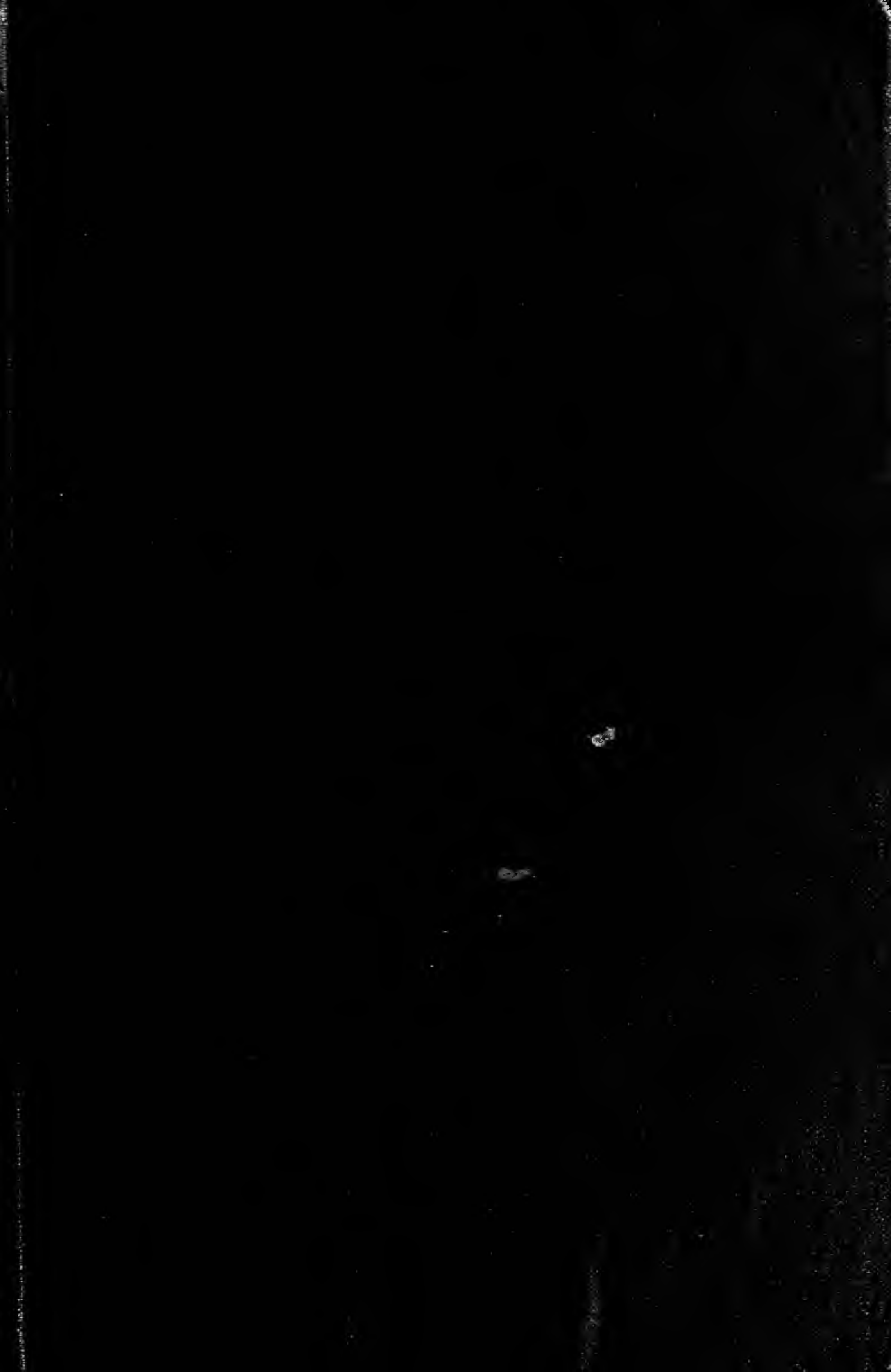

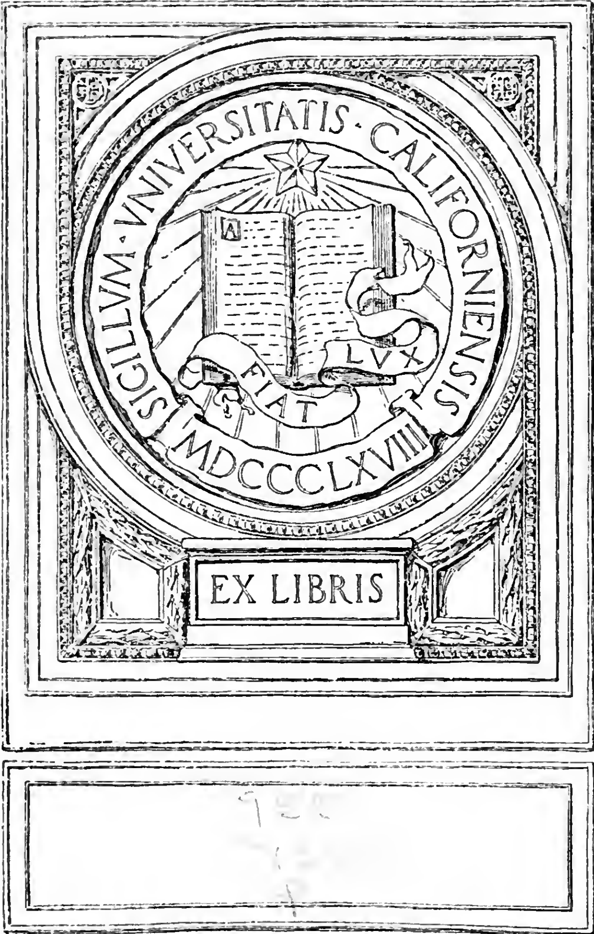
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# FROM FATHER TO SON

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# FROM FATHER TO SON

BY

MARY S. WATTS

AUTHOR OF "NATHAN BURKE," "THE RISE OF JENNIE CUSHING," ETC.

New York

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# FROM FATHER TO SON

## PART I

### CHAPTER I

THE train trundled eastward through a landscape now, at last, after something like twenty hours' travel, beginning to show the austere graces of New England. There were the evergreens, and the lean hillsides set with apple-orchards; the white houses and stone walls unconsciously picturesque; the clean tangles of wild growth, berries, herbs, vines, brambles alien to inland soil; and in the air, now and again, a hint of adjacent seas. The September day was hot; a fine bloom of dust had settled over the sleeping-car plush; the through passengers who had turned out quite spick and spruce for breakfast at Albany, now appeared somehow bedimmed like the window-panes. Promenading the length of the train one received a general impression of valises, of rumpled pillows, of old jaded magazines that were fresh yesterday, of vagrant umbrellas, and little whorls of hair-combings, and furtive crumbs lurking under the heating-pipes. On the rear platform of the rear car there were camped two young men, and an older one who might have been their father; the boys talked together, the other sat with folded arms, surveying the retreating scenery with half-closed eyes from under his hat which was pulled down in front over his thick white hair and his forehead so that it rested on his eyebrows. In the smoking-compartment behind there was sporadic conversation between two or three commercial travellers, voyaging in the interests of wholesale carpets, underwear-mills, distilleries or what-not, and another man who had the air of being a broker, banker, senior partner in a firm of attorneys or

some such person. That is to say, he was tall and heavily built, upwards of fifty years old with iron-gray hair, strongly marked features, quick, steady eyes, and noticeably good clothes and cigars.

"This part of the trip gets to be very tedious," he had said in assent to some remark from one of the commercial gentlemen.

"Yeh, you're not on the train long enough to settle down to it. Me for the long jumps. It tires you less going from Chicago to San Francisco or Mexico City, three — four days on the train, than these little twenty-four-hour runs."

"That was Quinnehasset we passed just now," the carpet-salesman volunteered. "Seventy miles more." They all mechanically looked at their watches. There was some stretching and yawning; the porter came around with his sad-hued rag and made perfunctory passes at the window-sills.

"What does Quinnehasset mean, does anybody know?" asked the banker-broker-lawyer-looking man, casually. "It's Indian, of course, but has it ever been translated?"

They variously answered that he could search them, or that they passed, or that if it was some kind of a sell, he could go ahead and spring it on them.

"No; it was a straight question. I was just wondering. All these Indian names have a meaning. I've heard some of them. There's Alabama, for instance. Means, '*Here we rest!*' It's interesting."

"It's mighty suitable," said the drummer opposite him, grinning. "Alabama's the state for the colored population. '*Here we rest,*' huh! They sure do!"

"I suppose Connecticut means '*Here we get out and hustle!*'" the carpet-man said with a lazy laugh; and he added irrelevantly: "Say, this *is* the silly season, sure enough! Any idea what Coshocton means?"

"I haven't made a study of it," said the first speaker, good-humoredly. "There are people that think it worth studying, though. I've heard them contend that all our American names of towns and so on ought to be Indian."

"Well, a good many of 'em are, and they're jaw-breakers for fair. Ever hear that story about the fellow that calls

in the stenographer to dictate a letter to a party saying that he'll meet him in Schenectady such and such a date, and the girl wants to know how to spell Schenectady, and he makes two or three stabs at it, and finally gives up and says: 'Oh, hell! Make it Troy!' "

The big man laughed obligingly, and confessed that he himself felt none too secure about the spelling of Schenectady. "I think the Middle Western Indian dialects must have been better sounding than these Atlantic coast ones, anyhow. Maybe it's because of being born and brought up in the Middle West; maybe I'm prejudiced. But these Maine and Massachusetts places have all got names like *squeemash* and *pebunksquot*. Now Miami, Muskingum, Shawnee — those are pretty!"

"Sure! And Galion and Youngstown, they're elegant," the whiskey-drummer agreed in jocular irony.

"They get eleganter the farther away you get from 'em, hey, Jakey?" suggested another; and then unintentionally put a stop to the interchange of wit, by remarking in surprise that they were slowing down. "What's that for?" He peered slantwise through the window. "Hadley Junction. Quite a little berg, Hadley. Three switches; fourteen milk-cans, an old woman, two boys and an Airedale terrier on the platform; two Fords and a wheelbarrow — "

"Two Fords *in* a wheelbarrow, did you say?"

"Ain't you the bright boy, though! Here comes the station-master. What's the excitement? Let's ask the porter. Hey, George!"

But the porter had vanished, whisking off his white jacket, and buttoning himself into his dark uniform coat, and looking tremendously important and busy. And in another moment, the two boys and the older man came inside.

"We're hitching on a high muck-a-muck in a private car," one of the youths announced. The other spoke to the tall man.

"It's the Stillmans," he said in an undertone, but his companion overheard, and turned on him in surprise.

"Do you know them?"

"Why, I — I — yes, I know them," said the other boy awkwardly, flushing all over his face, which was thin and

sensitive, with rather high features. One would have inferred that it embarrassed him to acknowledge acquaintance with the Stillmans. But the first boy remained quite unmoved by the revelation.

"Gee!" he commented airily, and bestowed his entire attention, or as much of it as could be directed through the car-window, on the manœuvres by which the railroad magnate's personal conveyance was now being attached to the train. This was not done without considerable shoving and shunting, backing and filling, with resultant shaking-up to travellers of less consequence, and even, it may fairly be supposed, to the exalted Stillmans themselves. The train crew might be observed running, shouting and waving arms; all the porters flourished up and down ostentatiously. At length with one final dislocating jolt forward and back, a kind of long wheezing sigh and universal settling down of trucks, the train moved on; Hadley Junction wheeled out of sight around a curve.

The white-haired man had gone forward meanwhile, presumably to his berth, in which direction the boys presently followed. The whiskey-salesman addressed the big man with some curiosity: "Which of those two is yours?"

"Those two? What two? Oh, the boys! Why, the one that spoke to me just now. The tall one."

"They're both tall," said the other a little contentiously, eyeing the man who knew Stillman with a species of involuntary hostility. He felt a certain resentment, utterly without foundation, yet somehow not unnatural, against this big-bug — such was the whiskey-salesman's phraseology — this fellow of Stillman's own crowd, some corporation-counsel probably with a bank-account as long as your arm; riding in an everyday Pullman and acting like a plain man. As he phrased it simply, it was as if the other had put one over on him. "Stillman's president of this road," he said accusingly.

"Wake up, Jake! Stillman's president of *all* the roads, ain't he?" said the underwear-drummer genially. He, at least, was sincerely indifferent to Stillman's status, financial or otherwise — to anybody's status, for that matter. "I thought both of those young fellows belonged to the old

colonel with the white goatee," he said. "They've been sticking together so."

"What makes you think he's a colonel?"

"Heard 'em call him that. He and the boy got on at Columbus, and some of their folks were down at the depot to see them off."

"I don't see how they happened to let 'em through the gates. They don't, as a usual thing," Jake said, still more or less sourly.

"Well, army-men, you know — I guess they've got some — now — prerogatives, as you might say. They don't have to pay when they travel, do they? Or else they get special rates. How is that, do you know, Mr.——?"

He looked inquiringly to the big man, who replied that he wasn't sure; he thought they had to pay their own expenses when going anywhere on their own private business. Otherwise he believed Uncle Sam footed the bills, or made them an allowance of some kind. "And in conscience it seems as if the Government ought to do that much," he added. "Their pay is very small."

"Well, I guess it's all it's worth — for most of 'em anyhow," the carpet-man said. "It's an idle life."

"It wasn't so idle down here in Cuba ten or twelve years ago. And I shouldn't wonder if what with fever and hostile natives and one thing and another, our soldiers aren't sometimes kept fairly busy in the Philippines and here and there. Then again they're generally on the job in times of floods and cyclones and so on," said the big man in the manner of an impartial observer. "Of course I haven't any use for a great expensive military establishment. That's all nonsense these times; nobody's going to jump on the United States anyhow. But I don't believe in running down the army."

"I wasn't running it down," retorted the other. "I just say it isn't any life for any man that's got any enterprise."

"Well, say, it's too hot to start an argument," the underwear-man interposed pacifically. As he spoke, with a timeliness comparable to the pre-arranged effects of the stage, there strolled in from the private car a second big, forcible, well-dressed man whose quick gaze canvassed them all, brightening with pleased surprise as it lit upon his twin.

"Hello, Lawson!" he said; and the other got up and responded: "Hello, John!" and they shook hands.

"What are you doing here? I thought you'd be down at the place, getting ready for the festivities. Cutting it pretty short, aren't you?" Stillman said.

"Well, I had to go back home unexpectedly on a business matter. Steven's been in the office all summer, and of course while Galway was there everything went along smoothly, but he went off on his vacation the first of the month, and directly this thing came up, and the boy didn't feel quite equal to it, so —"

"So he wired for Dad. I see," said Stillman, and smiled. "Mrs. Rudd with you?"

"Oh Lord, no! Nothing could persuade her to leave the Clear Harbor place, with this wedding coming on. She never goes home until November, anyway. Steve's here, though. He's on the train somewhere. He fell in with some college acquaintance."

They sat down, with two of those excellent cigars going. It was now to be seen that in reality, feature for feature, they did not look alike. The railroad president was much the older man, for one thing. It was only that in their strong and purposeful faces, their movements, their voices and manner, not domineering, not aggressive, yet the voices and manner of habitual authority, one recognized a kinship as marked as that of blood — the kinship of the American business man. His is as truly a race as any of the dozen and one from which it is made up, and possesses a racial type resembling none of them, emphatically his own.

"Well, how do you like the feeling of having a daughter married, Lawson?"

"She isn't married yet. Why, it's hard to realize that she's that old. But Edith's twenty-two; they *will* grow up, in spite of you! That was a very nice thing you sent. Edith and all of us appreciated that very much. You've heard from her? She said she was going to sit down and write, right away —"

Mr. Stillman made a deprecatory gesture. "The girls have heard, I expect. They picked it out. Glad you like it," he said, diplomatically refraining from more specific ref-

erence to the gift, wherein, indeed, Mr. Rudd had set the example. As a matter of fact, neither father had the slightest recollection of what it had been! They had their æsthetic tastes; Stillman's collection of ancient armor and weapons including our own Indian or aboriginal relics, had a considerable renown; the gardens, greenhouses and arboretum of the Rudd estate, down on the New England coast whither the owner was now being conveyed, were most beautiful. "Journey's End," Mr. Rudd called his summer home and loved it, played with it, petted it, tried experiments and spent money on it with a royal hand. But since one does not make wedding-presents of antique cross-bows or of new hybrid orchids, both gentlemen on such occasions felt themselves ill equipped for a selection, and moreover not greatly interested; they invariably delegated the business to the women of the family, and paid the bills without a murmur.

"George must be down at Clear Harbor already," Rudd said next. "They were expecting him when I left."

"Yes. He timed his vacation so as to take in the wedding and then go on up to that little place in Nova Scotia where he's been the last two seasons. He likes it up there; and let me tell you George earns his rest. He's very hard-working, very conscientious," said the older man, allowing himself to be betrayed into a warmth of which the next instant he was visibly ashamed. "My own son, of course — still — " he diffidently mumbled, actually reddening a little; "Never has given me the least anxiety. Lots of men have trouble — you know — "

"George is all right!" said Rudd, with sufficient heartiness; but a momentary absent look in his eyes that were ordinarily so alert, caused the other father to condemn himself inwardly with strong words. "I don't know whether that young Steve Rudd is making good or not. And here I've got to start in gushing over George!" he thought. "I must be getting old." And aloud, precipitately: "The ladies are back in the car. I mean Mrs. Ballard and Mary — they're with us now — and Clara, of course. Come on back and see them, don't you want to?"

"Why, I've got this cigar — "

"Oh, they don't mind that. Come on. Here, we'll leave

word with the porter to tell Steve to come back, too." Which was done forthwith, and the two old friends departed to the rear.

"That must be the Rudd Chemical Company Rudd. You know? Back home," observed the carpet-salesman after a while. "I kept thinking I'd seen him before."

"At a directors' meeting, one of those boards you big fellows are all on together, I suppose? Or maybe you had a little session with him, cutting coupons," said Jake in sardonic raillery.

The ladies of the Stillman party were taking the air and incidentally an icy-cold, delicious compound of lemons, pineapple, Apollinaris and so on, in an observation compartment at the end. All three got up with an agreeable little chorus of "Oh, Mr. *Rudd!*" and wondering and questioning ejaculations. A sooty black poodle shaved into the semblance of a lion, with a tuft of burnt-orange velvet ribbon tied into the curls over his left ear, burst into terrific yappings which he kept up until Miss Stillman's French woman who had been napping privately in a corner over her novel — somebody's "*Amours*" or "*Mystères*" or "*Intrigues*" — came and took him away.

"We supposed you'd be at 'Journey's End' up to your ears in flowers and telegrams and silver tea-trays and things," said Clara, expressing — with some difference — the same idea as her father. Miss Clara Stillman was a tall woman of about thirty-two, and she was dressed in a clinging violet linen gown, of the style which at this date was called "Princesse" or sometimes "Empire," accompanied by a loose, half-long violet linen coat, both garments panelled with intricate embroideries; there were cuffs and a collar and jabot of incredibly fine needlework; there was a dashing little travelling toque of crushed violets; there were violet silk stockings to match showing above her elegantly slender patent-leather pumps. It was a creation. The color accommodated itself well to her fair, accurately arranged hair, and her rather pallid, sprightly face.

Mr. Rudd repeated his explanations. "They don't need me. The only man that's ever really wanted around at a wedding is the groom, I expect," he said with a laugh. "But,

anyhow, Edith's got the whole thing worked out to the last detail. It's a wonder she hasn't had spots chalked on the floor where every member of the bridal party is to stand, or a schedule printed to tell us all just in what order we are to do everything. Figured it all out herself, you know. Perfectly determined there shan't be any hitches. Seriously, it shows executive ability. I was amazed."

"Oh, Edith's always been so clever — *original* — !" Miss Stillman murmured admiringly. "I do hope she'll have nice weather."

Everybody in unison hoped she would have nice weather. A man-servant of uncertain rank, being out of livery, arrived unobtrusively with more tall glasses filled, however, with an appreciably stronger refreshment. Only the gentlemen took it, but Mrs. Ballard, perhaps stimulated by the atmosphere, ventured circumspectly: "Mr. Rudd, do tell us! This young man, Edith's *futur*, *is* he German or *is* he Italian? The name — you know — it seems to be a — a — mixture, somehow. Brother John and I had a frightfully high-pitched discussion — neither one of us would give in. I offered a compromise on the theory that his father and mother were of both nationalities — I mean *either* — you *know* what I mean, so you needn't laugh — "

"Why, Gherardi's an Austrian, Mrs. Ballard. He's one of the military attachés at the legation; she met him last summer at Newport; that's when this thing started," said Rudd, circumstantially. "Curious, several people have asked me that same question, and I can't see myself why there should be the least doubt about it. Rudolph, you know. That's anything but Italian."

"That's what I said, Lawson," cried his friend, triumphantly. "I told Ellen nobody ever heard of an Italian named Rudolph. It would have been Rodolfo, or something on that order. And as to the Gherardi, they sometimes have names like that in Germany — or Austria, it's practically the same. There was that — let's see — what was his name, Ellen? The man that succeeded Bismarck — ?"

"Von Caprivi," said Mrs. Ballard.

"That's it, Von Caprivi. That's the same kind of a name."

"Mr. Gherardi hasn't any *von*, though, has he?"

"No, no title. I rather like that. His not having a title, I mean," said Rudd. "There's too much of this title business. In Germany, as I understand it — and maybe everywhere on the continent — if there's a count or a baron in the family, all the sons are counts or barons — might have half a dozen brother counts. Whenever I've been over there, I've noticed how thick the titles were, and I suppose that explains it. Seems absurd to an American — and rather cheap, rather cheap. Gherardi's people are more like ourselves. They're bankers in Buda-Pesth; very solid people."

"Pesth? Oh, I know somebody there, Count and Countess Jascha — charming people. We met them in London, and afterwards when she heard we were in Vienna, she wrote and insisted on our going to spend a week with them at their summer home, their wonderfully interesting old castle in the Tyrol. I wonder if Mr. Gherardi knows them. I'll ask him. Don't you remember the Jaschas, papa?"

Mr. Stillman grunted. "That was one of the times when you and your mother were over by yourselves," he said, swirled the whiskey and water around in his tumbler, and finished it. It was five years since his wife's death; she had been a highly ornamental person in her day, and as useful, probably, as Mr. Stillman desired her to be. Very likely he was not exacting about his womankind, what they did, spent, wore, or where they went; he never had the time. Unlike his friend Rudd, he had not begun life by stepping into the shoes of an extremely well-shod parent. Stillman came up from the ranks, came up from the bottom, came up from nothing; the sixty-odd years of his life had been passed in that savage and precarious business of coming up; and no incident not directly connected with it, not even the incidents of marrying and of burying his wife, impressed him much or abode significantly in his memory.

"I daresay Captain Gherardi — it's *Captain* Gherardi, by the way, so he has a title after all, he's in the army like all the rest of these foreign young men — I daresay you and he will find some mutual friends. He seems to know a great many people everywhere, the diplomatic corps generally

do," Rudd was saying, in reply to Miss Stillman. And here young Steven came in.

He spoke to Mr. Stillman rather shyly, and refused the highball, and sat down eagerly by the Ballard girl, as was natural, considering that she was the only person of his own age in the company. He must have begun at once telling her about his late companions, judging by the scraps of their talk that reached their elders — " Jack Burke " — " Awfully nice chap " — " Why, class of '07. Yes, ahead of mine, but he came back for the law course. Boiled it down to two years instead of four. That's going some! " — " His father's been stationed at Panama " — " Lived all over everywhere " — and so on, and on, with the two young heads, the boy's sleek fair one, and the girl's loose, wavy mop of chestnut brown, close together. Mr. Steven Rudd's shyness ceased, as one might say, conspicuously, to trouble him in Miss Mary Ballard's society; but then it would have been ridiculous for anyone to feel shy with so round, dimpled, short-nosed and obviously unimportant a person.

" Why didn't you bring your friend back here, Steve? " said Stillman hospitably. " Go and get him now, why don't you? "

" Oh, thank you, Mr. Stillman, it would be jolly, but they're getting off this next stop — Clam Beach. Mrs. Burke's there — " He went on talking to Mary. " Do you know, it's only twenty-five or thirty miles from our place, not more than an hour in a machine. You can go straighter than by the railroad; it winds all around. And the roads are fair. I'm going over. Look here, I'd like awfully well to have Burke meet you. Can I bring him over to the hotel? After this everlasting wedding's over, of course. How long do you think you'll stop? "

" Why, I don't know — " said Mary, in a slightly lower voice, hesitating, glancing at her mother; and the latter lady, who was perfectly capable of listening to two conversations at once, and of joining in either absolutely *à propos,* immediately struck in with the information that Clear Harbor was a delightful place — such a nice hotel — she had always liked it so much, partly, no doubt, because of having so many friends whose summer homes were in the neighborhood —

"I wish we could have asked everybody to the house," said the elder Rudd with genuine regret. "But you know how those things are. We've got all the family, naturally. I never before realized what a posse the Rudd connection made when you got them all together. And there's the bridal-party — "

"All the men are going to bunk on the sleeping-porches, or in the big room over the boat-house," Steven broke in gleefully. "I don't know how Edith's arranged for the girls; they need more dressing-room accommodations than men."

"Oh, they'll have loads of fun. You always do when you're all crowded in," Mary assured him. They went on talking, leaving the question of the Ballards' stay at Clear Harbor hanging.

Clam Beach was reached; the Burkes, father and son, descended, and Steven rapped on the window, and the two saw him and uttered a wordless farewell, smiling with lifted hats from among their valises and golf-bags and fishing gear. The train bowled on; and erelong arrived at the Clear Harbor station in a resounding mêlée of baggage-wagons, big motor-cars, middle-sized motor-cars, little motor-cars and some few horse-vehicles, of house servants, hotel servants, young men and girls slouchily stylish in every known variety of sporting-costume, numberless dogs, bicycles, yachtsmen, sailors on shore leave from the Government cruiser down the bay, and summer residents or vacationists from half a dozen less select resorts scattered along the neighboring beaches. It was among these latter gentry that the Stillman party augmented by the Rudds, happened to disembark; and now an odd, uncomfortable encounter took place. That is to say, as they were exchanging final civilities, and just as the Rudd chauffeur had come up and touched his hat and taken the Rudd bags, and while some Stillman satellite with equally impassive good manners was performing the same office for the Stillmans, and a second after George Stillman, big and clean in nice white flannels, had come shouldering through the crowd and got up to them — just at this moment, there caromed into Mr. Rudd's immediate presence — quite unintentionally, as was at once evident — a seedy person

with an ill-used hat, who began to apologize, and interrupted himself to ejaculate: " What! *Lawson!* "

Mr. Rudd ejaculated too, but unintelligibly, and stared, out of countenance in a surprise so perceptibly hostile as to put the others out of countenance, too; one and all, except Stillman senior, they began to look elsewhere and to be very busy, scattering off in haste, and reuniting farther away. The boy Steven stood looking from his father to the stranger, wonderingly.

" I — I hadn't any idea you were staying here — I — er — " Mr. Rudd fairly stuttered. " I — um — er — "

" I'm not staying. I'm going," said the man, recovering much more promptly. " You live around here somewhere, don't you? Seems to me I recollect hearing you had your summer place in this neighborhood. I'm at Clam Beach; just ran over to the Harbor this afternoon for the sail." All of which speech, he uttered not glibly, but with a kind of deliberate fluency, as if in the humane desire to give the other time to get over his embarrassment. And to be sure, Mr. Rudd, by the end of it, had himself in hand again, though he could not strike the newcomer's admirably casual tone.

" My son Steven," he said stiffly, with a slight gesture; and with another: " Steve, this is your — " Here he halted as one who sits down reluctant to a distasteful dish. Whatever it was, Lawson could not make up his mind to swallow it. " This is Eugene," he announced at last.

Stėven, thus enlightened, muttered some sort of howd'ye-do, in a miserable uncertainty as to whether he was expected to shake hands or not, and reddened painfully before the other's comprehending grin. But " Eugene," who, however disqualified otherwise for polite society, appeared to possess a real intuition about sparing people trouble, settled the young·man's difficulty by thrusting both of his own fists deep down into his trouser-pockets, and giving him a brief nod.

John Stillman, meanwhile, after one quick survey of the stranger, walked off with a meditative expression to where the family awaited him. He had some idea of who this " Eugene " was; a retentive memory and unusual powers of

observation had been valuable assets of Mr. Stillman's all his life. Clara, from the automobile, expressed warm approval as her father advanced without either undue hurry or undue deliberation.

"Papa, you're a wonder! It must have looked dreadfully pointed the way all the rest of us scurried away without a word. But I didn't know what else to do. It was so awkward — that impossible-looking man! However, Mr. Rudd was so upset himself, I don't believe he noticed."

"No, I don't believe he noticed," her father agreed drily. "Have a cigar, George?"

"Your taking it in such a matter-of-fact way, though, smoothed everything over," Clara pursued. She caught at another thought: "Oh, you know him. You know all kinds of people."

After the short pause which Mr. Stillman had formed the habit of making before he answered any question definitely, he said: "Why, yes, I think I know him. I think I remember him, that is. He's some relation of Rudd's — a cousin or something. Name's Rudd, too, as I recollect. He hasn't been around for years, though — fifteen years anyhow."

"What was the matter? Did he do something?" inquired Clara brightly.

"I never asked," said the railroad man.

George Stillman made a cryptic remark. "I didn't know they allowed it to be brought into the State of Maine," he said.

## CHAPTER II

THE foundations of the Rudd fortune, by this present date a solid and stalwart edifice, were laid as far back as the decade of 1840–'50 by that fine old family remedy, Rudd's Specific. Ante-bellum shelves were crowded with the tall, rectangular bottles it came in, with a label gummed up and down each of the wider surfaces, setting forth its virtues as a cure or preventive for so many human ills that the list might almost have served for a medical dictionary, beginning as it did with Anthrax and Asthma, Biliousness, Bleeding of the Nose, Cancer, Consumption, Catarrh, Dysentery, Diabetes, and so on down through such occult troubles as Ricketts and Shingles to "all Zymotic diseases," with which it victoriously wound up. David Rudd was the patentee and sole owner; he was a young man in his early twenties when he first conferred the benefits of Rudd's Specific on a suffering world, and for upwards of thirty years, he continued the humanitarian labor of making and dispensing it under that name, until the taste of the new generation required a change. Other times, other manners. The Specific became the Pancurata in a round bottle inside a cylinder of corrugated pasteboard, lined with a leaflet of printed directions for its use, wherein, it may be noted, not nearly so many, or such diverse and magical qualities were ascribed to it. Scarcely one person in ten remarked the inconspicuous statement that it was manufactured by the Rudd Chemical Company; but by that time, that is about the year 1878, the Specific or the Pancurata — a patent-medicine by any name smells just as sweet — had ceased to be the main output of the Rudd concern; drugs, toilet-waters, soaps, salts, perfumes, facial creams, or the ingredients of all these things were what the firm now purveyed to a vast and constantly increasing *clientèle*, both wholesale and retail. And not long thereafter the Specific followed its creator into what may be called a respected oblivion.

But meanwhile, David not only made a great deal of money with the medicine and other ventures, he also got married and raised a family of five children — or tried to raise them. David junior, the oldest boy, ran away to join the army at sixteen years of age and died of typhus in Andersonville prison in 1863, after only a few months of soldiering. Hester was another who did not live to grow up; but Elihu and Susan and Lawson — they came in the order named — had better luck. They were all the children of the first Mrs. David Rudd, Eliza Perry that was.

Lawson Rudd enjoyed the distinction of being the first member of the Rudd family to be photographed; there existed daguerreotypes of all the rest — Mrs. Rudd in a plaid silk dress and black thread lace shawl, and a bonnet with bunches of flowers over each ear; David of the Specific in trousers plaided too, terrifically plaided, and a double-breasted waistcoat of crimson velvet with cut crystal buttons, and a velvet collar to his coat, and that ministerial expression common to all our ancestors of that date whenever they posed; Hester, a meagre child in tarlatan flounces and a satin bodice, her little thin slats of arms distressingly obvious; little David and little Elihu with round collars and sleek hair. They were all stacked away in their embossed morocco cases, in a seldom-visited corner of the attic shelves; there was really no other place for the old things in the elegantly ornate or elegantly severe "period" rooms of the present Rudd house. For that matter, Lawson's own likeness taken by the new process at a time when he himself was still quite new, only served now as a means of entertainment, arousing ribald laughter rather than filial respect. Could that pudgy, solemn kid with the preposterous visored cap, and the rows of buttons all over him — could that really be Dad? Pipe the laced shoes and the white stockings on him, will you? Some sport!

Nevertheless, Lawson looked at you straight from the blurred, sallow bit of card with the same look, resolute, self-confident and unafraid if a good deal harder and minus the innocence and openness, with which he met the world to-day. If he harked back to that baby at all, or to the headstrong, high-tempered, cocksure, intolerant boy who had succeeded

the little fellow, it was probably with the wonder, the contemptuous sympathy, the lurking shame you and I also feel for our younger selves. He could not remember much about him except that he had been very fond in his dumb, boyish way of his mother and of his sister Hester who died; he used to pull her about in her little carriage, and play with her; and of a dog named Gyp that died too. He remembered wanting to be a pirate, and later on actually having dreams of being a missionary! And he remembered very distinctly the day his brother David took him around behind the woodshed and told him about his design to run away and enlist; Lawson was not to breathe a word about it until it was all over; and then he must say to Ma and the folks that David left good-bye for all of them, and that he wouldn't have gone off without saying it himself if he could have helped it; and that he would write. The small eight-year-old promised and performed all this faithfully, and took a thrashing for his part in the crime without a whimper.

