than if I'd been a portmanteau. And yet in the bank I had much more money than Frank. Ah! but he was flashing it. Didn't they run!

"I tried to have it out with Rosa as we went down to the *Via Milano* that night. Perhaps I was unreasonable. Perhaps I showed jealousy—a foolish thing to do. We parted rather cross with each other. You see, I'd never spent money like water on her. I was saving to have a home.

"I had rather a hard day following. The boilers had to be gone through, and that's a job I never leave to the Second. The boilers are the vitals of a ship. I don't care what happens in the engine-room so long as my boilers are all right. And so I was a bit late getting away at night. I went along to Rebecca's. Rosa was serving in the cafe, and I began to grumble to Rebecca. I told her that if necessary I would pay for some one else to do that work until we were married. Not that the chaps annoyed Rosa now that she was engaged, but I didn't like the idea of it. Rebecca said Rosa was doing it of her own accord. She said she didn't know what had come over the girl. Rosa came upstairs, and when I told her not to go into the cafe, she said she'd do as she liked. She said she didn't want to go out that evening; would rather stay at home. We had words . . .

"I left in a huff, I suppose, and went back to the

ship. I felt badly used. The Old Man came along to my room and spent a couple of hours telling me how that chap who'd been in the mess-room had won ten thousand francs. There were all sorts of frills to the story as he knew it. One of the clerks at the agent's had told him that the man was an English milord. That was a bit of my brother's cleverness. He had registered at the *Bristol* as Francis Lord. Of course the papers had made the most of it.

“For two days I never went ashore. I was annoyed at Rosa. You know, these little tiffs are inevitable, though I must say we'd managed without them up to this. I said to myself that when she wanted me again she could have me. The mood lasted two days. I began to get anxious. I couldn't rest. After all, we were engaged. The ship went home for survey next voyage, it was rumoured, and I had promised Rosa we should go together. I put on my shore-clothes and went up to Rebecca's. I went in to have a drink first, intending to go round to the private door afterwards. Just as I sat down Rebecca came in and saw me. She beckoned me to come inside. We went upstairs. ‘What's the matter?’ I said. ‘Rosa!’ says Rebecca. ‘She went out this evening to meet you, she said, and she's not back yet.’

“For a moment I couldn't quite see the drift. Perhaps I'm slow. But then I realized what might have happened. I took my hat and ran

downstairs. Outside a carriage was crawling past. I jumped into it and told the man to drive all he knew to the *Bristol*. It's a stiff climb, but those two horses tore along the *Principe*, past the station, through *Piazza Caricamento*, up *Via Lorenzo*, full tilt. I jumped out and ran into the hotel and asked for the manager. I described my brother as well as I could. 'Yes, yes,' he said, 'that would be *Signore Lord*.' He had just paid his bill and gone. He was to get the *Twenty-fifteen* for Milan. The commissionaire said the *Signore Lord* had driven to the *Brignole* station, though he had been advised to go to the *Principe*, where he could get a better seat. I gave the man a franc and bolted out again. '*Stazione Brignole*,' I told the man, and away we went. The '*Twenty-fifteen*' would be there in about ten minutes. Five minutes later I was in the dreary, half-lighted, bare-looking waiting-room. There was only one person in sight. It was Rosa."

Mr. Carville paused and raised his head. We became aware of some one calling. I turned and beheld Mrs. Carville standing, her hands on her hips, at her door. She was calling to her husband in a clear, strong vibrant voice. With a slight shrug, he rose.

"*Si, si, Rosa*," he replied equably, and then to us he smiled and, raising his hat, set it well over his eyes. He looked at his watch.

"Gee!" he said, "I must be off. I'll have to

finish the yarn another time. Good day to you."

Looking down at his boots for a moment reflectively, and pocketing his pipe, he stepped down and walked sedately towards his house.

CHAPTER X

ANOTHER LETTER FROM WIGBOROUGH

FOR a few moments we sat still, oblivious of the flight of time. The afternoon sun threw long shadows across the road. Mrs. Wederslen flew past in her automobile, inclining her haughty southern head as she sat, erect and dominant, behind the steering-wheel. The rumble of the trolley-cars came up on the still air from the valley. My friend and I looked at each other and knocked out our pipes.

I do not think that, had we been left to ourselves, we would have broken the silence for a long time. Mr. Carville's retreat had been so sudden that we could scarcely realize he was gone, that we might not see him again for perhaps two months. Time was needed, moreover, for us to adjust our feelings towards him, to comprehend fully the peculiar circumstances that, while we had been listening to the story of Rosa, she herself had been in the next house. We had to connect the Genoese maiden with the reserved and taciturn neighbour who had given us food for so many conjectures. Nor would our resentment against Mr. Carville, for

breaking off so abruptly, have taken the form of speech all at once. We were too dazed. We wanted to think. We would not, I say, have broken the silence for a long time ourselves. But Miss Fraenkel's temperament was different, and in this case surprising.

With Miss Fraenkel silent thought, I imagine, is not a habit. With her to think is to speak. The effervescent enthusiasm of her nature makes speech indispensable. I do not believe that, during the two-and-a-half-hour recital of Mr. Carville, Miss Fraenkel had any coherent thoughts. More than any other women the American woman avoids the cooler levels of intellectual judgment. In one moment she stands, nude of the commonest knowledge of a person or a thing. In a moment more, and she appears before your astonished eyes, panoplied in all the glittering harness of a glowing conviction. Minerva-like, her opinions and beliefs spring full-armed from the head and front of her great Jove Intuition. Logic, says the ancient platitude, hangs by the end of a philosopher's beard; and an American woman would as soon grow hair on her face as admit reason to her soul. Therein, doubtless, lies her charm, her artless allurements, her enigmatic manner, her astonishing success.

Something of this was apparent in Miss Fraenkel as she leaned out of the window and met our gaze with delighted eyes.

"Isn't he just won-der-ful?" she chanted.

“ You enjoyed it ? ” I asked.

“ Oh sure ! But listen. I’ve got a plan. Why can’t you two make it into a book ? It ’ud be perfectly lovely ! You know, Mr. Legge, you’re quite an artist, aren’t you ? And Mr. Pedderick here, he does some writing. Oh I’m sure you could do it ! You know . . . ” Miss Fraenkel made a pause luminous with bright glances, “ a picture of those two, in the cafe having a dinner ; a real kissing picture. I’m sure she would look so sweet ! ”

Mac and I kept our eyes resolutely upon the tops of Manhattan. I doubt if either of us were qualified to deal with such a situation. Mac had been told before by approving natives, that he was “ quite an artist,” and I knew how he relished such patronage. And a lady in California had blandly inquired of me if I “ went in for reading ” much. We were inured to this. We might even have made a joke of it and faced Miss Fraenkel unflinchingly, had not the thought struck us almost at once, that Miss Fraenkel’s plan had in it the elements of feasibility. Bill, rising to put the kettle on, uttered our unspoken thought.

“ Ah ! ” said she, “ but what’s the end of the story ? ”

“ Why sure ! ” faltered Miss Fraenkel. “ They get—get married ! That’s the end of every English story, isn’t it ? ”

Bill cackled from the kitchen, artlessly and shrill. “ ——and lived happy ever after ! ” added

Miss Fraenkel, with radiant unwinking hazel eyes.

She went away after tea, to her pew in the gaunt wooden Episcopal Church in Chestnut Street, rapt in a felicitous dream of romanticism. It was nothing to her that Mr. Carville had poured diluted vitriol upon some women who clamoured for the vote, nothing that he had barely deigned to notice her existence. Once aware that he essayed to be a spell-binder, she accepted him with utter *abandon* in that rôle. She permitted him to bind the spell; and as she walked with short quick steps along Van Diemen's Avenue, her brown head held high and unswerving, I could not refrain from the fancy that she moved as one in a trance.

It was a disappointment to us that we heard the whistle of the five o'clock train before we realized that Mr. Carville was on board. The sound was the one thing needful to set our mind and tongues free to talk of him. So potent had been his atmosphere that, to be honest, we had been unable to apply judgment to his case. When we gathered at dinner the discussion was in full and amiable swing.

"It is very difficult," I said, "to distinguish the fact from the fiction, not because he is extraordinarily skilful in 'joining his flats,' but because he is so absorbed in the story himself that it would be quite inconceivable to him that anyone would *not* be interested. He has evidently never imagined

such a contingency. Such ingenuousness is more than uncommon. It is sublime.”

“How about your theory that he is an artist?” argued Mac. “He can’t be both conscious and unconscious of his art.”

“Yes he can,” I replied. “All great artists are. Mind, I don’t pretend that Mr. Carville is a great artist. I merely state the fact that he has one of their attributes. I account for it this way. We have here a man of undeniable powers but limited ambition. At certain periods in his life he has been crossed by his remarkable brother, a man whom we now know to have not only brain-power, but will-power. This brother has impressed himself upon our neighbour’s imagination. You noticed almost admiration in his voice at times as he spoke of his brother? It has been his whim, therefore, to accentuate as much as possible the difference between them. He has, moreover, cultivated the habit of reticence. Thrown by his profession among men of shrewd wit but imperfect delicacy of mind, he has kept himself to himself. In the course of years it has been almost necessary for him to speak. I can imagine him, a man of quick perceptions, and no mean gift of expression, finding silence becoming an agony. Much brooding has bitten the real and fanciful details of his life into his mind. He has, quite by accident, discovered in us a singularly acceptable audience. Without conscious premeditation he has told us his story. Every narrator of the most trivial incident

can induce you to listen for something naïve and individual in his utterance. Most of us disperse this quality over our days. Mr. Carville has secreted it, distilled it to a quintessence, and the result is—well, something in his tone and manner quite unusual.”

“Yes that’s all right enough,” assented Mac, “but I still don’t quite see how his brother couples up with that chap Cecil wrote about.”

“Well, I don’t either,” I replied, “but you must remember that Mr. Carville has told us so far only of the past. In his narrative he is not married. That must be at least eight years ago, a long time in the life of a man like his brother.”

“I’ll write to Cecil,” said Bill suddenly, with one of her flashes. “Wouldn’t that be a good plan?”

“Excellent!” I exclaimed. “We ought to have thought of that before. He will be tremendously interested.”

This was a true prophecy. Some three weeks later, on a day in the middle of November, we received a bulky letter with a Wigborough post-mark on a two-cent stamp. The excess, I recall, was nine cents, gladly paid by me while Bill was tearing off the end of the envelope.

“Yes,” she said, scanning the sheets quickly, “it seems to be. Here——”

We adjourned to the studio. Mac seated himself before a half-finished cover for the Christmas Number of *Payne’s Monthly*, Bill took up a leather

collar-bag destined to be Cecil's Yule-tide present, and I began to read.

“ High Wigborough, Essex.

“ MY DEAR BILL,—Many thanks for your jolly letter. I write at once to tell you how awfully interested I am in what you tell me. It really is a most extraordinary thing, though as you know it often happens. On the very day your letter arrived I met Carville again! Without any warning I heard the chuff-chuff of a motor in the lane, and saw him walking up to the door. I asked him in, of course, He sniffed and coughed a good bit, because I was biting a big plate, and the fumes are pretty thick even with nitric acid. He wanted to know all about what I was doing. Of course I explained, asked him to sit down and have a drink, and for a time we got on very well. I said I supposed he was touring, and he remarked :

“ ‘ Oh, no. I'm living down here just at present.’

“ ‘ What, broke again? ’ I asked laughing. He looked at me in that fiery damn-your-eyes way of his and then joined in the laugh. ‘ No,’ he said, ‘ experimenting. I've taken up flying.’

“ He said it just as you might say, ‘ I've taken up tennis.’ He gives you the impression that if he remarked that he had taken up cathedral-building or unicorn-breeding, you would believe him. A most remarkable man!

“ I said, ‘ Oh, I've heard something about your people, I believe, Carville,’ and took up your

letter. He put his whisky down on the floor (he was sitting in my low window seat) and glared at me. 'At least,' I said, 'funking you know, I see it's the same name.' And I went on to tell him how I'd been so impressed with my first adventure with him that I'd written to you about it. He held out his hand for the letter. I just sat and watched him. He read the whole thing rapidly, his eyes going back again and again to some parts of it; and then he gave it back to me.

" 'So that's where he is, eh?' he said and smiled. He took out a pocket-book and made a note of the address.

" 'Who,' I said.

" 'Charlie, dear old Charlie,' he said, 'I haven't seen him or heard from him for years.'

" 'Then it is your brother?' I asked. He nodded.

" 'He always was a bit of a duffer,' he said. 'What's N.J.?' he asked suddenly.

" 'New Jersey,' I replied, 'in the United States.'

" He shut up his pocket-book and said no more about it. Cool, eh? I wanted to ask him no end of questions about his past life, but didn't care to. He was ready enough to talk of his experiments though, and asked me to go over to Mersea Island to see his shop. 'Thanks, I will some time,' I said. 'Come now!' he rapped out, and that was what I did. Took the plates out, washed my hands, and scarcely remembered to stopper the acid-bottle. Away we went, tooling through Peldon

at about seventy miles an hour. He is certainly a superb driver. Down our lane that big car of his brushed the hedge both sides, but he never slackened at all, either in his speed or his conversation. He had several wealthy people interested, he said, and he was going to do something really big in the flying line. We were nearly flying at the time. Of course there aren't many people about this part of Essex, but it really was risky. He said this London-to-Paris and London-to-Manchester business was all 'tosh,' he was going to beat that all to fluff. We crossed Mersea Island, turned in at a five-barred gate, and rushed up a hundred-yard plank-road that he had put down.

"It is a curious place he has there. A big shed of creosote-boards and felt roof, in the shape of a letter **L**, and at the side a small lean-to affair where he lives. One leg of the **L** is a workshop with an oil-engine to drive it; the other is for his plane, and opens at the end on the plank-road. As we came up a tall chap in a yellow leather suit all smeared with oil came out and I was introduced to his friend D'Aubigné. Can you believe it, old girl—D'Aubigné and I were in Paris together! He had a thing in the Salon the same year as I did, but having money he chucked Art and went in for motoring. We fraternized at once. It shows you what a small and sectional thing fame is, for while he had never heard of *me*, I was equally ignorant of his tremendous importance as an authority on aerial statics. Never heard of aerial statics before,

for that matter! Carville seemed quite pleased I knew D'Aubigné, and showed no hesitation in turning me over to him.

“ Well, I went all over and it was really very interesting. The position seems to be this. D'Aubigné has tons of ideas and patents and can make no end of improvements in aeroplanes, but he has no nerve. Several times he told me, he had had narrow squeaks. Now Carville, so D'Aubigné says, has a head like a gyroscope. He doesn't know what fear is. Seeing what I had of him, I can quite believe it. So having met some years ago in Venice (D'Aubigné seemed frightfully amused at something that had happened in Venice) when Carville suddenly found himself able to command a large capital, he had D'Aubigné over, and between them they are going to boom a new long-distance machine. D'Aubigné's admiration of Carville almost amounts to worship. He told me that when Carville went over his place at Avranches, he spent about ten minutes looking over a monoplane, and then climbed into the seat. 'Set it away,' he said. D'Aubigné was perplexed. 'This won't carry two,' he argued. 'No,' said Carville, 'I'm going to try it by myself. Set it away.' I have told you how domineering he is. D'Aubigné started the engine, and so he says, crossed himself. Carville was off, and in another minute he was heading for St. Malo. D'Aubigné says some of his volplanes were agonizing to watch. When he turned he went out over the sea, but it seems

this was not because he was afraid of falling, but because he wanted to get a nearer view of a steam yacht riding off Granville. He came down on the shingle and smashed the thing badly, but he was busy studying the wreck when they came up to him. It never occurred to Carville to cross himself. D'Aubigné is a big yellow-haired Norman, and his eyes fairly goggle when he gets going on Carville. Personally I believe they've both been bad eggs in their time. When I spoke to him of your letter he pulled down the corners of his mouth and wrinkled his nose. 'Ah!' he said, 'It's quite possible. Many things happen to men like Carville. You know he was in the war with the Boers?' I said, no I didn't, and he told me that Carville had rushed to South Africa, just as thousands of others had done. He, however, had the devil's own luck; saved an officer's life, a man in the Imperial Yeomanry, named Cholme. Cholme was a pal of Belvoir's at Charterhouse. It seems Cholme gave Carville a letter to Lord Cholme, in case anything happened, you know. Something did happen and Cholme was killed at Spion Kop. Carville never got a scratch. When he came home he took the letter to Lord Cholme, and the old chap told him to ask what he liked. The old man is a pretty rough employer (he owns *The Morning*), but he had a royal way with his son. Carville said he didn't want anything, but might have a favour to ask some day. Well, it seems it was an interview with Cholme that he was after when I met him in

Huntingdonshire, but he has his own ideas of the way to do these things. He approached Lord Cholme, not with a begging-letter, but with a proposal to finance this aeroplane scheme. Cholme jumped at it, D'Aubigné says.

"We were standing in the workshop watching a young chap fitting a piece of a new engine, when we heard the roar of the aeroplane. Carville had started his engine before opening the doors. It was deafening. We got outside just in time to see him leave the ground. He made straight for the sea. D'Aubigné says he always does make straight for the sea. He may come back from over Dengie Flats or St. Osyth, but he always makes for Gunfleet and Kentish Knock Lightship at first.

"D'Aubigné went into the drawing-office where he works out his calculations and all that, and he got out a flask of Benedictine. Over this, he told me some rather startling things about Carville. D'Aubigné knows nothing about the girl you say is called Rosa, but in addition to a dozen other more shadowy creatures, he says there is a Gladys not far off, a thin girl of about thirty. Of course, D'Aubigné is a Frenchman and takes the French view, but it certainly seems to be a fact that Carville makes a hobby of women.

"Since then I have seen him frequently. Sometimes he and D'Aubigné come over to tea with me, and if I would let them they would take me for long spins across England. They work in spurts, and

then shut the place up for a day and tear round the country. Once I heard the roar of a car and looked out in time to see Carville rush past, and there was undoubtedly a girl with him. Once, too, I saw him in the air, far away over Layer Marney, going towards Colchester. D'Aubigné says their machine will be ready soon. As far as I can make out, whatever they do, *The Morning* is to have exclusive information.

“Do you know, it suddenly struck me that an aeroplane lends itself extraordinarily well to etching? Carville missed the plank-road one day in landing, and I saw the machine lying with a list in the field near a rick. I made some notes, and when it is finished I'll pull a proof and send it to you. I fancy it will be rather good. In the clear transparent afternoon light of a late October day, with the rick behind it, the great vans sprawled out over the hedge, the corrugations of the engine, the thin lines—— Do you see it? I think very highly of it. An aeroplane has a personality, like Carville.

“Well, now you must send me news of your side. I wish I could tell you what he is going to do, but D'Aubigné says that is a secret. One thing he has told me, and that is that they are going to fit the machine with a wireless telephone so that he can talk to *The Morning* office while he is flying. Wonders will never cease!

“I like Mac's colour prints. The effect of the sky over the steamer is quite topping. Where

painting in oil on a copper plate seems to fail in the detail. The colour spreads so. The red port light of the vessel is much too large. However, I shall certainly spoil some paper trying to out-do Mac.

“ Kind regards to all. Write soon,

“ Yours ever,

“ CECIL.”

As I folded up the sheets and thrust them into the envelope, Mac looked across at me. Seeing that I had no inkling of his thought he remarked with some slight irritation :

“ Wonder when the deuce that chap’s coming back ? ”

“ Where’s he gone ? ” asked Bill, holding up the pocket-book to see the effect.

We did not even know that.

“ Oh,” I said, “ Mediterranean, I suppose.”

To us the Mediterranean is a far-off beautiful dream. We sat trying to visualize for ourselves the incredible fate of visiting the Mediterranean as we might take the cars for Broadway. I heard Bill sigh softly. Mac’s voice, when he spoke, was gruff.

“ I’d ask the kids if I were you,” he said.

“ I can do that,” I agreed dreamily.

Sometimes, it must be admitted, we get homesick. It generally happens when we have letters from home. We felt rather keenly, just then, the shrewd poignancy of Mr. Carville’s description of himself

as an alien. But to us it implied a subdued if passionate desire to see again the quiet landscape of England. The painter-cousin's sketch of the aeroplane near a rick, sunk in the ditch by a hedge, in the clear transparent afternoon light of late October, appealed to us. To see a quickset hedge again . . . we sighed.

No doubt we would have allowed the daily flow and return of life's business to oust our neighbours' fortunes from our minds, and waited patiently for Mr. Carville's reappearance, had not a most exciting game of cow-boys, a game in which I for the nonce was a fleeing Indian brave, led to an abrupt encounter with Mrs. Carville. Benvenuto Cellini's scalp already hung at my girdle, visible as a pocket-handkerchief; and he lay far down near the cabbages, to the imaginative eye a writhing and disgusting spectacle. The intrepid Giuseppe Mazzini, however, had thrown his lariat about me with no mean adroitness, and I was down and captured. This thrilling *denouement* was enacted near the repaired fence, and any horror I may have simulated was suddenly made real by the appearance of Mrs. Carville, who had been feeding her fowls. When one is prone on the grass, a clothes-line drawn tight about one's arms, and a triumphant cow-boy of eight years in the very act of placing his foot on one's neck, it is difficult to look dignified. The sudden intrusion of an unsympathetic personalty will banish the romantic illusion.

It may be that the sombre look in Mrs. Carville's face was merely expressive of a doubt of my sanity. For a grown man to be playing with two little boys at three o'clock of a Tuesday afternoon, may have seemed bizarre enough in her view. To me, however, endeavouring to disengage myself from my conqueror and assume an attitude in keeping with my age and reputation, her features were ominously shadowed by displeasure.

"If I disturbed you," I said courteously, "I am sorry."

She put her hand on the paling and the basket slid down her arm. She seemed to be pondering whether I had disturbed her or no, eyeing me reflectively. Ben came up, no longer a scalped and abandoned cowboy, but a delighted child. Perhaps the trust and frank *camaraderie* of the little fellow's attitude towards me affected her, for her face softened.

"It's all right," she replied slowly. "You must not let them trouble you. They make so much noise."

"No no," I protested. "I enjoy it. I am fond of children, very fond. They are nice little boys."

They stood on either side of me, clutching at my coat, subdued by the conversation.

"You have not any children?" she asked, looking at them. I shook my head.

"I am a bachelor," I replied, "I am sorry to say."

“That accounts for it,” she commented, raising her eyes to mine. I agreed.

“Possibly,” I said. “None the less I like them. I suppose,” I added, “they ought to be at school.”

“There is measles everywhere in the school,” she informed me. “I do not want it yet.”

“Mr. Carville,” I said, seizing an opening, “told me he did not believe in school.”

“That is right,” she answered. “He don’t see the use of them. Nor me,” she concluded thoughtfully.

“That is a very unusual view,” I ventured.

“How?” she asked vaguely.

“Most people,” I explained, “think school a very good thing.”

“It costs nothing,” she mused and her hand fell away from the paling. The two little boys ran off, intent on a fresh game. I scanned her face furtively, appreciative of the regular and potent modelling, the pure olive tints, the pose and poise of the head. Indubitably her face was dark; the raven hair that swept across her brow accentuated the gloom slumbering in her eyes. One unconsciously surmised that somewhere within her life lay a region of unrest, a period of passion not to be confused with the quiet courtship described by her husband.

“True,” I assented. “By the way, is Mr. Carville due in port soon?” She turned her head and regarded me attentively.

“No,” she said. “Do you wish to see him?”

“ Oh, not particularly,” I hastened to say. “ He was telling us some of his experiences at sea, you know. It was very interesting.”

“ I do not like the sea,” she said steadily. “ It made me sick . . .”

“ So it did me. But I enjoy hearing about foreign lands ; Italy, for instance.”

“ This is all right,” Mrs. Carville replied in the same even tone. “ Here.”

“ And he will be back soon ? ” I said, reverting to Mr. Carville.

“ Saturday he says ; but it may not be till Monday. If bad weather Monday . . . Tuesday . . . I cannot tell.”

“ I see,” I said. “ I hope we shall see him then. He was telling us . . .” I paused. It occurred to me that she would hardly care to be apprised of what her husband had been telling us—“ of his early life,” I ended lamely.

“ Of me ? ” She asked the question with eyes gazing out toward the blue ridge of the Orange Mountains, without curiosity or anger. I felt sheepish.

“ Something,” I faltered. She turned once more to glance in my direction. I was surprised at the mildness of her expression. Almost she smiled. At any rate her lips parted.

“ He is a good man,” she said softly, and added as she turned away, “ Good afternoon.”

CHAPTER XI

MR. CARVILLE SEES THREE GREEN LIGHTS

As happens on occasion the weather changed with dramatic suddenness in the last week in November. One might almost imagine that our august emperor of the seasons, the Indian Summer, protracting his reign against all the wishes of the gods, stirring up the implacable bitterness and hatred of winter, had gone down suddenly in ruin and death. I remember well the evening of the change. I had spent a tiring day in New York, working gradually up Broadway as far as Twenty-third Street. Seen through the windows of the Jersey City ferry-boat, the prow-like configuration of lower Manhattan seemed to be plunging stubbornly against the gale of sleet that was tearing up from the Narrows. The hoarse blast of the ferry-whistle was swept out of hearing, the panes resounded with millions of impacts as the sleet, like thin iron rods, drove against them. An ignoble impulse led me to join the scurrying stampede of commuters towards the warmth and shelter of the waiting-room. There is something personally hostile in a blizzard. In the earthquake at San Francisco

there was a giant playfulness in the power that shook the brick front from our frame-house and revealed our intimate privacies to a heedless mob. There was a feeling there, even at the worst, when the slow shuddering rise of the earth changed to a swift and soul-shattering subsidence, a feeling that one was yet in the hands of God. But in a blizzard one apprehends an anger puny and personal. There is no sublimity in defying it; one runs to the waiting-room. And once there, nodding to Confield, who sat in a corner nursing his cosmopolitan bag, pressing through the little crowd about the news-stand, I found myself urging my body past a man wearing a Derby hat and smoking a corn-cob pipe. I had a momentary sense of gratification that even a seasoned seafarer like Mr. Carville should feel no shame in taking shelter from the inclement weather.

“ Good evening, sir,” he said imperturbably. “ Homeward bound ? ”

“ Sure,” I said, putting down a cent and taking up the *Manhattan Mail*, an evening journal of modest headlines. “ I suppose you are coming out, too ? ”

“ Yes,” he said, as we turned away, “ I’ve come up from the ship. We only got in this morning.”

“ You are late,” I agreed. “ Mrs. Carville said you might be in on Saturday, and here it is Wednesday.”

He gave me a quick glance.

“ Oh ! Did she tell you ? Yes, we had several

bad days after passing Fastnet. The Western ocean is bad all over just now."

"I suppose you were sorry to leave the Mediterranean."

"It was Bremerhaven this time," he replied, striking a match. "Near Hamburg, you know. They change us about now and again."

"What is your cargo?" I asked.

"I thought you knew," he said, surprised. "I'm on the *Iroquois*, an oil-tank. Standard Oil, you know. I quite thought you knew."

"I had intended to ask you," I said, "but it is a delicate subject. One cannot very well ferret for details of a stranger's business."

"That's the genteel view, I know," he said, smiling. "There's something to be said for it, too."

"You will come in and finish your story?" I ventured.

"Well, I did think of looking in some time . . ."

"After dinner to night."

"Much obliged. It passes the time."

We went out and climbed into the Paterson express. We are rather proud of this train in a way, for it is the only one of the day which confines itself to stations when contemplating a stop. I narrated to Mr. Carville an incident of the preceding winter when a commuter of Hawthorne, on our line, stepping out one snowy night, found himself clinging to the trestles of the bridge over

the Pasayack River, and the train vanishing into the darkness. Mr. Carville laughed at this, and remarked jocosely that he was "safer at sea." We discussed for some time the comparative merits of English and American railroads, Mr. Carville expressing the fairly shrewd opinion that "conditions so different made any comparison out of the question."

"After all," he remarked, "leaving out London, which has more people in it than Canada and Venezuela put together, what is England? From an American point of view, I mean. Simply Maryland!"

I appreciated this. Often during my sojourn in America, I had pored over maps and vainly endeavoured to form some conception of so gigantic a territory. I had failed. I had come to the conclusion that minds nurtured in the insular atmosphere were forever incapable of visualising a continent. In my fugitive letters to friends at home I had been reduced to the astronomer's facile illustrations. "Just as," I had written in despair—"just as a railway train, travelling at a mile a minute, takes nearly 180 years to reach the sun, so we, travelling in a tourist car at rather less than a mile a minute, took an apparently interminable period to reach the sun of California!" It was a poor jest, but excusable in one whose clothes, ears, mouth, eyes and nose were full of cinder-dust, excusable in a disdainful Britisher so far from home. To Englishmen, who had never seen a

grade-crossing, a desert, or a mountain, and for whom a short night-journey on smooth rock-ballasted lines suffices to take them from one end of their country to the other, my figure was vague enough, no doubt. Some day, when I go back, I shall try to explain.

“Yes,” I said, “exactly—Maryland.”

I was more than ever reinforced in my already-expressed opinion that Mr. Carville was a man of more ability than ambition. There was to me something bizarre in his deliberate abstention from any contact, save books, with the larger intellectual sphere to which he by right belonged. His naïve confession of culture showed that he was aware of his latent power, but I was not sure whether he had ever realized the stern law by which organs become atrophied by disuse. We had reached our station and were struggling up Pine Street through rain and wind before I ventured to hint at my concern.

“Ah!” he said. “I daresay you’re right in a way. But——” The wind blew his voice away, so that he seemed to be speaking through the telephone, “——I’ve a family to think of.”

We parted at the door, and I hurried to tell the news to my friends. They smiled when I spoke of Mr. Carville.

“We’ve had news, too,” said Bill, helping me to spinach. “A paper from Cecil.”