"How long was it before Grandpa and Grandma found out?" Lawson's own son asked him upon hearing this tale.

"Oh, I don't know — a week perhaps. They missed him at once, of course, but they thought he had gone to see your grandmother's brother, Uncle Jed; he was living in Chillicothe at that time. It took longer for news to travel around in those days."

"What did you say when they asked you? I mean all that week before they found out?"

"I expect I lied, Steven. It was all very wrong, you see. Children ought not to disobey or deceive their father — or their mother, either, of course," Mr. Rudd interpolated hastily by an afterthought. "Your uncle died afterwards, and I suppose I was partly to blame. So you see I got worse punishment even than the whipping, and I deserved it," said Lawson, anxious to point a moral.

"Huh!" said little Steven thoughtfully. The father who unwillingly knew deep in his heart that if he had the thing to do over again, he would have acted precisely as on that first and only time, wondered uneasily if the boy knew it too.

But this conversation took place years later. We have to

consider now young Lawson Rudd, who was growing up and going to school and getting ready for college, all during the grave years of secession and civil war and reconstruction. David Rudd's money must have doubled, quadrupled through that time. He set Elihu, who like his father was a man of action with no turn for book-learning, up in business, sent Susie to Europe, lavished diamonds and seal-skin sacques and rich equipages, those classic desires of Victorian femininity, upon his wife. Lawson had a riding-horse, he had a tutor, he had pearl studs, he was entered at Harvard. There was a billiard-room at the top of the house, which had besides a marble bathroom; there were double-parlors all festooned with brocatelle, all glittering with mantel-mirrors and cut-glass prisms. There were expensive oil-paintings, fruit and game pieces for the dining-room, landscapes and Holy Families for the parlors; Mr. Rudd commissioned a friend who was in the business to select them for him regardless of cost. The stately regiments of books drawn up around the library walls were furnished him in like manner. Lawson was the sole person who ever tried to read them, and he did not get far, seeing they were mostly encyclopædias, sermons, and treatises on various subjects of an equally profound depth and dryness, with never a word about gardening, or farming, or raising live-stock, which were things of real interest to him.

Mrs. David Rudd died in 1870. She had been a good wife and mother, an earnest church-worker, a fine cook, a managing, efficient housekeeper, and so, of course, must have been greatly missed and regretted. The family, however, bore up under their loss philosophically, as we all must, whether or no. David kept on turning over dollars. Lawson went to Harvard, Susan married after two years or so, and went to Denver to live. This last event must have left the house rather lonely for the two men; but what would you have had the young girl do? Neither her father nor brother were so selfish as to want her to give up her life to making a home for them; or, looking at it in another and less amiable way, they may have been each so occupied with his own life that they were not over-interested in Susie's. Lawson being away at college for the better part of four

years, and David completely taken up with business. At any rate, Susie married, Lawson graduated, David Rudd was a hard-and-fast widower for almost half a decade, the world was getting ready for the Centennial celebration at Philadelphia, when the next blow fell on the Rudd family. Mr. Rudd married again.

It need not be referred to in this dramatic metaphor, but for the melancholy fact that David did not select an earnest church-worker this time, or a fine cook and housewife, or a person who gave the slightest promise of being a good wife and mother. The second Mrs. Rudd's recommendations were youth — she was twenty-three or -four, only a very little older than her bachelor stepson — a buxom figure, fresh complexion, big bright eyes, abundant glossy black hair, and so forth. It had been a long time since the first Mrs. David's complexion was fresh, or her eyes bright; good works do not necessarily contribute to good looks, and perhaps there is not much real satisfaction to be got out of hanging jewels and opulent garments on a faded woman of fifty with a switch, and a well-established snore. Are we not all poor creatures? The new lady, before her marriage, was a Miss Mayme Bell, a positive nobody from nowhere; that is, she was reported to be the daughter of some rooming-house woman down among the tenements which constituted part of the Rudd real estate. That must have been where David ran across her; the whole affair was entirely respectable, naturally. Far better to land him outright, and acquire a legitimate, indisputable title to at least a third of that same real estate, than to risk any other connection. She might be harmless enough; but unsuitable was no word for the match. It was a ghastly piece of folly. Society sympathized sincerely with that poor young Lawson upon whom it was bound to come harder, so people said, than on the other members of the family. The brother and sister had homes of their own; they need have nothing to do with the interloper unless they chose; but Lawson's home was spoiled, and he had to stand it. It was a shame, about which they declared themselves to feel more deeply because nobody could condole with him. Nobody could even mention the deplorable event to him unless he himself introduced it.

And there were not wanting those who pointed out the strangeness of the fact that it was the father who at sixty or thereabouts had made a fool of himself, instead of the twenty-year-old son. They said, however, that Rudd junior was a noteworthy example of the old head on young shoulders; a cautious, stubborn lad.

For once society was right. His father's marriage did come harder on Lawson than on the rest. Elihu received the disastrous news with a sort of philosophical levity after the first stunning shock of surprise. "Well, after all —! You can't blame the old gentleman for wanting to have a little fun before he passes on," said he. "Why shouldn't he? He's worked hard, and he's entitled to his play. I suppose he just realized all of a sudden that he'd better hustle, or he'd be too late? Can't live but once."

"Oh, it's all very well for you to laugh *now,*" his wife rebuked him. "You may not feel so much like laughing after a while. That woman will probably get everything he has away from him. That's what she married him for."

"Not everything, 'Stell, not everything. Father's not in his dotage yet, by any manner of means. And anyway haven't I supported you in pretty fair comfort this far? I guess we'll always be able to scratch along on what we have," said Elihu, who indeed was a chip of the old block, and it may be a little proud of his success as a money-maker.

"Oh, yes, but you know what I mean. I'm thinking about the children's rights. Here she'll come in with her claims, and I suppose there won't be any way to get around giving her a share, if she doesn't get the whole. It's abominably unjust, if it is the law. I don't see why — "

"Damn it, Estelle, I believe you'd rather this girl had gotten hold of him without any marriage!" said Elihu Rudd; he was rough in his speech at times. "I believe you'd be glad if it had all been disreputable — "

"Well?" said Mrs. Elihu, savagely. "I don't see why it couldn't have been. Then it wouldn't have made any difference, or any trouble."

"Don't you believe it! I don't want any common-law complications, after the old man's dead. Will-cases are

jury-cases in this state, and the juries invariably side with the woman. I tell you we're lucky as it is."

Susie expressed herself with even more vehemence than Elihu's wife. She called it a disgrace, marriage or no marriage; she wrote intimating that a guardian should be appointed for old David; she orated about *her* children's rights, and prophesied the direst calamities in store for every Rudd to the ultimate generation; she proclaimed the entire family disrupted and herself estranged from her father forever, and in fact did everything in her power towards the disruption and estrangement except to refuse the very handsome allowance Mr. Rudd continued to send her month in and month out with an exasperating magnanimity — or indifference. It is doubtful if he ever read her letters; when all was said, David was still, even as his elder son had gauged him, a shrewd and tolerably hard old man, who knew the world and could make a close guess at what his children thought of him. Nor should anyone condemn them off-hand for being mercenary or selfish. Estelle and Susan were no Lear's daughters; Elihu was as right-minded as the average man, and no more self-seeking. They wanted to do their duty; and their indignation, their anxieties were wholly natural.

But for Lawson, the thing was an intolerably grotesque tragedy. With the distorting self-consciousness of youth he felt himself the target for sneers and ridicule equally with the two chief performers. His father's foolishness somehow reflected on him, in Lawson's perverse judgment; it was his pride that writhed. There was perhaps something physical which he could not have controlled, had he tried, in the young man's revolt. His father was an old man; he ought to be over and done with all things fleshly; it was disgusting. Lawson hated his stepmother, not because she had taken his mother's place, nor because he grudged her any share of the property; he hated her merely for existing at all, for being a gross, good-looking, good-natured, bouncing animal, mortally afraid of himself; he hated her calling him abjectly "Mr. Lawson," fully conscious that he would have hated her just as much for daring to call him Lawson. When the nauseating fact became evident that there was going to be

another Rudd added to the family, the young man escaped in desperation by getting himself transferred to their New Orleans office. He had already displayed the inherited aptitude for business; those changes from the Specific to the Pancurata and the elimination of the name of Rudd were due to Lawson's taste or sagacity, and he now began a course of other well-considered reforms, improvements, alterations of policy. The new plants at Mobile and Kansas City were his idea, and it was he who took the first steps towards extending their trade to Mexico and the South American states, during the four or five years of his stay in New Orleans. When his father died, it seemed natural that Lawson, young as he was, should be called home to assume the management of the company, jointly with Elihu; the brothers amicably divided the country by the Rockies, and each controlled the section of his choice. They left the widow in unquestioned possession of the Rudd homestead, and of the just and suitable but not at all lavish provision which that canny old David, vindicating Elihu's judgment, had made for her and for her little boy Eugene.

## CHAPTER III

THE automobile rounded to before the "Colonial" façade of the house which was brick of a mellow ruddiness with ranges of small-paned windows rimmed with cut stone alow and aloft, and a mathematical distribution of chimneys. Lawson and his son got out and passed between the round barberry bushes simulating ancient box on either hand of the door, which was a door in strict keeping with a fan-light and brass knocker. His house, like everything else with which Lawson had anything to do, like his clothes, his amusements, his way of life, was unpretending yet obviously expensive, with a peculiarly thorough expensiveness extending to the most minute detail. The approach to it was through a kind of informal farm-like park; the celebrated gardens lay to the rear so that they could be looked upon in privacy from the terraces and breezy balconies, pergolas, and so forth, which the best-known architect of the times in conjunction with the best-known landscape artist had constructed at a cost which Mr. Rudd would have deemed it the extreme of purse-proud silliness to mention. No man ever made so much money who was so genuinely indifferent to it merely as money. What Lawson craved was beauty and complete physical comfort; and with him the dollars were a means, never an end.

They had had a rather silent ride from the station, the father scowling a little over what were perhaps unwelcome memories roused by the late meeting, and the son revolving a dozen questions, not one of which could he bring himself to ask. Steven was not afraid of his senior; it was a characteristic obedience and deference that restrained him. "If Dad wanted to tell me, he'd tell me," the young fellow reasoned. He knew Eugene Rudd only as a name; he had always known that one member of the older Rudd generation was a step-brother, many years younger than the others, of whom they scarcely ever spoke, though when they did they

never said anything derogatory — before their children, at any rate. Steven recalled a saying of some old-country nurse he had once had about its being an evil bird that fouls its own nest; he thought he understood the family reticence, now. He was nearing twenty-four, had gone through college, and spent a year travelling in Europe by himself, coming off from these experiences with a clean slate; and he had now been in business six months. In fine, like many another gentleman of his years, young Mr. Rudd was of the opinion that he had seen the world, and knew a thing or two; nobody needed to tell *him* what sort of a chap this Eugene was, Steven said to himself shrewdly.

In spite of the event imminent, everything was quiet as they drove up; the caterers, expressmen, and all the rest would be coming and going by the service entrance around the corner of the north wing; busy enough there, probably. And probably it was there also that Edith was to be found. Even supposing the Elihu Rudds and Aunt Susie with the Denver relatives, and all the Chillicothe and Chicago and Washington, D. C., cousins, and Julia Thatcher and the other bridesmaids — even supposing that they had all arrived and the house was simmering with them, Edith would not be bothering her head about their entertainment. She would capably tell off her mother and Hester for that duty; and like as not, she herself would be perched on a stepladder with her head done up in a towel, bossing the decorators, and occasionally taking a hand with the hammer and nails when they failed to get her idea. Mr. Rudd sketched this exposition humorously, and Steven agreed to all the items except the last.

"No, Edith doesn't ever do anything herself," he said sagely; "she's great at getting work out of other people — and she doesn't make them mad either. I don't mind doing what Edith wants; she's generally right somehow. But then Edith and I have always been pretty good pals," he added, with a certain regret.

"Well, we've got Hester still, anyhow," said the father, valiantly cheerful.

Everybody had arrived, and the house was simmering with them sure enough. Looking down the long centre-hall to

where a suave archway framed the distant view of the ocean, they saw the terrace busy with moving figures, bright-colored amongst the pretty painted iron tables, against the background of striped awnings, cushions, rugs, tiled floor, tall jars, potted plants, white balustrades silhouetted on the sky. Tea was being served; two children and a fox-terrier romped across the scene; a nursemaid with an armful of embroidered lawn which was evidently somebody's baby recently on parade, came through the screen-doors. "Mollie Shaw's," said Lawson, recognizing this apparition. "She got here just the day I left. I'd forgotten all about her having a baby already — only a year, you know. They've named it Rudd — Rudd Pennyfeather Shaw!"

"*Wow!*" said Steven appreciatively.

Mrs. Rudd advanced to them through the screen-doors in her turn, and both saluted her dutifully. "Well, Lawson! Stevie! Why, you both look quite clean!" she said in accents of fatigued surprise. "Wasn't it terribly hot inland? It was eighty-five here yesterday. I thought about you on the train. That awful five or six hours between Cincinnati and Cleveland! Will you come out now and see all of them, or go and change first?"

Lawson elected to go out and see all of them, Steven to change first. "Where's Edith?" asked the former.

"Why, she's superintending —" Mrs. Rudd began, and stopped mystified as her husband and son exchanged glances and burst out laughing.

Family-parties are not likely to be a dish to everyone's taste, unless flavored, to keep up the metaphor, by some alien ingredients; and this one followed the rule. So Mrs. Rudd disjointedly confided to the head of the house as they moved towards their guests that although she was nearly worn to shreds, with so many people and so much running around — really the breakfast-trays, merely to mention one thing, it looked like a hotel in the mornings, every servant in the place galloping up- and down-stairs with a breakfast-tray! — but what she was going to say was that in spite of the crowding and confusion and waiting on, she was glad all these young people, outsiders, you know, were there. The girls and men kept one another busy, so you didn't have

to worry — the darlingest, sweetest girls, every one of them! But with so many strangers always within hearing, it kept the family from — well — making remarks — criticizing — you know? Really those two little Potter children — those two little grandchildren of Susie's — were awful. Perfect little hoodlums; nobody had the slightest control over them; they must have been allowed to run perfectly wild. Of course one couldn't say anything; Susie was simply wrapped up in them — much more so than she had ever been in her own children! The little girl was rather pretty; Susie had suggested her being flower-girl, but Edith — well, you know how Edith is. She always knows what she wants, and at her own wedding she certainly ought to have everything her own way, so Susie couldn't say anything, though anybody could see she didn't like it. And oh, Lawson hadn't heard the latest, it happened while he was away. Captain Delaney, he remembered that nice Englishman at the Legation last winter, Captain Delaney? — Well, it seemed he couldn't get leave, or something, so he couldn't come, and George Stillman was going to take his place — very nice of George at the last minute that way, but then he always had been the kind of person you could ask to fill in. Clara might not be best pleased, particularly as she hadn't been invited to take part in any way, but of course she couldn't say anything.

"Clara Stillman is too old for Edith's set — or Hester's either, for that matter. Of course that's the reason she's so anxious to go with them all the time; but she's been out at least ten years. And Gertie Bryce is another, only she's beginning to *look* her age. If she just wouldn't wear those girlish clothes! One can't say anything, or I should tell her they make her look older instead of younger. That's she over by the steps in the bright egg-yellow. No, not that one, that's Hester. Mercy, Lawson, don't you know your own daughter — ?"

"There's Elihu," said Lawson, pushing open the door. "I'll bet *he* doesn't want any breakfast-tray sent up for him. Hello, El!" he shouted.

Elihu Rudd got up a little heavily and shook his brother's hand. Hester, very charming with her black eyes and hair and brilliant color in a pale yellow frock and a wide droop-

ing hat wreathed with wheat and forget-me-nots, came running up and threw her arms around her father's neck and embraced him with an abandon which sundry young men and women witnessed admiringly or appraisingly according to the sex. Susie captured the unspeakable grandchildren, one in either hand, and presented them wriggling and hanging back, to their Uncle Lawson. Susie was now the widowed Mrs. Alonzo Lambert, gray-haired and of somewhat dumpy, unstylish, grandmaternal figure; and Mrs. Elihu Rudd had likewise acquired girth and crows'-feet; so that her appearance offered some difficulties even to the high-priced milliners and mantuamakers whom she patronized. They were both older than, and in strong contrast to, the resolutely slender and youthful Mrs. Lawson, who had been considered a beauty in her day, and by a caressing lamplight, with what her younger daughter Edith ruthlessly described as her " face fixed," and a becoming toilette, might pass for under forty still. One may be sure that the lamplight, the toilette and the face-fixing were never neglected; the proceedings connected with rejuvenation and reconstruction occupied arduous hours — so many of them that Mrs. Rudd, to tell the truth, had not much time left for anything else. *Il faut souffrir pour être belle!*

The wedding-party sat down to dinner that night some twenty-five strong, at what the lady of the house proclaimed to be the unearthly hour of six o'clock — " Edith's arrangement, you know, to give plenty of time for the rehearsal afterwards." And punctually to the minute the bride-elect herself, who had scarcely been seen all day, owing to her manifold activities, descended to the drawing-room, perfectly costumed, without a trace of fatigue about her, taller, cooler, and more composed than any other person present. To some of the older people, there was a kind of effrontery about this composure of Edith's. " Nobody would ever guess that she was the bride," one matron whispered to another; " the most matter-of-course — ! But then girls know all about everything nowadays — simply *everything!* They don't think any more of getting married than of having a shampoo and manicure, actually! "

There was, however, one moment when even Edith be-

trayed some disturbance; it was when the butler, after receiving some communication from a subordinate, and after hesitating perceptibly between the master of the house, Mrs. Rudd at the other end of the table, and the young lady seated midway, finally approached the last named, deferentially imparted a piece of information, and stood back awaiting orders.

"Oh — tst!" said Edith, with annoyance. She shrugged, grimaced, made a movement to rise, and changed her mind in the act, sitting down again resolutely. "It's a reporter. If there has been one of them here, there've been five hundred! I've told them over and over I won't have any stuff in the papers. You'd think they'd all know by this time — "

"Why do you mind?" "You might as well." "They'll have something in anyhow, and it would be better to have it correct." "Everybody does." Suggestions were offered from various quarters, which Edith apparently did not think it worth while to notice. She raised one shapely shoulder again, and looked towards her brother. "Steve, will you go and — ?"

"You bet!" said Steven, with humorous alacrity; he had thrown down his napkin and was pushing his chair back, when Mr. Rudd unexpectedly intervened.

"Never mind, Steven. I'll see him," said he authoritatively, rising; and on the word, departed. The young man resumed his seat obediently, though a little red in the face, with a look of discomfiture which perhaps no one noticed — but family parties are notoriously argus-eyed.

The groom arrived somewhat late, by motor from Clear Harbor in company with his best man, Lieutenant Ernst von Sternberg, who with divers brothers-in-arms had been helping him celebrate his approaching entrance into the holy state of matrimony on board His Imperial Majesty's cruiser, the *Eisenfeldt,* just now at anchor in our waters. George Stillman came over, giving a lift to the minister on the way; George was an obliging, thoughtful fellow. There was plenty of champagne, and the night was hot and stuffy, presaging a storm, but the rehearsal under Edith's competent direction, went off very smoothly — one might have said the rehearsals, for she put them through it several times,

until everybody was letter-perfect. The wedding was to take place the following morning at eleven o'clock in the little parish church of St. James, which had been founded and was largely sustained by the munificence of her father and other wealthy summer residents. Of a romantic, Norman style in architecture, rough gray stone overgrown with creepers, it stood at no great distance from the Rudd gates, adding considerably to the charm of the Rudd landscape.

"The machines are to drive up to the east door, and go around in order and come up again. There will be men stationed to direct everybody," Edith announced in her clear, pleasantly firm voice. "Dr. Stanley, you will already be here, of course, and Mr. Gherardi will be in the vestry. Mr. Prather, the organ a little slower, please. Everyone's so used to *Lohengrin*, some of them can't get in step to this — it's a little hard. I think we ought to try walking in again — if none of you mind? Dad — ?"

Lawson gave her his arm once more, and for his part walked up the aisle in exact time — to the *Allegro* from the Seventh Symphony, of all tunes in the world! He had an ear for music and a nice sense of rhythm. "Sounds to me like a funeral march, but if Edith wants it — !" he thought resignedly. He was perhaps beginning to be a little tired, what with the railroad journey, the heat and chatter, the smell of the flowers which were already in place; and found himself wishing irritably that Steven could take his place, that it was all over, or rather that it did not have to be at all. Carefully weighted-down uneasiness suddenly rose to the surface of his mind; all at once he bitterly did not want to hand over his girl to this blond, good-looking, spick-and-span young German officer with his close-clipped head, his impervious blue eyes, his chain-mail of manners. Natural, racial distrusts and prejudices whispered in his ear. Why couldn't Edith have pitched upon one of our own men, if she must marry? But that was the rub, after all; why should she marry? Why should a man's daughter leave him just when she had reached an age to be a companion to him? And Edith was a first-rate companion; she was bright; she had her own bank-book and kept her balance to the last cent when she was only ten years old; she —

"When I come to the words: 'Who gives this woman to be married to this man?' you step back, allowing the groom to advance, as you say: 'I do,' Mr. Rudd," the clergyman admonished him. Lawson relinquished the girl, withdrawing as directed.

He went back to the house, sitting in the front seat alongside his chauffeur, so as the more easily to evade conversation with the ladies in the car; and said good-night to them rather curtly in the hall and escaped to the terrace with a cigar. There was Elihu with another cigar, recumbent in one of the long chairs, with, shocking to relate, a pair of loose, downtrodden, old slippers on his tolerably massive feet, his dress-pumps having begun to "draw," as he explained unabashed. Elihu had declined the rehearsal on the incontrovertible argument that he did not need to rehearse anything, and preferred to see it all as a novelty the next day. He gave a companionable grunt at sight of his brother.

"All through?"

"Yes."

Lawson sat down. The scraping of his chair was the only sound between them for a long while. Remotely, from the region of the dining-room they could hear laughter, bursts of mock applause, jingling of ice and silverware. Down in front, across stone retaining-walls, parterres and reaches of lawn, the tide rustled ceaselessly in the tiny harbor. There was no fog, but the clouds hung low.

"Overcast," said Elihu at length. "Looks like rain. I expect that's what makes my feet hurt."

"I hope it will hold off till after to-morrow, at any rate," Lawson said.

"Yes. It would be a pity if it rained, after Edith's taken so much trouble to have everything go all right," said Elihu. After another pause, he cleared his throat, and made the same remark, prompted by the same good intention, in the same non-committal style as all of Lawson's business friends. The latter recognized it with a kind of resentment, a kind of grateful understanding. "Nice fellow, this young Gherardi that Edith's marrying, Lawson. Seems to be all right."

"I'd like it better if he was an American," said Edith's

father, frowning in the darkness, though his manner was carefully off-handed, as expressing a sentiment wholly natural and comprehensible.

"Why yes, of course. But some of these foreign matches turn out successfully — I mean most of them, most of them!" said the elder brother correcting himself hastily, and not skilfully, as he was conscious. He searched his memory in something of a panic, and finally produced: "There's Hank Meigs's daughter, for instance, that married this young Englishman — I met him but I can't recall his name just now. That must be ten years ago or more, and they seem to be happy together."

"It's a lottery anyhow," said Lawson.

They were silent again; then the younger brother said abruptly: "I don't believe you know it, El. Eugene's here."

Elihu's chair emitted a creak under his sharp movement. "*Eugene?*" he ejaculated. But for the lack of light, his large countenance might have been observed to change expression with a vivacity almost ludicrous, considering that ordinarily it was anything but mobile or responsive. After a second or two, he inquired cautiously: "You mean he's coming to the wedding, Lawson?"

"No," said the other with impatient emphasis. "No. He isn't asked. Why, my children don't know him; they've never even seen him —"

"Well, I *thought* it would be queer," said Elihu, rubbing his ear.

Lawson went on talking: "I had to tell Steven who he was to-day — had to introduce them —" He gave the older Rudd some account of the late meeting on the Clear Harbor platform. "Annoying, the whole business. Perfectly unintentional, on his side, of course. Eugene doesn't want to see me any more than I want to see him. It appears he's stopping at this little resort, Clam Beach, down the harbor." He paused. "Well —" And here Lawson paused again. "Of course Eugene has a right to go anywhere he wants to, even if it's occasionally where the rest of us happen to be. We don't own the earth. Still —"

"Uh-huh," said Elihu, assentingly. There was a meditative silence. "Was he sober?"

"More or less," said Lawson. Then he amended the statement with a sort of grudging justice. "Oh yes, he was sober enough. I don't want to give you a wrong impression. You can see he's kept it up — drinking, I mean. It shows on him. But he hadn't had anything this afternoon."

"Uh-huh," said Elihu again. His questions seemed to be animated by a negligent curiosity rather than genuine interest; one might guess that the answer was a matter of indifference to him, even when he said: "What's Eugene look like now, Lawson? I haven't seen him for — oh, it's going on fifteen years; I never saw him but once after the split-up. What's he look like?"

"Why, his hair's gray —"

The older brother exclaimed, startled: "Gray? Why Eugene's too young to be gray! He's — wait a minute — he's not over thirty-five," said Mr. Rudd who, of late, had, insensibly to himself, begun to look upon a person of any age short of forty as barely emerged from the kindergarten. "He'd just come of age when we had that time in the office. He can't be gray!"

"Well, he *is* all the same — gray as a badger. It's his life. I told you it showed all over him. He's got lines in his face — all around his eyes, thick. A man can't go along that way fifteen years and not have the marks on him. I don't know how he dissipates outside of drinking, and I don't want to know," said Lawson forcibly; "but I judge Eugene's a regular now. He probably couldn't break himself of his habits if he tried. He was pretty shabby — awful old hat. What's the reason all these bums have that kind of a hat? Haven't you ever noticed it? It's like the diseases plants have, that always show first at the top — get all ratty, you know!" Both men guffawed with sudden amusement at the idea.

"What's he doing now for a living?" Elihu asked, with a return of his first indifference, however.

"I don't know. The last I heard he was writing for some paper. I suppose he gets one job after another and gets fired. He looks like it. We didn't have any time to talk to-day, and Eugene wouldn't have told me anything about himself, anyhow. That's one thing about Eugene, Elihu! He might be down to his last cent, and we'd never hear anything from

him about it. Lots of people have shady relatives; there's one in pretty nearly every family, I believe. Think of the men you know that have to be putting up all the time to keep some fellow out of the penitentiary, or to look out for his family, or just simply to save him from starving to death. I tell you it might be a good deal worse. Eugene's never bothered us that way, at least, one minute. That's one thing about Eugene!"

Elihu agreed that that was one thing about Eugene. They smoked for a while silently, no doubt revolving old memories about which they were in complete accord; the brothers were good friends, each one sharing the other's opinions and prejudices, or able to see his point of view. The sympathy between them could not have been better exhibited than by their next action. Elihu, coming from the past to the present by a certain sequence of mental processes, was removing his cigar to ask a question — with active interest this time — just as Lawson, similarly impelled, turned towards him, about to speak.

"How's the boy doing in the office, Lawson? Is he taking hold?"

"Why, I was just starting to speak about Steve!" said the father. "Funny thing how people will fall into the same line of thought! He's getting along fairly well. He's pretty young, you know; but I think he'll learn."

"You were holding up your end all right when you were his age," said Elihu. "Didn't need to ask the old man for orders when you were around."

"Yes, but men got started earlier in those days, El. Married younger, and took up their responsibilities sooner, somehow. You did, too. Everybody did."

"Everybody that amounted to anything," said Elihu, not without a touch of arrogance, one quality of his, which, by the way, did not enter into the other Rudd's composition. Elihu's own sons had not been above the average; they were both dead, perhaps fortunately for their father's pride. The name would be carried on, it was hoped, in that branch of the family, by several sturdy little Rudd grandsons, of one of whom, little Elihu, Mr. Rudd was particularly fond.

"Well, it's different now," Lawson said, with a small

restless movement, indicative of some restrained dissatisfaction which his brother may or may not have noted. " The young people are different; they seem to me to be more — more immature. One mustn't expect too much of them. When Steven began, I thought to myself: ' Now I must try to look on the boy just as if he were somebody else's boy, just as if he were any boy. I don't want to favor him, or make it easy for him. That wouldn't do him any good.' Of course I gave him some advice; I gave him a serious talk, the same as I did when he was starting off to college the first time. ' Steven,' I said, ' there're a great many things in business that you'll have to find out for yourself. I can't help you, and nobody can help you. Experience will do it, and nothing but experience. But,' I added; ' you're here in a subordinate position. Now, as to that, I can tell you something. There are four classes of people that take orders. Class Number One doesn't listen. Class Number Two doesn't understand. Number Three goes off and forgets it all in five seconds. And Number Four thinks he knows more about it than the one that's ordering him. Now that's all the classes there are, and the chances are that you're in one of 'em; or you may be in all of them. But that's all the classes of people that take orders; the minute you get out of those classes, you're giving orders, you're not taking them.' "

Elihu made appreciative sounds. " Did he get you? "

" He got some of it, I hope," said the father. " Of course you have to remember that he's pretty young," he reiterated, defensively, with a strange and pathetic mingling of worry, defiance, frank relief at disburdening himself to an equal — for it was the naïve belief, once in a while naïvely betrayed, of both Elihu and Lawson that they two were the only equals in the family! The others, wives, children, relatives in law near or distant, they cherished or liked or tolerated in varying degrees; but it was only one to the other that they spoke on even terms.

" One reason I got away earlier than usual this summer was to give him a taste of what it would be like with no Dad around," Lawson went on: " Of course Galway was there — I couldn't risk leaving everything to Steven all at once. I'm

trying to do what I've done with other young men — feel 'em out, feel 'em out by degrees, you know how that is, El. That's always been my way."

"Uh-huh," said the older Rudd. "Well, I guess he did all right, didn't he?" he asserted rather than asked, with a confidence assumed in pure good-will, for if there was a thing on earth of which Elihu was beginning to feel morally sure, it was that his young nephew had not "done all right"; something had happened which Lawson had not liked.

"Oh yes, he didn't have much chance. That is, until here the other day. After all, it's not so very important; no use making a mountain out of a molehill. I don't think Steven will make the same kind of mistake again, anyway; he's had his lesson, and perhaps it's just as well. Galway went on his vacation the first of the month, and that left just Jim Dickerson in the office with Steve —" Here Lawson, who had been fidgetting about in his reclining chair, rose to a sitting posture, wheeling to set his feet on the ground and bring his face nearer to the other as he continued the tale. "First thing you know, El, I had a wire from Steven, and a letter from Dickerson, and it looked to me that there had been some kind of a ruction, so I took the next train out of here. Do you know what was up?"

He halted, though obviously not expecting a reply, but Elihu signifying by a rumble from somewhere within him that he had no idea what was up, and was waiting to hear, Lawson pursued: "We have a correspondent down in Havana — man named Ginn that runs some kind of a notion-store, I imagine — it has one of those high-flown Spanish names. Anyway he buys a bill of goods of us once in so often, not very much, five or six thousand dollars at intervals of a year or so, probably. I don't know anything about him, except that he's always paid his notes promptly, and we've never had any trouble with him. Well, it seems he was up touring the States this summer, and when he got around to our neighborhood, he thought he'd drop in and make our acquaintance, and do a little business personally for once. Of course I wasn't there; but Steven and he made out all right, and everything was going smoothly until they

came to close up the deal, and then this Ginn drops a pretty broad hint that it wouldn't be any harm to shade the invoice a little — make up two sets, you know, on account of customs charges being exorbitant, and so forth and so on — "

" I see," said Elihu.

" Well, El, I've known men to do that before — "

" Uh-huh," said Elihu.

" The trouble was it was Steven's first experience, and what does he do but get furiously insulted, and bawl the fellow out, and call him a scoundrel and the Lord knows what besides! Dickerson interfered to try and smooth things over, and all he got for his pains was that Steven lit into *him!* I don't know what kind of a circus they had in the office, but it must have been beautiful! " ejaculated Lawson ironically, wagging his head. " Ginn went off in a huff, naturally — "

" No great loss," said Elihu, judicially.

" No, certainly not, but that's no way to treat that kind, you know, Elihu. That's what I said to Steven. 'Why, Steven,' I said, 'when a man comes at you with a proposition like that, there's nothing for you to get mad about. You don't have to tell him what you think of him. It's no affair of yours what he wants you to do; he can't make you do it.' Well then, he blazed away, and said it was abominable, and he wanted Ginn to know that he wouldn't countenance cheating the Government — And right there I said to him: 'Oh piffle! As if your countenancing anything was so important to Ginn!' Well, then he quieted down a little, and wanted to know in a very tragic way what I would have had him do? It wasn't possible that I would have wanted him to accept such a suggestion? I spoke to him pretty sharply then. I said: 'I'm an honest man. You know very well I wouldn't alter an invoice. Nobody but a fool would, anyhow; because they always get caught sooner or later. But all you need to say to people like that is that you'd rather not do business that way, that you never have, and you think it's best to be on the safe side. That's every word you need to say.' "

" Sure! " said Elihu in full approval. " After that if he wants to take his account somewhere else, why let him take it, and to hell with it! "

"Yes, but I could see that Steven thought that was a contemptible, middle-of-the-road policy," said the father in his worried voice. "He's so young! And then, too, his idea in the abstract was all right. I tried to make him understand that I wasn't condemning the principle, merely this perfectly futile row he'd made. He stormed around about it's being his duty to make his position clear and to stand up for morals, or something. I said, 'It's all right taking care of your own morals, Steven, but who made you the guardian of the other fellow's?' He hadn't any answer for that, and then I went on and told him I was distressed to find out how he had spoken to Dickerson. I said to him: 'Mr. Dickerson has been with us twenty-six years, since before you were born. He is absolutely upright and trustworthy, and has always put our interests before everything else. He knows more about the business in a minute than you will in five years. He was only trying to tell you exactly what I've been telling you about how to treat men like Ginn, and here you turn to and abuse him like a pickpocket!' And I said: 'What's more, Steven, I want you to know that Mr. Dickerson has not uttered a single personal complaint to me. He merely wrote and asked me to come out and adjust certain difficult matters that had come up in the office, which he felt nobody was competent to deal with but myself. He never even mentioned your name, because he realized that you were very young, and he was too generous and too forbearing. I've picked up the facts mainly from your own report.' That made an impression on him, I was glad to see. He felt very badly to think he'd been unjust to Dickerson."

"Did you make him apologize?"

"Why, no, Elihu, I didn't say anything to him about apologizing. I thought I'd leave that to his own commonsense and right feeling — if he had any. And he had!" said Steven's father, thankfully. "Dickerson told me the boy came to him, and told him he was sorry in a very straightforward way, and they shook hands and agreed never to say another word about it. I told him that Steven did it on his own hook, without any prompting from me. I was glad I could say that. It was more satisfactory all around."

Elihu made no comment; perhaps to his mind there was

not much satisfaction to be got out of any of these events, though looked at in the most favorable light. "Reminds me of that time with Eugene," he reflected. "I don't wonder Lawson feels uneasy."

## CHAPTER IV

NOTWITHSTANDING the bride's repeatedly stated objections, and even certain sharp preventive measures she had taken, the emissaries of those periodicals which make a specialty of such matters turned out in considerable force in the neighborhood of St. James the next morning. They could always take snap-shots of the crowd even if the principals were unapproachable, and possibly counted on the fact that some members of it might not be averse to answering a question, or giving some harmless, petty details — though, of course, they would never consent to be interviewed, never! Somehow or other the rumor had gone abroad that Miss Stillman, for instance, or even Miss Hester Rudd could be persuaded into these confidences. And, in fact, as the machines drove up to the church door, some enterprising journalists got speaking likenesses of a number of elaborate parasols, half a dozen chauffeurs, sections of sundry limousines, the base of the monument erected to the memory of the Clear Harbor volunteers who fell at Santiago, and Mr. Elihu Rudd's top hat. No one could penetrate within the church itself without a card, however; and upon the exit of the bridal-party, Miss Rudd — we beg her pardon! — Mrs. Rudolph Gherardi, was powerfully backed up in her design of securing privacy, by a not wholly agreeable ally, a dashing downpour of rain, that drove all the outsiders to cover, and kept the wedding-guests roosting amongst the pews, or packed into the aisles and porches for fully ten minutes. The storm had been threatening all morning, and burst just as the groom handed the bride into their car; he had to plunge in unceremoniously himself, with his gilt-braided uniform, and his sword and spurs fairly on top of her veil and satin train which were stuffed in any way and every way; the engine stalled with much futile uproar and presently a boom of back-fire like a cannon; the other cars

had got out of alignment somehow; chauffeurs were running about frantically buttoning up the storm-curtains; the Rudd automobile had to jockey for position, and by the time it finally rolled off, the rain had so increased that nobody could follow. All the rest of the bridal procession were temporarily marooned along with the guests, and naturally broke up in disorder. It was a hurly-burly of gauze hats, shower bouquets, frock coats, excited laughter, squealing exclamations and dodging of the drenching gusts, window after window swinging and slamming as several youths heroically ruined their brand-new gloves and immaculate cuffs vainly attempting to close them. Cascades of water gurgled down the steps, the gargoyles spouted, tall wind-swept wraiths of rain went tottering across the landscape; but there was very little thunder or lightning, fortunately for the nervous. Most people voted the experience rather picturesque and amusing, for all it spoiled or at least disarranged the preparations which had been so painstakingly planned.

"I wasn't sure at first whether I ought to converse out loud in church, but everybody seems to be, so I suppose it's not sinful. Now my trouble is that I don't know whether to go and speak to Mr. and Mrs. Rudd, or not. Ordinarily you don't offer felicitations and compliments and all that sort of thing until you get to the house and everybody is standing in line to receive them. It's a terrible position; none of the books about behavior in society tell you what to do when you're all mixed up with a wedding-party in a rain-storm. Don't you think that's a very grave oversight, Mr. Cook?" one guest said.

Mr. Cook agreed with her. "But brides are always supposed to have fine weather. The writers on etiquette probably don't like to assail such a popular pretense," he suggested. "For that matter, I myself am not superstitious, but it seems to me that this rain is very ill-timed. *Absit omen!*"

The lady eyed him. "Do you know Captain Gherardi?" she inquired irrelevantly; and then, on a common impulse, they exchanged warning glances behind a pair of shoulders in an impeccably tailored coat which just at that moment had been wedged or shoved into their neighborhood — the

coat and shoulders of young Mr. Steven Rudd, who hereupon turned around, smiling and apologizing and hoping he had not amputated a foot of either one of them.

" — Or done anything to your dress, Miss Grace? I came down on something that seemed to give a little. No? That's a relief! I stepped on Mrs. Thatcher's a minute ago. I heard it go *zip,* and made a perfectly lightning get-away, and I don't believe she's found it out yet! You won't tell, will you? "

" Not I! I have some dark secrets in my own life," said Cook, solemnly.

He was a short, slight, unnoticeable, middle-aged man, with his beard trimmed closely to a point and eyeglasses on a black ribbon; nobody could have looked less the adventurer and more like a retail dry-goods clerk — in the gent's underwear department, for example — and Steven, surveying him, wondered for a brief moment if he realized how funny his words were, taken with his appearance. Of course he meant to be funny, but still —! Here Steven reminded himself that Mr. Cook was not a retail-clerk; he was a novelist and playwright of some reputation, and might be presumed to know quite well what he was saying, whether in fun or earnest. Steve had read some of the stories, and, to be frank, considered them pretty slow stuff; nevertheless, the feat of writing them and getting them into print, and making a living thereby, commanded respect — even a little envy, for the young gentleman remembered certain efforts of his own in that direction while at college and later which had not met with conspicuous success among the editors.

" I went to see *Days Like These* in New York last spring. It's corking! " he said with enthusiasm.

" Thank you very much. It owes a great deal to the actors."

" Lorraine Hawtrey was fine in the leading part — the girl that runs away, you know. She can act *anything,* though — er — that is — " Steven floundered, inwardly calling down anathemas on his own head; what did that last tactful piece of criticism sound like to Mr. Cook? The author had not moved a muscle, but little Miss Bessie Grace was trying to keep from smiling. " It must be interesting

to write plays, and — and get them presented," he said desperately.

"It is, very. In a number of ways," said Mr. Cook, adjusting his eyeglasses and looking at the young man thoughtfully.

Steven began to wish he could get away politely — evaporate somehow before making any more blunders; but there was no moving in any direction now. The bulky figure of Mr. Stillman was under way down the aisle, like one of the new Cunard liners leaving port, and persons on either side were obliged to perform the action known to childhood as "scrooging back" to make room.

"I daresay you meet all kinds of weird characters — stage people, musicians, art-students, all that?" he said lamely.

"Mr. Cook knows everybody, it seems to me," said Miss Grace. "All sorts and conditions of men."

"It's my trade, isn't it?" said the novelist.

Some feeling which this time was not a mere desire to make talk prompted Steven to ask him: "Did you ever run across a man named Rudd in New York?"

"Rudd?"

"Yes. He's a — a kind of relative of ours. He writes — or at least he used to write — for the papers, I believe," Steven explained, not much surprised at the blankness of Cook's expression. "Oh, I don't mean he's one of the — the big ones, the big writers. It wouldn't be strange if you'd never heard of him. New York's fairly seething with newspaper-men, I suppose. I hardly know him myself — I've barely met him. But I thought you might possibly —?"

"Why, yes, I used to know a Rudd — "

"There, didn't I say he knew everybody!" Miss Grace threw in triumphantly.

"Only I haven't seen much of him recently, as it happens," said Cook. "He was on the *Planet* some years ago at the time that I was writing some articles for them — "

"The *Planet*? That's Dana's paper," said Steven, a little vain of his range of information. "One of the fellows in my class went on it. It gets all the bright men, they say."

"Mr. Dana was a little too soon for me," said Cook, smiling. "He was before my time. Why, I don't know about *all*

the bright men; maybe there are a few left for the other papers. Your — er — your cousin did very good work, I remember. We met occasionally. I don't know why I never connected him with your family, in spite of the name being rather unusual; perhaps he never happened to talk about his people in my hearing. Did he come from Ohio? Almost all the Western and Mid-Western men in New York know or know of one another — "

And at this juncture the arrival of Mr. Stillman saved Steven the embarrassment of answering or of not answering. He thought the other's manner had been a trifle guarded; nor was the reason far to seek. Mr. Cook had not seen much of this relative recently, eh? No, Mr. Cook was not the kind of person ever to have seen much of that derelict, Steven guessed knowingly, unless indeed he chanced to be studying a type from among the needy and dissolute members of his profession. Steve himself had been a good deal intrigued by the unwelcome and more or less mysterious Eugene with his tell-tale voice and complexion, his disarmingly agreeable manners; for that matter, the simple fact of his being so far the only disreputable Rudd to appear above the family horizon was enough to arouse curiosity.

He lingered for the sake of appearances long enough to hear Mr. Stillman's, "Ah, Mr. Cook! Writing anything now?" and squeezed out at the other end of the pew and in and out through several more pews, to speak to Miss Ballard and her mother. Momentarily alone in the places just vacated by Mr. and Miss Stillman, they had an odd air of standing guard over the latter's resplendent lace-and-chiffon wrap and her bejewelled mesh-bag thrown down together in a priceless heap, delicately glowing against the dark wood bench. It struck Steven that the Ballard ladies were frequently to be seen in this watchdog pose. They, for their part, were not at all resplendent, or only very mildly so, the older, in gray, the younger in a mauve flowered organdie, each toilette suggesting to alert feminine eyes that it might be a year-before-last or even a five-years-before-last inheritance from Clara. Young Mr. Rudd, however, possessed no such gift of divination; he thought they looked very nice, just like everybody else; and if questioned, while

disclaiming any particular interest in Mary except as a girl whom he had known all his life, he would have freely avowed that he liked her awfully well, and was almost as fond of her mother, and that there was nothing on earth he would not do for either one of them. Mrs. Ballard turned a face of fatigued vivacity upon him, as he edged nearer.

"Well, how about this rain?" said Steven buoyantly. "Won't Edith have it in for the weather-man, though?"

"It really hasn't spoiled anything," Mrs. Ballard assured him with the promptness of long social experience. "Nobody ever minds a little rain, and we are all having a very good time. She made a lovely bride. Generally the girls are too tired out to look their best."

"Oh, Edith's a perfect pine knot. She never gets tired. I thought she looked corking, too, and that's rather funny, because she's not really pretty. She's too long and thin," said the brother with true brotherly candor. He checked Mary's reproaches with a laugh. "Pshaw, Edith doesn't care; she doesn't give a pin whether people think she's pretty or not. Why you know *that!* Do you know I believe that's the reason she — well, gets away with it so well — her looks, I mean, you know. She never gives it a thought!"

"Oh yes. Anyone can see that she is absolutely unconscious," said Mrs. Ballard, accommodatingly. In her private judgment, if ever there was a girl who knew how to make the most of herself, it was Edith Rudd. She actually capitalized her homeliness, accenting rather than trying to conceal her lanky height, her washboard of a neck, her arms like hinged laths; Edith was never seen, no, not even to-day, with a single dab of color on her thin, sharp-featured face, with the high cheekbones, that all summer was always a mask of tan and freckles; her small, keen, light-blue eyes were innocent of shading; she dressed her straight hair with a defiance of style that achieved stylishness. Never gave her looks a thought, indeed! The older woman could have laughed aloud. It was true that Edith never wasted time; she knew her own mind too well, and was altogether too efficient, cool-headed, thorough and calculating, aware to the last detail, of the qualities of her defects. Mrs. Ballard admired her for it, and, as has been seen, loyally supported

the popular illusion to which Steven had just given utterance. Edith had something that was better and more durable than good looks, her friend thought. Lo, the proof of the pudding was the eating: here was Edith, easily the greatest favorite in her set, getting married at twenty-two or so, while Hester, acknowledged on all hands a stunning beauty, was still hanging on the Rudd tree, in her fifth season! To be sure, she was probably holding off for some spectacularly rich or brilliant match, but even so —

Steven was speaking: "We all think that George was a pretty good scout to come in and fill up this way. Nobody ever really wants to ush, you know; they just feel it's complimentary to be asked to, and they can't get out of it, anyhow."

"Oh, George doesn't mind not being first choice. He's having the time of his life," Mary said. They looked over to where George, with one hand against the stone pillar behind her, was bending down over the maid-of-honor, manifestly having the time of his life to such an extent as to render him completely oblivious of everything and everybody else. The maid-of-honor was Miss Hester Rudd, she of the black eyes, the dazzlingly white teeth — you could see her palate every time she laughed, the other girls said — the flower-like textures, the fruit-like contours. Hester was not too long and thin, Hester, whenever and however you took her, was a satisfyingly beautiful sight, as even her brother Steven would admit; and George Stillman would undoubtedly agree with him. She leaned against the pillar under the young man's arm, flashing an occasional glance upward at him from beneath the bridesmaid's hat, pulling pink petals out of her bouquet and nibbling at them between pink lips tantalizingly. Her white shoulders and slim white ankles glimmered through diaphanous pink. The costume and attitude and occupation were a deliberate challenge to all the senses, and sufficiently characteristic of this young lady, as her brother realized in a sudden and most uncalled-for mortification. "Hester overdoes that goo-goo-eyes business," he thought. "Now she's trying to make a fool of poor old George; she tries it on with all the men. All right if a girl wants to, of course — only she overdoes

it. Everybody's noticing. It's damn bad taste!" thought Steve, permitting himself an expletive in his annoyance.

"Doesn't Hester look perfectly lovely?" said Mary.

"Yes. She has all the looks in the family. My mother says that Edith and I are 'all Rudd,'" said Steven. "I think Edith's more attractive, though," he said savagely. He went on talking, he even plunged into petty gossip to distract Mary's attention from the lamentable spectacle of poor old George being made a fool of before everybody! "Between you and me, I'm dead certain that's the real reason Delaney ducked the wedding. Because of Edith, you know. He was tremendously taken with Edith."

"Oh, do you think he — ?"

"Well, if he didn't, all signs fail! She never said a word to me about it. Edith's too good a sport, she'd never tell," the brother declared with pride. "Some girls do, you know. They like to count up the scalps."

Mary did not argue the point; perhaps it was too well-established in their circle to be worth an argument. "Is he nice?"

"Oh, top-hole! Got a decoration, D.S.O., or something in the South African war — awfully nice fellow. I suppose she liked Gherardi better. Between you and me," said Steven again, lowering his voice: "I can't see why. Gherardi's all right, of course. Well, anyway, it's all over now. Only I wasn't the least surprised when the other one flunked this business; he must have found that he couldn't stand seeing another man get her. I don't think he's such a friend of Gherardi's anyhow — just knows him officially, I daresay."

"I do believe the rain is slackening off a little!" Mrs. Ballard said. There began to be a definite movement towards the doors; one of the bridesmaids stood on tiptoe and beckoned energetically to Steven; George Stillman, with a start, "came to," as sundry observers bitingly remarked, and offered Miss Rudd his arm instead of putting it around her, which, they opined, was what he would have infinitely preferred. The automobile with Mr. and Mrs. Lawson and Mr. and Mrs. Elihu, rolled off; Cook got ready an umbrella to hold over Miss Grace; Miss Stillman — in a Paquin cos-

tume, a hat misted with floating fronds of bird o' Paradise, and her wonderful necklace of filigree silver and paste jewels that had once formed part of the stage *parure* of Mademoiselle Mars — came back to get her wrap.

"Mother and I are going over to Clam Beach Thursday," Mary was saying.

Steven halted, turning back. "Clam Beach? Why, aren't the Stillmans staying at the Harbor for a while? I thought — "

"Oh yes!" Clara told him; she had the effect of not seeing the other two ladies at all. "We'll be at the Ocean House just as usual. They save that suite every year for us at this time — so nice! George *was* going to his beloved camp, but — I don't know — " she smiled archly and meaningly. "Clear Harbor seems all at once to have developed powerful attractions — perhaps I ought to say 'Journey's End' — "

"If you don't get started, the bride and groom will be old married people before we tell 'em howdy," Mr. Stillman interrupted. "Are you ready, Ellen? Want to put this on?"

He spoke to Mrs. Ballard, picking up her shabby silk cape which was almost as much of an antique as Mademoiselle Mars' necklace, with an attention which his daughter seldom showed her. Indeed, Miss Clara was upon many occasions, as upon this one, airily indifferent to what became of her aunt and cousin. "Aunt Ellen and Mary are always *there*, you know. I feel I can call on them whenever I need them. They're both so sweet!" she would say.

By the time the main body of the guests reached the house, Edith, that incomparable genius at organization, had generalled the members of the wedding-party, maids, groomsmen, parents and all, into their proper places and a resumption of their proper functions; and thenceforward things moved without a hitch. Considering that it rained at intervals all day, so that the lawn and terrace, Mr. Rudd's beautiful gardens, the sea-wall and fountain that had been photographed so often, the pine-grove, the bay-tree walk, were none of them available as a background, or a means of entertainment, and that the whole point and purpose of the

summer-home wedding were therefore lost, it was a remarkably successful occasion. Indoors, it was too close and stuffy with the casements shut, too damp and windy with them open; but the champagne, the jellied bouillon were iced to perfection, the *filet de pintade en cloche* a triumph; there was an apparently bottomless supply of cigars and highball materials, both of prime quality, in the men's dressing-room. Mrs. Rudd in lace and pearls with her face marvellously "fixed," was charming in the rôle of hostess, explaining from time to time that they had been determined to have everything absolutely *simple* — a seashore wedding, you know, and so small and quiet. The groom made a good speech in his pleasantly foreign accent, the military men and the young secretaries of legations who had come up from Washington and Newport imparted a flavor of distinction and of the unusual; and Hester Rudd caught the bride's bouquet.

Steven was so busy seeing everybody that he had no time really to see anybody, as he once or twice noted, during some brief respite from his activities, with a vaguely satirical amusement. About half-past four, as he was running upstairs at his mother's behest to rout some missing male relatives from the billiard-room (or the other remote retreats whither the lady of the house divined they had stolen off to smoke and discuss the stock-market) and warn them that the new couple were about to depart — as Steven ran up on this errand, one of the servants apologetically intercepted him on a landing: if he pleased, Miss Edith, — that is — beg pardon, sir, Mrs. Gherardi, would like to see him a minute.

"Me? Where is she? Oh, in her own room? All right!" He turned off down the corridor. The door stood ajar into the familiar room which was oddly still though people were scurrying past every moment, and there were loud talk and laughter and glimpses of confusion through the other doors. It did not surprise the brother; Edith's room was always a cool, ordered place; nor was he much surprised, reaching the threshold, to see her alone. She was standing before the long mirror, putting some finishing touch to her hat and veil.

"Hello, Ede! Here I am! Where's everybody?"

Edith went on making expert motions with her long, firm, slender hands; she revolved slowly before the glass with her head over one shoulder as if studying the hang of her skirts, then at last faced him. "I made them all go away. I wanted to say good-bye by ourselves. Can't do it downstairs, with everybody around, you know," she said collectedly. But some unwonted slurring of her speech which was naturally very clear, penetrating and musical, one of her few real attractions, filled him with consternation. The stark Edith who never was known to get into a temper, or to shed a tear, it couldn't be possible that she —?

"Here, don't!" he urged, appalled.

"I'm not going to!" said Edith with a sound that might pass for laughter. In fact, her features were steady as she went up to him and put both arms around his neck and put her head in the ultra-smart travelling-hat, against his shoulder; she was almost as tall as he. Steve hugged her close. Good old Edie! Always such a good pal! Like one of the fellows! Always understanding you — always square — always keeping her word — never giving anything away — never talking — it startled him to find out how fond he was of Edith, how much he was going to miss her — !

"Here, don't *you*, Stevie!" said Edith, with another unnatural laugh.

"I'm not going to!" said Steven, trying to echo it. "Anyway, we don't need to get wrought up, and pull the farewell-forever stuff," he said with resolute lightness. "Even if you and Rudolph have to go and live over there, you'll be coming back to this side every little while."

"It won't be the same," said Edith. "I won't be the same, somehow."

"Well, it — it'll be all right — it's going to be all right," said Steve, embarrassed, conscious of a certain inadequacy in this effort at reassurance, but unable to think of anything better.

"Can't be helped, anyhow," Edith said. She moved out of his arms, and stood looking at him; then spoke impulsively: "Steve, remember that ridiculous way you always wanted to play when we were little — fairy tales out of books, and

nonsensical things like that? Remember how you were always wanting me to be a poor abused Cinderella, or a princess chained up in a castle, so that you could come prancing in and have a grand fight with a dragon or a sorcerer or something, and rescue me? And I never liked it. Don't you remember?"

Steve nodded and began to chuckle, glad to feel the tension relax. "Yes, you always wanted to rescue yourself, and do your own fighting, I remember. We generally ended by joining forces and defending Hester. Hester liked to be the oppressed heroine; she used to tease and sulk when we wouldn't have her."

"Steve, I think you're always going to be like that. Getting up and defending somebody, or protecting somebody, or something — like those everlasting old knights in armor, in the fairy-books," said Edith, not too lucidly — yet somehow she made the central idea clear. "And Dad is, too —"

Steven broke into genuine laughter this time. "Dad? Oh, come now, Edie! Think of Dad in a sheet-iron vest riding around knocking people on the head when they didn't behave right!"

"He would, though! And you would, too, if you ever had to," the girl insisted. "You needn't make fun, because it's — it's fine. I've often wished I was a man, so I could, too. Steve, I hope you won't ever give it up — I hope you won't ever stop feeling that way. I — I —" All this she had been saying with a good deal of vehemence, but now hesitated. "It isn't mean or tittle-tattling to say it, because I daresay you feel it yourself. Dad's got an idea that you're — well — idealistic, and all that sort of thing, you know — rather high-flown —"

"I know," said Steven, flushing.

"Well, he is, too, Steve! Right down in the bottom of his heart — only he doesn't know it. You and he are exactly alike. You don't see it yourselves, but I can see it all the time."

"Maybe that's the reason we don't invariably agree. They say that opposite temperaments get along together better," suggested her brother, determinedly flippant.

She shook her head at him, drawing her straight light eye-

brows together with a look of wistfulness and perplexity, strange on Edith's face. " You needn't make fun," she said again; and with that constraint which so commended her to the masculine mind: " A person doesn't want to talk about — about this sort of thing. But just this once — Steve," she said earnestly; " what I'm trying to say is that Dad has sort of — of — high-up things, spiritual things, I daresay a clergyman would call them, that he has to live up to, just like you. If he heard me, he'd say it was all nonsense, but he — he has his ideals, just the same, and I don't believe they're so very different from yours. I wanted to tell you, because I'm afraid you and he will get to misunderstanding each other, and you'll have fusses, and — "

" And you won't be here to manage us, and set us right! " said Steven, good-humoredly, affectionately. " All right, Edie! I get you! "

## CHAPTER V

CLAM BEACH differed nowise from dozens upon dozens of resorts scattered up and down the seaboard of these United States, where congregate considerable numbers of seekers after rest or pleasure whose purses are not quite so long as those of the Rudds and Stillmans. The little harbor would have been commonplace if any spot on earth where salt tides run, and ships and dories lie at anchor, and tall piers strut out from shore, now high above the water, now barely showing on a level with its surface, could be commonplace. There was a single street, ankle-deep in sand, with meagre little shops and sailmakers' lofts and a blacksmith who was on the way to fortune since the rise and spread of the automobile habit; and there were two or three light wooden hotels, erected to all appearances in the expectation of being blown or burned down. One came here and there to reticent New England cottages, the tiny gardens about their door-steps blooming to the admiration and despair of the inland-dwelling gardeners. Farther out, abandoned farms with dilapidated, silent buildings and lengths of stone wall beautiful in ruin, provided a forlornly picturesque approach. Steven's runabout made heavy weather of the last few miles what with the sand and chuck-holes; up to then the roads had been good, but Wiscasset was a poor county; the population made their living off of the summer visitors — a pathetically lean living at that.

"It's a shame!" said Steve aloud, serpentining around the fiftieth boulder and surging into a low thicket of blueberries on the other side. He was not thinking of the highway, however, but of another victim of Destiny's neglect or hit-and-miss attention, as it seemed to him, namely: Miss Mary Ballard. They had been children together, going to kindergarten, going to Sunday-school, going to parties, picnics, the circus; Mary and Edith were just of an age. In those days,

either there had not been so great a disparity in worldly goods between the Rudds and other members of their circle, or, what is far more likely, the youngsters had not noticed it. Even later, at fifteen or sixteen, when the youthful Rudds could not help but perceive that they had more and could do more than almost any of their friends, and that the establishment was conducted upon the same large and easy scale as those of people whom they knew to be constantly referred to in the newspapers as millionaires, even then it is doubtful if they gave the matter any thought. Steven, like any normal, healthy-minded boy, valued his companions by their deeds and qualities, strictly for what they were, not for what they happened to have; and, when all is said, there is no judgment more sane, more just, than that of an honest boy; maturity cannot better it. As much can scarcely be said for the girls; but in this instance, Edith shared her brother's views, as was usual with the two. They both liked Mary; she could dance, she could ride, she could swim, she could play any game, she was always ready to amuse or to be amused, she had no mean little tricks, she knew everybody, went everywhere, and always seemed to be enjoying herself. If she was skimped in clothes or pocket-money, if unable to pay social debts in kind, if continually obliged to rely on somebody's motor-car, somebody's hospitality, they saw nothing of it. Only of late, last month, last week, had the fact gradually obtruded itself on Steven that the Ballards must be very poor, that they were clinging desperately to the foothold in society afforded by their unquestioned claim to caste, their elevated family connections, their old and well-known name.

Mrs. Ballard was Miss Ellen Van Huysen of Albany, descended from the patroon Dietrich Van Huysen who owned half the land upon which the city now stands, having bought it from Chief Skinned-Easy, of the Takeawiskies for a bead necklace and a demijohn of Holland Schnapps; at least, that may well be the story, for is not the same told of all the patroons, yea, of the Pilgrim Fathers, the William Penns, the whole body of pioneers? We may believe the original estate had sadly fallen off by the time it passed to patroon Dietrich's ultimate heirs. The other Van Huysen

girl, Anita, married John Stillman, the railroad man; *she* did well enough for herself, at any rate. Stillman was, in a manner of speaking, without antecedents; but one can get along very nicely without antecedents on seventy-five thousand a year. Ellen's husband, the late Quintus Curtius Lamar Ballard, was one of the South Carolina Ballards, a family whom the Civil War left with their name and probably not much else.

But this last fact hardly accounted for the present low ebb of the Ballard fortunes. At one time Mr. Ballard must have made a handsome living at his profession, the law. He was a man of fine presence, with a strong voice and a command of rhetoric, gifts which stood him in good stead during the political campaigns in which he took a prominent part beginning as far back as Harrison's first candidacy. And republics are not consistently ungrateful for he became Judge Ballard and served six years on the bench. What happened after that? And why should his brother-in-law Stillman say with a sort of philosophical contempt: "Politics spoil lots of men"? Q. C. L. Ballard had been dead some time, so that Steven — who, for that matter, had seldom seen him, owing to his frequent absences from home on stump-speaking tours, or perhaps other errands — found difficulty in recalling his appearance. The house where they lived when, as a little boy, he first knew them, where he used to go to play with Mary, he remembered distinctly, from the attic where they kept their toys to the dining-room in the basement with the row of beautiful old Bohemian-glass decanters on the sideboard, from whence, no doubt, emanated that fragrance of brandy that always hung in the air. It was Number Two, St. Clair Avenue, next to All Souls, a dignified and comfortable home in a desirable, if not the most fashionable, residence district. Then all at once they began to move; they kept moving, hither and yon, from one house to another. Then they ceased to live in houses, and took apartments for a season here, a season there. Mary was sent east to stay with some Van Huysen or Rutgers relative, or to Richmond, Charleston, Washington to stay with some Ballard, Poinsett or Dunwoodie relative while she went to school. When Steve wrote to her, he was for-

ever having to make note of a new address. She got through with the schools at about the time her father died; and since then she and Mrs. Ballard had boarded when they were not visiting indefinitely those same Van Huysens and Dunwoodies, or, intermittently, the Stillmans.

Steven frowningly speculated on the whys and wherefores of all this, and came to the conclusion just quoted. It was a shame. Mary and her mother had no home; they must be more or less dependent on those other members of the family — and it could not be a very secure or agreeable position to depend on Miss Clara Stillman, for instance. He had heard his sister Hester and indeed more than one of the girls — never Edith, though! Edith would not gossip — interchanging slightly acidulated criticism of Clara Stillman. Every now and then (they said) she got into a great fuss about having a chaperon — a *chaperon* at her age! — and sent for Mrs. Ballard. Then, when she got over the scare about propriety, or tired of having the Ballards around, or was afraid she would have to pay their expenses somewhere, why, she dumped them out of the way like so much rubbish. Must be lots of fun for Mary and her mother! But it was not going to keep on much longer, they would opine with shrewd looks; Mary was too popular, too attractive. Bye-bye, dear Auntie, and cousin! Here's one of those lovely gowns Mama bought at the Chicago World's Fair; you can cut it over so that it will fit both of you. Bye-bye! Have a good time!

Thus had Steven heard the young ladies discourse; only women relish such bitter trivialities, the young fellow would think. Miss Stillman hitherto had seemed to him amiable enough — but there was certainly something cold and cavalier in the way she shunted the Ballards off the other day. She might just as well have kept them with her at Clear Harbor; that famous *suite* that was set aside for her from year to year was roomy enough, in all conscience. Steve wondered if Mr. Stillman, if George, who was one of the kindest-hearted chaps alive, realized the Ballards' position. After all, maybe the two ladies themselves preferred Clam Beach, though that resort was considered by Hester and others abysmally " mucker." But the Burkes liked it; there

were probably plenty of nice people there; Mary and her mother might feel freer, if less comfortable, than when Miss Stillman was making a convenience of them; and anyhow, it was no business of his.

Something occurred at the moment that was distinctly Steven's business. That is, as he bumped slantwise over a granite escarpment, the rear right tire set up a continuous minute hissing which he recognized with an ejaculation. "Yah! There she goes!" said Steven, disgusted but resigned. He stopped the car and leaned over, attempting to estimate the damage; and looked up and down, shaking his head. The catastrophe had befallen at the bottom of a little dip, the road scrambled over the rocks before and behind; afar off there showed a V-shaped patch of sea between the hills. It was hot in this hollow and incredibly still; not a soul within hallooing distance, probably, although at the top of the stair-like ascent on one hand, a gable and tumbledown chimney pushed through the greenery. Fifteen minutes of uninterrupted going would have taken him into town; but "she" would be in ribbons before the first five. Steven, however, was a lad of stout muscle, and handy enough with tools; it would not be the first tire he had changed, so the prospect held no particular terrors. He took off his gloves, took off his cap, took off his coat and slowly descended. He went around to the back of the car, whistling confidently "Everybody Works but Father" — an aria new at that date — released the spare tire, and began to explore the tool-box. The whistle died; he took out wrenches, hammers, rolls of adhesive tape, extra nuts and washers without number as it seemed to him; he prowled in the corners; he investigated every square inch of the machine where a jack could be hidden, all to no avail. Michael must have taken it to use on one of the other cars, and forgotten to put it back; it was bowling along thirty miles an hour in the opposite direction towards Clear Harbor, supposing Mrs. Rudd were out — it was peaceably bestowed on the garage shelf — it was anywhere you choose except where it was needed by its owner upon his lawful occasions! Steven desisted from the search, and stood back, debating what he should do next, eyeing the inert car. He noticed that it was canted

up on the ledge so as to bring the injured wheel almost free; an inch more, and he would have a natural jack. Steven calculated, walked to the other side, applied his sturdy young shoulder to what he judged to be the most practical place, and heaved mightily — alas, without results. The automobile, for all its look of leaden passivity, all at once developed a kind of springiness which, setting aside its weight, seemed to neutralize his efforts; it was impossible to get a purchase on it. Steven remembered that the salesman had displayed a moving eloquence about its resilient qualities. He gave up at last, and stood back again, out of breath, perspiring prodigiously. Everybody Works but Father, to be sure! Inward laughter assailed him, as he found himself vindictively desirous of letting fly with a good sharp stone into the middle of it, and completing the wreck!