“Copy of *The Morning*,” added Mac. It is a rule of the house that there be no papers on the

table, so I possessed my soul in patience until after dinner. My cigar going well, and Mac thundering the "Soldiers' Chorus," from *Faust*, on the piano, I opened the paper which Bill handed to me. To be honest, I was a little startled. The chief item on the news page was headed :

AEROPHONE MESSAGE FROM CARVILLE ;
OVER HELIGOLAND ; ALARM IN GERMANY.

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The special article of the day was headed : "The Napoleon of the Air ; a Character Sketch," and the leader, signed by Lord Cholme himself, was a pæan, in stilted journalese, in praise of the *Morning's* enterprise in encouraging invention.

"The Empire," wrote Lord Cholme, "can no longer afford to pass by one of her most brilliant sons. In the light of his magnificent achievement, the daring of a Peary, the nerve of a Shackleton, the indomitable persistence of a Marconi, dwindle and fade. We do not hesitate to say that since the capture of Gibraltar, the Empire has secured no such chance for consolidating her paramountcy in Europe. The present is no time for hesitation or delay. Mr. Carville is master of the situation. By his message from the air, three thousand feet above Heligoland, in full view of German territory, to the office of *The Morning* he has demonstrated

the efficiency of his machine. If that is not sufficient, Mr. Carville's next journey will convince Europe, if not England. If the pettifogging Radical Government turn a deaf ear to our brilliant correspondent, if they ignore his claims and chaffer in any commercial spirit with his accredited agents, their days are numbered. It is hardly too much to say that the days of the Empire are also numbered . . ."

Apart from our own private interest in the affair, the news did not thrill. In America one's withers are unwrung by such scares. The "exclusiveness" of Lord Cholme's information, indeed, defeated his object. Lord Cholme, I knew, was loved neither in Fleet Street nor in Park Place. His ruthless competition with the news agencies, his capture of numerous cable-routes, had gradually divided England into two classes: those who read *The Morning* and those who didn't. Everyone remembers the exclusive description of the destruction of Constantinople in *The Morning*. No one was surprised to find that the following day Constantinople was still alive and well. Clever young Oxford men who had not succeeded in getting a post on *The Morning*, satirized the paper in other journals who never paid more than two guineas a column. No doubt, having been a newspaper man myself, I discounted the effect of the scare upon the public. I could imagine the delicate raillery of the other papers, if indeed they

deigned to notice Lord Cholme's exclusive information at all.

The special biography was as accurate as such biographies usually are. It was written in a fair imitation of Mr. Kipling's racy colloquial style and contained numerous references to the Empire, the White Man's Burden and our "far-flung battle line." I suspected that Monsieur D'Aubigné had supplied the basic "facts" which had been edited by Lord Cholme before being handed on to "Vol-Plane," as the biographer called himself.

I set the paper down and resumed my cigar. The drums and trappings of Lord Cholme's organ had revealed nothing fresh. I understand now why my friends had merely mentioned the fact of its arrival and made no comment. After all our real interest lay in the man, not in his aeroplane. We had never seen an aeroplane except in the cinema films, but we were familiar enough with current events to feel no surprise that a man had flown over the North Sea. I think I expressed our mutual sentiment when I observed that Cecil's story of how Frank Carville won his bet, and Mr. Carville's own account of the voyage from the Argentine to Genoa, told us far more about the man than "Vol-Plane's" highly-paid hack-work.

We had been but a few minutes in the studio before Mr. Carville knocked and Mac ran down to admit him. We heard the rumble of voices while our visitor discarded his coat; comments on

“the change,” and then footsteps on the stairs. I went to the door to welcome him.

He was standing on the landing, appraising with a quick eye the kakemonos and prints that covered the distempered walls. We are rather proud of our “Japs” as Bill calls them. I even tried to learn something of the language from the “boy” who was our servant in San Francisco. He was not a scholarly boy, and he told lies in English, so that it is possible his tuition was of no value. I remember Bill was ironic because, when Nakamura was dismissed in ignominy, and wrote on the kitchen wall for the benefit of his successor, I was unable to decipher the message.

“Do you care for this sort of thing?” said Mac. “That’s original,” pointing to a fine Hiroshige.

“I used to,” replied Carville, feeling for his pipe. “I was a good while in that trade—coal from Moji to Singapore. I think they’re best at a distance though—the people, I mean.”

Mac protested against this “narrow view.”

“Yes, yes, I know,” said Mr. Carville, coming into the studio. “I read Lafcadio Hearn when I was younger; read him again out in Japan. Humph!”

Whether his characteristic ejaculation referred to Hearn or the studio I cannot determine. His interest was obvious, but it was the interest, not of a connoisseur, but of a man looking round another man’s workshop. Von Roon used to say

in Chelsea, "There is hope for him who looks with attention upon his neighbour's tools." Mr. Carville sank slowly into a chair, his eyes fixed upon a recent nude study.

"We haven't any Scotch, but if you care for Rye ——" said Mac, reaching for a tray on the throne.

Mr. Carville's eye lost its vague reflective expression as it fell upon the tray.

"Ah!" he said, "I'd rather have good Rye than—than—well, you know what most of the Scotch is here. No—no water thanks. I take it as I find it."

It was a new facet of his character, this. We watched him swallow the neat spirit at a gulp and place the empty glass on the tray without emotion. Mac and I sipped gently and waited for Mr. Carville to begin.

"I've been rather worried just lately, with one thing and another," he observed, putting away his little brass tobacco-box. "Second went home to get married last trip, and the Third, promoted, you understand, needs an eye. Very willing and all that, but he's been in these big hotel-ships, Western ocean all his life, and as I say, he needs an eye. I was telling you about my brother, if I remember."

We murmured that he had, and watched Mr. Carville's obvious enjoyment of his pipe.

"Ah!" he said, "the Brignole station in Genoa. Humph!"

"You see, my brother has something in his

make-up that appeals to a woman. I was going to say, all women. There's something spectacular, you might say, in the way he carries on. I've never been able to decide whether it's intentional or just fate. Anyhow, there it is; and if you look at it in that light, it isn't so very wonderful after all that a girl like Rosa was then should have been dazzled and carried away. When she jumped up and stood staring at me, I hardly knew what to do. 'Rosa!' I said, and we stood facing each other for a while. I don't know; but I think we got to know each other better just then. For me, at any rate, it was a revelation. They say a drowning man sees all his past life while the water is pressing on his ear-drums. Something like that happened to me then in that dismal, badly-lighted booking-hall. It wasn't love, in the sugary sentimental sense, that I felt for Rosa; but a blind, helpless sort of an emotion, a feeling that if I didn't get her I was lost—lost! I put out my hands as though I was catching hold of something to hold me up . . . I felt her hands.

"I can hardly remember how we went away from there. I know the driver shouted to me as we came out and I went up and paid him. And then we were in the *Piazza Corvetto*, sitting on a seat, near where the trolley-cars stop. How long we sat there I don't know either. I knew I'd got her again. She was there, alongside, and we were talking, like two children. I was very glad . . . you know."

He paused, and we went on smoking and sipping, and Bill bent her head over her needlework. I thought with a sudden and revealing vividness of the woman who had said to me, in her gentle Italian voice, "He is a good man." I think we were very glad too, though we did not say so.

"I can't tell you," he went on evenly, "whether my brother intended to take her away with him and was prevented by some accident, or whether he had changed his mind. I think he intended to. I can tell you what I did myself. Before I left Genoa I married Rosa. She wanted it. She did not trust herself. There are men like that. Women cannot trust themselves unless some man will trust them.

"When we sailed out of Genoa bound for Buenos Ayres, I was a married man, and Rosa had a flat in *Via Palestro*. I thought I knew my brother well enough to feel sure that I needn't fear him any more. That's the strange part of a business like that. To Rosa, to me, it was life or death; to my brother it was the amusement of a few hours, days, perhaps a week. It's a queer world.

"I think it was about two years after that before I saw my brother again. When the war in South Africa started we were outward bound in ballast for Buenos Ayres. At Monte Video we received orders to go to Rosario and load remounts for Cape Town. It was a big business; I believe the owners built three new ships out of the profits of that charter. When we got up the river those bony Argentine

cattle were waiting for us and run aboard in a few hours. No time for boilers or overhauling engines or anything. Straight out again, due east, with a crowd of the toughest cattle-men I ever saw before or since. There was no peace or quiet on the ship at all. They were not professional cattle-deck tenders at all, you see. They only took the job to get to the Cape, where the trouble was. Most of them deserted and drifted up country. Each trip we had to get a fresh team. I can't say I enjoyed my life very much during that charter. It was hard luck, though nothing out of the way for a sailor-man, to go off the Genoa run now I was married, and had a wife there.

“ I saw my brother soon after Cronje was captured at Paardeberg. I was ashore in Cape Town one evening taking a walk with the Second, just to get out of sight of the ship for an hour, when he pulls my sleeve and says he :

“ ‘ Say, Chief, there's that bummer we had in the mess-room that trip. Him as won the lottery-prize in Genoa.’ He pointed across the street to a party of chaps in khaki walking along and slapping their boots with their canes. I looked and saw the Second was right. The tallest and finest-looking man of the bunch was my brother.

“ He did not see me, I'm glad to say. I walked straight on, and turned into a saloon for a drink. The Second talked about the lottery business for a spell, for that yarn had gone all round the ships ; and I let him run on. I had a panicky feeling

inside me. It dawned on me suddenly that we were destined to cross each other all our lives, that go where I would, I shouldn't be able to avoid him. You see how a man's imagination will run away with him. I ought to have thanked God he was in South Africa and likely to get himself shot fighting for his country instead of going after women in Italy. When I was safe aboard the ship again I began to see how I had been frightened. For it was fright and nothing else that turned me into that saloon to avoid my brother. I thought of him rushing up to the Brignole station at the last second and looking round for Rosa, and finding her gone. He would know I'd had something to do with it. He would swear to find her some day, swear in one of his hot short passions, passions like a West India hurricane that whips and crashes and smashes everything around for a minute or two.

“I used to think a lot about him on the voyage back to Buenos Ayres. I don't know what he was in, in the war, though the Second, whose brother was a driver in the Artillery, said he was in the Mounted Infantry uniform. Everybody was Mounted Infantry in those days. To me it seemed strange that Frank should go out to the war, but I've come to the conclusion he really felt the call. There was the excitement too. The old bad Irish blood comes out in the love of a row. I prefer quiet myself.

“In Buenos Ayres I had a letter from Aunt Rebecca. Rosa had a baby, but it was dead as

soon as born. The old woman said I'd better come home. I remember walking up and down the bridge-deck that night, thinking things out under the stars. I knew Rosa would like to go to England. They hear so much about *Inghilterra* in Italy. For them it is a land where lords and ladies walk about the streets and give pennies to poor people all day long. And though Rosa was not all Italian, she shared the Italian idea that England is a superior country. Then again, I was not only in need of a holiday, but I was able to afford one if I was careful and kept down expenses. To take a holiday in England, with Rosa! To see it as though it was all fresh! The fancy took strong hold of me. I saw myself going through St. Paul's, the Tower, Monument and Westminster Abbey, as an alien. I saw the hungry landlady in the Bloomsbury boarding-house trying to rook me. 'Bloomsburys' have a very bad name in Italy among educated people. I read an article in the *Stampa*—very humorous it was. Humph!

"I talked it over with the Skipper next day. It is a strange thing to me how men value one sentiment and underrate another. If I'd gone to the Old Man and said, 'I want to go home, Captain, and see my wife,' he would have asked me if I was crazy. But as soon as I said—showing him the black-edged letter—that the kid was dead, he pulled a long face and said he'd see the agents at once. I wrote to my old uncle in London explaining matters. The Second got his step and they got a

new Fourth off a meat-boat of the company's that was loading at the time. When I was paid off I took my dunnage and bought me a second-class ticket for Genoa on a Rubattino boat.

“To a certain extent I had no reason to be dissatisfied with my success in life. Many a man has done worse at thirty-three. I was married; I had money in the bank; I could eat and drink and sleep well; I enjoyed reading and smoking. Beyond that, I have grown to think a man need not go. For you gentlemen, of course, it's different. You are out for fame. You work at high and low pressure, whereas I work in a vacuum, so to speak. I thought a good deal about life on that voyage to Genoa as a passenger. It was a new experience to me, I can tell you. For the first day or two I was lost. There seemed nothing to do. I'd walk up and down the promenade deck listening to the beat of the twin-engines, wondering if the Second was a good man . . . habit, you see? And then I found a little library abaft the smoking-room, full-up with leather-bound books that nobody wanted to read. They were Italian, of course, for it was an Italian ship, and it struck me that I'd have some fun rubbing up my knowledge of the language. For let me tell you that colloquial Genoese doesn't take you very far into Dante or Boccaccio! I think that was one reason why Rosa had disliked the idea of living in Italy. Although I didn't notice it much, being a foreigner, her speech was not refined. How could it be, down on the Via

Milano with Rebecca for a teacher? Well, I started in and every day I worked my way through a chapter or two. Perhaps it is because I know modern Italian writing so well—for a foreigner—that I don't take much stock in all these great men English and Americans boom so—Shaw and Wells, you know, and Maeterlinck. They're *smarties*, but the high pressure men are Italians. I can't help thinking, after reading the modern men, that they are like the transformers in an electric power-plant. The Italians are the generators of ideas, and these other chaps are transformers. They reduce the voltage, lose a lot in leakage, but are useful because they make the current available to the small man. It's a rather technical illustration, but that's what I mean.

“Two men, or two books if you like, took a great hold of me on that voyage—Mazzini's *Duties of Man* and Cellini's *Life*. I suppose they are about as far apart as any two books—or men—could get. You may laugh at the notion, but I found myself in sympathy with both! Mazzini appealed to my mind, Cellini to my imagination. If Ruskin had stuck to his last as Mazzini did, he might have made a revolution in England. I'm not a Socialist, never was, any more than Mazzini, and there was something fine to me about the way he told these boiling, ignorant, weak-minded mobs of Italian workmen that they had duties as well as rights. There's too much talk of rights nowadays. Anybody would think that because a man works

with his hands and takes wages, he's free to do as he pleases. I remember the Old Man once when I had trouble with a fireman. 'All I want is justice!' says the man, putting his dirty hand on the chart-room door. 'Justice!' roars the Old Man, 'By God, you dirty bone-headed Liverpool Irishman, if you had justice you'd be in irons, that's where you'd be.' Humph!

"I think I took to Cellini because in a way he reminded me of my brother. He got away with it every time! The idea of doing anything, or not doing anything, because it was against the law or custom, never entered his head! Very few people who read Cellini realize that there are men like him now. Every bit. They don't write about themselves, that's all. There will always be a certain number of men of his kidney, a sort of seasoning for the rest of us. They fear nothing and they reverence nothing . . . Strong men!

"All day and every day I'd sit away astern reading these books, and gradually an idea took shape in my mind. It was this. It was my duty to have a family, since my brother had turned out so. More than that, it was my duty to give them a chance, when they came. I could not see how I was to do that in England. I can't see it now. England to me is on the crumble. Emigration has dug away the outside of the walls and revolution is digging away inside. For men like Belvoir, men who have been to public-schools and Oxford, and have a private income, it will be comfortable

enough for a long time to come. But it is on the
crumble. When I thought of my children I never
pictured them grown up in that genteel snobbish
life that I'd been brought up in. No!

"And I knew that Rosa still had her dislike of
Italy. What should we do? Suddenly it occurred
to me that since my father had come from America,
I could go back there. I believe in this country, and
it's going on ten years since I first came. There's
something *electric* in the air over here, a feeling
that things grow. My boys will have a chance
here . . . I think.

"That was one part of the idea. The other was
to name my boys after those two men. It may be
only fancy but I think names have an influence,
you know. A father's fancy—let it go at that!
I'd like somehow to have one of my boys an artist,
and watch him grow. I used to dream about the
future on that lazy voyage to Genoa. Every man
does at times. Pipe-dreams, you know.

"Rosa was out and about when I reached the
Via Palestro. She fell in at once with my plan to
take a trip to England. We stopped at Paris for a
day or two to look round and buy things, and then
on to London. I found a quiet little private
boarding establishment in Tavistock Square, where
we lived cheap and comfortable. A penny bus took
us almost anywhere. I'd been fancying myself
with Rosa going about as a stranger, and if you'll
believe me it was almost a fact! London had
changed very much since I'd been in Victoria Street.

You'll notice that if you go back now. Same as New York; one can hardly recognize some parts of it now. I did enjoy that time. Rosa was so pleased with everything she saw. It was May, you see; London in May. We used to go down to Chelsea and watch the boats on the river, and see the people in the grand houses on the embankment, going out in their automobiles.

“ Gradually the idea that my brother would come across me again got fainter and I didn't encourage it. I heard nothing of him. My uncle, who had retired, down at Surbiton, told me he had not seen him for years. We agreed that it was best to leave him to his own devices. I didn't take Rosa down. Somehow I didn't see her catching on to my uncle and cousins. They were a little too genteel for her.

“ For the same reason I didn't take her to Clifford's Inn when I went to see Miss Flagg, the woman Gladys had lived with. Miss Flagg was there, much the same as before, with her flat and peculiar furniture and her untidy dress. She was so glad to see me and hoped I'd got another book to print. Humph! She told me she didn't see Gladys very often nowadays; had a flat of her own in Fulham. My brother had crooked his finger, and away she ran. Miss Flagg told me all about it, how Gladys had taken to paint—on her face I mean—and gone to the devil generally. I'll say this for Miss Flagg, she never used anything to add to her beauty, much as she needed it. We

were going on very nicely when I happened to mention I was married, and all the light went out of Miss Flagg's face. She was finished with me. You see, even when they're after votes, they're just the same. I left her and took Rosa to the Zoo in the afternoon. I enjoyed that, and so did she.

"After about three months of this sort of thing, I began to hanker for the sea again. You may wonder at that, but it's a fact. It grows on men, me for one. I felt lost without the beat of the engine, you know. So I applied for several jobs, and finally the builders of the ship I'm on now, the *Iroquois*, wanted a chief to take her out to New York. I got the job and we went to Sunderland to join her. Since then I've been crossing and re-crossing the Western Ocean. And speaking in a general way, that's all there is to it."

Mr. Carville, pinching his shaven chin with a thumb and fore-finger, looked down meditatively at his boots. In some subtle way his manner belied his words. I felt a lively conviction that there was in a particular way something more to it. It seemed quite incredible that he had no more to tell us of his brother.

"Surely," I said, "you have heard of your brother since?"

He gave me a quick look.

"That's right," he said. "I have. I was going to tell you about it. I saw him, fifteen days ago, in the North Sea."

"Great Scott, did you really?" exclaimed Mac,

and he picked up the copy of *The Morning*. "Look here!"

Mr. Carville took the paper and read the news without exhibiting any emotion. I saw his eye-lid flicker as he glanced down the special article by "Vol-Plane." Lord Cholme's concern for the Empire seemed to leave him cold.

"Humph!" he remarked and handing the paper to Mac, remained lost in thought for a moment.

"Ah!" he said at length. "That certainly accounts for him. But it doesn't say anything about the three green lights."

"What green lights?" I asked, little thinking that I should see these same lights myself in the near future.

"I'll tell you," said he, and looked round for a place to knock out his pipe. I passed him the ash-bowl that Mac brought back from Mexico when he went down there to do a bird's-eye view for a mining company. Mr. Carville held it up to examine the crude red and blue daub on the pale glaze.

"I suppose," he began, "that of all the meetings I've had with my brother, this last one was the most unusual. It was unusual enough, that time in the *Parque Colon*, when he grabbed my neck in the dark; but this last meeting beats that, I think. It's funny how a quiet, respectable man like me should have such experiences, isn't it?"

"I ought to explain that the *Iroquois*, like all oil tank steamers, has her engines aft. The captain

and mates live amidships under the bridge, while we engineers all live in the poop, under the quarter-deck, as they call it in the Navy. There is a long gangway between the two houses, but as a general thing we live apart. We have our own pantry and steward and we can go straight out of our berths into the engine-room without coming on deck at all.

“ It was the second night after we left Bremerhaven that this happened and about ten minutes after eight bells, midnight. I keep the eight to twelve watch with the Fourth, you see, and it often happens that I don't feel like turning in right away. It was a clear yet dark night without a ripple on the sea. It had been one of those calm days that we have in English waters in winter time, a pale sun shining through a light haze, cold yet pleasant. I'd seen the Third tumble down the ladder and heard the Fourth put his door on the hook. Down below there was the quick thump of the engines, the rattle of the ashes being shovelled into the ejector, and the click of oil-cup lids as the Third went round the bearings. Everything seemed in fair trim for a quiet night. I walked up and down the deck for a spell, finishing my pipe, and then I was standing by the stern light, an electric fixed on the after side of the scuttle. A good way to the westward was the Kentish Knock Lightship. I was leaning against the bulkhead, smoking and thinking of things in general, you may say, and wondering what the Second would do next, when

I saw three green lights, very low on our starboard quarter. I don't think I was much struck by them at first. Might have been a trawler. The Second Mate told me afterwards that after the Old Man had gone down he saw a green light and thought it was the Harwich and Hook-of-Holland mail-boat. He was half asleep or he'd have wondered where her mast-lights were. I took very little notice, I say, until it struck me that, so far from being a trawler, those lights were moving a good deal faster than a mail-boat. Sometimes I could see only one light. I began to wonder what it was and I stepped down to my room to get my binoculars. I remember the mess-room was dark, and across the table and floor was a narrow bar of light from the Fourth's door. As I came up the stairs I heard a peculiar droning sound, as though the Third had let the dynamo run away. I turned round intending to go down below, when I saw the green lights coming up fast . . . fast.

“As my foot touched the deck the wings were overhead and I saw the long body and flat tail. To me, for I'd never seen an aeroplane close before, it was a wonderful sight. I put the glasses up and watched it slide away in the dark, dropping until it seemed to skim the water. ‘So that's an aeroplane!’ I said to myself. And I saw it wheel round and the green lights came into view again, rising, I remember. I was a bit excited and leaned over the stern rail. I had never realised before how a man might feel while flying. I'd always looked at

the pictures as rather Jules Verney, you might say ; improbable and far-fetched. But here it was, coming up on us again, much more wonderful than any picture ! We were doing about twelve knots, and I suppose that machine was coming up at thirty. Just above the big triangle of three green lights was a blue spark snapping, and in the shadow between the wings the shape of a man. I stood there watching, watching, feeling nervous because of that peculiar drone that the propeller made, when all of a sudden it stopped and the whole thing swooped down to within twenty feet of the awning-spars. I stepped back a little and looked straight up. In the wink of an eye he was gone, but I saw him, and he me. As he swerved away to clear the funnels, I heard him give a great shout of laughter that rose to a small scream : ‘ *Pon—soul—it’s—Char—lie !* ’ he sang out, and dropped away astern. I heard his engine begin again, a note like an insect ; and he fled away towards Gunfleet. And that was all !

“ I stood there dazed for a moment. In spite of the suddenness of it, I don’t think I had any doubt it was my brother. I saw his big hook nose sticking out of the fur cap between the horrible goggles, his body craning forward under the wings. And the voice, the wailing, sneering, screaming laugh, ‘ *Charlie !* ’—that was him right enough. My brother !

“ I stepped along the gangway to the bridge, just as the Second Mate took the telescope from his

eye and laid it in the rack. He saw me and leaned over the rail beckoning.

“ ‘ Say, Mister Chief, what the blazes was that ? ’ he whispered.

“ ‘ Didn’t you see it ? ’ I asked. I knew he had been dozing on the lee side of the chart-room.

“ ‘ See it ! I *heard* something ! ’ he says. ‘ Was it you calling Charlie ? ’ His name’s Charlie, you see ; Charlie Phillips.

“ ‘ No,’ I said. ‘ I didn’t see anything. You must have been asleep, Mr. Phillips.’

“ He looked at me, rather raw about the gills, took a look at the Gunfleet Light and bent down again to me.

“ ‘ Did you *see* anything ? ’ He waved his hand towards the Essex coast. ‘ Yes,’ I said. ‘ Green lights.’

“ ‘ Oh, that was the Harwich boat,’ he says. ‘ I know that. She’s gone. Must have been going twenty-two knots.’

“ ‘ It was an aeroplane,’ I said, whispering, ‘ flew past.’

“ ‘ *Eh!* ’ says he. I said it again. He straightens up and takes a turn up and down the bridge. Humph !

“ I was just testing him, you see ; or rather, testing my own feelings by his.

“ ‘ You’d better watch out,’ I said. ‘ It may come back.’

“ ‘ I *am* watching out ! ’ says he, rather savage. ‘ *I’ll* take care of all the aeroplanes about ; thank you, Mister Chief.’

“ I went back then and took another look round with my glasses, but I saw nothing but a couple of coasting steamers in shore. I stepped down into the mess-room and looked through the slit of the Fourth’s door. Funny coincidence! He was on his settee in his pyjamas, asleep, and on his stomach was a magazine he’d been reading, a magazine with a coloured cover showing an aeroplane dropping and bursting shell on a man-o-war.

“ I lay awake for a long time, listening to the bells, watching Rosa’s picture flickering on the bulkhead as the screw below me shook the ship. So we’d met again! I couldn’t blame the Second Mate—I’ve kept the grave-yard watch myself; and there is no love lost between the bridge and engine-room on the *Iroquois*. Except, of course, the Mate and the Second, who are good chums, because on an oil-boat the Second can do the Mate a lot of harm. I couldn’t blame Mister Charlie Phillips. But what would he have said if I’d told him my brother was on that machine? What if I’d said I’d seen wireless sparks spitting above it? Humph!

“ And then do you know what happened? I suppose I must have dozed a little, for the next thing I remember was the whoop of our siren and the engines going dead slow. As I tumbled out to go down it was three o’clock. The Third was standing by the reversing gear and I saw by the vacuum gauge that the temperature of the sea was down to forty-eight degrees. ‘Fog, sir?’ says

the Third. 'Aye,' I said. 'Shut your injection a little. We're off the Goodwins, I suppose.' Everything was all right, so I climbed up to look. The Old Man was out on deck and they were heaving the lead. Every minute the siren gives a mournful whoop and the slow thump of the propeller made me miserable. I leaned over the side, thinking of my brother and his aeroplane. For the life of me I couldn't be sure it wasn't all a dream. The thin whine of the siren sounded very like his cry of 'Charlie!' I heard the Old Man bark something, heard the tinkling of the telegraph and the siren bellowed again. We were going full speed astern! Just as I turned away from the bulwarks I saw a green light, the side light of a coaster, rush past. I could hear some one shouting through a megaphone on the bridge. She must have been awful close—went past our stern with an inch to spare as we swung. And then all was quiet again as the engines stopped and went ahead dead slow. I went down and got my overcoat and a pipe. The Second was putting on his clothes. 'Ah, you may as well,' I said. 'It's thick all right.' I like a man that don't have to be called.

"All night we crawled along. You see, the Straits of Dover are very like Piccadilly Circus. You never know who you may run against in a fog, it's so crowded and the company is so mixed. About breakfast time the Old Man judged by soundings he was abeam of Dungeness and we went half-speed. The fog lifted about Beachy Head,

“So you see, the fact and the fiction was so mixed up in my mind that by the time we got into the Western Ocean I didn’t feel sure which was which. The Second Mate never said a word more about green lights, for if he allowed there was an aeroplane about on the middle watch the Skipper would naturally ask him why he didn’t see it. And then what mixed things in my mind still more was my picking up the Fourth’s magazine in the mess-room one day and reading that yarn. I was going to tell you about this; but merely to show you how my brother impressed me that I dreamt about him at sea. But now—it seems I didn’t dream it after all.

“I’m not surprised,” went on Mr. Carville, after a slight pause to stir up the ash in his pipe with a pen-knife, “not surprised. My brother had it in him always. Quite apart from any personal feeling I might have for him or against, I was always prepared, so to say, to see him doing something big. His trouble with his season-ticket and his bigger trouble that put him in gaol were very much on a par. He always had an unconventional way of getting what he wanted. It was no use talking to him; he simply doesn’t see what you mean. I—I wonder what he’s going to do next.”

“He might pay a visit over here,” I said tentatively. Mr. Carville gave me a quick glance.

“I shouldn’t like that at all,” he said, shaking his head. “You see . . . I might be away . . . I shouldn’t like it at all.”

He was obviously disturbed, and I felt that the suggestion had been unwise. Obviously it would not do to tell him that his brother knew where he was.

"So far," he remarked presently, "my little boys don't know anything about their uncle. I've no wish that they should. I want them to grow up in this country without any connection with Europe at all. Any debt they owe to Europe can be paid later. My brother couldn't help them at all. And Rosa——."

Mr. Carville stood up to go. The cover for *Payne's Monthly* caught his eye and he nodded approvingly.

"That's clever," he said. "I wish sometimes I'd gone in for doing things, like you. As you said, a man's mind rusts, gets seized, if it isn't working. I did think of doing something with a few papers I've got in my berth on the *Iroquois*, but—I don't know."

"Why not let me have a look at them," I said. "I might act as a sort of an agent for you, unpaid of course——."

"Much obliged," said Mr. Carville placidly, "but I don't know as you need bother. I threw a book over the side once."

"A manuscript!" I said, aghast. He nodded, looking at his boots. "I thought a lot of it once; called it *Dreams on a Sea-Weed Bed*, and got a funny faced little girl in Nagasaki to type it for me. But one voyage, when I'd been reading a book called *New Grub Street*, I got sick of the whole thing and

dumped it in the Java Sea, half way between Sourabaja and Singapore."

"I can't approve of that, Mr. Carville," I said, standing up and confronting him. "A foolish thing to do!"

"How's that? It might just as well be twenty fathoms deep in the Java Sea as twenty volumes deep in the British Museum? Eh! It was mine."

"Oh yes, yes; but it's hardly fair to deprive the world of it."

"Humph! I guess the world won't sweat, sir. It would be a good thing if a lot of modern stuff was dumped. Some of the authors too, by your leave!"