If only some farmer, or fisherman, or berry-picker would come along! Ordinarily, these ownerless pastures and woodlands were alive with them, he thought; but to-day there was nobody in sight. As if in retort, he heard a distant rumor of some one boring through the undergrowth on the hillside above; and, directly, running his eye over it, made out a man, a little way below the top, working his way sidewise, crab fashion, from ledge to ledge; he had a pack on his back, with two ends poking up over his shoulders which Steven, after an instant, perceived to be a camp-stool, easel, or some such equipment as a painter on sketching-tour might carry.

"Hi!" bawled Steven. "Hey! Hel*lo — o!*" And supplementing this adjuration by earnest wavings of the arms, he had the satisfaction of observing the man, arrested, holding to a young birch tree, and staring around alow and aloft. Finally discovering Steven, after an attentive moment, he waved his own arm in turn, and bawled back.

"All right! Wait a minute!" And therewith laid a new course straight for the road, or as nearly straight as possible where the going was so erratic. It brought him out with a rush and slither, and a dry cascade of twigs, pine-cones and small fragments of rock, a dozen yards from where Steven stood; and he shook himself, maintaining his balance with an inarticulate ejaculation, looking towards Steve and grin-

ning. He had on an old blue jersey, an old pair of corduroy trousers, an unbelievably old slouch hat with a short-stemmed black pipe stuck in the ragged band in the front of it; the sketching apparatus lumbered behind him. The young man's whole acquaintance embraced no such figure, yet, as the other advanced, Steven was aware of a bewildering familiarity about his gait, his shoulders, even about the quick and understanding eye with which he took in Steve's own plight. The bewilderment cleared off in a flash; it was Eugene Rudd.

Ghastly embarrassment invaded Steve, who nevertheless was sufficiently sophisticated not to be put out of countenance by any ordinary mischance. The trouble was, that this was not ordinary; in one breath he hoped that the other would not know him, recognized the cause of that puzzling sense of familiarity to be a likeness between this Rudd and his own father, faint and far-off, but discernible, and remembered that he himself, too, was "all Rudd." Indeed a surprised recognition, duplicating his own, but without a trace of any other feeling — or it might be that Eugene was more skilful and ready at concealment — now became visible on the latter's features.

"What! Why, it's Steven!" he exclaimed. "Hail, young Steven!" said he, with a laugh in the same unforced manner; and he came up closer, eased his pack to the ground, and moved slowly around the automobile, inspecting it, with a gingerly experimental touch here and there. Steven experienced a relief as disproportionate to the circumstances as his discomfiture had been; common-sense returned; if the other took their meeting in this everyday style, why should he, Steven, get into a fluster over it? Why in the name of reason, should he get into a fluster anyhow?

"I don't know the first thing about motor-cars," Eugene presently confessed with a kind of genial concern; "I'm no good except as another pair of hands. You'll just have to tell me what you want me to do."

Steven explained, finding it on a sudden astonishingly easy to talk to Eugene — as easy as if he had been any passing stranger. Furthermore, it proved easy to work with him;

although he had truly described his ignorance of automobiles, he was handy, tolerably muscular, and very quick at understanding. Together they succeeded in hoisting the car up, improvising a sort of combination lever and support out of a stout fence-rail, wedged with stones. Steven got the fresh tire in place, and they took turns pumping it up, an exercise for which the older man betrayed an unfitness which Steve noticed with vicarious humiliation. The young fellow could have out-pumped his father, too; but this was not an instance of the advantage of youth over age, for his companion was not more than ten or twelve years his senior, not yet past the prime of life. No, Steven knew that it was no burden of years that made Eugene's breath come gaspingly after half a dozen strokes, and the water bead out all over his face — his face that was a little blotched, a little puffy, though still not unwholesome to look upon. He pumped his spell gallantly, without any notion of crying for quarter, and Steve's sensitive humanity would not allow him to hint at it, even; instead he shortened his own turn, trying to make the inequality between them less unmercifully obvious. It was done at last, and in concert they heaved a long breath, swabbed their respective foreheads, stood back to contemplate their work and found it good. The automobile no longer resembled a loathly antediluvian with a sore hoof; once more it was an able personality, finely contrived as a watch, potential speed shaped in gracious and flowing lines.

"What make is it?" Eugene asked.

Steven told him; he was conscious of an awkward moment which the other somehow relieved by taking down his old pipe and beginning to pack it from an equally old and ramshackle pouch. Steven wondered if the act was deliberately conceived to set him at ease; but everything Eugene did seemed to be quite simple and natural.

"You don't smoke?" he said, cocking an inquiring eyebrow towards Steven, as he tamped the tobacco down with a forefinger discolored by many such operations.

"Cigarettes, sometimes." Steven hesitated, confronted by the fact that he actually had no form of direct address for his new-found relative. In hasty review, he dismissed

" Rudd " and " Mr. Rudd " as being only a degree less impossible than " Uncle Eugene," which, Good Heavens, was not to be thought of for a minute! The other suffered from no such indecision, it would seem; he called Steven "Steven " *tout bonnement,* which on the whole exhibited both good taste and good manners, and Steve had a lurking fancy that his own present quandary would amuse Eugene Rudd very much, if he suspected it. " I'm awfully obliged," he said at last. " I was stuck hopelessly, if you hadn't come along and helped."

" That's all right. Glad to." He had got the pipe going, and moved nonchalantly towards his pack. There seemed to be nothing more to say or do, but Steven found that it went strongly against the grain with him, to let the brief acquaintance end thus, though Eugene appeared to be entirely willing. They might never see each other again — blood is thicker than water — and — and hang it all, he was so decent, drink or no drink, thought the young fellow.

" Er — I say! " he called out, stuttering again over the inability to give this amiable pariah a name. " Going in town? "

The other who was in the act of swinging his sketching-tools to his shoulder, paused; for the first time, he lost poise, betrayed a slight uncertainty. " Why, I — no — that is — "

" He's afraid of taking advantage of me," thought Steve, in swift sympathy. " Oh, come along! " he insisted. " You were heading in that general direction just now, weren't you? I'll put you down anywhere you say. Come on! "

An odd expression came into the other Rudd's face at the boyish cordiality of that voice and invitation; without doubt it was a long while since anyone who called him kin, had showed so much zest for his company. Blood thicker than water, forsooth! Eugene stood an instant longer dubiously, then laughed, shrugged and walked up to the machine. " Young Steven, I thank you! " he said, with a burlesque gesture, tumbled his goods in and tumbled in himself. They moved off, not very dashingly, the eccentricities of the road preventing any display of class, except at the steering-wheel. Perhaps Steven did not regret the necessity for concentrating all his energies on weaving around the ruts and

ridges; although the feeling of constraint was wearing off, he could not be unaffectedly himself in this companionship. Eugene at first sat silent, too, attentive to the road, with eyes drawn up under the slouch of his hat, and teeth clenched around the stem of the little black pipe.

"They c-call stones of that size d-dornicks at home," he remarked joltingly, as the car caromed from one to the next. "Very descriptive word, I've always thought. Dornicks. Sounds j-just like them."

"I don't believe I ever heard it," said Steven.

"It's a back-country sort of word — pure Ohioese. I still call Ohio home. You don't know much about it, I suppose."

"About Ohio? Why, it's my home too. I'm from Ohio," said Steven, surprised.

"Yes, I know, but — " Eugene stopped, removed the battered hat, knocked out his pipe, and bestowed it scientifically in its place again. "Not much satisfaction in a pipe while we're leaping from peak to peak like the wild thunder, as Lord Byron has so beautifully and poetically remarked. I keep biting my tongue," he said, in parenthesis, and went on: "I know. But I imagined somehow that you had spent most of your life away from the Middle West — here perhaps. Or travelling, you know — Groton — Harvard — and so on — ?" he finished on a questioning inflection.

"Oh, yes. But still home is home. We've never given it up. At one time people rather urged Dad to make our place here his legal residence — because of the taxes, and all that. They're a good deal fairer, or lighter, anyhow, in this State. But he said no, he'd always voted in Ohio, and preferred to finish out there."

"That was like him," said Eugene, and smiled. "Your father's changed very little," he added after a minute. "He looked exactly the same to me the other day as he did twenty years ago. There wasn't anybody else of the family along, was there? You have sisters? That Miss Rudd that's just been married — ?"

Steve answered him, marvelling again, inwardly, at the ease of their talk. He willingly gave the older man credit for the tact that guided it — not so much tact, after all, Steven judged, as genuine interest. Eugene's inquiries and

comments were more intimate than an outsider's could have been, yet he stopped short at a safe distance from the confidential; he not only kept away from that disastrous brink, he kept his companion away from it likewise, having perhaps mastered the valuable truth that we always dislike the person to whom we have told too much. At any rate, Steve, rehearsing the conversation afterwards, decided that though he himself had certainly talked a good deal, he had not talked indiscreetly. He had said, for example, that Uncle Elihu and the family had come on for Edith's wedding. Yes, they still lived in California, at Pasadena. Oh yes, Uncle Elihu was very well and active, though he always seemed to Steven so much older than Dad; really there was only a few years' difference between them. Dad and Uncle El went out every morning and played golf together; they could play, too. Either one of them could baste the ball a good way; they both stopped and put on their glasses when they went to putt, and then if they didn't putt in, why they could blame it to the glasses. Oh, they were a pair of foxy grandpas all right! Natalie Rudd? Why, her name was Carter, now; she had two children. Aleck? He was dead. Yes, awful thing; he was killed in a railroad accident here about three years ago. It was in the papers at the time; they all felt so sorry for Cousin Judith; she'd never gotten over it, of course. Dad had to go and tell her; he said it was the hardest job he'd ever had to do in his life.

And so forth and so on, harmlessly. Eugene did not ask after anyone by name direct; it was always "your Uncle Elihu," "your cousin Mrs. Slade," "the Chicago relatives," or some such phrase. Ishmael kept his distance; he would make no claim to kinship with Israel!

"I'm putting you through a catechism," he said apologetically; and in his matter-of-fact tone, without a hint of sentiment: "it's interesting to me, you know. I haven't seen anything of any of them for so many years. Now right here, please — if you'll let me out — ?"

They were just cresting a rise that commanded the town and harbor and a wide, wind-swept circle of sea and sky; a path crossed the road, zigzagging off to left and right. Steven brought the car to a standstill, and the other climbed down.

"I'm not staying at a hotel. Don't like 'em," he said, answering Steve's glance around over the boulder-strewn wastes. "I hunted up a nice, salt old retired mariner down here at Thanksgiving Cove that has a cottage and takes people in — Cap'n Nathan'l Howe."

"Cap'n Howe? Why, that's where some people I know are staying. The name's Burke. Have you met them?"

Eugene shook his head. "I may have, but I don't remember. Perhaps they are at one of the other cottages. There's quite a little settlement at Thanksgiving Cove, and everybody takes summer-boarders, and everybody is named Howe. It's right over the hill, but you'll have to drive into town and out again to get there with your machine. This is a short-cut I'm taking, north-east by a half north across Miss Betsy Howe's cow-pasture, which brings me out bearing towards the Cove with Cap'n Howe's house about two points on the port bow. Well, so long!" He went off, waving a carelessly friendly salute, the pack on his shoulders, and the outline of a flask in one hip-pocket, plainly to be discerned under the ragged jersey.

Steven drove on, perforce slowly, meditating on the unobtrusive skill, the consideration for himself with which the other had carried off an awkward situation; and on the nicety with which, at the end, he had avoided any word or act that might be construed as an overture toward further acquaintance. No, he was decent, the young man thought again, and proud, too, after his fashion, for all his reddening nose, and the whiskey-bottle which, manifestly, was the cause of his ostracism. "Father and Uncle El couldn't have that tank around, of course," thought Steven. "I daresay they stood him as long as they could. It's a pity, too, because he must always have been nice when he was sober, like to-day, for instance."

## CHAPTER VI

THE Ballards were staying at The Grandview, which either actually was, or seemed to Steven in his mood of concern for Mary, the gaudiest and flimsiest of all the depressingly gaudy and flimsy hotel structures in the place. It was built, like the rest, in a style of showy false rusticity, with slight shingle walls stained green, encircled by kindling-wood verandas and surmounted by a monstrous roof at twenty different pitches. The stalwart landscape disowned it; one might fancy it pinned there precarious and temporary, to serve the needs of precarious and temporary visitors. That, at least, was Steve's impression, as the automobile toiled uphill towards it, along the sandy street. "Looks just like a cheap place for cheap people," he thought disdainfully, and with a fresh pang for the girl. To do him justice, the young man had no thought of money in his mind; the adjective, for him, merely connoted something which Mary Ballard most emphatically was not, something shoddy or unworthy — Steven himself would have had difficulty in defining it.

He came to a footpath debouching upon the street from somewhere within the hotel-grounds, and drew up, perceiving it to be a side-entrance or short cut. The legend, "Grandview Tennis-Courts," with an arrow pointing the way, was posted up on the brow of a pergola constructed of birch saplings laid across a series of massive and powerful concrete columns, two of which had come loose from their foundations, yet still remained upright, contrary to all physical laws, steadied by the crosswise poles! It was a miracle, but like most miracles susceptible of a rational explanation, some unæsthetic person having reamed out a hole in one of the monoliths which revealed them to be hollow and of a material resembling papier-maché. They were, besides, fairly arabesqued with names, dates, monograms and

inscriptions executed with pocket-knives to commemorate the passage of previous visitors; Steven glanced at them with another surge of distaste. Yet the fragrance of the pines warm in sunshine was pleasant, and bright-berried vines and small flowers twinkled in the undergrowth, and between tree-trunks one caught classic perspectives of the sea. He followed the path towards a sound of thudding balls and of a voice calling the game with attendant outcry and laughter. There was a hedge of evergreens around the little plaza where the courts had been laid out, and searching an opening through it, he unexpectedly beheld Mary on a bench with another girl, looking on while two young men charged and retreated on either side of the net. "Thirty-love!" Mary was in the act of proclaiming; she reached into a candy-box on the seat between them, with her eyes still watchfully fixed on the players, and in a moment cried out again: "The other side, Mr. Pillsbury! You have to serve from the right-hand court again this time!" she directed, in an utterance somewhat obscured by the caramel.

"Hey? Right? Oh, sure! I keep forgetting."

"Isn't it ever going to be my shoot again?" queried his antagonist in tones of mock hopelessness.

"Ask her; she's the doctor!" retorted Mr. Pillsbury, facetiously, taking his position. "Get ready now, Al!"

"My, I don't see how you keep all those rules in your head," observed the other girl, also helping herself to candy. "Say, these are getting all stuck together."

It was this little summer scene that Mr. Steven walked into, edging around the sidelines to keep out of the way of the players, who, however, stood with arrested rackets at sight of him. Mary wagged a hand, signalling welcome. "Hello!" And: "Oh, I say, don't let me interrupt the game!" were his remarks on reaching her.

"You're not," said Mary negligently, and waved her hand again. "Miss Schlemmer, Mr. Rudd."

"Pleased to meet you!" said Miss Schlemmer in a loud, clear and somehow extraordinarily conventional voice; her eyes, which were very large and black, missing no slightest detail of Steve's appearance. The other two men drew near. "Mr. Rudd, meet Mr. Pillsbury and Mr. Strunk," said the young lady, in the same high-pitched recitative.

Steven met Mr. Pillsbury and Mr. Strunk accordingly. "Please go on playing, or I'll feel awfully —" he began.

"Not so awful as you would if you watched us for a while," said Mr. Pillsbury, epigrammatically. "We're just beginners. Miss Ballard's been coaching us. She's made arrangements to be received at the State Insane Asylum when it's all over."

"You're doing all right," said Mary.

"Say, look here, what you after? More candy?" inquired Mr. Pillsbury, who was evidently something of a wag. Miss Schlemmer lamented pointedly that nobody ever wanted to teach *her*.

"You and Mr. Rudd play an exhibition game for us, won't you, Miss Ballard?" she besought them, with some manœuvring of the black eyes.

"As far as I'm concerned, it would be an exhibition, sure enough!" said Steve, and was amazed at the immoderate approbation with which so very mildly humorous a speech was received. "I entered in a tournament once that they were running on the lose-and-drop-out-plan, you know, and I stayed till the third round. Some playing! The fellows I was paired with all defaulted," he said soberly — too soberly perhaps, for the others looked uncertain until led by Mary's laugh. Steven began to be conscious of something artificial in their manner towards him; Mary was herself, as always, but the rest practiced a kind of ostentatious informality, beneath which one sensed a strained anxiety about forms. His arrival had broken up the game; do or say what he would, not one of them could be persuaded to play in his presence. Mr. Strunk said it was ripping weathah, and wanted to know if Steven drove his own cah? And when Steve said that he did and furthermore that he had had a puncture on the way over which accounted for the fact that he was late for his appointment with Miss Ballard, and the other fact that he had a busted knuckle and sundry grease-splotches — when Steve, in an attempt at lightness, had recited all this, lo, it had an effect exactly contrary to his intention, everybody listening as solemn as a hearse!

"You burst your knuckle?" said Miss Schlemmer, in acute — and it may be observed, much more correctly-

worded — sympathy; "How awful! Does it hurt? You ought to put some peroxide on it right away."

"Or dioxygen. Eyether one is good," said Mr. Strunk.

"Oh, it's not so bad as all that," said Steve, mentally registering a vow never to mention any sort of injury to any part of his anatomy whatever, again — at least, not to strangers who might take him seriously. He was relieved when Mary announced herself ready, and parted from the others, still feeling himself a species of target for civilities which seemed singularly to lack spontaneity.

"They didn't like it much, my coming along and taking you off this way," he confided to Mary as they got into the car, and he took the wheel. "Well, I don't blame them. Then, when I saw they were — well, peeved, you know, about it, I thought I'd be real clever and entertaining, but — " he shook his head, grinning. "Did you ever see such a fizzle?"

"No, that wasn't quite what was the matter. The trouble was they all knew you were one of *the* Rudds, and I think they expected you to be terribly smart and offish, and all that," said Mary simply. "Nearly everybody in the hotel went over the other day to see 'Journey's End' — on Thursday, you know — ?"

Steve nodded, with his eyes on the road. For some years past his father had set apart Thursday afternoons at the season when the gardens were in full flower, for the public to be admitted and shown the lovely and unusual spectacle. Mrs. Rudd made it a subject for much complaint to her friends: it completely destroyed all feeling of privacy for the family — perfect pandemonium the whole day long; and the people were so unappreciative, swarming all over everything, and trying to get into places which had been roped off or placarded with polite requests to keep out — you'd think they'd understand or have more consideration; and they were forever scrawling their names, or worse still, scratching them with penknives on those fine marbles, the vases and terminal figures and the other things that Mr. Rudd had sent to Italy for, and breaking off or pulling up pieces of the flowers and shrubs for their silly "souvenirs"; the gardeners had to watch them every minute. One day a

little boy fell into the *Victoria Regis* basin, and was all but drowned, only Angus McCrae — that was the head gardener's boy, the crippled one — fished him out somehow, and then his mother spanked him, instead of being grateful, and never even dreamed of giving Angus anything, or even of saying thank you! "Oh, you may laugh, my dear, but it's one of the trials of my existence. Mr. Rudd is *so* democratic and *so* public-spirited, I can't say anything!" the lady would conclude with a sigh. Cynics were not wanting, however, who intimated that since the affliction classified "Journey's End" with the celebrated ruins, county-seats, and abodes of royalty of the old world, her annoyance might not be very profound, after all.

"They went over and couldn't get in, because of its being so soon after the wedding, you know — ?" Mary went on. Steve nodded again. "That nice old Scotchman, McCrae, went out and explained, and told them everything was at sixes and sevens, so that Mr. Rudd had decided the place must be kept closed for once. So they had to come back disappointed, and there were some very crisp remarks made." She smiled at the recollection of some of the remarks. "Of course they didn't know that I knew you. They'll be painfully careful after this, and I shan't have any more fun," she ended with comic regret.

"I don't see why it should make any difference," Steve said. She did not answer, and after a minute he asked, not without diffidence: "What kind of a place is 'The Grandview,' anyhow, Mary?"

"Oh, it's — it's good enough." Mary paused; if Steven had looked at her he would have seen her soft, fresh young features settle slowly and one might have fancied reluctantly into an expression of decision, as of one who braces himself to await the burning of a fuse, or of a poor swimmer making up his mind to dive, or, in a less handsome, but more accurately descriptive figure, a person about to swallow a dose of hateful medicine. But Steve's attention was taken up with the task of jockeying his car just then, and when she spoke again, if there was a corresponding hardening in her voice, it also escaped him. "We have to go to an inexpensive place, and 'The Grandview' is only ten dollars a week,"

said Mary deliberately. "I really don't mind, though." And as Steve turned a challenging eye towards her: "Really I don't!" she insisted with a great deal of spirit and good-humor. "I always have a good time wherever I am!"

"You make your own good time!" Steve declared, not trying to keep the note of admiration out of his voice. How well she took it, was his thought; the place was as "mucker" as Hester had called it — anybody could guess that, not so much from what Mary said as from what she didn't say! And she was not used to — to that sort of thing, yet she was standing it, making the best of it, with the finest temper in the world. Her mother, too; Steve called up the older woman's resolute animation of voice and features, her whole presence delicately distinguished — in Clara Stillman's old clothes! — with a pang. The young man was not the less loyal to his own mother for doubting if she would bear adversity nearly so well. The Ballard women were a pair of thoroughbreds, by George! It was a shame!

"We have to stay *some*where, and it's always interesting, one way or another," said Mary, still with that heart-breakingly cheerful philosophy — so the humane young fellow thought. "I've never minded a bit on my own account — being poor, you know," she brought out bluntly, though after a barely perceptible hesitation. "Money isn't of any real consequence. I hate not having enough for Mother, though. She has all those old-timey notions, and it's harder for her. She thinks I'm terribly free-and-easy. Oh, well!" And with that, and a shrug, Miss Ballard sprang suddenly to another subject, before Steven's slower-moving masculine intelligence could act to pin her down, as it were, to the one in hand. "Do you know, Steve, after you were talking about your friend this Mr. Burke, the other day, I got to wondering if I didn't know of him already. There was a girl named Francie Burke at the Temple School in Washington that winter I was there, and I know her father was in the army. Washington schools are always crammed full of army and navy girls. This girl had a brother Jack that she was all the time talking about — "

"Jack Burke!" Steven shouted out; "That's the same one. Must be! There'd hardly be two, with fathers in the

army, and he has a sister, only I don't know what her name is. Must be! Does she look anything like him? You saw him standing on the platform, don't you remember? Isn't that funny? The whole family are here staying over at Thanksgiving Cove."

Further comparing of notes tended to confirm them. Mary's Burkes, she thought, came from Ohio, too — that is, if they could be said to come from any fixed point, army people being perpetually on the move, accustomed to strike or set up a home anywhere, on the shortest notice. "I can, too, for that matter," the girl interpolated with a rather acid little laugh. "I've lived in ever so many places. I was only at that Washington school for one term, about five months, so I really didn't have much chance to make friends, but I knew Francie as well as I did anybody. I remember she told me she was born at some way-off post up in Montana or somewhere, and her brother down on the Mexican border. But they came from Ohio to begin with. Why, I didn't get a good look at your Mr. Burke the other day, Steve; I wouldn't know him again. Francie wasn't very pretty, but awfully sweet and wholesome."

The question was so interesting that to go over to Thanksgiving Cove and settle it, seemed to be the next step in order — imperative, really. Steven suggested it, but Mary was ready; she was always ready for everything. They found the road skirting the shore in passably good condition, and erelong came upon an irregular gathering of houses, dories, fishnets drying in the yards, and fences whereof every paling bore an inverted stone jug; and after some inquiry drew up before a sound-looking old clapboarded dwelling set a little back and up, and approached by a paved walk — paved, that is, naturally, by the granite outcroppings which hereabouts conveniently occurred in a series of ledges or stepping stones. It was a quiet place, the only people in sight being two ladies sitting under an old-fashioned arbor of whitewashed lattice-work and wild grape vines, that made a pretty pattern on their white dresses. The hillside yard was not well kept; the grass showed only in sparse mats between the rocks, and knots of golden-rod and wild asters grew at random; yet it had a character which moved Steven to say: "Doesn't look much like 'The Grandview,' does it?"

They started up the path. The two ladies under their arbor were occupied, one with a lapful of darning, the other with some books or papers from which she was reading aloud. They could hear her clear voice: " . . . Let us not cease to do our utmost as good citizens, and whatever comes, even the worst results of our adversaries' blind and reckless policy . . ."

" Blooie! What have we struck? A suffrage convention? " ejaculated Steve under his breath. But at that moment, hearing footsteps, the reader looked up; she rose a little awkwardly, trying to hold a mass of some sort of manuscript from sliding off her knees, and at the same time to put back a flying strand of auburn hair from her forehead and eyes. " I beg your pardon, isn't this Captain Howe's — ? " Mary began to ask, and stopped short with an exclamation; they stared for an instant, and then each one spoke the other's name.

It appeared that Major Burke and Jack had gone fishing; but Jack's mother and sister, thus stumbled upon, were sincerely cordial to young Mr. Rudd, of whom, they said, they had heard a great deal, and not less so to Miss Ballard whom the other girl " placed " at once though it was five years since their Temple School acquaintance; the army family had changed posts as many times in the interval. " But we've actually had nearly ten months at home — the Columbus garrison, you know — can't tell how much longer it will last, of course. I had a grand winter, anyhow. We have ever so many relatives there, and lots of Mother's friends, that were girls when she was; they all went to school together and came out together, and everything. It made it lovely for Jack and me," said Miss Burke with enthusiasm. She was, as Mary had reported, not pretty, but of a pleasing, healthy, happy aspect, with unruly red hair, a good many freckles, and a pair of bright blue eyes, very strong, steadfast and open.

" I think I'd have known you anywhere for Jack's sister. I never saw such a likeness! " Steven told her.

She colored, looking extraordinarily gratified, and gave her mother a triumphant glance. " There, Mother, you *see!* "

It was a piece of by-play which Mrs. Burke thought herself obliged to explain, with a smile. "They don't really look like each other at all, Mr. Rudd — at least, that's what *I* insist. Every time the subject's mentioned, it creates a great schism in the Burke household. The fact is they both do look like their grandfather Burke, one in a man's way and one in a girl's way — "

"Well, that comes to the same thing, Mother — "

"Not quite, my dear. Show him that picture, Francie, and then he'll see what I mean," commanded her mother, turning again to the darning. She picked up from the bench beside her a big pair of tortoise-shell-rimmed spectacles, put them on without a particle of vanity or affectation, bit a thread off, ran her hand into the toe of a sock, and set to work. "Sit down, both of you, there's plenty of room, though it doesn't look as if there were, with all this muss," she said, casting a glance around over the tops of the goggles. "Just push that old bandbox and the other stuff to one side, Mr. Rudd — or on the floor will do. They can't be hurt much after all these years, and what they've been through already."

Steven, obeying, cleared off the bench and deposited at the feet of the company, first, a large, square old leather case of a species somewhere between a valise and a portable desk, with a lock and key, and a collapsible pocket at one side, its pleatings cracked clean through at every crease; then a miscellaneous stack of ragged newspapers, account-books or journals, and letters with and without envelopes, bound up in faggots and marked with names and dates; and finally a stupendous round bandbox, of unguessed age but still stout and intact, covered with a pinkish cream-colored paper, with a medallion on one side, representing *Battery Park, New York City,* according to the flourishing copperplate inscription underneath. The band was playing in Battery Park, ladies in flowing, low-necked dresses were walking out with little girls amazingly pantaletted, and being accosted by high-stocked gentlemen; and in the distance a full-rigged frigate was to be seen making port. On top of the picture was a spread-eagle with a streamer in its beak bearing the motto, *E pluribus unum.* Altogether, it was a monument to the bandbox makers' art, and Steve surveyed it with par-

donable curiosity, pausing before he set it down, though it was packed full of more papers, books or what-not, and correspondingly heavy to hold.

" I think that thing's a perfect gem, don't you? " Frances said, noticing his interest. " The decorations are so naïve and serious and ridiculous. But look how well it's made! It's just as strong as it ever was, and it's been knocked around like everything. That's the way the people themselves seem to have been in the old days," said the girl meditatively, " a lot of fancy stuff in poor taste on the surface, but always something sound and solid down underneath."

" Francie's getting to be a profound philosopher since she's been digging in these old ruins," said her mother with amusement and tolerance. But the other two young people had been rather impressed by this little dissertation, and looked at the fragment of antiquity with a new respect.

" How old is it, do you know? " Mary asked.

" About eighteen-thirty-six would be its date, I think," said Miss Burke, cocking her head on one side professionally; " Not a very interesting period." And, seeing frank non-comprehension on their faces, she added, coloring a little, " I'm studying up all that, you know — periods and antiques and collectors' fads, and all those things. You have to, if you're going to do interior decorating. I'm going to take a course this winter."

Mary murmured something about its being awfully original and interesting, looking somewhat dubiously at the surrounding junk meanwhile. But Stephen was genuinely roused.

" Interior decorating? Something new, isn't it? It would be just the thing a girl could do, though. But I shouldn't have thought it would take so much study. Do you have to go through all these old books and things — ? "

Both Burkes chorused an amused negative. " Oh no, no! This isn't part of the course. This hasn't got anything to do with it. These are just some old family papers I'm sorting out," said Francie.

Steven eyed the heaps. " Must have been a good-sized family," he ventured, with a soberness which by no means misled Mrs. Burke, who laughed again.

"It's not all ours, sir! Some of it doesn't really belong to the Burke tribe at all. That's one reason it has to be sorted; it's the accumulation of years, part important, part worthless, I daresay. Those old newspaper-clippings, for instance. Francie was reading one of them just as you came up — the dullest stuff that ever was put on paper, but she has to go over it all. It's a sort of biography of General Burke that she's helping prepare."

"Somebody wants to write him up — he was my grandfather, you know, or rather you don't know — for the Pioneer Society, or the Loyal Legion, or something," said Francie. "They came to the family for all the details, of course. They'd found out somehow that he had started to write his life, and then he died before he'd got it finished, so it hadn't ever been printed. It was all in the garret of my uncle's house. Father said a member of the family ought to look it over, because some outsider might publish something that the old gentleman hadn't decided about, or that oughtn't to go in anyhow; but he took one look and said *he* wouldn't do it, and my uncle took a look and said *he* wouldn't, and nobody would, so I pitched in. They all kept telling me I was the antiquarian anyhow, and the best person for the job! That's their crude idea of a joke."

"General Burke? Oh, he was in the army, too?"

"No, only for a little while. He was a lawyer. Here's that picture, Mr. Rudd." She had picked out one from a sliding pile of daguerreotypes, and now held it towards him.

"Oh, they've got oodles of those at my mother's old home in Albany," said Mary, interested now, craning over his shoulder. Between them, with some laughter, slanting the picture this way and that, they captured the likeness of a young or youngish man in mid-nineteenth-century costume, with hair brushed back in a mighty, upstanding wave above a mildly humorous face, to which Frances Burke's did indeed bear some faint resemblance. It was not particularly attractive, not striking in any way; so that Miss Ballard and Mr. Rudd, who were well-brought-up young people, found themselves, as they confided to each other afterwards, more or less floored for the proper thing to say. It was easy to see that the Burkes were vastly proud of this ancestor; and,

after all, Steve reflected, the old boy showed up as well as his own grandfather, David, whose daguerreotype reposed in the attic of the Rudd home. He was about to take a chance — as he said later — on telling Miss Burke that she was the living image of the general, when Mary had a better inspiration.

"Oh look, somebody has written something in the other side of the case! May we read it, Mrs. Burke?"

"Why, certainly. It's a contemporary opinion. Nobody ever liked that picture," said the lady.

The note was in a small, firm handwriting, legible as print, on a square of cardboard fitted inside the case. "*Sorry, dear Nat. This thing is neither just nor merciful! J. V.*" Steven read aloud. "That must have been somebody that knew him pretty well," he said, chuckling.

"It was Doctor Vardaman," said Mrs. Burke, darning away steadily. "Yes, he was a very old friend. Major Burke is named for him — Jack too, of course. Doctor John Vardaman."

"There're lots of letters from him," said Frances. "Let me tell you they're life-savers, too! Such a plain hand, it's no trouble at all, and almost all the others are perfectly ghastly — you have to puzzle them out line by line. That's some kind of a diary he kept, that big lot of exercise-books or whatever they are. How do you suppose that came to be mixed in with Grandpa's things, Mother?"

Steven and Mary stooped together, and each picked up one of the doctor's volumes. They were bound in pasteboard covers, overlaid with marbled paper, curling and crumbling at the edges, and bore labels: "*J. Vardaman,* 1845-1847"; "*J. Vardaman,* 1849" and so on, for some fifteen years. Steven opened his at random, turning the leaves, and there arose a faint odor, musty, not wholly unpleasant, as if to the young man's quick fancy, it might have blown from dead gardens; with the thought, he came upon a mummified flower, parchment-like in texture, dried and flattened beyond recognition, the very wraith of a flower. He caught sight of some lines of verse: "*To Louise wearing a rose,*" in the same distinct handwriting. Only a short while, and Steven was to know that handwriting and all the contents of

the diaries better than he desired; but he had no suspicion of what was in store as he closed the book hurriedly. All very well for Miss Burke perhaps, but what was he doing, a stranger, unauthorized, prying into the closets of the helpless dead, raking over poor sentimentalities that were half a century old when he was born?