"I quite agree," I said. We had been to see Brieux' *Damaged Goods* in New York a week or so before, and we were in the mood to sympathise with Mr. Carville's dislike of the pruriently modern. He stood by the door of the studio, one hand on the jamb, the other under his coat, the plain gold albert stretched across his broad person, the light shining on his smooth pink forehead as he looked down at his crossed legs. It has occurred to me from time to time, that this unobtrusive man, with his bizarre record and eccentric mentality, was evolving behind the mask of his mediocrity a new type. That this process was only half deliberate I am ready to believe. A man who disciplines his soul by flinging overboard the manuscript of a book does not thereby slay his imagination. He only drives it inward. When we first

came to America we planted all our seeds in the garden too deep and they grew downward, assuming awful and grotesque forms. In some such way Mr. Carville's imagination was working within him, fashioning, as I say, a new type. I insist upon this, inasmuch as beyond it I have no mementoes of him. Both he and his are gone from our immediate observation, and though we may hear from him again, as a ship passing in the night, a rotund meditative figure pacing the deck of some out-bound freighter, so far I remember him mainly by this intellectual inversion. For him the suppression of passion had become a passion; for him individuality was cloaked by the commonplace. In his way he made a contribution to art; he had hinted at the possibilities underlying a new combination of human characters. He had given strange hostages to Fortune, so that Fortune hardly knew what to do with them. It is possible that the abrupt and dramatic disappearance from his life (I refer to his brother) has slackened the intensity of his hold upon this idea; but I do not know.

He left us that evening quietly and without fuss. He had, in a notable degree, the neat movements and economy of gesture which I can imagine indispensable to those who lived in confined cabins and take their walks upon decks beneath which their shipmates sleep. In a quiet indescribable way there was manifest in his demeanour a gentle repudiation of all things traditionally

English. You could not possibly imagine him vociferating "God save the King" or "Sons of the Sea." With a simple dignity he had assumed the dun livery of the alien, and there was to me a certain fineness in the sentiment that forbade any flaunting of the nationality in the faces of his native-born children.

And in the midst of our musings, just before we turned out the lights, it occurred to me quite suddenly that, since he had finished his story, it was quite possible that we should not see him again.

CHAPTER XII

THE VISION FROM THE KILLS

FOR a long time that night I lay watching the gem-like glitter of the lights that fringed the eastern horizon. A strong north wind shook the house, sweeping the clouds before it with a contemptuous energy that had in it a promise of frost on the morrow. As the stars rose it was as though the lights of the city themselves were rising into the clear sky, emblems of the vast and serene power that had sent them forth. High above the level constellations soared the two great beacons of the Metropolitan and Woolworth towers, like the mast-head lights of some enormous vessel, while away northward, almost hidden by the swinging limbs of our elm, the occulting flash on the Times Building added a disquieting element to the otherwise peaceful scene. For me at least the glamour, the mystery and the beauty of that amazing city had never worn thin. For me, after a day in her roaring streets, after a scramble in her lotteries, there ever comes to me a recrudescence of that wonder with which I beheld my first view of her from the Jersey shore. The cynical American says, I know

NOTE.—The word "Kill" is Dutch in origin and signifies very much the same as Kyle (Scot), meaning a *deep arm of the sea*.

not with what truth, that the alien, clutching his bundle and gazing with anxious, frightened eyes toward the mountainous masonry of Manhattan, catching sight of the green sun-lit image of Liberty with her benign unfaltering regard, holds his breath and feels within his bosom a fierce but short-lived ecstasy of joy. For one brief instant (I still quote the cynical American) faith and hope flame in his heart and the future lies before him as a shining pathway of industry and peace.

For me, however, the impression that New York had made was neither so unpractical nor so evanescent. For me there was reserved a certain *fear* of those multitudes and those heaven-kissing towers, an apprehension that even a species of victory after defeat had not sufficed to dethrone. Call it perhaps awe, mingled with homage to the indomitable spirit of the race, rather than fear.

This I felt, and every visit to the heart of the city quickened it, stirring my imagination to some fresh effort, and revealing some new phase of the exhaustless energy of America.

It was only natural that in the course of my musings it should strike me as strange that Mr. Carville displayed no shadow either of reverence or dislike for a place which impressed itself upon me more even than San Francisco or Chicago. It seemed to me strange that a man so sensitive to detail, so conscious of the scant poetry of the commonplace, should have no feeling for that

astonishing accident which we call New York City. That he was not aware of her I refused absolutely to credit. If he could feel the beauty of Genoa and the immensity of London, he must necessarily be conscious of the sublimity of Manhattan. I regretted that I had not led him to speak of this. I regretted the possibility of seeing him no more. I felt a pertinacious curiosity about him, as a man who could contemplate with equanimity a spectacle that for me held always an inscrutable problem. To the disgust of the cynical American I always waved aside Washington and even Boston, ignored even that mysterious bourne, the "Middle West," and claimed that he who found the secret of New York had also found the secret of America. As I drowsed that night I registered a vague resolve to see Mr. Carville again and broach the subject to him. I felt sure that in some way or other he would add something to my knowledge, not only of the city, but of himself.

I became aware of Mac's voice in my ear, and struggling to rise, saw that he held in his hand a letter bearing a special-delivery stamp. It is one of the terrors, and no doubt advantages of the American mail, that a letter may descend upon one at unexpected hours. You may be locking up for the night, or enjoying your beauty sleep in the early morn, when a breathless messenger will hammer at your door with a letter, quite possibly containing a bill. Such a missive my friend held over me like

a Damocles sword, between thumb and finger, and awaited the news with interest.

It did not, however, contain a bill. It was a request from an advertising agency to proceed to Pleasant Plains, S.I., and interview the president of a realty company who desired what we call tersely enough a "write-up," an essentially modern development of English Literature, in my opinion. Mac maintains with stubborn ingenuity that Doctor Johnson and Goldsmith did "write-ups," just as Shakespeare wrote melodramas, and Turner did "bird's-eye views." I make no such claim. The point is that a write-up brings in fifty dollars, while sonnets are a drug in the market. For this reason I sprang out of bed with unusual alacrity and prepared to catch the eight o'clock express.

"It may mean a 'bird's-eye,'" I remarked, as I bolted my breakfast.

"You can make the suggestion," returned Mac, passing me half a grape fruit. "There's no need to introduce either mosquitoes or ice-floes into a 'bird's-eye.'" This in reference to New Yorkers' objections to Staten Island.

"I shan't mention them in the booklet unless they specially ask me to," I said with a grin. We are always facetious when a new job comes up. I should not be surprised if the immortals were much the same.

Catching the eight o'clock express is with us rather a legend than a solid fact, in spite of our vaunted breakfast at half after seven. One has

to shave, collect the necessary papers, put on one's boots, pocket tobacco and matches, run upstairs for a fresh handkerchief, and do multitudinous other things that somehow or other take time. As a rule we find ourselves half-way to the station, running breathlessly, only to find that we have two left-hand gloves, or that some vitally important document has been left behind. The seasoned commuter, by long and arduous practice, eliminates these errors; but we, who go to New York but once in a week or so, are unskilled in early morning hustles, and generally see the tail-end of the express disappearing in the cutting. This morning, however, I managed to get out of the house by three minutes to eight, sufficient time for an athlete to do the half-mile to the station. With a silent prayer that the train might be a few moments overdue I raced across the lot and down Pine Street.

I saw, as I hurried down the straight incline of Walnut Avenue, that I was in time, and slackened my pace to a walk. The morning, as I had expected, was clear and cold; a sharp frost had glazed the puddles in the roadway, and on the uplands of the further bank of the Pasayack River light patches of snow lay among the trees. The sun shone gloriously in a blue sky, and a keen wind blew the leaves into swirling eddies about the stoops of the houses. At the bottom of the hill was the station, a small low-roofed structure of wood. Some score of commuters were clustered about it, and I perceived, seated sedately upon a

hand-truck, his feet crossed, his corn-cob drawing serenely, and his brown-gloved hands holding a copy of the *New York Daily News*, none other than Mr. Carville.

He raised his hand in salute as I came up. I hurried into the office to buy a ticket, and the train came in as I came out, the locomotive-bell clanging faintly above the gasp of the air-brakes and the blowing of steam.

“Good morning,” I said. “You are away early.”

We climbed into the smoker and took a seat not likely to incommode the card-players.

“Ah,” said he, smiling, “I expect we’ll be going out to-night, you see, and it wouldn’t do for the Chief to miss his passage, would it?”

“So soon!” I said, in some surprise.

Mr. Carville gave me one of his quick good-tempered glances.

“Soon?” he echoed. “Do you know, sir, how long it takes to load the *Iroquois*? Just eight hours. Humph!”

Mr. Carville was fond of using this ejaculation of his in a double sense, if I may say so. As he spoke his eyes were fixed with some interest upon four of our neighbours, who had seated themselves near us and had laid a grey mill-board card-table across their knees. Whether it was the card-table, or the extraordinary speed with which the *Iroquois* was loaded, that excited his amusement, I am unable to decide. I was too familiar with the mania of

Americans for gambling in trains to take much notice of it. It is possible that Mr. Carville was less sophisticated.

"That," I said, "does not give you much time on shore."

"No," he said, "it doesn't. Speaking in a general way, we're glad to get to sea. In port, at this end at any rate, it's one continual rush. Shore people have very little consideration for sea-going men. They come and bang at your door any time, day or night. You may be changing your shift—don't matter, in they come. Some business or other. At sea," he concluded, "we do have a little peace."

"Where are you bound for?" I asked, opening my paper.

"Oh, Savona or some Riviera port, I expect. They don't give us our orders till we're off Sandy Hook. You're going to New York I suppose, sir, on business?"

"Not exactly. I'm going to Staten Island," I replied, "and I believe this is the quickest way."

He regarded me with astonishment.

"Is that so? I suppose you'll be taking the ferry to St. George, then?"

I said that such was my intention, and asked why.

"Why, you see, I'm going that way myself, to Communipaw. The *Iroquois* is lying down there."

"Dear me! It never struck me——" I began. He laughed quietly.

"No," he said, "I don't suppose, if you asked a thousand New Yorkers where such and such a ship was loaded, that not more than one could tell you. They know the *Lusitania* lies somewhere about Eighteenth Street and the *Oceanic's* next to her, and that's about all. It's the same everywhere. Ask a man in the Strand how to get to Tidal Basin; he won't know what Tidal Basin is, let alone *where* it is. As for an oil-boat—Humph!"

"I shall have your company, then?" I said. He shrugged his shoulders.

"If you don't object, sir," he said.

"I should like it above all things," I returned. "I was thinking last night, that there were many things I should like to ask you, but I was afraid that possibly you might not visit us again for a long time."

"Not at all," he said. "I was very glad to step in. You've got an atmosphere . . . if I can call it that. I mean there's something I don't get on a ship, or for that matter, at home . . . you understand? Now and again I feel I'd like to talk to people who *do* understand."

"That reminds me," I said, "that I have been wondering how New York impresses you. I think it is rather wonderful myself."

Mr. Carville smoked silently for a few moments while the card-players pursued their games and the train thundered through the flat swamps of Riverside.

“Have you ever seen it,” he asked, “from the Narrows?”

I shook my head. The *Campania* had come up in a dank fog, when I had arrived seven years before. I mentioned the customs formalities that keep one below at such a time. Mr. Carville smiled gently.

“I always think,” he said, “that for an artist, that view is the best, because it’s the first. I was looking at that picture in your friend’s studio last night; that one of New York from Brooklyn, and I couldn’t help noticing how heavy he’d made it. See what I mean? He was too close. The weight of the buildings gets on one’s mind. That’s the trouble with Americans, anyway. They show you a building and tell you the weight of it, and then the cost of it. Even women are judged by their weight. Only last night I saw in the papers something about a suffragette. They said she weighed one hundred and fifty pounds! I think it is a mistake, myself. Tonnage is all right in a ship; but it doesn’t signify much, either in a city or a woman.”

Rather astonished, I agreed that this was sound æsthetic doctrine.

“Now,” went on Mr. Carville, “if you ask me how New York impresses me, I should say that it reminds me of Venice.”

The train stopped at Newark. For an instant I was quite unable to determine whether Mr. Carville was joking or not. One look at his face, however, precluded any such resolution. I waited until the

doors banged and the train was moving before I said, "In what way, Mr. Carville?"

"Mind you, it may not impress you in any way like Venice——"

"I regret never to have been there," I interrupted.

"You may," he assented. "You may. A man can do easy enough without ever seeing Naples; but Venice——ah!"

"Yes, I can imagine that," I said, "but in what way——"?

"Well, I'll show you, as you're going to St. George—*San Georgio* as you might say"—he chuckled—"and you can tell me what you think."

I fell into a study at this, a study that lasted until the train slid slowly into Jersey City and we joined the throng that were hurrying towards Chambers Street Ferry. I decided to let the matter stand over for the moment. It would not do to act illiberally towards a man who combined a knowledge of sea-faring with Italian literature, and who had evidently arrived, however unacademically, at certain original judgments and criteria of life. I offered no remarks as the Erie ferry bore us swiftly across the glittering and congested Hudson to Chambers Street, and I observed that Mr. Carville was absorbed in watching how the vessel was piloted among the traffic. It was natural that his imagination should be stirred by a familiar skill. As we crossed the bows of an incoming liner I saw his eyes sweep over her, keen, critical, appraising. No doubt he saw many things that escaped my

landward vision. For me ships are very much alike. I expect he realized this and forbore to bewilder me with matters of technical interest. I have a sneaking appreciation of the mystery and beauty of a ship in full sail on the open sea, an appreciation I scarcely cared to reveal to an engineer. He stood by my side on the upper deck, his corn-cob in his hand, imperturbably observant, a miracle of detached respectability. And he thought New York like Venice!

Nor did we talk very much as we walked quickly down West Street to the Battery. Once he looked at his watch and remarked that he wanted "to be aboard by ten." The sun shone on the water dazzlingly as we rounded the end of Manhattan, showing the hull of the Ellis Island ferry a black mass. The usual crowd of foreigners with their dark eyes and Slavic features, shoe-shine boys, touts and officials waited around the entrance. I put my hand on Mr. Carville's arm.

"Our steamer isn't in yet," I said. "Suppose we see them land."

He glanced up and nodded, and we paused.

As the ferry came alongside the crowd gradually drew together more closely, and some, who had been sitting in dejection on the seats, rose and joined us. A tall policeman walked to and fro, keeping us back, bending his head to listen to a woman with a baby. Young men in flashy button-boots and extravagantly-cut clothes chuckled among themselves, while two serious-looking men

talked German, an endless argument. Above us the Stars and Stripes fluttered and snapped in the breeze, and the trains on the Elevated Road crawled carefully round the curve. Now and again the deep bellow of a steamer's whistle smote on our ears, smears of sound on the persistent roar of the city behind us. The feet of the little crowd shuffled as they shifted to get a better view, and two boys, chewing gum, climbed on the seats and stood up. A small girl of ten or so sped past on roller-skates, uttering shrill cries to a companion beyond the grass-plot. And then the gates opened and they came out to us, a little flock of frightened animals, each with his ticket pinned on his breast, each looking round for an instant as sheep do when let out of a pen, instantly herded by officials in peaked caps. A big unshaved man in a black sheepskin cap opened his arms and the woman with the baby hurried to him. A smart girl behind us pushed through and went up to a sullen-looking old man with a Derby hat and a high-arched nose. The boys on the seat exchanged ribaldry that drew the eyes of the tall policeman to them, and they vanished. The little crowd of aliens began to move towards the East Side and we followed as far as the Staten Island Ferry. I turned to Mr. Carville, thinking he might have some comment to make. He shrugged his shoulders and drew out his little brass tobacco-box.