Mrs. Burke was answering her daughter's question. "Why, I don't know, unless the doctor gave them to your grandfather to refer to, for dates or something. He knew that General Burke was writing an autobiography, and there must have been a great deal in the diaries about early days and their own young life, that would have interested them both. I wish now that when I had the chance while they were alive, I had gotten them to tell me something about — "

"You *knew* them? Did you *know* them?" cried out Mary and Steven in a breath; it was to them as if Mrs. Burke had casually mentioned a personal acquaintance with the Pharaohs! She burst out laughing at their ingenuous betrayal of astonishment.

"Of course I knew them. It's not so very long ago — at least it doesn't seem long to me. To be sure I was only a young girl — not so old as any of you. But General Burke was living still when we were married. He died when Francie was a little tiny baby; we were way off there at Fort Missoula, and couldn't come home. Dear me!" She suspended the needle with a short sigh, her eyes fixed on some vista unseen by the rest; then fell to again philosophically. "He was the dearest old gentleman. They both were."

## CHAPTER VII

IN the course of the next few days, Mrs. Lawson Rudd went to call on the Burke ladies, whether acting on a hint from Steven, or out of her own natural, maternal desire to know the people about whom her son was so enthusiastic, who shall say? Mrs. Lawson, to tell the truth, was not very maternally-minded; even when the children were small with amusing kittenish ways, charming objects to exercise one's taste in dress upon, she had not been over-devoted to the nursery. And to see them inevitably and irrevocably grown up, which is a tragedy for all mothers, was mainly tragical for Steven's by the hideous implication of advancing years. No polite tarradiddles from her associates could veil their knowledge that a woman with two full-fledged daughters, and one ditto son, of marriageable age, and actually getting married, however fresh her appearance, could not be far short of — ahem! "Poor Mama, how she will hate her grandchildren!" Edith used to say, with her precocious astuteness.

Whatever Mrs. Rudd had in mind when she went, however, she came back sufficiently well pleased to call Mrs. Burke (who must be about her own age, but looked ten years older) a *charming* woman; to pronounce Miss Burke (who was not good looking and had rather abnormal bookish tastes) *very attractive;* and to say that Major Burke (who met her with boyish admiration, and an honest and openly expressed disbelief that she could be Steve's mother) was *perfectly delightful.* Army people were *always* delightful. Besides, they had discovered so many mutual friends; the Burkes knew everybody at home, in Washington, everywhere; Major Burke had been one of the army officers detailed to represent our Government in some capacity at the last Paris World's Fair; he was in the Engineer Corps, the highest branch of the Service, etc., etc. She had them to dinner and otherwise showed them such a number of nice

little attentions that Miss Stillman who was invited to the dinner, remarked to another guest that it was easy to see their hostess had no fears for either Steven or Hester. "The girl Burke is too homely, and the boy probably hasn't got a cent of his own, so that settles them both," said Clara, kind-heartedly. "Hester Rudd can be trusted not to lose her head over any man without money. Steve isn't nearly so practical; any pretty face could catch him. But her best friend couldn't accuse Miss Burke of having a pretty face. So it's quite safe."

The other guest was Clara's aunt, Mrs. Ballard, and she agreed readily that it was quite safe. She almost always agreed, or disagreed only when she saw that it was expected of her, and as she was a person of extended acquaintance and experience, her judgment was seldom at fault. The habit, contrary to what might be supposed, did not make her society tiresome or monotonous, because of another habit, native or acquired, of carrying on the conversation exactly in the vein of the present company. If they were gossiping, Mrs. Ballard gossiped; if displaying culture, who so cultured as she? If exchanging housewives' information, she invariably had an item ready. *Chiffons*, beauty-specialists, rest-cures, the newest opera-singer, the newest scandal, the newest creed, all was one to Ellen Ballard. So that she now said, with a little, meaning smile, a little, pointed, drawling utterance: "At any rate, Hester appears to be stalking other game just now — rather *big* game."

"Oh yes. Isn't George perfectly fatuous?"

It was after the dinner that this conversation took place. The Rudd family-party had all dispersed by this time, and of the guests there remained only George and his sister staying on at the Harbor because, presumably, they wanted to, and the Ballards staying on at the Beach because they had to, perhaps. Nobody knew how they managed to stay anywhere. The seashore season was waning; autumn advanced; people with nothing to do had gone to the mountains, people with something to do back to their desks and offices. Outdoors it grew uncomfortable with fogs, sharp gales, the first frost. To-night there was a fire of drift-wood in the living-room; Mrs. Rudd, on a low sofa drawn up by

the hearth, was pouring the coffee, a rite which she would never leave to the butler, insisting on performing it with her own small, white, plump hands which looked very pretty all twinkling with oddments of jewellery, hovering over the tray. Mrs. Burke sat in a deep chair near by; Mr. Rudd had taken her husband into the glassed-in porch that lay beyond for a view of nobody knows what botanical marvel that McCrae had succeeded in blooming, hybridizing or what-not after countless patient trials. The army-man was himself an amateur of gardening, it seemed; he hoped some day to settle down on a little farm and spend the rest of his life planting things and watching them grow, he told his host optimistically. Lawson warmed to him from that moment.

In the adjoining room, the younger Burkes and Rudds had wound up the Victrola and were essaying the latest dance-step; they did not miss or humanely pretended not to miss one couple upon whom Miss Stillman now directed a glance of steely penetration. In a window-alcove her brother and Hester probably supposed themselves unobserved; the young lady was kneeling on the cushioned seat, her light draperies foaming all about, her feet cunningly tucked up under her in the prettiest of attitudes with one finger upraised while she put her pet cat through some trick. It was a large, coal-black, heavily furred cat with the collarette and plume-like tail of the Maine species called "coon-cats"; and, sitting upright, he observed Hester with animal gravity. As a rendering of the witch and her age-old familiar, it was utterly captivating. George, lounging as near as he dared, looked on with longing and delight.

"Now put your paw right in the middle of my paw, Dingbats!" cooed Hester with an absurdly commanding gesture. "You'll see, Mr. Stillman, he'll do it in a minute." She held out her upturned palm, an invitation to which Dingbats remained monstrously callous, though the sight sent a thrill through the young man on the other side of him. Hester crooked a finger around the cat's foreleg and lifted his paw — against Dingbats' strenuous protest — and placed it daintily in the pink hollow. "There, you see he knows what I want! He's just stubborn and won't mind. You're a naughty old squeeze-y Dingbats, sir!" She hugged him up

against her white dress and neck, looking innocently at George over the black mass of fur.

"He's not very appreciative, seems to me," said George, a trifle huskily. And in fact, Dingbats, struggling himself free, jumped down, executed a mighty fore-and-aft stretch with a yawn to match and stalked away, twitching his tail. Cheap and facile moralists often affect to feel something rebuking about the honesty of dumb beasts, even about their decent indecencies; but the only result of the above sample was to bring from Clara the comment that Hester made such a pet of that cat simply because he was so becoming to her — just like a big black muff.

"She'll have George sitting up and begging next," added the sister with sisterly solicitude.

"Oh well, wouldn't it be a good match?"

"George would be a good match for anybody," said Clara, wilfully misinterpreting the older lady. "Clam Beach is very nice, isn't it, Aunt Ellen? I've been meaning to come over to see you, only somebody told me the road was awful — ruinous to a machine. Can't I take you back there to-night, though?"

Mrs. Ballard successfully smiled. "Oh, thank you very much, Clara, you're always so thoughtful! But we're going back with Steve. He came and gathered up all of us, the Burkes and ourselves, in that big car. Big as it is, I really don't know how we all managed to pile in, but we did, and were perfectly comfortable, too. Steve and Mary and little Miss Burke were all in the front seat, and Jack junior hanging on by his little finger somewhere! Young people love that helter-skelter style, you know; you were just as bad when you were their age. I'm glad you didn't try going to Clam Beach, for you wouldn't have found us there. We've moved to Thanksgiving Cove."

"Thanksgiving Cove?"

"Yes — a farmhouse where they take boarders, Captain Eben Howe's. The Burkes are at Captain Si Howe's. Mary liked it so much when she went to see them — she and Frances Burke are old school-friends, you know —" explained Mrs. Ballard smoothly — "Mary thought it was so nice that she persuaded me into trying it. It *is* more inter-

esting than the 'Grandview'; that's just like any other hotel. At Captain Eben's everything is very plain, of course — no conveniences, but one doesn't mind somehow — it's all very quaint and typically New England — "

"And Steve Rudd goes over there all the time to see those Burkes, doesn't he?" Clara interrupted, possibly in the benevolent design of evening the score, which at the moment stood rather in her aunt's favor.

A faint color rose in Mrs. Ballard's delicately faded face, a light flared briefly in her fine, dark eyes that once upon a time had been always bright. But she answered with a smile charged with innuendo: "Between ourselves, he comes over all the time to see *one* of those Burkes," upon which simple statement, a singular look of discomfiture overspread Miss Stillman's countenance! You would have said the other had cannily cut the ground from under her feet, stolen her thunder, taken all the wind out of her sails. The conversation — to complete the collection of metaphors — appeared unaccountably without a leg to stand on, as far as she was concerned; Mrs. Ballard continued uttering nothings in her easy drawl, with her set smile, until the two fathers came in with the tonic effect masculine society generally produces. Major Burke picked up a photograph that was standing in its easel on the table and studied it.

"Who is this?" he asked.

It was Edith, in a riding-habit, with all her greyhound elegance, erect, straight-eyed, like a young collegian pranked out in girls' clothes for a piece of mischief. That remorselessly truthful engine, the camera, had extorted no supine admission of homeliness from Edith; characteristically, she had risen to the occasion. So that Major Burke said in all sincerity: "What a striking-looking girl! Who is she?"

"My daughter," said Lawson, with so much unconscious pride, that his wife cried out in amiable reproof.

"Dear me, Lawson, you say that as if she were the Queen of Sheba! It's only our little girl that was married the other day, Major Burke, and I assure you she's just like every other little girl. I think men are ever so much more ridiculous over their children than women, don't you?" she added confidentially to the major's wife.

Major Burke scrutinized the picture a moment longer, and laid it down, looking towards Lawson with a smile. "I'd like to have her in my regiment — if I had a regiment just now," he said. "My old father, who was a pretty good judge of people, had a phrase for faces like that. He would have said she looked as if she were 'clear grit.'"

"Edith ought to have been a boy," said her father, trying with indifferent success not to look as pleased as he felt. "She's very good at things boys do — sports and all that. She can actually throw straight, with a good free motion — very unusual for a woman, you know," said Lawson, forgetting his caution, as he recited Edith's gifts; and beginning to fumble in the inside pocket of his dinner-coat. "I've got a letter from her here — she shot a deer the other day, and wrote to tell me about it. They — the young people, she and her husband — are spending the honeymoon in the Canadian Rockies, hunting and camping. Just a minute — I'll find the passage — "

"Lawson!" cried Mrs. Lawson again, in pretty, well-bred admonition.

"Don't stop him! We *want* to hear it," said Mrs. Burke. The other shrugged resignedly. Lawson found his eyeglasses and stooped to the light, scanning and shuffling page after page covered with Edith's bold handwriting. Steven and the rest of the youngsters came in from the other room, signalling burlesque stealth to one another as the reading began.

"'*We thought that . . .*' Let's see, yes, this is it. . . . '*We stalked him for about six hours, part of the time crawling on our hands and knees through very thick, scrubby undergrowth. . . . Had to go carefully, but never lost the trail once, though in places it led over some rocky, exposed ground, where of course it got very faint, and even Pete, who, the other guides boast, can see a trail in running water, looked doubtful for a minute or two. . . .*' Pete and the others seem to be half-breed Indians, the kind they always have in the Northwest," interpolated Mr. Rudd, looking up. "'*Fortunately, however, the rain, which was falling steadily, and had been all night, softened the ground enough for him to make out signs of the buck's passing, besides the broken twigs, mouthfuls of grass cropped here and there, etc. I confess*

*I couldn't see a thing unless the men pointed it out. They find three dun hairs clinging to the bole of a tree, and some footprints further on and then they tell you that the deer stopped to rub his neck, and either something frightened him, or some insect stung him, for he jumped over to the other place; they know he jumped because all four hoofs are there close together! And then I look and look, and can't even find one hoof-print, let alone four! . . . Well, we came up with His Hornlets about ten o'clock. . . .'* It seems they had turned out at dawn for the expedition," Lawson sandwiched in again. "She says the thermometer was at thirty-seven — "

Steven and Jack Burke simultaneously uttered a chattering "*Whoosh!*" pretending to shiver convulsively, and blowing on their finger-nails.

"'. . . *He was browsing on an open slope across a valley* . . .' She doesn't say what the distance was. '. . . *An easy shot, or I probably couldn't have got him. . . .*'" And Lawson went on with Edith's tale of how she despatched the buck with a bullet behind the shoulder, and how Pete skinned him and cut him up, and how she was going to have the head mounted by a taxidermist in Calgary, and how finally — this she reported with considerable humor — one of the younger Indians had assured her that she was "*heap good squaw, worth heap pony,*" — Lawson went on with all this to the edification, no doubt, of the entire company. "It *was* pretty good for a girl!" he said at the last, straightening up, and removing his *pince-nez,* and fitting the letter back into its envelope.

"I suppose her husband lets her shoot the deer, and he goes after the wild-cats and things," said Francie.

"He wasn't along at all this time," said Steven. "In one of her letters, she said Rudolph — that's his name — thought our way of hunting was very funny. He expected there would be a train of gun-bearers and people following along with the luncheon, and a whole lot of beaters and so on to drive up the game while he sat in some kind of a bomb-proof and blazed away! That would be European style, you know."

Young Burke shouted with laughter; his father more

decorously, only permitted himself a slight grin. As for Lawson, he experienced a very definite annoyance underlying his own amusement. A son-in-law whom he must be forever explaining and interpreting — !

"These foreigners, you know," he said a little awkwardly. "They naturally don't understand that we inherit our manner of hunting from times when it was a necessity, not a sport — "

"Not much sport though, about sitting still, perfectly safe, and having the game driven up for you to kill. You could do that in the Omaha stock-yards," said George. "But after all — " he added tolerantly; "you can't blame Gherardi much for not seeing the fun of getting up at three o'clock in the morning and crawling around in a freezing rain and mud for half a day."

"Well, he didn't, in point of fact," Steve said.

"Didn't what?"

"Didn't go. I told you. Edith and her bunch of half-breeds got that deer all on their own. Didn't she say Rudy didn't go, Dad?"

"Why — er — yes, I believe she did," Lawson assented reluctantly. He had refrained from reading that part of the letter. There was a silence, everyone present striving more or less skilfully not to betray a surprise that was coupled with some other feeling not easily defined. Mrs. Rudd came to the rescue, trilling off a laugh.

"Oh, Edith is *so* different — *so* independent — she's eternally doing the *weirdest* things!" She turned to Mrs. Burke vivaciously. "I do wish you could have seen her hunting-suit! Dark green leather knickerbockers and a belted jacket, and of course leggings and boots and a sport hat, all matching. She had the whole thing made at MacTombly and Twitchell's," said Mrs. Lawson, naming a shop of the most altitudinous prices known to New York City, with a perfect semblance of unconsciousness: "You've been there, of course. Don't you think they have the smartest things —?"

"My daughter's husband, Captain Gherardi, is in the German diplomatic service," said Lawson to Major Burke vaguely, feeling with another wave of resentment that another explanation was incumbent, "An officer in their army, of course."

"Ah? They have different ideas from ours, as she says — I mean as you say — that is, as your son says — " said the other gentleman, rather confused himself, twisting the white moustache, nervously. "I have met a good many of them — army-men, of course — here and there in Europe — very nice fellows, and always very interested in military affairs — eager to know all about our army and methods and so on — "

"They've got such terribly strict regulations, it's no wonder they haven't much idea of our kind of sport," said Steven, anxious to help out. "Rudolph told me their officers weren't allowed to go in for any kind of athletics, polo or tennis or anything. He said some of them were poor and couldn't afford it, so they had an iron-clad rule to keep them all as much as possible on an equal footing."

After a pause, during which an appreciation of the lofty nature of German army discipline might be supposed, as it were, to sink into everybody's intelligence, Jack Burke said, not too admiringly: "They haven't got any regulations like that in our army, have they, Dad?"

"Well, no. It — it hardly seems as if it should be needed," said Major Burke, twisting his moustache again, with a thoughtful expression.

The party broke up not long after, and Steve conveyed his friends home, according to the programme. He had gotten fairly well acquainted with the vagaries of the road by now, and moreover had discovered what he called a long cut, a detour which added five miles or so but avoided the difficulties of his first trip. George Stillman, who, it turned out, had not known beforehand that his aunt and cousin were invited, came and asked, and indeed urged them warmly to be his passengers; the young fellow was fond of Mrs. Ballard and not so careless or so occupied in mooning after Miss Hester Rudd that he could not guess when his sister Clara had "turned rusty," as he graphically described certain of the lady's moods.

"I had no idea you were going to be here — Clara never told me, I suppose she thought I knew — or I'd have sent over for you," he said earnestly; "come on now, Aunt Ellen, you and Mary! Steve's got as many as he can take already."

"You shut up!" said the latter gentleman peremptorily. "Don't you listen to him, Mrs. Ballard! You're both coming with us, that's all there is to it!" So George had to withdraw at length.

"I can help you in anyhow, if I can't do anything else, Aunt Ellen," said he, and proceeded to do so gallantly, while Steven, sitting at the wheel, lighted a cigarette.

"That's right, Georgie! Be careful now! See that she puts her paw right in the middle of your paw!" he advised maliciously. A premonitory outburst from the engine mercifully smothered the other young man's startled "*Wh — what!*" and it is to be hoped none of the rest heard, or gathered the import of this bit of by-play.

Perhaps Mary had, however, to judge from a remark she made to her mother just before they went to bed. "There's going to be another wedding in the Rudd family before long, I'm thinking," said the girl. "Didn't you notice? This evening?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Ballard, lifelessly. She was sitting in front of the little pine bureau, brushing out her hair for the night; the bureau, in addition to its regular functions, performed those of a desk, a washstand, and a work-table, though somewhat cramped in size for any single one of those articles of furniture. On its narrow top there were assembled, besides a pitcher and basin, the hairdressing and manicuring equipment of both ladies, a bottle of ink with pens and paper, their last two laundry-bills, the shoe-polish, the talcum, the cold-cream, a cluster of artificial violets from a hat that they had been trying to re-trim, a glass hand-lamp, a pair of scissors, needles and thread, and a morsel of pilot-biscuit. Two wooden chairs, a bed with a mattress wherein, Mary said, all the doorknobs in New England had congregated and were holding Forefathers' Day exercises, and a strip of worn ingrain carpeting gritty with beach sand and perpetually damp, completed the furnishings of their room at Cap'n Eben's where, to be sure, the guests expected and professed to relish a Spartan absence of comfort. Mrs. Ballard, whose chameleon endowment enabled her to rough it with a better grace than anybody else wherever roughing it happened to be the prevailing mode, nevertheless eyed the

litter before her with a kind of passive disgust; she was naturally dainty, ordered, exquisite. She kept up a mechanical brushing of her thick, slightly silvered hair through which there ran the beautiful ripple that Mary's had inherited, while she stared into the glass at a face that seemed to have taken on years of age in the few minutes since she brightly said good-night to the Burkes, at the other Cap'n Howe's door.

"I remembered not to say anything about that other Mr. Rudd," said Mary.

Mrs. Ballard started. "Eh? Oh, yes. That was right."

"But Steven must know he's staying here, Mother. It seems silly to be so close-mouthed —"

"Wait until Steven or some one of the family mentions him first," counselled the older woman. She picked up the violets and fingered them; and perhaps they acted as a reminder, for when she spoke again, it was to change the subject abruptly. "I'm afraid you won't get any 'hand-me-downs' as you call them, from Clara this fall, Mary. It's my fault. I made her furious this evening. I really couldn't help it; she was intolerable. I'm sorry —"

"Oh, stuff! I'm glad you did," Mary cried out buoyantly. "I'm glad you got even with her. I never can; I'm not quick enough to think of those sharp, little needle-y things you say, right at the time; they always come into my head about half an hour afterwards, and then I think I'll save them up for the next time, and somehow there never *is* any next time — I never have the chance again! But you're always ready. Never mind the old clothes, Mother. It would probably have been the same even if you hadn't said a word to her; she was in a black bad temper the whole evening because the men weren't paying her any attention. Never mind the clothes —"

"Well, but I don't see how you can get along —"

"Maybe Uncle John will come across," Mary suggested, profanely, hopefully, after the fashion of youth.

"He will if he thinks of it — he's very kind. But it doesn't do to count on anything. I've learned that," said her mother, in the same jaded voice.

## CHAPTER VIII

STEVEN had, of course, realized at the outset that it would be impossible to avoid meeting again that not altogether impossible person, Eugene Rudd, as long as the latter abode at Thanksgiving Cove, rambling the countryside, fishing or sketching; or anon shutting himself up for a space in his room at Cap'n Eben Howe's, whence there would issue the sound of his typewriter clicking steadily. That these were his occupations, together with one or two other small facts about him, young Burke divulged innocently enough, the very first time he saw his friend. "Oh, by the way, funny coincidence, there's a man named Rudd staying at the other Cap'n Howe's where your friends the Ballards are — and here I thought there was only one Rudd family in existence!" said Jack; "I remember your telling me once that you were the only Rudds in the telephone-book at home, so that I wouldn't have the least trouble finding you, even if I forgot the address. This Rudd seems to be a kind of a quiet fellow; keeps to himself most of the time, though he's very nice when you meet him. I think he's literary or artistic or something —" And here Jack outlined the other Rudd's activities as above. "He was here when we came, and we saw him every now and then at meal-times, or out somewhere, but it's only recently that we've begun to speak. He looks rather interesting — only you can see that he —" the young fellow went through an expressive pantomime, with a look of vast shrewdness. "Pretty frequently, I should judge. Early and often! They can get it almost anywhere around here, you know. Prohibition's a grand success in this State!" And misinterpreting Steve's expression as the latter began to speak, Jack interrupted him in the same knowing and cocksure style. "Why, yes! Didn't you know it? Any time you feel dry, all you've got to do is to amble out to one of these rattletrap

old abandoned farms, and carelessly drop your flask with a quarter of a dollar or some such matter alongside it on top of a rock or a stump near the old buildings, and gently fade off into some bosky dell, whistling 'Little Brown Jug,' or some other Sunday-School tune. Then presently after you've cruised around awhile, you all at once recollect your flask! You hasten back — and you find it. That's all. Nothing's happened. You haven't seen anybody, or heard anybody, much less talked to anybody! No one has sold you anything, no law has been broken. This Rudd gent goes — "

"Hold up!" said Steve. "He's a relative of mine." It seemed so necessary to announce the fact, that it all at once became perfectly easy and simple, and Steven wondered inwardly why he had not done it sooner, what he had been boggling over. "I started to tell you just now, but you didn't give me a chance," he said. "It's all right, anyhow, Jack."

"Well, I can't take any of it back — only I'm sorry if I was too personal," said the other, regretful but unswerving. "I suppose I might have guessed — or I ought to have found out before I did too much talking. It never occurred to me, somehow!"

"He's a half-brother of my father's."

"As near as that?"

"Yes. But he's lived east nearly all his life, he hasn't been home for years. We children — that is, I — I just barely know him. It happens that way in families sometimes, you know, especially in big families like ours," Steve explained; and whatever his friend thought, he said nothing more. Steve found himself increasingly relieved that he had come out plainly and acknowledged the connection; he had an intuition that Eugene, on his side, would never so much as hint at it.

A few days later, the expected, for once happened. That is, driving over to the Cove with an outfit of net and stakes and odd rackets picked up around the house, for the makeshift tennis-court which the young people proposed to set up on a level spot — one of the few thereabouts — which they had discovered and pre-empted, he found the other

Rudd with Francie at a table in the summer-house, both of them up to their knees in General Burke's memoirs, engrossed in making notes, copying or comparing passages, docketing this, laying aside that. Eugene looked up, and then got up and shook hands, saying: "Oh, Steven!" and Steve himself said: "Oh — er — hello!" and the momentous occasion was all over! From that moment he magically ceased to feel the slightest embarrassment about Eugene Rudd or his company.

"He's helping me," Frances said. "Everything was in such a muddle, and I went at it without any system. It's a little hard, anyway, all by oneself."

"I've done a great deal of this sort of work, as it happens," said Eugene. "And she lets me smoke." In fact he had his short black pipe, a villainous-smelling utensil, though probably not much worse than Major Burke's or Jack's to which Francie was pretty well inured; and in other respects, as Steve noted, he had doubtless, in honor of the young lady, assumed a much more formal toilette than that of their first meeting, to wit, a shabby business suit and a negligé shirt with the fringe imperfectly pared from the cuffs — but it was clean. Eugene himself was meticulously clean, and there was something in the movement of his lean browned hands as they went competently through the masses of papers that reminded the young man bafflingly of his father. "All in this batch are of no importance, Miss Burke," said Eugene authoritatively, with the pipe in the corner of his mouth, jotting down a memorandum on the outside of the packet. "Now I've sifted out all of J. Vardaman's letters and got them arranged in chronological order, tandem, at length, seriatim, in sequence, — *one* after another — the last thing I worked on was a thesaurus — the scent of it clings 'round me still! J. Vardaman deserves consideration. Better put his letters with his journal." And with some further practical recommendations, he presently took himself off, leaving the young people to themselves, yet not too pointedly.

Indeed, as the days went on and the little colony of Steve's friends at the Cove saw more and more of this other Rudd, it developed that he had a knack of never being in the

way, of not outstaying a welcome, and of making himself useful without being officious; they all liked him. The men, and perhaps some of the women were quite aware of his weakness, but — "He never shows up except when he's sober, anyhow. As long as he sticks to that, there's no harm done," Steven decided. He himself felt that their acquaintance had reached a stage where he could say to the older man, a little lamely, it is true, but without fear of being either foolish or offensive: "If you don't mind, I wish you'd tell me what I'm to call you. I can't keep on *you*-ing you forever. It's ridiculous, but — I don't know — there doesn't seem to be any — "

He did not need to go any farther, for a look of comprehension, at once amused and concerned, had already appeared on the other's face. "Why, of *course!* I ought to have thought of that!" ejaculated Eugene. "You couldn't call me — " He halted with an involuntary smile, so that Steven guessed he was passing in review the grotesque alternatives that had occurred to himself. "Better just say 'Eugene,' hadn't you?" he suggested finally.

So "Eugene" it became; and it seemed to Steven that this black sheep had handled the question with a humane tact that was characteristic of him. Taken with other amiable characteristics, it justified the young man's liking, which had at first somehow savored of disloyalty to his father, or to some rather vague entity, the family or the firm of Rudd, which had cast out Eugene, doubtless for good and sufficient reason. Steve sometimes wondered what the exact circumstances of the casting-out had been; if there had been hard words, a scene. At any rate, he said to himself, they had all behaved like gentlemen since — no backbiting, no public laundering of soiled linen in the courts or out, a decent and self-respecting reticence on each side, an especial care not to prejudice the youngsters of his own generation; not from his father, not from his Uncle Elihu, had Steve learned that their half-brother was a drunken scalawag; and had Eugene possessed an equally damaging secret about the other two, Steven believed he would have been equally scrupulous.

"Let's see now, jest what kin *air* you and this here young

feller?" Cap'n Eben, who had a Yankee thirst for information, asked them one day; he meditatively moved a small light-blue eye, exhibiting true sailor-like keenness of vision, from one to the other. "You air Mr. Rudd's son over to the Harbor — the one that's got the big place near there — you're his boy, ain't ye?" he said, fixing on Steven. "Ye don't favor your pa as much as him, though." Here the captain jerked his head towards Eugene. "How close kin air ye, if it's a fair question?"

Steven hesitated, taken aback; but before the pause could assume a significance, Eugene answered, with a kind of mock gravity which disposed of the matter in the best possible fashion: "Cap'n Howe, you'll have to figure it out for yourself, it oughtn't to be any trick at all for a man that can take a ship's position. His grandfather was my father."

"Hey?" said the captain nasally.

"His grandfather was my father. The old gentleman was left a widower rather late in life, when the children were all grown up. He married a second time. Hope triumphs over experience!" said Eugene, airily sententious; and that made the ex-seaman (who was a widower himself) laugh.

"Well, they do say there's no fool like an old fool," he remarked — whereat Eugene, after a moment, laughed heartily too. Captain Howe left them, his curiosity fully satisfied. They sat for a while in silence.

"I didn't know what to say," Steve confessed at length.

"It *was* awkward."

"Oh, of course, the only thing to do was what you did. Family history — explanations — one doesn't want to go into all that with strangers, but —" the younger man blurted out. "This time it — it —"

"It couldn't be helped," said Eugene. "Quite so. After all, it's not of so much importance to the rest of the world as we think. Maybe you're inclined to take it too seriously," he added kindly. And after another silence: "I remember how my poor mother used to worry over things that in the long run didn't matter — or couldn't be helped, anyhow —" he said, puffing at his pipe, staring straight ahead absently. "She taught me, with Heaven knows what pains, to say 'Brother Elihu,' 'Brother Lawson'" — Eugene reiterated

the forms of address with a grimace of wry mirth; " '*Brother Lawson,' 'Brother Elihu'!* You may imagine how much they relished it. She meant well. She just didn't *know.* She was like any other woman, incapable of letting well enough or ill enough alone. Always trying to tinker up the hopeless situation. She never understood why 'Brother Lawson' " — he grimaced again — " '*Brother Lawson'* didn't like me — "

Steven made some inarticulate sound of protest, but the other overrode it, shaking his head with a philosophical smile. " Why, your father *couldn't* like me, Steven," he said reasonably. " Put it to yourself! As soon as I got to be old enough, *I* understood. Well — ! " He raised one shoulder, shrugging the whole unhappy history away. " Are you in the office? " he asked suddenly.

Steven laughed. " Yes. This summer I was supposed to be in charge! However, I'm not under any illusions about my usefulness. I'm just learning."

" But you like it? " pursued the other, eyeing him.

" Oh, yes. I don't know that I've got a great turn for it, like father. Everybody says he was a wonder. But I like it. Anyway there has to be a Rudd in the business, you know," said the young man, reciting the doctrine in which he had been brought up, which so far he had not dreamed of doubting or denying; on the contrary he was not a little proud of the inheritance, and ambitious to make a good showing under responsibility.

After this he rather expected further intimacies from Eugene, and was not quite sure whether he cared about them; but, as it turned out, Master Steven might have spared his anxiety. The next time they met he found himself on the same agreeably impersonal footing with the outlawed Rudd as before — the same footing that Eugene maintained with everybody. Once or twice he went fishing with them; and once or twice he had Jack and Steve up in his room. It was a bare little room up the attic stairs under the roof, with a cot-bed, a handglass hanging to a nail with a shelf underneath it by way of dressing-table, and Eugene's manuscripts and proof-sheets heaped on the floor in a corner alongside his broken old valise. He was compiling some

sort of text-book, hack-work for a New York publishing-house, the kind at which apparently he made his living; the young men speculated as to how much he was paid. Not a princely sum, as was very evident; Lawson Rudd's butler would probably have disdained it; yet such is the glamour enveloping the trade of letters that both of them secretly envied this humble practitioner.

"Mr. Cook said he did very good work," Steven told Mary. "I daresay there're dozens and dozens of them that 'do good work,' though, and barely get along on it. We had fellows in my class that we all thought were world-beaters at writing — and they thought so themselves. They were all going into literary work when they got through college, and we fully expected one or another of them would make the Nobel Prize in a year or so! Well, out of all those men, how many do you think have made good? Just one, and he hasn't taken down any prizes yet. He's a reporter on a newspaper, and he has to work his head off to hold the job, at that!"

"I thought you used to write," Mary said.

"Oh, I had the bug for a while like all the rest. Everybody is pretty sure to think he can write; it looks like such a cinch," said Steven, laughing though he colored. "That year I was travelling around on the other side I had a good deal of time and I thought I'd try it — see if I couldn't sell something, you know. Nothing doing!"

"Oh, you couldn't have kept on long enough. They say everybody always has a terribly hard time getting started, before they make a reputation."

"Yes — but I don't believe it's ever easy, reputation or no reputation," Steve opined sagely. "I showed some of the things to Eugene. He didn't say much. I suppose he didn't like to discourage me, and couldn't reconcile it with his conscience to *en*courage me, so he just temporized. Praised it with faint damns, as you might say."

"Well, there're lots of things you can do besides writing. I wish I could do something," said Mary dispiritedly. "I can't do anything. Anything worth while, that is."