"Humph!" he said. "They've got it all to come," and began to pare the tobacco into his hand.

I could detect no sympathy in his tone, only a grim humour and contempt for the credulity of those trembling peasants now hurrying to their doom. And as I thought of this, quite suddenly he began to talk of his brother.

“I’ve often wondered what Frank would have made of all this,” he said, waving his hand towards the sweep of the Brooklyn Bridge. “Not that I’d like him to come near me and mine, but just out of curiosity, I’ve wondered.”

“I should say he would be likely to get on well,” I said.

“You’re right—he would! He would take hold right away and as they say here get away with it. He’s a citizen of the world, is Frank. He’d be on Fifth Avenue or in Sing Sing within a twelvemonth. But there’s no need for him to come to America. He’s fallen on his feet again apparently in London. I hope he stops there.”

“You seem to have some secret fear of your brother, Mr. Carville——” I began.

“Secret? There’s nothing secret about it, sir. I’m scared of him. You don’t know him, so you can’t understand how you’d feel about it. I tell you the mere presence of that chap in the room unsettles people. He’s a disturbing influence. Even strangers notice it. Suppose he was over here, and me away in the Mediterranean? You’ve no idea how he can talk and wheedle and explain everything to suit his own ends. I do.”

I did not say so, but I understood Mr. Carville’s

feelings. Cecil's letters bore him out very completely.

"There's another thing you may not appreciate. When you're married you will, no doubt. A man and his wife aren't always on the same dead level terms with each other. Little differences, lasting perhaps an hour or a minute, sometimes till breakfast, crop up. They may rub each other's raw places, so to speak. Even in a case like mine, here to-day and gone to-morrow, we can get on each other's nerves. There's friction in every machine . . . unavoidable. You understand me, sir?"

"Yes," I said. "As well as a bachelor can, I think I appreciate your point. You mean that since you can't foresee these minor affairs and since you may leave home before the clouds roll by . . ."

"That's just it! Imagine a man like Frank living next door say, a man who has known Rosa, as I told you . . . See?"

As we stepped upon the ferry I noticed that his features were sharp and bore the impress of a quite unusual secret care. I felt guiltily that we had been unwise to tell so much to the painter-cousin. Who could tell what it might not lead to, even after so long an interval, with so incalculable a man as this brother?

With the bellow of the whistle Mr. Carville's face cleared and assumed its wonted placidity. The deck trembled as the screw began to revolve,

and imperceptibly we moved out towards Governor's Island. It was just here, I think, as we began our little six-mile journey to St. George, that a sudden illumination came to me. I understood Mr. Carville's reason for waiting instead of explaining his impression of New York. He gave me credit, apparently, for the ability to find it out for myself.

The vessel was going swiftly now over the shining waters of New York Bay. To the left lay the low and sombre buildings of Governor's Island; to the right the prison-like pile of Ellis Island showed red in the sunlight. On either side the shores fell away from us, leaving Bartholdi's statue, for a brief moment, the dominant note in the scene. Quickly we hurried by, and Black Tom, with his fringe of cranes and stacks, his dark panoply of low-lying smoke, was revealed. Before us uprose the wooded heights of Staten Island, and far down the Narrows a glimpse of the blue Atlantic. A couple of tramp steamers, one with much red paint on her bows, were coming up past us, and I noticed the Red Ensign was flying from the poop. With large gestures Mr. Carville's arm swept the horizon indicating the salient points. Almost before I was aware of it we were entering the ferry station and he was calling my attention to the chimneys and buildings on the Communipaw shore.

"Now," said he, as we emerged upon the street "your road lies down the coast, but if you have an hour to spare, you might come over and look at the

ship. We'll take the trolley to New Brighton and ferry across from there. But of course——"

"With pleasure," I said hastily. It occurred to me that I could do worse than visit Mr. Carville's ship. We boarded a trolley-car.

"You see," said Mr. Carville, "I'm interested in Staten Island. In a way it's very English. About a year ago I bought a lot up at Richmond Bridge. The house will be ready in the spring and we'll move in. I've had a fancy for a long while to have a home of my own. We did think of buying in your part, but it's rather a long way for me, besides being dear."

"You'll be leaving Van Diemen's Avenue?" I said. He nodded.

"Sure. The wife's not very anxious to stay out there. She's funny in some ways. Thinks there's a prejudice against her."

"I assure you——" I began.

"Oh, I don't mean you, sir. She means in the stores. She's heard things . . . Women are quick to take offence. She has her own way of living and it's a good way. We shouldn't like to feel we weren't wanted. And you know, in your parts, there's a good deal of gentility creeping in. I was reading the local paper last night . . . Mrs. This and Mrs. That entertaining to bridge, and so on! Humph!"

The car jingled and swayed round the corners, keeping close to the shore, and pulled up with a jerk at New Brighton. Across the narrow belt of water I could see the sterns of many ships.

“Here we are,” said Mr. Carville. “The launch starts down there.”

A stiff breeze was blowing and we were occupied with our hats until we reached the Communipaw side. Mr. Carville muttered a warning about no smoking “. . . five hundred dollars fine . . . necessary, you see,” and I saw his corn-cob no more until we reached his room.

“There she is,” he remarked, indicating two very red funnels projecting above a roof. “That’s the *Iroquois*.”

A faint smell of petroleum was in the air as we threaded our way among the blue-ended barrels and lengths of oily hose. In one way this ship of Mr. Carville’s was novel to me. There was about her decks no noise of cranes lifting cargo, no open hatchways, no whiffs of steam or screaming of pulley-blocks, with huge bales of merchandise swinging in mid-air. As we ascended the accommodation ladder I saw nothing save a young man with thick gauntlets standing guard over an iron wheel valve in a big pipe that ran along the deck. A stout iron-grey man in uniform was leaning against the sky-light on the poop-deck as we came past the funnels. With a slight bashfulness Mr. Carville turned, and making a vague introductory gesture, pronounced our names. I caught the words “Chief Officer” and “come to have a look round!” There was a little further parley, in which the “Old Man,” “stores,” and “The Second” bore some part. I did not pay much attention

to the conversation, to tell the truth. I was looking northward across New York Bay and comprehending the significance of Mr. Carville's parallel between Manhattan and the City of the Lagoons. For a moment I forgot that I was standing on the deck of a ship. From my lacustrine vantage the whole of the wide harbour lay in view, the more distant edge of Long Island forming an irregular and dusky line betwixt the blue waters and the bluer sky. In the middle distance stood the statue of Liberty, islanded in the incoming tide-way, while away beyond, rising in superb splendour from a pearly haze, the innumerable towers of Manhattan floated and gleamed before my eyes. Irresistibly there came to me a memory of Turner's Venetian masterpieces, and I knew that even that great magician would have seized upon the scene before me with avidity, would have delighted in the fairy-like threads of the bridges, the poetic groupings of the vast buildings, and the innumerable fenestrations of the *campanili*. One by one half-forgotten fragments of Byron came back to me as I looked out across the wide lagoon. I thought of Venice "throned on her hundred Isles," of him who said,

"I loved her from my boyhood ; she to me
Was as a fairy city of the heart,
Rising like water-columns from the sea,
Of joy the sojourn and of wealth the mart ;"

One by one, moreover, there came before me still more convincing evidence that this casual

analogy had in it a deeper significance, that here the Queen of the Adriatic was indeed resuscitated and the Venetian Republic born to a sublimer destiny. Surely the same indomitable spirit, the same high courage, that had reared that wondrous city out of the sea, was here before me, piling story upon story, pinnacle beyond pinnacle, till our old-world hearts sickened and our unaccustomed brains grew dizzy at the sight.

For a time—I know not how long—I stood with my hand on the rail, looking out upon that vision from the hills. I heard Mr. Carville's voice behind me, and I turned.

“What do you think, sir?” he said, and waved his hand.

“You are right,” I replied in a low tone. “You are certainly right. As for your *San Georgio*,” I smiled, “I'm afraid, Mr. Carville, you are a cleverer man than I thought you!”

“Come down and have a smoke,” he said. “I've some letters to see to.”

We descended the companion-way and crossed a large cabin with berths all round. Mr. Carville selected a Yale key from his bunch and opened his door. A young man in a soiled serge suit came out of the next room with some letters.

“Ah!” said Mr. Carville, hanging up his Derby hat, “How's things, mister?” and he took the letters.

The young man addressed as mister made several incoherent remarks of a technical nature, and with a glance in my direction withdrew.

“ Sit down,” said Mr. Carville, shutting the door. “ You’ll excuse me for a minute ? ”

I sat down on a red plush settee while my host settled into a wicker easy chair by a small desk. The room by our computation would be small, yet I perceived that Mr. Carville had within reach of his hand almost every convenience of civilization. At his elbow was a telephone and a speaking tube ; just above him an electric fan. Electric lights were placed all over the room. His bed lay below the port-holes and a wash-basin of polished mahogany was folded up beside the bed. On the table were cigars and whiskey. And between the bed and the wardrobe, on four shelves, were ranged some two hundred volumes ; even for a landsman a respectable library.

He sat for some moments reading his letters with patient attention, pinching his lower lip between thumb and finger. My estimate of him had undergone several changes since leaving the Battery ; since leaving deck, even. I felt somehow, that this quiet sedate person was no longer apologetic in his attitude towards me. Here he was master, and a subtle alteration of his demeanour indicated this to me. He sat there, as I watched him, solid and secure by inalienable right of succession, a son of that stern, imaginative adventurer, his father ; a son, moreover, of that sea which he served from year to year. I looked up at the photograph of his wife which he had mentioned, a photograph set in silver. The soft shadows of the platinotype

suiting Mrs. Carville. Evidently this had been taken about the time of her marriage; the fine modelling of her face and the poise of her head were instinct with youth. In her eyes I fancied something of the mild expression with which she accompanied her remark, "He is a good man." On either side of the silver frame were small pictures of the boys.

Mr. Carville put the two letters in a wire clip and offered me a cigar.

"Now you can see for yourself," said he, "where I live." He laughed. "I'm one of the few people who haven't got a bad word to say of the Standard Oil Co. They give me more cubic feet of private space, bigger cabin space, and better food than any shipowner across the water. They give me any mortal thing for my engines except time to overhaul them. The newspapers tell me they're a blood-sucking trust battenning on the body-politic, and so on. Personally" and Mr. Carville drew the stopper from a square bottle, "personally, I find them very decent people to work for."

I sat looking at him for some time as he busied himself with a drawer which contained, he assured me, an apollinaris. It struck me that though he had gained in certain external trappings of the mind since entering his room, he had ceased to appear to me as a heroic figure. Even the perception which had appreciated the grandeur of New York, the wit which had connected St. George

with *San Georgio Maggiore*, seemed to me incongruous with the present phase of his character. Quite possibly I had been so drilled in hatred of Standard Oil that I unconsciously revolted from the notion that any good could come out of that protean enterprise!

"You serve both God and Mammon," I remarked as the apollinaris splashed into the glass. He nodded.

"That's right," he said. "They say you can't, but I think it's a mistake. Something's got to bend if you're going to make both ends meet."

I agreed that this was so and scanned the books on the shelves. They at least were a noble company, their gold and green and blue broken by the plain yellow paper backs of Italian books. Shakespeare was there and St. Francis of Assisi: *Fors Clavigera* in a cabinet edition; Symond's *Renaissance* and Pater in wide-margined dignity. Tucked in corners, too, were books in that quaint pocket edition of the *Bibliothèque Nationale*: *Rabelais*, in five volumes, Beaumarchais' *Memoirs*, Rousseau, Scarron's *Travesty of Virgil* and that extraordinary work of genius, *The Maxims of La Rochefoucauld*. As I turned them over I saw on their pages the purple rubber-stamps of some bookseller in Tunis, Bizerta, Tangier and other places even more obscure. I had a vision of the man making his way, in some perspiration, through the press of Arabs and Moors to the little shop under the arches. I saw him scanning the shelves,

the derby hat pushed back, the vest open, the thumb and finger pinching the lower lip. . . . I turned to him with a worn copy of *Heine* in my hand.

"I think," I said, "I must fit out an expedition, to go and dredge the Java Sea for that manuscript you threw overboard."

"No," he replied, settling in his chair. "It wouldn't be worth it."

"We don't often find a man who could do it," I said.

"That's because they lack balance. The mistake artists and literary people make is, they think that because a thing is priceless, we can't do without it. I think it's a mistake. Someone pays half-a-million dollars for a Turner, say. Well, even if it was burnt up, lost overboard, what of it? It can be done again."

"Do you think so?" I asked. I was glad Mac did not hear this.

"Certainly!" replied Mr. Carville. "Everything's been done, which is a sound argument for supposing it can be done again. There's plenty of men doing much better than they did in olden times. I can't see much sense in the theory that because a picture is old it's a masterpiece, and because it's new it's junk. We ought to take longer views. How do *we* know what the youngsters are going to do?"

"That indeed is on the knees of the gods," I said as I put the *Heine* back on the shelf. I looked at my watch.

"I must be off to Pleasant Plains," I said. "If you are not going out at once, I should like to return in the afternoon; but I must run now."

"I expect we'll be bunkered and out by tea-time," he said, rising. "Still, some other time. . . . We're not away very long, month or so . . ."

He followed me to the gangway and I bade him farewell and *bon-voyage*. He had donned a double-breasted coat with brass buttons and a cap with a badge and gold cord on it. The effect on my mind was somewhat disquieting. He seemed to have vanished behind a gaudy mask, a mask whose sympathy with and knowledge of me was inexpressibly remote. I looked back as I crossed over towards the ferry, and saw him in deep conversation with the Chief Officer.