They were sitting on the end of Luther Rodman's pier, where the Boothbay excursion-boats stopped Mondays and

Thursdays, waiting for the moon to rise. Behind them loomed Luther Rodman's warehouse, buttressed with barrels of a famous oil company's product — those blue barrels familiar to the view at every port of call the world over; the aroma of them, mingled with those of tar and fish and salt water and ham frying for somebody's late supper hung all around; below them boats lolled on the incoming tide; to right and left there was a long curve of broken and rocky shore; and at the rim of the horizon the light on Saddler's Shoal went and returned in ordered revolutions. Mary had a lame chair backed against a post, her feet propped on a coil of rope; and Steve sat on the edge of the platform, one leg swinging over the void, his arms hugging the other knee. It was a sufficiently romantic hour, but the young people, contrary to precedent, had not drifted into any sort of sentimentalities; for that matter the fashions, even in lovers' talk, have radically altered of recent years, and sweet nothings, we understand, are now completely out of date! If Steven's thoughts had wandered into such personalities as that Mary Ballard's feet were the smallest he ever saw and that they looked very cute in her well-worn canvas sneakers perched beside each other on the rope like a pair of ragged little birds — if the young gentleman had been occupied with this and other discoveries, he kept them to himself, in the belief that Mary, in common with all the girls whom he really liked, did not care for that style of talk. Besides, of late he had noticed a restlessness, a kind of absent constraint in her manner suggesting that she had something on her mind — something that left no room for soft speeches. Steve guessed what it was with a wrench of pity, a purely masculine desire to protect, to be of service. It was money that was worrying her — or rather the lack of money, he thought, painfully conscious of his own helplessness. He could do nothing; he must not even seem to suspect what was the matter. Once he actually thought of going to George Stillman and putting a word in his ear; but Steve's saner judgment recoiled from that piece of benevolent meddling. It was no business of his to tell George to take care of his own aunt, his own cousin — no, not even when all signs pointed to George as an imminent brother-in-

law. Steven saw the two women bound hand and foot by conventions, absolutely without recourse. A man might go and pawn his watch, he might borrow of another man, he might even stand off the landlord and the laundry-bill, Steve said to himself seriously enough, but these were women, ladies, his own class. And, for the thousandth time, it was a shame! The troubled note in the girl's last words gave him another twinge.

"Oh, you could do anything you tried!" he said warmly.

"No. Nowadays you have to know how — you have to be trained in some specialty, or you can't get anywhere. You can't just take things up. They want people with college-degrees for everything — and I've never been to school in one place long enough to get an education, let alone degrees and things! Look at Francie Burke, how hard she works, and she's *clever!* I never could do anything like that, not if I tried forever," said Mary wistfully; "I'm not bright enough. Mother could — or she could have when she was my age. Mother could learn anything. Those books on architecture and all that sort of artistic stuff that Francie has to study, why, Mother likes to pick them up and read them, just as if they were novels!" said Mary with a rather touching pride and wonder. "I can't get interested in them. I haven't got enough sense."

Steven found himself welling over with a compassion which he dared not show; and otherwise without a word to answer this naïve self-arraignment, whether in sympathy or rebuttal. In the end he was reduced to retorting violently: "Oh, stuff!" and, strange to say, the wisdom of Solomon could have achieved no utterance more comforting. Mary swallowed hard, and changed the subject.

"I like the Burkes awfully well, Steve."

"Yes, I thought you would. Jack was my friend, to begin with; I didn't know the others at all, but one could tell by him what they would be like."

"They're so straight-out and — and sincere, I suppose I mean," said Mary, knotting her brows with the effort to find the right word. "They seem to be just themselves. I don't believe they ever think of doing anything just because other people do it. Mother says people who make a point of being

different from everybody else, generally contrive to be simply rude. She says it's almost always just a cheap trick to get yourself talked about."

"Well, the Burkes aren't crazy to be talked about, I know that," Steve interposed vigorously. "Imagine Major Burke doing anything for effect! You can't. You simply *can't!*"

"Oh no! But people *do,* you know, Steve. I met a woman in New York last winter that everybody said had a press-agent. She was one of the rich-overnight kind — loads of money, and perfectly determined to *get in,* you know. They said she was spending a fortune, giving perfectly huge amounts to charities, and having photographs of herself and her town-house and her country-house, and her prize Boston bull and all that sort of stuff constantly in the smart magazines, and notices of every step she took, and everything she did — the same way they boom actresses. And she was getting in, too! Everybody laughed at her, but they were beginning to recognize her and invite her and accept her invitations, just the same. Mother said she had managed wonderfully well — all except the charities. The climbers almost invariably overdo that part, she says. Mother has seen a lot," Mary ended pensively.

"A person does, of course, that's been going around in society as long as she has. But, Mary, *I* don't think it's so rotten, after all," the young man argued. "Most people just want to have a good time, and I suppose their idea of a good time is like that woman's. If it makes her happy to be prominent socially, why, there's no harm in it."

"Yes, but she isn't happy. She's worried to a frazzle the whole time for fear she can't stay *in,*" said Mary with considerable acuteness. "And Mother says those people are in daily and hourly terror of some unpresentable relative turning up, or some friend who used to know them when they didn't have anything. Anyhow I'm not talking about society being rotten, Steve, I'm just saying I'd like people to stop pretending. I'd like everybody to do what he liked because he liked it, and not because everybody else did it. I'd like to be *real* myself. I feel all the time as if I were two girls, the one that everybody else knows, and the one *I* know. I don't believe Francie Burke ever felt that way about herself for one minute."

"You'd find she has, if you asked her. Nobody is the same on top that he is underneath," said Steven.

They talked on for a while in this grave, analytical strain, quite forgetting the moon which had been up for an hour before Mary — very likely with the whispered opinions of "everybody" formidably menacing her — announced, jumping up, that it was time to go in. Even then, according to Steve, there was no need of hurry, so they loitered along the shore road, though the night was growing cold, still trying to settle the riddle of human character in its relation to human behavior, with the preposterous and touching certainty of youth that there must be some solution, some explanation of the monstrous inconsistencies did they but search long enough and earnestly enough. Undoubtedly most of the time they were repeating catch-words and catch-phrases; but they thought they were thinking. In fact, Mary had just divulged the weighty and novel information that there were moments when her mind seemed to work and move like a muscle, now stiff and slow, now with unexampled ease, speed and accuracy; and Steven was quoting as nearly as he could recollect it, a passage from one of his professors at college to the effect that it made scarcely any difference how much or how little mind you had, provided you always kept it "on the job" — they had just reached this interesting point when, turning an elbow of granite cliff where the path dropped abruptly almost to the water's edge, they saw a man sprawled out amongst the rocks and sea-weed and driftwood farther out, fast asleep — or insensible from a fall perhaps, as they both conjectured the next minute, in some alarm. It was no place for a nap, and besides the position of his body was somehow not that of ordinary slumber; it was too loose, too jointless, the arms and legs flung abroad; his hat lay a few feet away. The two young people stood an instant, appalled. Then Steven interposed as the girl made a movement.

"You wait here a minute," he commanded. "I'll see what's the matter first."

She obeyed, with an involuntary recoil, recognizing that his fear was the same as her own. "I hope he isn't — !" she ejaculated.

Steve scrambled over the rocks. Coming nearer, he caught with inordinate relief a sound of thick and heavy breathing; the man was still alive, anyhow. Nearer yet, he caught something else — a whiff of something that, alas, was not the clean sea-air; a hideous possibility flashed through his mind, and became a certainty even as it passed. He went close and bent over the prostrate body; he took hold of it by the shoulder; it stirred and muttered incoherently. Dead, forsooth! Steven could have wished him dead in good earnest; instead, here he lay, a log — a hog, the young man thought in disgust and anger.

"Is he hurt? Badly?" Mary called. "He spoke then, didn't he?" She started towards them.

Steven shouted at her in stark panic. "Don't! *Don't!* You can't do anything. Stay there! Stay where you are!" he implored. "He's all right — there's nothing the matter. I can take care of him. Go on home! Don't, Mary! Please don't! Please go away — !"

But she had reached them. She stooped over and looked close, and said "*Oh!*"

Steve felt as if he were one furnace of shame from head to foot; had she been another man, the adventure would have been sufficiently distasteful, but a girl — a girl he knew — Mary Ballard — it was sacrilege for her to look upon such a thing. He wanted to snatch her away from the pollution, he wanted to fall on his knees and beg her forgiveness for the whole race of men and drunkards — and he could only say wretchedly: "He's — he's sick!"

"No, he isn't, Steven," said the girl composedly. "I know what's the matter with him. We'll have to get him home. He can't lie out here in the cold — "

"Mary, if you'll just go on — if you'll just go away — "

"You can't do it by yourself, Steve. It takes two to handle them when they're this bad — "

"I'll run back and get some one. Mary, *please!* This isn't any job for a girl. It's — it's horrible — !"

"Yes, it's horrible — but it's got to be done," said Mary, silencing him with a hand. She spoke rapidly with a clear-headed decision drawn from some unguessed reserve of practical knowledge, or sheer courage and common-sense. "You

won't have time to get anybody; the tide will be up here before you can go and get back. And anyhow it would make a lot of talk all over this little place, and you can't have that. Cap'n Howe might feel that he'd have to turn him out; or we might get talked about ourselves. You don't know what might happen. I'm pretty strong, and we can drag him between us, if he can't stand up. I think he can. They generally can if you make them try." And with this final bit of uncanny wisdom, she stooped again, and shook the sleeper's arm experimentally. "Mr. Rudd! Mr. Rudd!" said Mary, jogging him to and fro. "Wake up!"

Eugene opened his eyes and rolled them at her stupidly, uttering an inarticulate noise like an animal.

"Get up!" said Mary sharply. "You can, you know. Get up!"

She appeared to be absolutely unafraid, and stranger still, unrepelled! It was astounding, if Steven had had room for astonishment, but the needs of the moment absorbed all his energies. He got hold of Eugene by the other arm, and together they hoisted him upon his feet.

It was about a quarter of a mile to Cap'n Eben's house. As the young woman had judged, Eugene, though he could not have kept his balance without their support, could stagger, roll, reel along somehow, with it. They did not have a great deal of trouble with him, mainly because he was too far gone to protest effectively. Less drunk, he might be very ugly, Steven suspected, arguing from some few experiences with drunken men. He was thankful on Mary's account — though it seemed likely that she would have been able to cope with the brutal phases of intoxication, too; she displayed, as they went along, so ghastly a familiarity with the tactics of the situation! Luckily they met no one; the lights were all out in the cottages, and it was too cold for strolling. Yet the quarter of a mile lengthened to leagues; it took hours, years, an eternity, and the last part of the journey was the worst, the path being so steep, the stairs steeper, and the necessity for caution weighing heavily on both young people. As it was, Steven wondered that the whole house did not rouse; the noise of their entrance, and of their laborious, shuffling, shoving progress to the first landing seemed to him fairly to shake the universe.

" I'd better take him from this on, don't you think? " he whispered to the girl. " It's only one more flight, and if anyone sees us, they'll just see *me* — "

She nodded, relinquishing her hold. An oil-lamp, with a tin reflector behind it, nailed on high, lighted the narrow passage, and Steven saw a door at the other end of it, shut quickly and soundlessly; Mary sped towards it; and even in the act of taking a fresh grip and propping Eugene against the wall, it came to Steve with a dart of apprehension, a dart of relief, that that was the Ballards' own door. Her mother must have waked, or perhaps was on the watch anyhow; and if there was a woman on earth who could be trusted both to lie discreetly and to hold her tongue discreetly, it was Mrs. Ballard. He was bracing himself for the struggle up the next flight to where the next tin pharos burned dimly, when Cap'n Eben came padding out, a weird, goateed figure in night-shirt and pantaloons, and expressed himself in a nasal expletive — subdued in tone, however — at sight of them.

" Found him down on the beach," said Steven.

The captain contributed prompt and efficient assistance. " Brung him here just yourself? " he queried, not without approval. " I want to know! "

## CHAPTER IX

STEVEN went back to his car, which had been left in front of the other Captain Howe's gate, and drove off home in a more or less clouded mood. It should have been midnight by the way he felt, but was actually about ten o'clock — surely not a disreputable hour for a young man and woman to have been out together; but Steve recognized the prudence of Mary's counsel. She was right; the whole thing had to be kept as quiet as possible, more for their own sake than for that poor miserable souse of a Eugene, who had very little to lose in the way of reputation. But what a girl! To think, to speak, to act so marvellously to the purpose in an emergency that must have been for her absolutely without precedent! Even Edith, who represented to her brother all that was most forcible in the feminine character, could not have bettered the performance. In spite of that, Mary's valiant services must go without praise, without thanks, above all from the poor creature they had benefited. For it was Steven's humane hope that Eugene, when he came to himself, would not remember anything distinctly about last night; it must have happened to him again and again to have been picked up and escorted home by some Samaritan Tom, Dick or Harry, so that circumstance by itself could not deeply humiliate him; but Heaven forbid that he should ever know of Mary's share on this last occasion. It was bad enough for Steven himself to have to know it. The young man reflected with a grim humor that a day-long sermon on Temperance would not have affected him so powerfully; he was not given to fleshly indulgences, being by nature of a cleanly habit in mind and body; but now he felt as if he would never want a drink of anything stronger than water the rest of his life! He found, however, that his anger with Eugene had faded to a kind of impatient pity. Here was a man of brains and talents, an educated man

who in early life had had every possible chance given him, a man moreover of fine instincts, humor, spirit, — above the average, in short — and he must go and throw himself away, debase himself to the level of the dullest degenerate that ever came out of the slums. It was such a waste — such an irreparable waste and loss.

He was just turning in between the ivy-bound gate-posts which had been copied, brick by brick, from those at the entrance to an old Virginia estate — everything about the place exhibited Lawson's thoroughness, being "Colonial" *en suite,* down to the very hinges on the doors — when he saw two other headlights glancing around the curves of the drive at a rather reckless rate of speed, and prudently checked up a little, drawing to one side. It was George, he guessed, coming away from an evening with Hester; and to be sure, as the lights drew near, the driver suddenly slowed down in his turn, and leaned aside from the wheel, shouting.

"Hello! That you, Steve?"

"Hello!" Steven shouted back, preparing to pass. But George brought his big machine to a standstill in the middle of the road, and shut off the power, and jumped out; he came over buoyantly.

"Hey? Anything the matter?" said Steven, continuing to forge ahead by inches.

"Shut down your engine, you darned lobster!" said the other young man, affectionately. "Been over to see Mary? Well, Steve, I've beat you to it!" His face was indistinguishable in the dark, but his voice and whole figure unmistakably radiated content, happiness, a victorious excitement. "Shut off, I tell you!"

"What's that? Beat me to *what?*" said Steven, complying.

"To the license, you!" All at once George's wild exhilaration gave way to some deeper feeling. His voice shook. "She — she said she would — you know? To-night. Oh, Steve — !" he blurted out, "I'm — I can't hold in — I feel so — so — why, I never knew what it was to be happy before!"

Steven behaved appropriately. "Why, George, you don't tell me! Why, that's great!" he said, and shook George's

hand, and thumped him on the back, exaggerating his cordiality a little maybe, touched, a trifle amused. In the brother's eyes, though he was fond enough of Hester, all this jubilation over winning her was somewhat out of proportion. If it had been Edith, now —! But Steven liked George, and if *he* was satisfied, that was the main thing.

He was much more than satisfied; he was tremulously exultant, deprecatory, wondering at his good luck. "Steve, you know I can hardly believe it. She's such a glorious girl — she — she — "

"Sure!" said Steve, pumping his hand up and down. "You — you're all right, too, George. Everybody in our family will be pleased," he assured him awkwardly; but George scarcely heard.

"I can't believe it," he repeated. "A girl like Hester — hang it, you know, Steve, a man isn't fit — *no* man deserves it — I know *I* don't deserve it anyhow. I — I feel as if I'd give a year out of my life to — to wipe the slate clean, you know — to be good enough, you know — "

"Aw, g'wan, George!" said Steve in amiable raillery, shrinking like any other young man, from these intimacies, mortally afraid of further revelations, though they might be entertaining enough from anybody but a prospective brother-in-law. "When is it to be?"

"She wouldn't say," sighed George, a cloud briefly shadowing his ecstasy. "She made me promise not to tease her about it. She can't bear to leave your father and mother, you know; she's the only girl they have left now. She can't make up her mind to it. But we're engaged, anyhow. Oh, Steve, she's the most wonderful girl! Of course you're her brother; *you* know what she is!"

"Yes. Yes, indeed I do!" Steven agreed warmly —thinking meanwhile that Hester's devotion to her father and mother was truly wonderful, about the most wonderful and novel thing he ever expected to witness! He said to himself reprovingly that Hester was all right — he did not mean to be cynical — she wasn't quite so perfect as George thought, that was all. Supposing some fellow came around raving this way to George over his sister Clara? Wouldn't George feel just about as he, Steven, felt now?

"Well, see you to-morrow — " said George, going back to his own car; "unless you go over to the Cove, as usual." He got in and slammed the door, elevating his voice again, as both automobiles began to move. "Say, Steve, why don't you and Mary speed up a little? Come on in, the water's fine!"

For once, however, Steven did not go to Thanksgiving Cove; he might have beguiled himself with the argument that Eugene needed looking after, if it had not been sadly evident that the latter would be in no condition to receive visitors, even on errands of mercy, for another thirty-six hours, at the shortest; besides which, young Mr. Rudd had something else on his mind, something that he considered ought to be attended to before any more Cove journeyings. Instead, therefore, of ordering out his car at the customary hour next morning, he went in search of the senior Rudd, who, they told him, would probably be among the green-houses. And there, sure enough, Steve found him, in an old suit of clothes, with earth-stained hands, and a fine, full-bodied perfume of fertilizer clinging about his boots, whistling "*Il mio tesoro,*" while he happily sorted bulbs, of which a tremendous consignment for the fall planting had just arrived. The place was pleasantly quiet except for this low whistle, which was singularly sweet, penetrating and true. They had cleared a potting-bench for the work, mounding it where the soil had been, with brown paper bags of all the tulips, jonquils and crocus in the world, it seemed to Steven. At the other end of the bench, Angus McCrae sorted diligently, standing and resting his left leg, the one that was too short, on a coil of hose, and keeping his perfect side towards Mr. Rudd. Apart from the leg, in spite of which he handled himself surprisingly well, Angus was a well-built, sturdy young man; his gravity and taciturnity were probably native, too, uninfluenced by the deformity, for there was no hint of melancholy about him. On the contrary, Lawson often asserted that he was the best of companions without ever opening his mouth. So now he worked in tranquillizing silence as always. There was no artificial heat in this glass-house, nevertheless the air felt faintly warmer than outside; it was flavored with those

odors of growth and decay about which there is something pastoral and wholesome.

Steven's father looked up, and gave him a nod of greeting, and went on sorting; Steven leaned against the jamb of the door, and watched them for a few minutes. "What a lot of plants!" he said at length.

"Going to naturalize these narcissus — plant big groups, regular sheets, hundreds in a bunch, here and there in those little open places through the woods. You must have noticed every now and then there's an opening like a little pocket of sunshine — an ideal exposure!" said his father enthusiastically; he was like a boy with his bulbs and his plans and the manure on his boots. "I thought we ought to have more of these earliest flowers — 'Daffodils that come before the swallow dares,'" he quoted, handling them fondly: "Hey, young gentleman, you can't tell me what that's from!"

"Yes, I can. I've taken a shot at writing a play myself; it's from 'Winter's Tale,'" retorted Steven.

"Why, you *do* know something after all!" Lawson ejaculated in mock surprise. "Shakespeare says some beautiful things about flowers. All those old Elizabethans had ideas about gardening. I remember once thinking that I'd have a garden such as Bacon describes in one of the essays, but he had it laid out with some fantastic scheme of arbors with bird-cages in 'em, that I decided wouldn't be very attractive. These tulips are mostly for a Dutch garden I'm starting. My own design, Steve. I'm going to make it like those I've seen in the old country — in Holland — tulip-land itself. There'll be vegetables and flowers all mixed in together; they don't waste any space over there, you know. If there isn't room for something useful, they put in something beautiful, or the other way around; but every inch must be made to yield. Now for instance, onion-beds divided off with ribbon plantings of pansies, say; and potatoes with clove-pinks. I think I'll have a whitewashed brick wall enclosing the whole business, with dwarf peach-trees trained on it, and in front good-sized beds of iris. One ought to have a great many pot-herbs in such a garden, too — thyme and parsley; and of course very bright brick-red geraniums —" he paused, gazing speculatively.

"You'd have made a bully farmer if you'd ever had to work that way, Dad," said the young man, not without wonder.

"*You* wouldn't!" Lawson said, laughing. "You ought to try and get interested in it, Steven. Every extra thing you get interested in, is an asset for your old age. When you can't work any more, you'll at least know a variety of ways of playing."

"But you always did like farming. You didn't have to try. Suppose I suggested to you to take up the study of geometry for a recreation!"

"You'd be the first man that ever called it that!" his father retorted. He began to segregate the bags again, striking into "*Angels ever bright and fair,*" in a louder whistle. The high notes soared pure and ringing as if from a flute.

"I can't whistle either," said Steven, with an envy that was not entirely pretended; his admiration for his father, which was a real and deep feeling, extending even to Lawson's rather unusual whistle, always melodious and true.

"No, you can't! And, Steven, that's one thing I don't recommend you to try," Lawson said solemnly. "I've heard you! '*Take me . . . take me . . . take, oh take me to your care!*'" He halted abruptly. "You wanted to see me about something, Steve?"

"Why, yes, I —"

"Very well, I'm coming." Mr. Rudd wiped his hands on a piece of burlap, and strolled toward the door. "We can take a walk around the garden, and look at everything. Smoke?"

"No, thanks," said Steven, a little nervously, finding all at once that it was going to be more difficult than he had thought to open up the two subjects he had in mind. Perhaps his father, who was quick-witted and no second-rate judge of men, had some inkling of the younger man's trouble; he lit a cigarette himself and continued the sauntering in a receptive silence.

"I saw George last night," said Steven finally, fishing for a good lead. "I suppose he'd spoken to you?"

"Oh yes. Of course I didn't raise any objection. I don't

know a man that I'd like better to see a daughter of mine married to than George."

"I told him all our family would be pleased. He was fairly running over with joy. Had to stop me at the gate to tell me! It was funny, but you — you liked him for it just the same, somehow." Here Steven suddenly made up his mind to the first plunge. "I was coming home from Thanksgiving Cove. Dad, did you know that Eugene was staying there?"

"Hey? Eugene?" said Mr. Rudd, stopping short. "No, I didn't. I thought he said Clam Beach. But it's of no consequence to me where he stays, anyhow. I haven't thought about him since that time we met him," said Lawson, resuming the walk. "Why, what of it?"

"Nothing. Only I thought you might not know. And I've been going over there right along, and seeing him almost every day."

"Yes?"

"Well, Dad, I — I like him. Everybody over there likes him. If it wasn't for that — that one thing, you know, he'd be all right."

"Eugene's a bright man," said the elder Rudd, in a manner of complete detachment.

"It seems an awful pity his lushing that way. It must have been pretty trying for you and Uncle El. Only he was just a young fellow then, wasn't he? It couldn't have been quite so bad as it is now."

"It gave promise of growing worse," said Lawson, after a short silence. "I've not seen him more than half a dozen times since. As you say, it's a great pity."

"The doctors say that drink's a disease, sometimes."

His father uttered a slight grunt which might have meant anything, and Steve went on: "Well, all I wanted to say was that I — I was beginning to be sorry for him, and to think that maybe you and Uncle Elihu might have been unnecessarily harsh," he confessed, reddening and stammering but honest — "when you — turned him out, you know — ?"

"Your uncle and I didn't turn Eugene out, Steven," said his father, still impersonally; "he went of his own accord."

"Oh! Well, of course, I only guessed at the circumstan-

ces — I simply meant when he left home. I was beginning to feel rather mushy and sympathetic — till I saw him drunk!" Steven shook his head. "I understand now. You couldn't put up with that sort of thing. Likely to happen any time! I daresay he realized it himself, since he left you of himself."

After another short pause, Mr. Rudd said, "We acted to the best of our judgment."

They walked along, Steven in some relief and with a family pride reinforced by this small scene. He himself had done an unnecessary thing, maybe, but at any rate, a decent and straightforward thing; and his father had rigidly adhered to the Rudd code of *noblesse oblige* — though not more rigidly than the weakling, Eugene; not a word to the other's prejudice, a judge-for-yourself reticence.

Two men with a horse and cart-load of loose earth came around a bend towards them, shepherded by the elder McCrae, who halted with a sort of military salute at sight of the master of the place. The men, who were Italians, swarthy, good-natured looking pirates, uncovered civilly, smiling with glistening teeth. All the work-people about the estate liked and respected the owner; they did not know his son so well, and stared rather hard at the young fellow.

"That's some dirt for the tulip-garden, I expect," said Lawson. "It's going to be over here to the right." He went up to the wagon, and ploughed out a handful of the soft, brown soil, and held it to his nose, sniffing luxuriously. "I like the smell of good earth," he explained, laughing to behold Steven's amazement at the spectacle; "don't you, McCrae?"

"It's what we're a' made oot of, Mr. Rudd," said the Scot gravely and with admirable caution. Besides being an expert gardener, he was a man of marked character, tenacious of his opinions, prompt in judgment and action — but no one had ever known McCrae to commit himself in speech! Lawson described these traits to Steven as they passed and got out of hearing, with immense relish.

"Very funny! He's absolutely honest, and has been in charge here fifteen years. All that time he's never left a penny unaccounted for, or failed in a single one of his responsibilities — and I don't believe he's ever said 'Yes' or 'No' downright to anything! That's another thing about

gardening, Steve; there's nothing like it for getting you acquainted with men — studying human nature."

"I thought any kind of business necessitated that."

"Not to the same degree — that is — well, it's different, anyhow," said his father with a half laugh, realizing that his hobby was not to be effectively backed up by such arguments. "That boy Angus — he's a sample of what gardening does for a man — "

"Seems to me you're going off on another tack, Dad."

"To be sure I am! I say that boy Angus couldn't do anything else nearly so well, and there isn't anything else that would have developed him so much. He's going to take the engineering course at Boston Tech, and make an all-around landscape-architect of himself; he's had nearly all the practical experience necessary."

"Fine!"

"Yes, isn't it?" said Lawson, omitting to mention that his own liberality had made the undertaking possible for young McCrae. "Angus has a real love for beauty. Have you noticed that whenever you happen to run across him he always contrives to keep his good side towards you? That's not vanity; that's just a desire not to be a jarring note, not to introduce anything that would suggest pain or ugliness where everything else is so beautiful."

"Poor fellow!"

"He told me so himself one day in his shy way. We have gotten to be great friends, working together. I — I was very much touched."

"It *is* touching."

They reached a little esplanade, paved with broken flagstones sunk in moss, and walled on the landward side with a bank of late, bright bloom, amongst which here and there the slender, dark spire of a juniper rose, as it were, unbidden, like a somber thought in the midst of gayety. Across the opposite side a weathered stone railing guarded the edge of the cliff. There was a stone bench in the sunshine and they sat down, facing the great, brilliant hollow of the sea and sky. Now was the moment for Steven to begin on that other matter; but all the approaches he had rehearsed over night, incontinently departed from his memory! The most

he could do, conscious all the while that it was only a paltering device to gain time, was to inquire with an inordinate display of interest what was the name of that bush with the pink and white flowers, over there?

"That? Why, that's a plant John Stillman brought back from a trip he made to Norway, one summer," said Mr. Rudd. "It's a — a — well, the name will come to me after a while, probably. He admired it tremendously, and told me he thought about me at once, and made sure to bring enough so that I could have a root, too. Now to my taste, it's not very beautiful or remarkable in any way, but I like it anyhow, on Johnnie's account; it didn't thrive for a while, but McCrae finally got it acclimated. Great triumph; pleased me very much! Why yes — why not, Steve?" he asked, meeting the frank surprise of his son's face. "To have something from a friend's garden, to plant it and see it grow — I think that must be about the least selfish of human pleasures, the most innocent, anyway."

Steven sat dumb. He himself would have cherished a gift in the same way and for the same reason — for the giver's sake, to please him; but this exhibition of sentiment on both sides between two such superlatively unsentimental persons as he had always taken his father and Mr. Stillman to be, was a revelation. It came upon him forcibly that in all his life he had not found out so much about his father as in this last half-hour — had never tried to find out. The older Rudd had indeed ceased to be a remote controller of destinies, a personage of Arabian Nights' resources, of inconceivable powers and activities, inhabiting an unimaginable realm called an office, and visiting the nursery-world at set intervals, like the sun. That awesome individual had given place, at about Steven's freshman year to a bizarre combination of "cranky" old gentleman, public character and private autocrat, with occasional flashes of a rather disturbing insight and humor. Nowadays in his quality of "Dad" Steve felt for him the tolerance which with most children passes for filial affection; as the only other man in the house there existed between them a bond of sex sympathy; but as Lawson Rudd of the Rudd Chemical Company, as the "big man" in "big business," Steve was proud of his father,

vehemently desirous of following him worthily, hitherto at heart uneasy about his ability to do so. This discovery of an unsuspected treasure of gentleness in his senior encouraged him as much as it took him aback. "Why, Edie was right! Father and I are really very much alike!" he thought with a glow of something like pleased vanity. But here was Mr. Stillman, too, who had always seemed not to have an idea or an interest apart from his complicated affairs, revealing a quaintly romantic feeling! Who would have believed it of those two, hard, busy old boys? They were just like himself and, say, Jack Burke; to be sure, it was not quite possible to figure them writing blank verse, or day-dreaming together, or discussing solemn abstractions by the hour, as he and Jack did; they were too old, too slow, prosy and unimaginative, he thought pityingly, but they undoubtedly practised some equivalent form of fellowship. For the moment, Steven found the gulf between the generations bridged. "Dad, I wanted to tell you —" he began without any of those adroit preambles he had studied; and said what he had to say becomingly.

Mr. Rudd repeated it — or rather gave a condensed version of as much as he thought expedient — to his wife that night, standing on the hearth-rug in front of the daintily carved white wood mantel in the lady's fanciful little boudoir, which was all rose-tinted silk upholsterings and rose-flowered chintz, with rosettes, flounces, flutings, painted tables, chiffon lamp-shades and what-not. In the middle of it Mrs. Rudd bloomed like a rose herself — a somewhat full-blown one — in a pink and lace negligé; and Hester came in and sat on the foot of the gilt and ivory *chaise longue*, cuddling Dingbats in her lap, and listening. At the end, the two women exchanged a glance, but they made scarcely any comment and that of a sweetly non-committal nature, until the head of the house had left the room. It was a cardinal principle with both of them never to be anything but softly appealing, acquiescent, and opinionless in the company of a man, even a husband, even a father; agree to every word he uttered — and go your own way afterwards, was their Golden Rule.

"Steve's awfully easy," Hester observed, breaking the

brief silence that followed Mr. Rudd's departure. "I knew she'd get him. She had it all framed up — working on his sympathy and — and chivalry, and all that sort of stuff."

"It wasn't Mary. She couldn't have thought it out for herself. It was her mother; she's always done all the thinking, and then coached Mary. Ellen Ballard always knows exactly what to say, and exactly how to take everybody. She's very clever," said the older lady.

## CHAPTER X

ON arriving at Cap'n Eben Howe's, Steven was informed by the captain himself that both Ballard ladies had gone up to Cap'n Si's to say good-by to the Burke family, who would be leaving next morning at an unearthly hour in order to get the earliest train to Boston. To Steve's expressions of astonishment and regret, he opposed a wooden countenance and the laconic reminder that they were army folks.

"Oh, Major Burke got orders, I suppose?"

"I s'pose he did," echoed the captain, nasally. "Anyways they're packing up." As Steven made ready to go on, he added superfluously; "Mr. Rudd's upstairs. Want I should call him?"

"Why, no, thanks. I'll — I'll be back directly," said Steven embarrassed and annoyed and avoiding Cap'n Eben's remote yet penetrating gaze.

"Wouldn't wonder if he'd be leaving pretty soon, too," the latter remarked. "Not the same time the others do, though. There's a boat from the Harbor at two this aft'noon."

Steven did not know whether this meant that Eugene had been invited to go, or not; it made very little difference, the young man thought sourly, the point was that he was going and that it would be a relief. One such experience as they had had with him was one too many. "Well, I'll be back after a while," he reiterated, and drove off, leaving that ancient mariner, Cap'n Eben, standing at the little white picket fence among the festoons of frost-nipped bitter-sweet, looking after him and stroking his goatee with a dry smile.

The Burkes were too thoroughly seasoned campaigners to make much of any move even as unpremeditated as this, so that Steven found them in no confusion, spite of the open trunks and stacks of clothing, spite even of the corded bundles of the late general's biography with which Frances

and Mary were laboring energetically. Both girls gave him an absently amiable welcome and kept on with their work, in contrast to Jack, who threw open the window upon hearing Steven's car, bellowing out that Fort Whipple was their ultimate destination.

> "'*With me bundle on me shoulther*
> *Sure nobody could be boulder*
> *An' I'm off for Arizony in th' mar-r-nin'!*'"

chanted Jack blithely, abandoning his stevedore duties to execute half a dozen jig-steps in time to the melody, with brilliant precision. "Arizona, that's where it is — darkest Arizona. Don't even know how to get there!" he said.

"Well, *you* don't have to get there, do you?" said Steve, finding a seat on the window-sill; and Jack looked sober for an instant.

"No. I've got to go back to Uncle Jim's office and get busy with the Revised Statutes of the State of Ohio, or some such light literature," said he. "Makes me feel kind of lonesome. Francie will be in New York all winter at her decorating joint. The Burke family is going to be all split up in little splinters."

"You'll be at uncle's, and I'm coming out Christmas, Jackie," Frances called out. "This is ready to nail up now."

"Don't you want to leave it open till you get those other things?" Mary began to say, looking up from a convenient attitude on her knees and heels beside the box; she interrupted herself, flushing as her eyes encountered Steve's.