It took me some time to reach my destination, and I was scarcely surprised to discover that the man I had come to see was in New York. So far as I know this is a habit peculiar to American business. A man sends an urgent message to you to confer with him, and on your breathless arrival you find he is gone out for the day. I telephoned in various directions and finally obtained the particulars I needed from a young man who was smoking a poor cigar, with his feet on the stove rail in a small office on the estate. It occurs to me that this young man was defective in courtesy and breeding. I remember thinking he would have been improved if he had been sent to sea. Perhaps I was merely out of sorts,

It was between four and five when I boarded the Staten Island ferry once more. The wind had gone down with the sun, whose red globe flung long bars of ruddy gold athwart the still water. I took my stand on the upper deck. Once again I looked across the bay and beheld that wonderful vision of New York floating above a blue haze, a mass of glittering pinnacles and rosepink walls flaunting snowy pennants of white vapour, and looped to the sombre vagueness of Brooklyn by the long catenary curves of the suspension bridges. As the steamer started I walked aft, that I might not see the dissolution of the phantasy. It may be a weakness; but there is to me, mingled with all perception of beauty, a feeling akin to pain. Often I have envied those more robust souls who can gaze with unfaltering eyes at the beauty of this world, and feel no pang. I am not so. I was absorbed in this thought when I saw a steamer with two red funnels coming round from the Kills. At the masthead blew a flag with a blue eagle. As she came across our track I saw that she was the *Iroquois*. On the poop-deck was a familiar figure, short, rotund and blue. I stepped to the end of the deck and waved my hand. Mr. Carville was walking back and forth, hands in pockets, his corn-cob pipe in his mouth. He paused and caught my signal, answering heartily. As the distance between us increased he resumed his promenade, and the *Iroquois*, threading the narrows, dwindled

to a dark blot surmounted by a patch of vivid red. Once again I turned northwards, and the swift dusk of evening was falling. The sun had dropped behind the Jersey hills, and uprising behind Manhattan was a grey mist and a steely sky, ominous of snow.

As I walked up Pine Street to Van Diemen's Avenue the air was opaque and silent, while the thick, soft flakes that touched my face like chill fingers clung to my coat and balled under my feet. Winter, as we know it not in England, was come at last.

CHAPTER XIII

MISCELLANY

IT has often struck me that many people would have lived next to the Carvilles at that time and never discovered anything about them. When I think of it, our connection with them, from first to last, was strangely fortuitous. How fortuitous none other of our neighbours were even aware. Indeed, I remarked once to my friends that here we had an illustration of the widely-pervading romance of everyday life. How little did our respectable commuting friends imagine the story that ran through our trivial connection with Mr. Carville and his family! How little does Mrs. Wederslen think, for example, that her surmise about the burnt aeroplane is grotesquely wrong! How little does Williams, perpetrating on canvas his last fall vacation at Bar Harbour, understand how we came into possession of that etching of an aeroplane lying across an English hedge! Even Miss Fraenkel, I think, has no clear ideas concerning Mrs. Carville's connection with the tragedy of that New Year's night. I remarked, early in this narrative, that Miss Fraenkel's

importance in it was of the slightest. Her enthusiasm was ever an *ignis fatuus* leading her into unprofitable byways of conjecture. My friends and I, therefore, have the superior position as regards the vanished family next door. We even know whither they are gone; but we do not tell. It gives us a rare artistic pleasure to keep our counsel.

I think I may say that after New Year's Day we are qualified to keep any secret. Even we, with our inside knowledge of certain phases of newspaper work, had no real conception of the pertinacity of the Press. If the reporters did not ask us how much money we had in the bank, it must have been an oversight, like that trifling speculation of a drawing, or etching—I forget which—so fortunately foiled by the indignant Bill. Nevertheless, the unmannerly young men obtained nothing beyond the barest requirements of the law. But I anticipate.

Several times, during the weeks before Christmas, we had packets of newspapers from Bill's painter-cousin, and once a letter. Some of the papers were copies of *The Morning*, others, of contemporaneous issue, were old and steady rivals of that journal. In all of them were heavily-marked passages referring to the epochal aeroplane. It appeared that Lord Cholme was in some trouble. The *Bugle* even went to the length of suggesting that his lordship was being "held up" by his brilliant coadjutor, that Mr. Francis Carville's past record made it impossible for him to act otherwise than

obliquely. The *Aeronautic Review* summed up the situation to date in a contemptuous leaderette.

“If Lord Cholme,” they write, “wishes airmen and the public to take his asseverations seriously, why in the name of honest journalism does he not publish fresh dispatches from his mysterious correspondent? What are the facts? Of Mr. Francis Carville we know that he is a member of the Trojan Club, and that he has made several daring flights in a new plane designed by M. Alphonse D’Aubigné. Lord Cholme is entirely correct in stating that Mr. Francis Carville’s past is none of the public’s business. What is the public’s business is whether Mr. Carville has done anything authentically comparable with the performances of Wright, Bleriot or Loraine. It is all very well for Lord Cholme to publish in *The Morning* conversations which he has enjoyed with Mr. Carville while the latter was in the air a hundred miles away. The reputation of *The Morning* for veracity is not so spotless that the public can afford to accept its statements *en bloc* and without corroboration. And corroboration is just what Lord Cholme obstinately refuses to provide.”

It may be imagined that *The Morning* treated its readers to something quite different from the above. It was pointed out, in *The Morning*, that

jealousy was only natural among those journals who had missed coming to terms with Mr. Carville. Mr. Carville's terms were too high for the gutter press, etc., etc. *The Morning* was not to be drawn into giving away the secret of Mr. Carville's amazing intentions by any sarcasm. One thing was certain: the news would only appear in *The Morning*. Order your copy early.

So it went, a rather common and sordid squabble. For one single day the *New York Daily News* permitted its London correspondent to explain briefly what was happening, and then turned the rest of the cabled matter over to the Sunday editor. He, having a number of photographs taken from balloons which he had been unable to use before, seized the chance of "working them in," while the science expert wrote a whole-page article in the magazine section entitled "The Wireless Telephone: Is it Coming?" These were mailed to the painter-cousin, that he might see for himself an American Sunday newspaper in all its glory.

It must not be supposed that we paid much attention to all this. The season was too busy for our species of work to allow of much diversion among newspaper problems. It would hardly be believed how dilatory many American business men are when it is a matter of placing a Christmas order. Several commissions came in to us only a few days before, leaving very little time to set them out, to say nothing of proofing and correction. We had, moreover, our annual batch of

letters and parcels to mail to friends in England, a task not to be shirked on any account. And there were presents to each other. . . .

It is commonly assumed by those superior people who unbend enough to "study child life," as they call it, that the faculty for pretending is peculiar to children. As Mr. Carville would say, I think this is a mistake. We grown-ups have many games that we play. There is the game of meeting in the street. What child so besotted with pretending could do it? Mac and I, for example, meet Mrs. Williams as we take our constitutional round the town. As we approach we exchange *sotto voce* remarks to the effect that she is coming. Mrs. Williams continues to approach. We note her costume, but dare not make any more remarks, as American hearing is very acute. At the instant of passing, Mrs. Williams, who is really a very worthy young woman and not bad-hearted, looks up suddenly, smiles from ear to ear, bows and is gone. We replace our hats, recover from a half-mumbled "Good morning," and continue upon our way until out of earshot. That is one of the games we play.

Perhaps we three are peculiar, but we love to maintain the old foolish habit of hanging up a stocking on Christmas Eve. No one is supposed to know how or when they get on the breakfast-table. We invent all sorts of excuses for slipping away alone to Newark and New York to buy things for each other. I, perhaps, occupy the

absurdest position of all, for Bill consults me as to what Mac "would like," and he confides in me his conviction that Bill has wanted a spool-holder for a long while. Of course I am silent as the grave. My room for a week before Christmas is stored with secret packets. Sometimes this clandestine shopping has disastrous results. One snowy afternoon in Chinatown I pushed open the door of a Chinese store, intent on the purchase of a set of Shantung mats for Bill, and discovered her at the counter. . . .

"I thought you were at home!" wonderingly.

"And I thought you in Newark!" protestingly.

It adds to the fun of the game.

In the midst of our bustle and dissimulation a letter from the painter-cousin with a proof of his etching of the aeroplanes. For a brief breakfast-hour all was forgotten in the contemplation of the work of art. Bill, anxiously torn between her lifelong championship of her husband as the greatest artist since Whistler and her very natural desire to hear good of so charming a relative as Cecil; and I, burning with literary curiosity as to the outcome of so novel an experiment, leaned over Mac's chair as he sat by the studio window and examined the proof in the pale light of a winter's day. Slowly the big magnifying-glass moved over the paper, bringing into focus every detail of the picture. We accepted in silence the fact that the ink had dragged in one corner.

As was fit and proper, it was a small picture, yet

the effect upon the mind was of a vast open sky and infinite rolling distances of land and sea. It brought to one's memory the grey flatness of Essex, the lonely reaches of mud, the solitary house and the neighbourly hedges of the roads. And it did this quite independently of the bizarre structure that lay athwart the foreground, like some gigantic and disabled insect in a moment of exhaustion. It lay there prone and motionless, a sprawling emblem of despair. And aloft, high up, as though in subtle mockery of the human endeavour, a sea-bird soared with wings atilt, sweeping with effortless grace towards the grey sea.

"I don't like remarques," growled Mac, pointing to a small sketch on the margin.

"Well, I don't either," I admitted, "but this isn't on the plate, my friend. Moreover, I think it's rather interesting. It's Carville, I believe. Let's read the letter."

"High Wigborough,

"Essex.

"December 14th.

"DEAR BILL,—I have been sending you a lot of newspapers lately just to let you know what startling things are going on in dear old England. What do you think of it all? I suppose you have so many tremendous affairs in America that England is hardly worth bothering about, eh? Do you mean to tell me that the bale you sent me was all *one* newspaper, and comes out *every* Sunday

like that? Why, it's more like an encyclopædia than a newspaper! It's incredible. What an educated lot the Americans must be if they read it all.

“Of course it's all rot, this row between *The Morning* and the other papers. What is true, so far as I can get D'Aubigné to tell me anything at all, is that Carville has been acting rather shirty with Lord Cholme. Indeed he has been rather shirty with my humble self just lately. At *any* time he's the most restless chap I've ever met, and the most disturbing. He comes up here in his big car—and it's really very awkward, so large a machine in a narrow road. Carts have to go round by Layer Marney!—and sits the whole afternoon watching me work. You know, the light's so bad these days, I have to start late in the morning and work till three. As a rule he does not say a great deal, but his presence is none the less unsettling. He found me pulling a first-state proof from the aeroplane plate, and I thought he would have been interested. Not a bit. I really believe this chap, clever as he is, is utterly lacking in artistic perception. D'Aubigné, to whom I mentioned this curious lack in his friend, admitted that Carville, as far as Art is concerned, is *un âne bête*. I suppose he thinks me as big a fool at his flying problems; but then I am interested even if I don't know much, while he looks at a picture as though it was likely to go off bang and blow him up. An awfully misanthropic chap he

is, too. He positively sneered when in the course of a conversation he found out I was engaged. (By the way, I've an invite for Christmas down at High Wycombe. I wish you could be there!) He has the poorest opinion of women, says they are all false. 'Well,' I said, 'you ought to know, my dear chap!'

" 'Why do you say that?' he asked, glowering at me.

" 'I use my eyes, and D'Aubigné tells me you are fond of women.'

" 'D'Aubigné is a chattering fool,' he snapped back at me. Well, perhaps D'Aubigné is a chatterer, but Carville knows he isn't a fool by a long way. And even a fool can see that Carville makes a hobby of it, as I told you before. D'Aubigné biked over here one afternoon when Carville was in town. He told me Carville had had an awful row with the woman called Gladys, a girl who writes for one of the weekly papers. She has been living with him, on and off, for years, and apparently he had got into the way of thinking she didn't mind his other affairs. All of a sudden, however, she's gone and got married to a rich Australian author. This rather upset the apple-cart, for Carville is one of those men who always want the very thing they can't get. He tried to get the Australian gentleman to come down and write up the Mersea Island works and have a fly round, but he very wisely preferred to stay in Kensington. So D'Aubigné says; but

perhaps his lively Gallic fancy imputes more wickedness to Carville than he really possesses. However, it really seems that having lost his Gladys, who is a thin woman of thirty at least, and grown sick of his other gossamer loves, Carville has suddenly begun to bore D'Aubigné with another old flame named Rosa. Is it possible that he is thinking of your neighbour's wife? D'Aubigné says he's written to her. Good heavens!

“These affairs of the heart are really at the bottom of the row between Carville and Lord Cholme. The great effort, whatever it is, ought to come off, for D'Aubigné says the new machine is complete. People, as you see in the papers, are ragging Lord Cholme frightfully because of the delays. The Press so far have been kept away from Mersea Island.

“I couldn't finish this last night, and left it open until to-day. D'Aubigné has been over, and tells me Carville is a changed man. He is going to visit this Rosa by aeroplane, and is as fresh as a boy at the sudden idea. In any case, crossing the Atlantic was part of the scheme. The curious thing is that dear old D'Aubigné, who has no idea that I know where 'Rosa' is, and who doesn't know himself, little thinks he has told me the great secret. He imagines that Rosa lives in France. He says Carville was out one night over the sea, doing some low flying with sudden ascents,

and returned in high glee about something. Then he said he was going to see his Rosa by air. D'Aubigné is rather sick about it, for he is naturally afraid that if Carville finds Rosa it may be all up with the great scheme. Isn't it topping?

"Well, I'll let you know if anything further happens. Let me know what you think of the proof. D'Aubigné says '*Bon*,' which is very nice of him!

"Yours,
"CECIL."

"P.S.—If it isn't lost *en route* there is a small parcel coming. *Bon Noel!*

"C."

"P.P.S.—I've scratched the head of Carville on the margin of etching. What do you think of him?

"C."

It was a sinister face that we looked upon, sketched on the unpressed margin. The head was caught in the attitude of leaning against a wall, so that the salience of the jaw, the flare of the nostrils, and the white of the eye were accentuated. The brow was high, but (I imagined) pinched near the crown, and the large cavernous nose gave to the whole face an expression of bird-like rapacity that was corroborated by the full curved lips. And in the eye I fancied I saw a crazed look.

“ Good gracious ! ” said Bill, blinking at it through her glasses. “ What a bad-looking man ! ”

“ He seems to have that reputation, ” I said, and I left Mac to study the weaknesses of his brother-artist.

I do not think any of us thought very seriously about the news in this letter. Anything so mad—in those days—as crossing the Atlantic in an aeroplane seemed out of the question. Our energies were so bent upon the Herculean task of earning enough money to cross the Atlantic by steamer that we did not, I fear, give the painter-cousin’s letter its rightful attention.

“ Pooh ! ” said Mac. “ The man’s cracked ! Fancy ! In winter with a gale like we had last week ! ”

We certainly had some terrible weather during December. The day I went to Chinatown the traffic was disorganized in all directions. I went to Chinatown for the express purpose of buying some toys for my little friends next door. In the midst of our business it had occurred to us that the house next door would be lonely if it so happened that Mr. Carville did not get to port before Christmas. The idea had been taken up with enthusiasm. Beppo was to have a coasting-sled, Ben a pair of roller skates. Bill set to work to make Indian suits for them, and I was commissioned to fight my way to Mott Street and get coloured tops, snakes and kites. Bill’s attitude towards Mrs. Carville altered to a milder and more

tolerant form when she learned that the latter would soon be the mistress of a freehold home and garden in Staten Island. Bill had never been there, but she saw my write-up about it, and concluded that it must be a sort of second-class Garden of Eden, with good roads, steam heat and an absence of serpents. I did not deny that this was the case. I have at least the courage of my convictions. And Bill is ready to believe good of any locality that is immune from earthquakes.