"Oh, that's so!" Frances stood a moment, pondering, until Jack's brisk advance with the hammer and nails apparently forced her into a decision. "Never mind them. It's all fixed so nicely, and we couldn't get all that extra junk in anyhow. Go ahead, Jack," she commanded; and to Steven: "Would you mind doing something for me? That old diary — don't you remember? A great piling lot of books like exercise-books that that old gentleman, Doctor Vardaman, Grandpa's friend, had written — ?"

A terrific fusillade of blows from Jack on the lid of the packing-box intervened; he and Mary were laughing, kneeling together over it.

"Doctor Vardaman's? Yes, I remember!" cried Steven above the racket. "What about it? There were some letters, too, weren't there?"

More hammering resounded; everybody was laughing and shouting by this time, and Francie shrieked in her turn: "Yes! Mr. Rudd has all of it, the whole business. He took them to read over for me. We all thought there was plenty of time — and now we've got to go off all of a sudden. Could you get them from him?"

Jack's pounding subsided abruptly, perhaps by accident, and he said without looking up, as he set another nail, and aimed at it: "Mr. Rudd's been sick in his room for a day or so, so he doesn't know about our going yet, and we don't exactly like to disturb him. But I don't suppose he'd mind if *you* — ?"

"All right! I'll do it now," said Steve, seizing his hat.

"Oh, I didn't mean right now — any time will do, any time! He could express them to me for that matter. It's only that I oughtn't to leave them lying around — I mean I don't want to burden him with the care — " Francie began to explain anxiously, but Steve had already reached the door. And from that day to this he has never known just how much the Burkes knew of the late calamitous episode, or of the part Mary and he had taken at the close of it. This was getting back to Cap'n Eben's in a little while, sure enough, he thought with a smile; but there was no immediate prospect of seeing Mary by herself, and he might as well get this miserable quarter of an hour — for it was bound to be miserable — with Eugene over; not improbably, it would be their last.

He went up the narrow steps, and knocked, and after a moment, Eugene's voice, which had the quality not to be described yet always recognizable of the drinking man's voice, and this time sounded no worse than usual, bade him come in. The other was standing at the little mirror, shaving, with his back to the door, but as Steven entered turned about, looking bloodshot and haggard and unkempt, with the grizzling stubble pricking out on his chin, with his torn undershirt, with his suspenders trailing and the soiled old trousers wrinkling down around his hips, with the razor in

one hand and a rag of newspaper flecked with dabs of grayish lather where he had been wiping it, in the other. They stood looking at each other a second; then Eugene said in his natural manner without either shame or bravado. "Hello! Shut the door, will you? It makes a pretty sharp draught through here, if you leave it open."

"Oh, all right!" said Steven, lamely echoing him; he shut the door with an excess of carefulness, prolonging the action so as to put off looking at Eugene again, put off speaking to him, if only for an instant. The sensitive young fellow writhed in spirit to see this man for whom he still could not curb his liking, thus dirty and disordered, emerging from a drunken spree in a kennel of a room that smelled obscenely. Why couldn't Eugene be always decent and manly, he who had in him so many of the elements of decency and manliness!

Eugene went on with his shaving. "Sit down, sit down," he said, over his shoulder. "Just tumble anything that's in the way onto the floor. The place is all upset anyhow."

Steven dumbly went and sat down on the abhorrent bed. In the middle of the floor, Eugene's battered valise was spread open, with books and some clothing piled half in and half out — two or three of those frayed collars, a shirt, a string-tie most distressingly stringy; the coat of his blue serge business-suit — he did not appear to own any other — was carefully adjusted over the rounding back of the chair, with a stubbed whisk-broom near at hand, which he had probably been exercising upon its greasily refulgent surfaces, across the shoulders and elsewhere. There were also laid out a pair of tan shoes recently half-soled, together with a round tin box of somebody's *Marvelline Shoe Paste.* Evidently it was as Cap'n Eben had reported; this Arab was about to fold his tent and depart. The sight of his poor wardrobe, his poor efforts to furbish it up, suddenly became to Steven poignantly pitiful. He stared at the things with aching eyes; how lonely Eugene was, he thought with a pang, how un-cared-for! Very likely he had nobody but himself to thank for it; very likely it was all his own fault; but still —! His old slouched hat, its original blackness weathered to a melancholy green where it was not defaced with all sorts of

stains and blotches, lay on top of a square bundle of marble-backed books which Steven might have recognized for the Vardaman manuscript, but he had clean forgotten his errand.

The other looked around from stropping his razor, and following Steven's gloomy stare, said: "I'm packing up. Going this afternoon."

"I know. Captain Howe told me," said Steve, trying to speak as casually. "Can I do anything to help you?"

"Why, yes, if you don't mind. I've got some of that stuff they clean up tan shoes with, but I don't know how to use it. I don't seem to make mine look any better. Have you any idea how? If you'll just show me — ?"

"Sure! Yes! I know how. I've often used it — or something on the same order. All those preparations are a good deal alike," said Steve, voluble, in a queer relief at having something to do, something commonplace to make talk. "Here, let me! I'll fix them for you." He fell to on this plebeian task enthusiastically. He had come filled with the inexpressibly repugnant expectation that he would be obliged, perforce, to deliver some sort of admonition, reproof, Heaven knew what; that there would be a petty scene; Eugene would attempt feeble and futile explanations, or he would be abjectly apologetic, or perhaps merely sullen and unapproachable. Instead, here he was polishing away at Eugene's boots! And here was Eugene himself undisturbed by vain regrets, or recognizing no reason why he should burden Steven with them, methodically scraping his chin, as if he had never done anything to be ashamed of in his life! At the moment he uttered a mild expletive, arresting the razor.

"Cut yourself?" said Steven.

"Yeah. There's a kind of a set-off, you know, under your chin where it joins the rest of you. Hard place to get at."

"I should think you'd use a safety."

"I do as a general thing. But when I'm getting over a time like the other night, you know, I always have a try with the regular razor to find out how steady my hand is, the first thing I do. It's a kind of a gauge," said Eugene with an absolutely defeating simple openness; it was the more de-

feating because though there was nothing showy or artificial about it, it conveyed the certainty that with his habitual facility he guessed exactly at Steven's thought, and with his habitual consideration was trying to make the situation easier for him.

Steven, at any rate, all at once found himself capable of saying without being offensive either in his own eyes, or to the other: "Oh, why don't you cut it out, Eugene? The booze, you know. Why don't you cut it out?"

"I don't want to. I like it," said Eugene tranquilly.

"You could stop if you tried."

"Perhaps. But I'm not going to try. Never mind talking to me, Steve. I know you came here thinking you'd have to. That's a measly job; a person's always afraid he'll be putting on a holier-than-thou pose, and being insupportable, whereas in reality he's only trying to get through with a disagreeable duty the best he can," said Eugene, and smiled to see the species of thankful discomfiture visible on Steven's face. "You hated it, didn't you?" said Eugene; "well, now you've done it, and it's over with!"

In effect, it was over with; there seemed to be nothing further to say — or Steven could think of nothing further! Somehow he could not preach penitence and reform to a sinner who seemed to divine in advance every thought in his head, and to surpass him in sympathy and good feeling. He was glad enough to abandon the effort, to keep on rubbing at the tan shoes which he presently brought to a superb condition of color and polish, while they talked companionably about indifferent things. He took down Eugene's New York address on one of the high-numbered streets towards the east side of the city. "It's a tenement-house, but a model one, mind you!" Eugene assured him, laughing. "The buildings were put up by the Astorbilt Estate especially for the housing of the poor but virtuous. We're all stone, fireproof, with a courtyard for the sake of light and air in the middle of us, and a flat roof where we can hang the wash and also go up and sit hot nights and look at the river and the shipping and the stars. I'm on the first floor — not so desirable as those higher up, but one has one's reasons —" he shrugged. "A policeman from the traffic

squad on Lower Broadway has the apartment across the landing from me. Mrs. Macarty makes the most heavenly doughnuts. Come and see me some time when you're in town." Steve promised that he would, and they parted good friends.

He remembered Doctor Vardaman's diary at the last, and coming downstairs with the parcel under his arm, encountered Mary. Mrs. Burke had sent her home — "Canned me," Mary said with a laugh. "She insisted that I was all tired out, but I'm not. I never get tired." Notwithstanding which disavowal she did look a little pale, a little weary, in an old gray silk jersey suit of Miss Stillman's which was not becoming to her colors and fitted too tight across her round little bust; but a bright spot of red came up in either cheek as the young man looked at her. "I came away, though. I thought perhaps they'd had enough of me, and would like to be to themselves for a while," she added hurriedly.

"Then maybe I'd better not go back there just now," said Steven with a promptness which visibly took Mary aback for no reason at all; she began to stammer some remonstrance which he did not heed. He opened the door into the frigid gloom of the Howe parlor, illuminated by furtive gleams from the nickel-plated trimmings of the stove, and deposited his bundle of books on the horsehair sofa under two vigilant crayon portraits of defunct Howes. "Let's go and walk somewhere," he said; "I want to talk to you."

She lingered an instant, something in her attitude betraying a desperate indecision that yielded suddenly to a desperate decision. "All right!" she said briefly, and struck into step by his side. They walked along in silence past the lines of whitewashed palings, and the dooryards with their ravaged flower-beds, past the bleak church, which nevertheless possessed a wooden belfry designed in lines of admirable quaint stateliness by some New England Christopher Wren a century ago, past a bit of stony common where the school-children were riotously flying kites in the noon recess, and so on up to a jut of headland overlooking the bay. "Let's sit down here," Steven said, speaking for almost the first time since they started.

"All right!" said Mary again; and down they sat forth-

with on a fallen log from behind which a squirrel or some other small animal scurried off with a prodigious disturbance of dried leaves, upon their approach. They sat side by side, but in a prosaic enough posture, with their hands in their pockets, for the wind blew cold, though there was a strong, clear sunshine.

"I don't know what to say to you, Mary — about the other night, you know," said Steven abruptly. "I don't know whether I ought to say anything at all. It was horrible, and I can't get rid of the idea that I'm somehow responsible for him because he belongs to my family — he's another Rudd."

"Oh, that's all nonsense, you don't need to feel anything of the kind. You couldn't help it."

"If it had been somebody else, some other man, I wouldn't mind so much. He doesn't seem to care a great deal himself. That's ironic!"

"Why, he doesn't know about *me?*" asked the girl. "I thought he was too drunk to notice or to remember anything."

Steven glanced at her, startled, recoiling inwardly. There was something indefinably repellent to him in her placid and literal reference to the ugly facts. No girl ought to know anything about such things — or, at least, he thought confusedly, no girl ought to talk about them in this familiar tone. "I don't know how much he remembers. I didn't say anything about you," he told her.

"Of course not," said Mary, nodding her head wisely, again with that appalling manner of experience. "It wouldn't have been any use. And after all, he wasn't so very bad."

"Mary, for Heaven's sake — ! Anybody would think you'd been handling drunks all your life!" the young man burst out, in actual distress. "A girl like you! It's terrible! You're only putting on that air to save my feelings, I suppose, but — "

"Why, no, I'm not, Steven! I'm not putting on anything!" she protested, in obviously genuine surprise, which, the next instant, gave place to some impossible mixture of resentment and resignation. "It's you who are trying to

smooth things over on my account — and Mother's," she said quickly in a sharpened voice. "You needn't, Steve. I know you mean well, pretending to be so shocked, but you oughtn't to have said that about 'handling drunks.' That gives you away; you're overdoing it. Men oughtn't to try that sort of thing; they aren't good at pretending. You ought to take some lessons of Mother — or of me. Only here lately I'm beginning to get tired of the pretending business, myself. It looks to me as if being honest were better in the long run. A person feels more comfortable." And here the complete blankness of Steven's face arrested her; gradually blankness overspread her own. "Why, Steve, why — you didn't *know?* You weren't pretending at all? You really didn't *know?*" she cried out, incomprehensibly.

"I don't know anything, I think. I don't seem to have an atom of sense. I didn't mean to pain you, but I've done it somehow, I can see that," said the young fellow.

Mary slowly withdrew her gaze, fastening it on the horizon. "I thought everybody knew," she said. "I thought you were just clumsily trying to be nice to me. Because of my father, of course. I thought you were pretending you didn't know about him; it seemed to be one of those kindnesses that are really unkind. Are you sure that you never heard about my father, Steve?"

Steven shook his head, staring at her.

"I thought everybody knew," Mary said again. She bent down and gathered a handful of pebbles and began to fling them, one by one, at a tablet-like slab of rock about thirty feet off across the road, with an expert eye and motion. "He used to drink," said Mary, deliberately aiming and taking a shot. "Drank up all Mother's money, and all his own prospects and everything. Drank himself into his grave at last, which was a good thing — the only good thing he ever did. Don't be horrified, Steve. It's the truth. I'm tired of pretending."

She went on tossing pebbles, and telling Steven the simple, wretched tale. She had begun to know about the late Ballard's failing when she was ten or eleven years old; her mother had tried to keep it from her, but the little girl waked up at night when her father came home. "I used to go down

and help Mother get him upstairs and put him to bed. Afterwards he would be sick, of course," said Mary, without visible feeling. "Mother had to have somebody help her. The servants never stayed after they found out. Mother and I had to stay; we had to take care of him. And Mother still loved him, in a way, I suppose; I didn't. But I never said anything about him; she had me too well trained for that. It got to be pretty bad, after a while, because there wasn't any money. We were put out of places — oh, I don't mean they got the police and had all our things stacked on the sidewalk, like slum-people, you know. But we had to get out just the same. Then Uncle John or somebody in Mother's family — they've all got lots of money, luckily — would come to the rescue and pay the bills and start us fresh once more. Father would go straight for a little, and then — " Mary delivered the final pebble, hitting her target squarely in the middle — "then: same thing all over again!"

When the girl was about fourteen, Mrs. Ballard, by writing begging letters to Mr. Stillman, to the Van Huysen connection, to other Ballards, even to old friends of her husband's at the Bar, who had been obliged to drop him because of his habits, by staving off tradespeople's bills, by selling treasured heirlooms, by every kind of unhappy expedient for scraping money together, had contrived to send her off to school. It was the same story; Mary travelled from pillar to post, as their miserable exchequer emptied and was replenished. She had not been taught anything at all, let alone anything useful, at these institutions of learning. "They were just fashionable schools, you know," she said contemptuously. "Mother thought she was doing the only thing possible for a girl of my family and position. *Family and position!* Then Father died. That was five years ago, and ever since we've been keeping up that same old stunt of *family and position.* We're nothing but a pair of ladylike crooks, the two of us, going around and living off of our relatives, or off of anybody for that matter, and licking people's boots, and putting up a front, and — and trying to get me married off to some man with money — "

"Mary!" cried the young man in command and entreaty at once. Everything she had said confirmed certain of his

suspicions; but he shrank from any more revelations. Somehow they had the effect, not of debasing Mary, but of turning an unbecoming light on their whole world with its incredibly cheap and incredibly costly labors, diversions, aims, standards. And, Good God, he thought, that nice women, that decent men should be willing to bargain their pride and honesty and the inestimable treasure of time, the irrevocable years, for these things which he had had all his life — money, ease, social prominence! But how if he had not had them? Might not he, Steven Rudd, have done a little of the same ignoble trading? He knew his mother would, Hester would, without a qualm. "Don't talk this way! Don't run yourself down this way! You — you've got some exaggerated notions — "

"I should think I've told you enough to show that I've got a truer notion about some things than you have, Steve!" she interrupted. "I ought to have, goodness knows! I suppose at college and maybe other places you've sometimes helped to put a drunken man to bed — swearing and calling you names, or maudlin and slobbering, or just stupid like a log — I suppose you've done that sometimes. Well, my mother did it at least once a week for years — and dressed herself and went out to teas and things the next day and made believe nothing was the matter. And so have I. I've done that, too, over and over again. Did *you* ever run up a big bill at the tailor's, all the while not knowing where your next cent was to come from? Did *you* ever have him tell you he couldn't give you any more credit? Did *you* ever have to take people's old worn-out satin slippers and pretend to be delighted? Have *you* ever laughed at insults and made believe you thought they were jokes? Did *you* ever sell a lot of nasty stories to the editor of a rotten little society paper about people that had had you in their houses and been kind to you, just because you *had* to have money? Well, I *have*. I tell you, Steve Rudd, I know more about *living* in a minute than you do in a year, if you *are* a man!"

A silence ensued upon this fierce outburst, Steve sitting and gazing at the girl, scarcely able to believe his own ears. Mary was twenty-two, but looked younger with her big, innocently trustful brown eyes, and round face and dimples,

and bright curling hair which had never grown very long; in a short dress and pinafore she might have passed for a child. Mrs. Ballard was the very figure of the *grande dame*, elegant, reposeful, witty. To behold them, even to know them intimately, nobody would imagine that either one had ever had a care in her life. That they could have endured, be still enduring these sordidly tragic experiences moved him to groundless denunciations of the whole social fabric—groundless, Steve realized in a succeeding wave of common-sense; for there was no compulsion upon the Ballard women to live thus. If they would cling desperately to the skirts of Society they must expect and submit to be occasionally trailed in the mud.

Mary spoke again, unconsciously retorting upon him. "I've made up my mind to end the whole disgusting sham. I'm going to work, if it's nothing but scrubbing floors," she said.

The moment and her mood were not markedly propitious, but Steven nevertheless spoke out. "Look here, Mary," he said. "I've — I've hated to have you tell me all this. I knew before that you and your mother were — were in a — a pretty hard position — "

"Why, of course! Everybody knew it. I daresay Mother and I have furnished a lot of fun in our time," said Mary. "Oh, I don't think *you'd* laugh at us behind our backs, Steve. But it wouldn't have been any harm if you had. We've earned it."

He put her words aside with a gesture almost angry. "Oh, stop! You've brooded over the whole business until you've got yourself all worked up, and now you're making yourself out to be dreadful and to have done all sorts of dreadful things, when in reality you've only acted as nine women out of ten would have acted in the same circumstances. I hate to hear you talk that way. And anyhow I didn't get you to come here with me to-day to — to talk like this," said Steven, beginning all at once to his own private astonishment and vexation, to be rather red and flustered and incoherent. "I — I wanted to tell you — I want to ask you — "

She got to her feet with a movement of panic. "Don't say it, Steven, don't! I don't want you to! Please, Steven!"

"But I must. I — why, Mary, I — I love you —"

"No, you don't!" said the girl, maintaining her composure by a strong effort. "You're just sorry for me. Wait a minute! Listen to me! I — I hoped I wouldn't have to tell you — yes, I did hope you wouldn't do anything like this, because then I'd have to tell you — and I didn't want to. But it can't be helped now. Steve, it was all a — a frame-up," said poor Mary, her earnestness investing the grotesque phrase with something like dignity. "You were one of the men I was trying to catch. You're considered a good match, you know. Mother and I wouldn't have to worry any more if I could get you. Steve, it's horrid, but it's the truth. Mother — well, she didn't exactly tell me how to act. We never talked about it right out plain to each other, but — I can't explain to you — any woman would understand — somehow I got an idea just what sort of things you'd — you'd fall for. And you can't blame Mother, Steve, she didn't want to see me make a mess of my life the way she had of her own; she only wanted to see me all settled and right and out of danger. And besides it wasn't all her doing; I — I tried myself. I — I thought of things that — that would work on you. But, Steve, I hated it all along. I hated to trap you. Steve, you believe me, don't you?" She was not crying, but there was anguish in her voice, in her face.

"Well, but, Mary, you do like me a little — ?" began the bewildered young man.

"That's just the *reason* — that's *just* it! It wouldn't be right for me to — to marry you even if I — I loved you," said Mary, with force. The subtleties of this argument were beyond Steve; he stood helpless while she went on: "Because you're only asking me out of pity. I played that part of the mean game too well. I can't go on with it now; all at once I found out I just couldn't go on with it. I'm *done!*" said Mary, gesticulating violently. "I was beginning to see things differently, anyhow; and ever since we've been here with those nice people, those Burkes — ! They don't care a thing in the world about everything we've always thought so important; and they aren't queer, or funny, either. Mother and I can be just like that, if we choose. So you see how it is, Steve. I can't marry you."

Steven did not at all see how it was; he grasped at the only clue in sight. " Is it Jack Burke? Is it because of him? " he asked; and caught himself quickly, ashamed. " No, no, I had no business to ask you that. Forgive me! "

Mary, however, first looked amazed, and then actually smiled. " Jack Burke? Goodness, no! There isn't anybody. I like you better than any man I know."

And with that he had to be content. Perhaps the young man had not looked very deeply into his own heart before making his proposal; perhaps indeed he unconsciously avoided looking. But the fact is, that as he climbed into his car and drove off in grim solitude, Steven was beginning to be much more in love than when he embarked on this business!

Miss Ballard, meanwhile, went back to the boarding-house, to her mother sitting haggard and watchful, in their dreary room. She looked up as Mary came in, disciplining her face to that gracious interest which was the strongest feeling she ever allowed it to display in public; as a matter of principle she seldom relaxed even in private, and it may have been somewhat easier than ordinary to preserve on this occasion, for Mrs. Ballard was not without some by no means unpleasant expectations. " Well? " she said lightly.

" I was out with Steve Rudd," said Mary, taking off her coat.

" Yes? "

" He asked me to marry him, and I told him no."

" *Mary!* You — you — ? "

" I said I wouldn't. I refused him," said Mary. Illogical remorse smote her at sight of her mother's features wrecked with disappointment, for once open, for once uncontrolled. She ran to her and put her arms around her, half crying herself. " Never mind, Mother, never mind. I'll find something to do; I'll take care of both of us. That will be ever so much better than the other way. I just couldn't take advantage of him that way; Steve's too nice. Never mind! I'll get something to do, and take care of both of us."

The other poor woman settled down in the chair with a sob of defeat and despair. " Oh, I'm so tired of this life — so tired, so tired! "

# PART II

## CHAPTER I

MISS Hester Rudd's wedding took place at Easter, attended by sundry pomps and ceremonies which her sister Edith's had emphatically lacked. The event was "featured" with photographs and vivacious morsels of description in all the most conspicuously smart of the smart journals that give space to this species of news. There was a picture of the bride and her maids; another of the bride alone, standing in profile at the top of a flight of stairs, with her eyes cast down under a magnificent lace veil, and at least six feet of silver brocade train from Paquin disposed from step to step in the foreground; another of the bride and groom taken together, George, frock-coated and gardenia'd, very brave and conscious and smiling; the wedding-party entering the church; the wedding-party leaving the church; the wedding-party at breakfast, etc., etc. "Everybody" — that is, some hundred and fifty carefully selected persons — was asked and "everybody" went. The house was decorated with bushels of freesias and pink tulips; it is a little difficult to find anything in the way of flowers sufficiently rare and costly to be original at this season of the year, when the florists' shops are at their best, but the mound of orchids on the bride's table helped out in this respect. At any rate, Hester was satisfied, a statement of more significance than would appear on the surface; she had not Edith's taste and capacity for management, and changed her mind twenty times over every single detail, hovering undecided and keeping everyone else hovering almost up to the last minute.

Mrs. Rudolph Gherardi, by the way, was the matron of honor; she may be seen standing at the bride's right in the group picture, in a toilette of ivory-colored lace and apple-

green, with a satin hat of sweeping lines *à la* Madame Le Brun, lean and spirited among the other young women, like a game bird caught with some pretty barnyard flock. The Gherardis came on from Washington, but it was understood were not returning there; that capable Edith having dismantled their house, and having gotten everything, furniture, servants, automobiles, stables, dogs, in shape for a change of residence, on less than a week's notice. Captain Gherardi's government had recalled him to Berlin whence he expected to be re-assigned either to Rome or Vienna — a step up the diplomatic ladder, as the military attaché did not hesitate to make known. "The U. S. isn't quite so big and important as those continental posts, eh?" said Elihu Rudd, eyeing the young man from under his heavily thatched brows. "They wouldn't think of sending a real first-class man here. I see, I see." And he surveyed his nephew-in-law with an attention which might have seemed somewhat pointed to the casual on-looker; the captain, however, was rather favorably impressed by it, if anything; he caressed the ends of his little, blond, pointed moustache complacently, glancing at himself askant in one of the pier-glasses of Mrs. Lawson Rudd's Empire drawing-room.

Steven had to give the bride away, the head of the house being most inopportunely laid up with a severe attack of lumbago. Lawson was very savage, not at the pain which he bore with exemplary patience, and not, to be truthful, at his enforced absence from the wedding which he opined good-humoredly could go along according to all the forms, without him, but because of the delay in the conduct of an occult matter known to all the firm as the "Shepherd-Gaffney deal." He could not let it rest, though he could not rest himself; he had Mr. Galway up from the office; he had Jim Dickerson, that dependable old business war-horse; he sent for the head stenographer, and sat propped up on the bedroom lounge, smoking a strong cigar, his face twitching off and on with pain, dictating resolutely. Any time you passed the door, you might hear the heavy, deliberate words, which he was scarcely ever known to alter. "Oh my, no, it's not a bit tiresome!" Miss Parker assured Mrs. Lawson in response to her polite sympathies. "I like to take

the boss's letters. It's so easy; he always goes right straight along. My, if you could hear some of 'em, going *urr-urr*, and stopping and starting like an automobile engine when it won't crank right, and 'Just-read-that-over-please' about forty times, till you'd think they'd know it by heart! Oh my, no, honestly if anybody was to ask me, I'd say this was a snap."

Mrs. Rudd was much entertained and afterwards entertained her friends equally with the story. "I'm sure Lawson's manner would frighten me to death if I were trying to do anything of the sort for him. He seems to me to be simply growling one steady growl about shipments of magnesia and oxygen, things like that, in tanks or carboys, or whatever they are packed in. He scarcely ever says 'Please' or 'Thank you,' except in the most perfunctory way — just treats her like another man, or rather, like a machine. And she says he's *'lovely'!* Eh? Oh, mercy, no! A very nice girl, of course, but at least thirty-five and not at all attractive. If I had ever worried over that part of it — about Steve or his father — one look at Miss Parker would have set my mind at rest," the lady would finish with laughter.

Indeed, neither of the Rudd men, father or son, was likely to give any woman anxiety on the grounds Mrs. Rudd indicated. With Lawson, it was not so much a matter of resisting temptation as of never feeling it. His interests in life, arranged on a sliding-scale, were: the Rudd Chemical Company; his wife and family; "Journey's End." The schedule crowded out all other matters. And as for Steven, setting aside temperament, he was absorbed in carving out, or in a more accurately descriptive figure, in chipping out, some sort of nook for himself in the business world, and the operation safeguarded him. The young fellow was in deadly earnest about it. "I don't want to be just your son — Lawson Rudd's son. That's too easy — being fitted into a nice velvet case like a piece of jewellery. I want to be Steven Rudd!" he declared to his father, reddening, a little ashamed of his own vehemence, bracing himself to meet the other's amusement. But Lawson did not smile. He merely answered, a trifle absently: "Yes, of course. That's right. I see Mississippi Central and Gulf Coast has gone up two points since the merger," and went on reading the morning-paper over his breakfast.

It was at such moments that Steven felt, along with his admiration and respect for his father and along with a sense of youthful inferiority, a certain contradictory dissatisfaction. Every man of so strong a character and such large achievements must have a vision, must have started out with a vision, at any rate — a vision of great things to be done, whether conquering a kingdom, or supplying the world with sulphuric acid; that was Steven's thesis. Without that powerful imaginative or intellectual or perhaps spiritual endowment, no man could succeed, the younger Rudd was devoutly sure. But it was impossible to invest his father with any such attributes; though he had unquestionably succeeded as a very young man and was still succeeding before Steven's very eyes, there was no expanding him to heroic proportions; he continued to be an active, hardy, experienced, middle-aged gentleman, possessing, to be sure, noticeable powers of concentration and ability to get through an immense amount of work, but no vision, as Steven interpreted that term. Sitting at his desk in his office, dictating letters, receiving people and sending them away, arguing with brother business-men, making speeches and reading papers before this or that board, committee and convention, or at home in the midst of grinding suffering tenaciously conducting the Shepherd-Gaffney deal to a brilliant conclusion, he might be a big man in big business, but his bigness still eluded the son. He could see that his senior thought and spoke lucidly and to the point; that about any course of action he never seemed to hesitate or to be at a loss or to make a false step; that his memory was extraordinarily nimble and ready; that he understood other men and was liked by them; that he was shrewd, resourceful, courageous. But what had all these qualities to do with the indefinably uplifting thing, the indispensable thing that Steven meant by "vision"? He knew his uncle Elihu shared most of them, but he did not believe Uncle Elihu to be the equal of his father by any means. Sometimes he wondered if, after all, this difference between the two men might not be a proof of the existence in Lawson of the intangible gift.

Steven had solid doubts about possessing it himself. For one thing, he discovered that he could not fasten his wits

down to the daily, hourly tussle with facts and figures and the matters on hand, with the ease which his father displayed; it looked like ease to Steven. Mr. Rudd would arrive at the office about nine o'clock in the morning; he would read his mail; and for three hours thereafter he would pursue whatever business questions came up with an unflagging attention, and absolute command and application of every faculty. Steven, at *his* desk, with the moderate amount of work allotted to him, constantly wrestled with the difficulty of keeping his mind upon it! He was convinced that this was not chargeable to lack of interest; even if the work seemed to be routine stuff, mere drudgery, he knew that he must master it, if he would learn the business; and to learn the business was Steven's aim, because it was a necessary preliminary to running the business, to being Steven Rudd, in short, not Lawson Rudd's son, that contemptibly negligible person. The young man was not dull and not lazy; he had the sense and the humor to perceive that only in exceptional cases does anyone arrive at accomplishing big things without first having grappled with and overcome an infinite number of little things. His ambition was on the whole more reasonable and more creditable than the ambitions of a good many other youths in his circle with whom he once in a while exchanged views. Like himself, they were getting their business training in their fathers' offices or counting-rooms, but unlike Steve, they one and all had much wider, deeper, loftier, more far-sighted ideas about the conduct of their divers concerns than the older members of the firms, oh, much!

"Dad and Mr. Burch know all about business the way it was handled when they started out," one would tell the others in confidence. "They built up a mighty good business, too, but it's not going to stay good, unless they cut out some of the dead wood — abandon some of their cherished old time-honored, moss-back methods, you know. That's what I keep hinting to them all the time. If they'd let me strike out once, I'd *show* them! As it is, the only thing that keeps us from falling behind is my persuading them once in a coon's age to try something new. Then they forget, and think they've been doing it right along!" Or, "The matter

with old people like my father is they're too conservative. You can't run any business such as ours successfully, unless you keep it up to date — for that matter being up to date won't always bring home the bacon. You've got to be *ahead* of date. They can't see that. They're always advising going slow, cautious, making sure of one step before you take another, as my father says. I tell him, 'That's all right, but there are times when you'd do better to shut your eyes and jump for it. You talk about never leaving anything to chance, and of course that's good doctrine as a general thing, but you've got to take a chance sometimes. You take chances every time you walk along the street, but if you don't walk along, you don't ever get anywhere.' Makes me tired!"

Steven used to listen to them, setting down the contrast between their vigorously asserted points of view and his own, not to a difference in young men, but to the difference in fathers. "No, I don't do any suggesting. I don't know enough yet; and, anyhow, we've all got a realizing sense of who's boss in our office," he would say with a laugh. But perhaps he secretly envied a little the others' cocksureness and initiative. For, as time went on, most of these young fellows, one by one, succeeded to the management, partial or entire, of their several concerns; and lo, they "took hold" in the vernacular of the street; they poured new wine into the old bottles even as they had promised; they did well and justified their faith in themselves. Steven could not figure himself equalling their performances, mainly because the Rudd Chemical Company appeared to him to be outside of all classifications. It had the air of an erection already as complete and enduring as the pyramids, and as impossible for him either to improve upon or subvert. "I couldn't wreck it if I tried, and it seems to grow automatically!" he thought.

However, when summer came round again and he was again left in nominal charge, Steven found out, to his own surprise, that the position was, as he said freely, "a lot less nominal" than it had been the first time. He talked gravely to Mr. Galway about the change in himself, feeling as many another young man has before and since that it was much

easier to be confidential with an outsider than with his father. " I thought I knew it all last year. Now I know enough to know that I *don't* know it all. I've learned that much anyhow. Look how I handled, or manhandled rather, that Cuban fellow that wanted us to make up two invoices. I wouldn't do that now. And do you remember Mr. Walcott taking luncheon with us one day at the club, and telling a story about old Daniel Garrard being involved in some transaction that wasn't exactly creditable although within the law — "

" You bet it was! Imagine Oom Dan'l getting in bad with the law! Not he! " said Galway, grinning.

" Well, but do you remember Walcott's story was that somebody asked Mr. Garrard if he thought he had been strictly honest? And he said: ' Mr. So-and-So, I consider that I was as honest as the circumstances would permit! ' "

Galway laughed again. " Sure! Doesn't that sound like him, though? "

" Well, Mr. Galway, do you know that when I heard that story, I was secretly horrified? " Steven told him soberly.

" Horrified, eh? "

" Yes. I couldn't see how anybody could laugh. I thought old Garrard was a tricky old man that we all ought to turn our backs on! "

" Oh, Mr. Garrard's all right, in the main. It's only that he's a — a little *near,* you know," said Galway, rather hastily. " In business, of course, you come across all kinds of men. You have — er — you have to make allowances. We all know Oom Dan'l; you can't help laughing at that kind of meanness."