It was she who called our attention to a change in Mrs. Carville's demeanour. We were taking tea in the studio as usual, Bill sitting where she can "rubber," as she calls it, and make comments upon our neighbours as they pass us by. The canary, rejoicing in the name of Richard the Lion-hearted, chirped for his customary morsel of cake, and I rose to hand it to him. Across the lot, still covered with frozen snow that was blown about by the wind, I saw ascending a tall figure in a scarlet cloak.

"Goodness!" said Bill. "Who's that?"

"Mrs. Carville," I said, and we all looked.

"Hahne's have a big sale on," murmured Bill. Hahne's is the fourteen-acre department store in Newark, the store where you can buy anything, from a can of soup to one of Mr. Arnold Bennett's novels, and have it sent home free.

There is, in America, a mysterious connection between the pictures on popular magazine covers and the garments stocked by the big stores, a

connection that is to be found in the native love of pose. We all remembered a cover depicting a girl with a blue velvet toque with a red feather. We remembered, too, that Miss Fraenkel appeared during the week wearing a blue velvet toque with a red feather. On Broadway I counted ten blue toques with red feathers. So, too, with other fashions; and Mac and I turned almost simultaneously to find last week's number of that same journal (circulation two millions). The cover represented a woman in a snowy landscape, clad in a scarlet cloak.

"Well, I'm blowed!" said Mac. "I shouldn't have thought she'd have done a thing like that.

"It suits her," said Bill, craning. "She looks well in red."

I did not speak. I was watching Mrs. Carville cross the road to her home. There was an expression of gaiety on her face that I could not account for, a springiness in the stride, and a coquettish lift of the skirt that I had not noticed before. I remarked upon it to my friends.

"Perhaps he's coming home," said Mac.

"Hardly yet," I said. "And even then—that would hardly account for such a change. I wonder if she is in love?"

"You flirty old thing!" said Bill, sitting down again as Mrs. Carville vanished.

But I was thinking, had been thinking subconsciously, I suppose, of the painter-cousin's letter. I knew, without Mr. Carville telling me,

that women, more even than girls, are the victims of temporary illusions, that they abandon themselves at times to quite impossible and romantic dreams. In short, by virtue of my experience, I knew a good deal more than I could print or say. But I continued to think, and that evening after dinner, to the music of the Steersman's Song from the *Flying Dutchman*, it seemed clear enough to me that even after all these years, so deathless is passion in some hearts, the skilful hand of Frank Carville might set the woman's soul vibrating with some of the old ecstasy.

CHAPTER XIV

CONCLUSION

IT was a white Christmas that year. The earth was still white on Christmas Eve when, late at night, I crept carefully up to the Carville's door and deposited our gifts in the shadow of the porch. And next morning, when I woke early, the snow was falling steadily, as it had fallen for many hours. At breakfast (by no means at half after seven that morning) the sky was swept to a clean, clear, transparent blue and the sun shone with dazzling brightness upon the road and roof. As we shovelled industriously, I stole a glance at the house next door. The porch was empty, and so far as we could see there was no sign of life. We were rather glum at this, I remember, and over hot whisky discussed the probability of Mrs. Carville's returning the presents. Suddenly (we were in the studio) we heard a clatter of roller-skates in the porch and a single knock, as though some small man had stood atip-toe to reach the Canterbury pilgrim. I am not ashamed to say that we went down in a body to open the door. Giuseppe Mazzini and Benvenuto Cellini stood without,

the former with his sled over his shoulder, muffled to the chin, their red cheeks and bright eyes beautiful to behold.

"Hullo!" I said. "Where did you get those from?"

Benvenuto looked down critically at the new leather straps of the skates.

"Ma says," began Beppo, as though saying a lesson, "Ma says we thank you very much for the things, and——" he glanced at Ben, who was watching him, "and we wish you a Merry Christmas."

"Thank you," we said, filling the doorway. "Same to you. Where are you off to now?"

"Pine Street," said Beppo.

"Skates aren't much use now, eh?"

"He's tryin' 'em," explained Beppo.

"Well good luck. Eat plenty of turkey."

They seemed hesitating about something, looking at each other and then at us. We looked down benevolently.

"You come too," muttered Beppo.

It was my turn to hesitate. And yet, why not? Mac laughed.

"Come on, old man," he said. "We'll both go."

And we did. For two solid hours, oblivious of churchgoers, we slid down Pine Street and toiled up Pine Street, rejoicing in the keen air, the flying of the snow, and the delighted shouts of the youngsters.

“Now,” said Mac, “come in and have some candy?”

As we knocked the snow off our boots in the porch Bill came to the door, looking somewhat excited.

“She’s here!” she whispered, and suddenly struck dumb, we entered, took off our boots and went upstairs to the studio.

Quite naturally, Mrs. Carville had stepped in to thank her neighbour for the little leather purse which Bill had sent her. She embarrassed us yet more by standing up when we came in. Mac, who is punctilious, begged her to be seated again. She was wearing her scarlet cloak and her face was aglow with diverse emotions.

“I did not know,” she said as I was getting the candy, “I did not know people were so kind.”

“In Christmas time,” said Mac good-humouredly, “we like to be jolly, you know. When’s Mr. Carville coming back?”

A swift shadow crossed her face, gone in an instant.

“I am not sure,” she replied. “Perhaps next week. I do not know.”

“I was saying,” said Bill hurriedly, “it was a pity he couldn’t get in for Christmas.”

“Never,” remarked Mrs. Carville, watching the children eating chocolate, “Never can he get home for Christmas. Every year it is the same. He is always at sea.”

She looked down at us vaguely, as though she feared, somehow, that we did not believe her.

Suddenly, with a blinding clearness I saw the secret of this woman's soul. Why had I not divined it before? Surely the evidence was plain for me to see. Perhaps it was because I am a bachelor, and as Mr. Carville had said, there are many things I cannot easily understand. . . .

But I saw it then, as she looked round at us. I saw the immediate and precipitous chasm between such a life as hers and a life like my friend's, ever close to her husband, understanding his whims, his fears, his hopes, his weakness, and his victories. I saw the desolation of the sea-wife, the long lonely nights, the ever-present apprehension of loss. I understood the pathos of the scaldino. And swift upon that vision I saw the appalling danger of such a life to a woman of imperfect culture, strong passion and yet noble aspiration. I saw, too, another and more particular tragedy of hers, the tragedy of feeling for ever debarred from her husband's inmost soul. That vague look of distress seemed to me luminous with meaning. She wished to say—how much!—yet in English she had no words.

Married people, I observe, often copy each other's trivial mannerisms of speech and gesture. It struck me that the quick look with which Mrs. Carville regarded me as she departed, had in it something akin to her husband's. I fancied she had divined my thoughts, and was afraid.

We talked it over for a long time that night, I taking up the case for the prosecution and

submitting to the charge of uncharitableness with my usual equanimity.

“On Christmas Day, too!” said Bill reproachfully.

I could not get them to see the practical possibility of such a thing. They thought I laboured the details of the painter-cousin's letter too much. Mac was stubbornly certain that a man would never cross the Atlantic in an aeroplane in our time. I waived that. I cared nothing for aeroplanes. Let science do her worst. What I wanted them to see was the likelihood of that dark powerfully-willed man taking up the threads of a past romance and working havoc even so far away from England as New Jersey. And they would not see it. They declared I was a bad man, and hoped I would keep my evil thoughts locked in my breast. It was Christmas Day!

It is here that Miss Fraenkel interposed, all unconsciously, and became the cause of our presence at the final catastrophe, the collapse of the aeroplane in the snow. For had we not gone out that night to visit Miss Fraenkel, and with her see the New Year in, we should have had no vivid memory of that terrible descent, nor understood how strangely fate weaves our destinies, how inexplicably she will drive to ruin at the moment of victory.

We had been chatting quietly, I remember, as we climbed Pine Street, the deep snow making the passage difficult, when we heard the strange sound

of the rejoicing in New York, so far away. And it was without any thought of coming peril, without any thought of our neighbour out upon the sea, that we paused at the hill-top and looked out across the familiar scene. We were talking, I think, of a previous New Year, when we had sallied out from our flat in Lexington Avenue and joined the tumultuous citizens in their merry-making. We had not dreamed, we said, that wayfarers on the Jersey Hills could have heard us. And as we said it, Bill clutched my arm, I looked up, and saw the three green lights.

It has been narrated, in the beginning, how we watched, and how the thing, spinning horribly in the air, came down and burst into flames in the deep snow. It has been narrated how the public were misled, and, by a strange caprice of destiny, were given no history of the episode. With the public I have no immediate concern. Let it suffice that I record here my knowledge and conviction that the ill-fated Carville did indeed cross the ocean on his machine, taking a southerly course to the Canary Islands, and landing for a short time in the marshes of Glynne.

Lord Cholme declared again and again that the telephone messages broke off near Gibraltar, and for all I know Lord Cholme may be right. In all probability the apparatus went wrong and Carville continued his flight. The painter-cousin has told us that for days Carville studied maps and charts of the Atlantic Coast Line before he started, and it is

evident to me that the plan had germinated in his mind to descend upon his brother from the air. It was a fitting and glorious end to a stormy career, an end such as he probably would have desired, and which would appeal to his riotous and undisciplined heart.

The following day is memorable to us, as I have said, because of the revelation it afforded us of the methods of a free and enlightened Press. The next day after was a revelation, too. The hue and cry was gone, our little happenings were forgotten, and some other home was besieged by the reporters. I started out fearfully to go to the post-office after breakfast, and encountered Beppo and Benny with the sled.

"Hullo," I said. "Isn't father back yet, Beppo?"

He shook his head.

"No," he said. "Ma's in there though."

"Is she?" I answered. "Is she all right?"

"She's cryin', Ma is!" he remarked in a general way. "You can go in if you like."

I looked down at them, troubled. I thought of Bill. I hastened back to the house and called her.

"You go," I said. "It would be better, you know." She went to get her cloak at once.

"Now, let's go down to Pine Street," I said to the boys, and away we went, overturning at the bottom amid shouts of joy.

Miss Fraenkel was full of the news, and after I

had bought my stamps she continued to discuss it.

“It would make quite a story, wouldn't it?” she said. “A thing like that coming down, and nobody knowing where it came from. Like Sherlock Holmes!”

“Yes,” I said, “I'll try my hand at it some day.”

“Of course,” she smiled. “you'll have to invent a love-interest. You told me that was absolutely necessary.”

“I'll try that, too,” I said, smiling in my turn, and lifting my hat, I hurried home.

My friend was busy at his easel, blocking out a poster for a breakfast food.

“Where's Bill?” he asked, reaching for his matches.

“Hasn't she come back?”

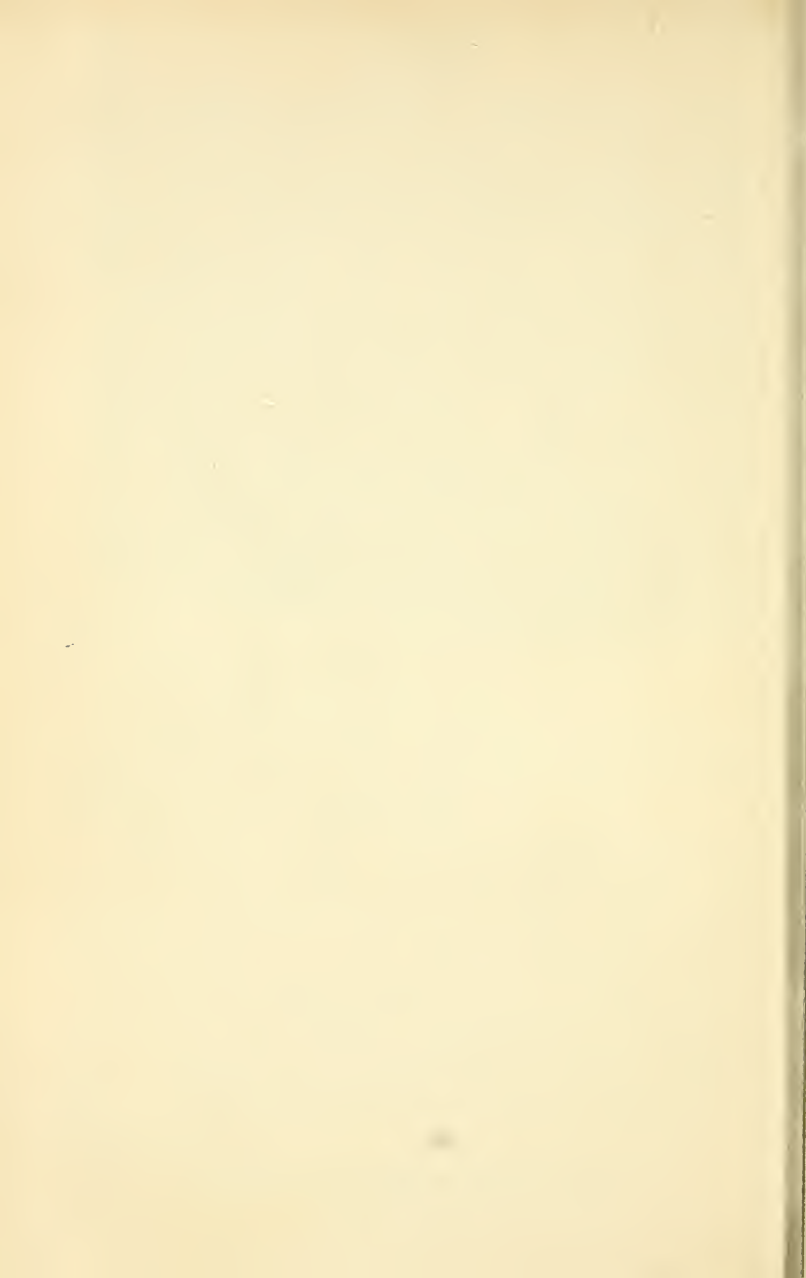
And I told him where she was.

Presently she returned, rather pale and seemingly reluctant to talk. It came out slowly, as she arranged it in her mind.

“He wrote to her,” she said. “That's why she was so excited lately. But she can't explain—in English, you know. She kept saying, ‘My heart! oh, my heart!’ . . . and yet she's glad, in a way. It would have been splendid and yet awful—if he had—don't you think? Just fancy! He was one of those men—I did what I could to quiet her. . . . He will be home in a day or two. . . . Poor thing!”

It is on the point of dusk as we stand at the studio-window and watch him coming up the hill, seeking vaguely for the footpath in the snow. He is wrapped up warmly, and his Derby hat is set firmly as ever upon his down-bent head. The corn-cob pipe smokes as ever, and he pauses to shake out the ash ere he steps down upon the road. For a moment he looks up at our windows, and seeing us, makes a grave gesture of salutation. He catches sight of Bill looking through her glasses, over my shoulder, and lifts his hat. His glance sweeps over to his own house, his own inviolate home, and drops once again to the ground. And then, with a reflective air, he steps across to the sidewalk and walks sedately up to his door.

THE END





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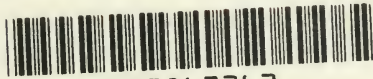
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