" Yes, I know that now. But at the time I was too green. I didn't see anything laughable about it. Quite horrified! " said Steve, who was ready now to laugh not only at Mr. Garrard, but at himself into the bargain. Galway looked after him with a singularly dubious countenance, however. They were all getting along harmoniously in the office, and certainly young Rudd had improved a good deal this last year, certainly he was no fool — but he'd never be the man his father was, Mr. Galway remarked to himself.

All this time, at the Stillman-Rudd wedding and else-

where, where were the Ballards? Scarcely anybody asked, and nobody seemed to know. The indifference of Society to the disappearance of two people who had been so popular struck Steven as almost tragic. "What is the matter with all of us?" he questioned himself. "We aren't heartless. We care for one another and we do a lot of kind, charitable things. I've seen cheque after cheque in Mother's book filled out to the Home for the Friendless and the Working Girls' Club and all those organizations. I know she's got besides a whole regiment of superannuated servants like Hester's old nurse and Annie Flanagan, that laundress we had for so many years, pensioned off so that they can live in tolerable comfort. All her friends that have the same means are probably doing the same thing. Yet here two women we know, in our own class, drop out all at once, and we don't pay any more attention to it than if they had never been! They might be dead, they might be starving in a garret — nobody cares enough to find out. If they had money, and chose to go away for a while, people wouldn't forget them. Yet I don't believe we're all indecently fond of money. What is the matter with us?" It was the dreary mystery of life as lived by out-of-pocket gentility that he was trying to fathom. The Friendless, for a paradox, have in reality plenty of friends; the Working Girls get all the sympathetic notice expressed in cheques and otherwise that is good for them. But who is doing anything, or who *can* do anything for the Reverend Mr. Goodshepherd, rector of All Angels, whose salary is twelve hundred a year on which he has to support a wife and five children, and meanwhile keep up the dignity of an Episcopal clergyman? There is little Miss Seaworthy, Rear-Admiral Seaworthy's daughter, whom he left without a penny, after carefully bringing her up so that she wouldn't know how to do anything; there is my friend Doctor Booklore, one time Professor of Dead Languages, who, upon reaching the age limit, retires with next to nothing saved up, dead languages not being a highly remunerative calling; though I know that they are pinched to the final degree, the most I can do for them without insult is to invite them to dinner and see that they get one square meal at least. With all the good-will in the world, my other

friend, Mrs. Lawson Rudd, cannot send these people cheques; she can help her ancient laundresses and nursemaids, but she cannot help ladies and gentlemen. Not being able to help them, perhaps the next best thing one can do is to forget them; upon some such theory, at any rate, Society seemed to proceed, in the eyes of young Steve Rudd. He asked Miss Stillman and George, both of whom replied rather vaguely: " Oh, Mary and Aunt Ellen? Why, they're in New York. No, it isn't New York either, it's one of those little suburbs." And both promised to get him the address, and both forgot. Steven advised himself in a melancholy mood that " she " probably would not care to hear from him, anyhow; he could not quite make out her unwillingness to marry him while avowing openly that she liked him better than any man she knew, and all that fantastic stuff about having laid a trap for him; but she had at least made it plain that she wanted to be let alone, and to go her own ways for a while.

He took a vacation in the Northwest that year, his interest having been aroused by some See-America-First doctrine preached by his sister Edith, of all people in the world! She and her husband had been visiting with tremendous state and ceremony at a grand-ducal hunting-lodge in the Carpathians, and Edith wrote in a lively strain, contrasting the experience not at all favorably with that of her wedding journey the previous year. For the week they had taken a maid, a valet and half a dozen trunks; five toilettes a day were the minimum; the eating and drinking — Edith herself was by nature of a Spartan abstemiousness — fairly wore out one's appetite; one of the guests was a celebrated operatic lady towards whom everybody had to practise an extreme courtesy, though she was more than suspected of being *au mieux* with the Royal Highness himself. For that matter there were all kinds of silly and scandalous intrigues going on all around; she had no doubt they sneered at her behind her back and called her stiff and prudish. They sneered a good deal covertly or openly at Americans anyhow. The scenery was magnificent, the air like wine, the sport would be the finest imaginable — " wild boar, Stevie, splendidly fierce and dangerous. If they'd let you go after them

and stalk them decently and give the poor brutes a fighting chance, you'd have enough thrills to put Stewart Edward White off the map. As it is, the hunts are all set like a movie scenario; the Highness can't be allowed to risk his precious life, so to keep him in countenance, none of us can risk ours. The women aren't supposed to have guns anyhow; we get ourselves up in gorgeous furs and the most stunning English tweed tailored creations we possess and motor out and meet the men in a beautiful, romantic glen or on a terrace in front of some old *schloss,* and the servants bring champagne and *pâté de foie gras,* and everybody flirts. I thought all the men must be perfectly punk shots, till I found out that nobody dares to bring in anywhere near as big a bag as the Highness. If you did, you'd ruin your court career!" She advised him with a kind of jocular seriousness to do his hunting and everything else at home, in his own country, if he wanted real sport in company with real men and women; nothing over there was any better than what America had to offer, if as good; she didn't care how spread-eagle-ish that sounded! Steven thought it did not sound so spread-eagle-ish as it sounded homesick and disillusioned. Something in the tone of the whole letter obscurely disquieted him. He spoke of it to his father.

"I don't know whether Edith's going to like it over there any too well. Of course she's been around and seen a good deal; she's perfectly sophisticated and able to look out for herself. But I don't believe Edie ever really gave a whoop for the society stunt; she plays it well because she does everything well. But I don't see how she's going to stand the sort of life she describes here," he said.

Lawson vindicated his son's judgment by reading the letter with a disturbed brow. "It doesn't give a very agreeable picture — to an American," he said thoughtfully. "We have plenty of foolishness among our own people, but not that particular kind of foolishness. Edith will get used to it in time, I daresay. As you say, she'll hold up her end, anyhow. I always supposed most women liked it."

"Edith's different," said Steven. However, the next letter from her showed the young couple back in town in their apartment, which was as spacious, elegant and choicely

located as was suitable to their wealth and elevated position; and Edith gave the impression of being very gay and busy, and as popular as any American woman could expect to be.

It was after he had got back home, tanned and hearty from four weeks of glorious roughing it, and with a diary full of impressions and experiences which he privately meant to use as literary material some day, that Steven, going up to dress for dinner one evening, found a bulky consignment just arrived by parcels post awaiting him. It bore an indecipherable stamp; but his name and address had been stenciled on in a notably legible and workmanlike manner, and it was wrapped and packed to travel around the globe; never were there seen knots at once so neat, complicated and secure. Steve had to operate upon them with his penknife; within, the first thing to be disclosed was a letter addressed to him in an unfamiliar handwriting, crabbed but distinct. He thought it must be from one of his new acquaintances on the upper reaches of the Columbia River, the post-trader perhaps, or John Plenty-Feathers, or the other guide, the one they called " Docky," till he opened and saw: " Thanksgiving Cove, Nov. 30, 191 — " and that it was signed " Yours truly, Ebenezer Howe." Steve began to read, uttering a loud exclamation in the middle of it.

" Great governor! That was mighty careless of me! " he ejaculated, with a rueful glance at the bundle.

" Steven Rudd, Esq., Dear Sir: " the Captain wrote. " Herewith please find enclosed eight (8) written books and one (1) parcel letters, as per list, left here last year by E. Rudd, Esq., on or about October 27. Same were found when parlor was opened on acct. funeral of Mrs. Sabina Howe Littleford, December following. Owing to circumstances of dec'd, she not having lived here, but just come back from the West (Erie, Penn.) where had resided thirty years, for a visit and dying suddenly while here, occasioning some confusion in house, books, etc. after being removed from parlor were put with dec'd trunk and other things, and supposed belonged to her. Mistake not rectified until remains were shipped to Erie for interment, with property. Heirs finding themselves unable to determine ownership of books, etc., returned same

to me. After some time identified same as having seen them in E. Rudd's room, but unable to locate him. However, obtained your address from gardener (R. McCrae) and am forwarding them with this. Invoice correct as far as known. Trusting this will be satisfactory,

Yours truly,

Ebenezer Howe.

P.S. A receipt would oblige."

"Great General Washington!" said Steven. He looked over the enclosed slip on which Cap'n Eben had scrupulously noted down: "1 *book, back loose, labelled Diary J. Vardaman* 1857." "1 *book, top c'n'rs several pps. badly nibbled, pres'm'bly mouse, ditto,* 1862." "1 *pkg. letters, ditto,* 1863." "That was mighty careless of me," said Steve again. What must the Burkes have thought? Perhaps, however, they themselves had forgotten the doctor's papers, since they had made no inquiries. The family had been widely scattered this last year and they were all busy people. It was to be hoped that nothing had been lost during the parcel's journeyings; all the Howe family might not be so punctiliously careful as the captain. But at any rate, Steven reflected with a smile, it was likely that the Burkes did not know much more about the manuscript than he himself, and were as little qualified to say what was missing, if anything. He opened the topmost book, that dated 1862, fluttering over the leaves amid a small simoon of powdery paper crumbs from the "c'n'rs nibbled, pres'm'bly mouse," and saw his own name in Doctor Vardaman's clear and strong hand, ". . . *from D. Rudd, the same infernal quack that makes the patent medicine* . . ." Steven read on.

## CHAPTER II

TAKING the years it covered in their order, the latter part of Doctor Vardaman's diary differed strikingly from the beginning of it, in not being nearly so prolix and detailed and in being concerned, generally speaking, with matters of more importance. During its first decade, the doctor appeared to have enjoyed that unwelcome leisure which is frequently accorded to young professional men at the outset of their careers; and to have employed a good deal of it in page after page of profound dissertations on nothing of any moment, in transcribing reams of verse, some quoted, some original, some rendered into English from the classics, in minute notes on the weather, the garden, the political situation, Shakespeare and the musical glasses! But as he progressed towards middle life, the times became less spacious, the entries fewer and much briefer and more compact, mere marking-stones along the path of a busy and hard-working man. " Out all day, home three o'clock this morning, dog-tired. Afraid Mrs. Jeffries won't pull through. Baby all right, though," he would scrawl. In the early '50's there had been an epidemic of cholera — *cholera morbus,* the doctor called it in the old fashion — all through one summer. Like the other doctors he stuck to his post; and working day and night, at last came down himself with the malady. A long gap between dates dumbly bore witness to the event which Vardaman had only chronicled with: " Sick since last entry." All along there were more or less technically worded memoranda of out-of-the-way cases which had come under his observation, accompanied with comments, theories, guesses, some of which would be wild enough, no doubt, in the light of present-day knowledge. And there were many notes for his lectures, remarks on medical works just out, on meetings and consultations with other doctors, and on discoveries noised throughout his professional world.

At the opening of the Civil War, he volunteered, and saw about a year of service in the field; but at the time Steve Rudd, by the strangest of strange chances, encountered him, the doctor had been assigned to Camp Mason which as Steve gathered by turning back and forth amongst the pages was a sort of depot or collecting place for army-supplies and the newly-drafted troops from all over the State. The hospital was probably as adequately equipped as any hospital in those days — a dispensary, some surgical appliances and instruments, a personnel made up of soldiers detailed for nursing duty, a few women volunteers, people picked up at hazard, here, there, and everywhere. Vardaman found no fault with it. His first notes dealt with cases of measles and dysentery, evils only too common among the camps. "Practically no surgical work here at all, as this station is too far from the front to be available for the wounded," he wrote. "Well, I had enough experience last year to be willing to retire and give some other man a chance. By comparison, this is a lazy job. I have a good deal of time to myself, and should use it to expand these notes, I think. We live in a great and stirring age, but who would suspect it from reading my journal?"

"June 18. The most great and stirring event since above was a scare about Mrs. Macfarlane's (laundress) three-year-old baby! Youngster got hold of some strychnine that the mother had got at the dispensary to kill rats with, and swallowed a good third of it. Mrs. Macf. found him playing with the empty box, and proclaiming that it was goody-goody! She didn't know how long the poison had been in him, but it fortunately had not had time to take effect, and I'll warrant there's none in the poor little devil now. He's as weak as a dishrag. Must warn dispensary-clerk about letting anybody and everybody have poisons. There ought to be a law. . . ."

"June 20. Two men down with malarial fever (?) in Ward 4. Attendant's diagnosis, not mine. 'Old-time bone-ache, Doc. Both of 'em chillin' off and on, and mighty uncomf'ble in their heads 'n' backs. Give 'em a hot mustard bath, *I* would.' He's a good fellow, Enos Moffat by name, and a very efficient nurse. Was a tinner in civilian life, I

believe! Macfarlane child all right; must have the constitution of an ox. Can't understand how it escaped in the first place, the poison acts with such appalling rapidity. There's a case on record of half a grain causing death in 14 minutes. He had had much more than that; it's so bitter one would think he wouldn't have relished it after the first taste."

"21. Malarial patients not improving; neither of them seems to react to the quinine. A new case to-day. Saw about having latrines cleaned; lime and copperas. If I could get hold of some bichromate of potash I'd make some tests of that strychnine."

"25. It's typhoid meningitis. 7 new cases yesterday and to-day."

"July 2. No use blinking the truth. We've got an epidemic on our hands. . . ."

"July 8. Captain Harter's little boy died this a.m. The other child will recover, I think. Mind probably affected."

The doctor's notes dwindled from this point to a mere scratch at intervals. It could be gathered that he had got another doctor, isolated the patients, used every precaution, tried every treatment known to the times. The blanks in the diary were eloquent of courage, endeavor, self-sacrifice, and alas, of gruesomely frequent failure. "Poor Moffat's gone. In his delirium he tried repeatedly to get up, talking about this or that sick man that he must attend to. But he always knew me, and I think the last coherent words he ever uttered were: 'God Almighty, Doc., they're dyin' on us like flies!'

"If it would only spare the children! Adults don't have the convulsions. . . ."

"Aug. (Don't know what date). All night with one of the teamsters. He died at dawn. I must find out this man's name."

The ghastly record went on for many pages, disjointedly, with entries interspersed which sometimes bore no apparent relation to the rest. "Bought quinine myself of Barton. Told him about the other. He wouldn't say much, of course, except that nobody knew what they were buying these days, and that mistakes would be made, and one couldn't place the

blame always, etc. But wound up very emphatically by saying that he made sure of *his* drugs."

"Wrote to Nat Burke. Something ought to be done."

"Burke not encouraging. The damned murderers."

It was autumn before the disease spent itself. And now at last Vardaman found time, not indeed to fill up those breaks in his journal, but to piece out its meagre details with the statement that young Steven Rudd was to read fifty years later.

"Oct. 22. I have been trying to get all my facts and dates into some sort of shape for a report. Everything was all higgledy-piggledy. To begin at the beginning: I realize now that it was that business of the strychnine that first aroused my suspicions. I had no time and no proper apparatus here to make a conclusive test, the only vessel at hand, for instance, to use in heating the pure spirits or chloroform would have been an ordinary saucepan out of the kitchen. However, I got nitric acid and potassium bichromate; having only the most elementary acquaintance with chemistry, am unable to state positively the proportion of nux. vom. present, but may fairly call it negligible. In plain words there was not enough to kill a mouse. This led me to investigate our store of quinine, of which I had been using large quantities in attempts to check the fever, which was beginning to gain on us frightfully. This time, however, not wishing to rely solely on my own judgment, I took a sample to a professional chemist. In the meanwhile I got quinine from a druggist (James D. Barton) whom I had known for years, and considered a trustworthy man; it was perfectly satisfactory. These expenses, viz.: the analysis and the quinine, I bore myself. The Government quinine was discovered to be a compound of magnesia, common flour, powdered alum, and a very small percentage of the actual drug to give it a slight flavor; there may have been other ingredients which have slipped my memory, but I have the chemist's formula. This was all I could do at this time (about the first week in August) as we were very busy with the sickness. Later I got an affidavit to the above facts from the expert I employed, and after considerable inquiry found that the Government had made large purchases of quinine at various

dates from D. Rudd, the same infernal quack that sells the patent-medicine; it seems that he has set up a wholesale drug business.

"I sent all the evidence to Burke, hoping that it would be possible to bring Rudd to book. But he wrote me back in that philosophical strain into which lawyers seem to glide insensibly, I suppose from constant daily contact with the worst and weakest side of human nature, and the necessity to suspend judgment and look on all sides. He said in effect that nobody would question my statements nor the proofs I offered, nor the sincerity and justice of my indignation. But getting a conviction in court, it seems, would be a horse of another color! The Government had undoubtedly bought quinine from a dozen different concerns all over the country both before and since the Rudd purchase; and even if I could undertake to swear (*which I would!*) that this was Rudd's quinine which I had discovered to be bogus, and if Rudd were put on the stand, he could easily swear and bring proofs quite as good as mine that the quinine was genuine to the best of his knowledge and belief, that he had had it tested as usual, that he had never had any reason to doubt the honesty of the South American agents from whom he got his supply, etc., etc. As to his patent-medicine record, that's neither here nor there, according to Burke. No judge and no jury would take into consideration the fact that he has been selling his vile, worthless cure-all for years, swindling poor, ignorant sick people whose very ignorance and sickness would have protected them against anybody but such a merciless and conscienceless scoundrel; supposing such an argument were advanced, all the opposing counsel would have to do (Nat says) would be to remark with a smile that Vardaman, being a doctor, shared the prejudices of his profession, and that however often and violently doctors disagreed amongst themselves, they were naturally unanimous in condemning any medicine or treatment that did away with doctors altogether! 'In short, dear Jack,' Nat writes; 'though I say it with shame, in the present state of our laws, nothing can be done to the fellow, richly as he deserves punishment. We have to let him go scot-free with his blood-money. It's all of a piece with the paper-soled boots, the

shoddy overcoats, the mouldy rations which have been furnished to our poor boys in the field, not seldom, according to rumor, with the connivance of the Government officials themselves. If the greedy wretches theorize about it at all, they probably tell themselves that a soldier takes his life in his hands anyhow, and that therefore it makes no difference how much he suffers or of what he dies. Not the least depressing feature of it is that these are instances in which treason seems to be going to prosper, whatever assurances we have to the contrary. Rudd and all the rest of them are without doubt making money hand over fist, and laying the foundations of fortunes that will last to the third and fourth generations of them that hate Him and keep not His commandments!' He adds that with all the pressure he could exert, and pursuing the case to the Supreme Court, the utmost penalty — if any! — inflicted on Rudd would probably be a small fine — small actually, as well as relatively to the immense sums he must have realized. I now have reason to believe that he contrived in some underground way to get several shipments through our lines into the Confederacy where, owing to the blockade, they will pay for quinine or chloroform at its weight in gold. Was that all this false stuff, too? One would think that the mountainous profits on the genuine drugs might have satisfied him; but I daresay he betrayed these helpless and suffering fellow-creatures, too, without a pang. Jim Sharpless would say, in his reckless fashion that it was this sort of thing that laid mankind under the necessity of inventing Hell. I am not a free-thinker as Jim is; I have always believed in the existence of some Almighty Force for good, though it were only spiritually, in the souls of men; I have always thought that Hell was a mediæval bogy; but it would be a satisfaction to me — I say this in solemn earnest — to think that Rudd and all his kind were to simmer intolerably in the fires of damnation through all Eternity."

There was more of it; the doctor had probably found the writing a relief from the sense of outrage and powerlessness. One might have thought that he exaggerated, but for the nature of the facts; no upright and humane man on earth but would have felt with and for him. Twenty years afterwards,

when he was over seventy, and these things belonged to the past, he had written on the margin of a page in script that was still firm: "Jan. 19, 1881. Have just been re-reading these notes with the same impotent anger as the day they were written. To be sure I don't feel now as if I would like personally to conduct the lynching of D. Rudd and his partners in evil; at the time I would have been glad to go along and haul on the rope! But would that have brought back to life those dead babies, those brave young men? Anyhow, Rudd's gone home and ta'en his wages; there were notices of his death in all the papers not long ago — quite a prominent citizen, very wealthy and philanthropic! There were liberal bequests to half a score of charities — two hospital-beds endowed, for a piece of irony. What kind of a bed was his own? *Ferrei Eumenidum thalami!*"

Steven sat over the journal for a long while; he was aware that the butler had come to the door and knocked and asked if he were dining at home and that he had answered that he had an engagement, that he was going out, he scarcely knew what. Later there had been the sound of the automobile-door slamming, and of its departure, grinding on the gravel under his windows; his father and mother must be going somewhere together. After another while it began to be chilly; he found with a dull surprise that the fire had burned down to nothing, there was only a handful of ashes in the cold grate before which he was sitting, still in his shirt-sleeves as when he had begun to read; and the dawn was coming in through the windows.

He put the books aside, and got up and walked about aimlessly, pausing in front of familiar objects and staring at them as if he had never seen them before. It was a big room, appointed in a style which Mrs. Rudd imagined to be appropriately masculine, severe and restrained. The young man's own taste was not very definite or exacting; and the only article that represented it was a dark, carved, wooden chest which he had seen in Florence, and fancied and bought. His mother had received it with mingled admiration and concern. He remembered her pretty ejaculations: "It's beautiful, Steve, I'm sure it's a superb old piece — but for your *bedroom!* It's really much more suitable for a hall, you

know. Never mind, though. I'll make it look right, if we have to build the rest of the room around it!" And that was what Mrs. Lawson had proceeded to do, ruthlessly exiling Steven to another apartment, bag and baggage, to his profound amusement, and that of his father, while she consulted architects and decorators, had drawings made, sent for samples of this and that, and spent money with the unremitting energy which she always brought to that task. When Steve was at last allowed to return to his quarters, the chest was fairly lost in the perfection of its setting! It had become a mere incident in the gravely sumptuous chamber along with the Italian walnut panelling, the floors artfully blackened to simulate antiquity, the high stone mantel, the wonderfully wrought iron fire-dogs and sconces, the heavy, simple, incredibly costly furniture. Steve pretended to be pleased, to please his mother; in reality he felt about this little excursion in decoration very much as did his father, who freely paid the bills. Both men were entertained, but not greatly interested.

Now, however, it was with a gloomy eye that the grandson of Rudd's Specific surveyed his expensive belongings, which that compound, no matter how distantly or indirectly, had enabled him to own. And what other ghastly profits had he to thank for not only his Florentine chest and these surrounding follies, but for every comfort, every indulgence, every advantage, in the whole of his pampered life, the young man thought bitterly. He had had a hazy idea that the Specific or the Pancurata had been one product of the firm's activities in early days; but by the time Steven came to the office, they had long ceased to manufacture it, and he had never even seen one of those tall, square-sided bottles, much less tasted the thick, dark, syrupy mixture of alcohol, opiates, senna, Heaven knows what, which they contained. Once indeed, in transient curiosity, he asked: "What was that stuff my grandfather used to make that had such a sale? Some kind of tooth-wash, wasn't it?"

"No, it was more on the order of a tonic," his father said; and that had satisfied Steve, to whom his grandfather's times were coeval with Adam's, and as devoid of interest. Yet now this doctor, this honest John Vardaman, thundering his half-

century-old anathemas, seemed as modern as to-day; the sane counsels of this old Burke who must have been in his grave before Steve Rudd was born, addressed themselves to the young man's understanding as pointedly as if the ink were not yet dry on them. He stood confused before the discovery. Every generation sits in judgment on its predecessors, and accords mercy on the plea that they knew no better. But they did know better! If there were David Rudds committing acts that by the standards of posterity were monstrous, there were also decent men, Burkes and Vardamans, who condemned them in their own era. And how about David himself? Could anybody believe that he knew no better? "One would think that the profits on the real drug might have satisfied him," Vardaman wrote, and Steve recognized and shared the vain perplexity, the sense of defeat with which honesty speculates about dishonesty. Old Burke, who might or might not have been a brighter man than either his friend the doctor or our friend young Rudd, had had, at any rate, a certain illumination when he said: "The greedy wretches . . . probably tell themselves that a soldier takes his life in his hands anyhow and that therefore it makes no difference how much he suffers or of what he dies." No difference! Steven thought of the stricken camps, the children, the doctors haggardly persevering, "poor Moffat"; he thought of those other camps, south of the line, paying at its weight in gold for what was not worth its weight in sawdust. He felt as if the mark of Cain were on his forehead.

He made a plan to get his father alone and tell him of the abhorrent discovery some time that day; and upon this got to bed at last and slept fitfully, though unassailed by ominous dreams, being too young and healthy, and on the whole too well-balanced. The young fellow had, somewhere within him, a reserve of common-sense; he realized that no part of this ancient iniquity could be charged against himself or his father, so long as neither one of them had had any hand in it, or even knew of it. None the less, he was dominated by the feeling that, charged or not, somebody must pay.

When he came downstairs in the morning with the Vardaman book beneath his arm, ready to take to the office, he

unexpectedly found his father still at breakfast. Mrs. Lawson was never visible, even to her husband and son, until well on towards the middle of the day; she breakfasted in bed and spent the rest of the time in scientific attentions to her health and appearance, with the help of her maid, supplemented periodically, when the problems became too deep, by professional experts from down-town. The sunshine came brightly through the bay-window where the natty white table was laid; there was a fire on this brisk wintry morning, and above the handsome plain mantelpiece might be seen a life-size portrait in oils of the late David Rudd, gazing upon the world with a perfect air of righteousness. His first wife presided over the sideboard. On another wall there was a charming picture of Mrs. Lawson Rudd, diamond-collared, with her fine neck and shoulders showing; and one of Lawson himself, a good likeness though naturally not nearly so decorative, faced it. The original of this last looked up with a half-articulate good-morning.

Steve returned it and sat down opposite him, and the servant brought him his grape-fruit; he began mechanically to eat, feeling all at once the steadfast order of their lives closing around him like a vise. The grip benumbed his imagination; he could not figure what would happen upon the bursting of his bomb-shell.

"Out last night, Steve?" his father inquired casually, but with the mental comment that the boy's eyes looked like two holes burned in a blanket.

"No. I was at home. I just didn't want any dinner."

"Not feeling quite right?"

"No, that wasn't it. I — I was reading."

"Reading, hey? Must have been one of those Sherlock Holmes stories," said Mr. Rudd, and laughed. "I've sat up pretty late over them myself, but I don't know that I ever missed a meal — "

"You can read what I was reading, too. I brought it down for you to see," said Steven, feeling as if he were setting the match to his fuse. "There it is," and he shoved the book towards his father with an unconsciously tragic gesture.

Mr. Rudd noted the tone, the movement, the only half

suppressed disturbance of his face, with wonderment. The old covers of the diary left a trail of discoloration on the table cloth. Bringing his eyes down to it, Lawson read aloud: " 'J. Vardaman.' And who is J. Vardaman? Why, it's *written!* It's in manuscript!" he ejaculated, as he fixed his eyeglasses. "What on earth *is* it, Steven? And where on earth did it come from?"

Steven told him briefly, and Mr. Rudd nodded, turning the pages. "Here's a place with a book-mark. Is that where you want me to read?" he asked, justifiably mystified.

"I think you ought to know everything that's there. You'll know what to do perhaps. I don't!" said Steven.

His father gave him another look of complete perplexity, but began the task without further inquiry. Steven pushed away his plate and sat back with folded arms, watching him. Mr. Rudd read steadily, and after a page or two and an occasional word of explanation from Steven, showed interest enough, though apparently he had no intention of abandoning his breakfast; Doctor Vardaman's tale had not affected his appetite to that degree. Sometimes he sat with the fork poised, while he read; sometimes he gave a slight grunt quite impossible of interpretation; and it could be seen that he went over some of the passages more than once. But the whole process, which Steve had supposed must of necessity be a lengthy one, took the older man only half an hour. Lawson's mind moved rapidly and accurately by nature, and he had acquired a fine facility at concentration. At the end he sat for a full minute with the book still open at the last entries, considering with a faint frown.

"Who was this Burke that the old fellow kept referring to?" he asked at length. "Any relation to your friends?"

"He was Major Burke's father. You know I told you about that biography of him they're trying to get up," Steve managed to answer after an instant of helpless surprise. He did not know how he had expected his father to act, but that the elder Rudd should meet the revelations unmoved except by a casual curiosity as to the identity of the Burke quoted, was unthinkable.

"I expect he was a pretty sound lawyer," said Lawson reflectively, rubbing his chin, still gazing at the book. "There

were some very good men in the old days at the Bar up there in the centre of the State. Ohio used to have quite a reputation in that line."

"Vardaman must have been a pretty good doctor, too, don't you think?" Steve suggested, with an effort.

"Oh, I've no doubt. And he had a hard job, too — mighty hard!"

Steven, staring at the older man's undisturbed face, experienced a flash of immeasurable relief. "All that he says there about the quinine and — and my grandfather — I suppose that's some mistake?" he said eagerly, hopefully. He could almost have laughed at himself for not thinking of that before. What a fool he had been! Doctor Vardaman was not infallible.

But Mr. Rudd made a little negative movement of the head. "No. It was all true, I'm sorry to say. That is, the doctor had his facts correct in the main." There was no doubting the sincerity of his regret. He shook his head again as he added: "Not a pleasant or creditable business to be connected with, or to think about, even at this distance of time. Bygones are bygones, of course, but still — "

After a silence, Steven said: "You knew about it already?"

"Oh, yes," said his father, shutting the book and pushing it across the table. The look on the other's face may have moved him to add quickly: "Not at the time, of course, Steve. At the time, I was only nine or ten years old."

"How did you find out?" asked the young man.

"Why, your Uncle Elihu told me, after we were both grown men. I don't believe I ever asked El how *he* found out," said Mr. Rudd, visibly searching his memory, and giving up the question. "I've a kind of notion, though, that the old gentleman told him himself, not long before he died. Anyhow, your uncle told me, when I came home from college and went into the office, and I don't remember that we've ever mentioned it since."

"What did he do? Uncle Elihu, I mean. What did he do?"

"Do?" echoed Steve's father, staring. "Why, nothing!"

"*Nothing?*" the young man cried out harshly. "Didn't you do anything, either?"

" No, Steven," said his father, still staring.

Steven started up, shoving the chair back with a violent movement, so that it tilted over, clattering against the window-sill; he began to walk up and down the room. His father eyed him attentively, with curiosity and a certain concern.

" Was that what kept you up last night, Steve? " he asked kindly. " Reading that old diary? "

Steven came to a halt in front of him. " This thing is monstrous — it's monstrous! " he said, trying to steady his voice.

" I'm not defending it, Steven," said Mr. Rudd. He had no trouble with *his* voice; thirty years of iron self-discipline controlled it for him, almost without conscious effort. He reached out, and set the chair in place again, as he was speaking.

" But you haven't done anything! You've never done anything! You take it out in perfunctory regrets. You — you — " Steve stammered incoherently. Suddenly he found himself without words; a passion of outraged justice possessed him, but, alas, it put no weapons into his hands. He saw the older man almost as an enemy, sitting secure in his superiority of age, his experience in dealing with men, buttressed with the patience and reasonableness that somehow build a stone wall in an instant.

" Don't shout! " said Lawson, raising a hand in warning. " I can hear you without your shouting, and the servants don't need to." He paused, humanely giving the young man a chance to collect himself, studying him meanwhile, but without offence; on the contrary there was something very frank and manly and sympathetic in the look Lawson bent on his son. He went on: " Let's talk this over, Steve. I think I understand how you feel; at least I'm trying to. You think your grandfather did a great wrong. Well, he did. He did. But he wasn't the only one, nor the worst one. Men thought and acted differently in those days — "

" You can't tell me that, father — and you might as well stop telling yourself that," said Steven. " There were honest men and rascals fifty years ago just the same as now, and anybody could have his choice which he'd be, the same as

now. Maybe they had different opportunities — bigger ones. And maybe bigger chances beget bigger criminals. What's that got to do with David Rudd?"

"Nothing at all, I admit," said Lawson. "If I try to make excuses for your grandfather, and if I refrain from calling him those ugly names you have just used, it is because —"

"Because he got away with it, I suppose," Steve said savagely. "Because he was sharp enough to play safe. Because he fixed it so he wouldn't be found out, or couldn't be brought to account, anyway."

"No," said the older man, still guardedly temperate. "It is because he was my father, Steven."

There seemed to be no retort to this simple statement; in fact, it did not pretend to be an argument, yet was far more potent, calling up a host of ancient decencies and obligations. Steven's father probably gauged its effect accurately; after waiting a minute with obvious careful fairness for the younger man to answer, and seeing — as he doubtless expected — that poor Steve was momentarily out of ammunition, he said: "As near as I can make out, you think that as soon as your Uncle Elihu and I found out about this discreditable transaction, we ought to have done something by way of expiation, or reparation. Is that it?"

"Yes, that's what I think," said Steven, trying, not very successfully, to emulate his elder's impersonal calm.

"Well, what? What sort of reparation could we have made, and to whom?"

"I don't know," Steven said gloomily. "It's just as Doctor Vardaman said: nobody could give the dead people, the children and all of them, nobody could give them back their lives. But what I can't understand is how you could complacently go on enjoying all that money after you knew it was gotten in this vile way! You act just as if you had a right to it — as if how it was made were of no consequence. Oh, I know it isn't the very same identical dollars and cents that the old man robbed and swindled and — yes, murdered for — it's not that actual money, but it all came from that. In the old days people would have been afraid there was a curse on it. You didn't care. You kept right on

with it, turning it over, making it breed more money for you. How could you be satisfied, how could you go on — "

" I don't see that getting rid of it in some fantastic fashion, impoverishing myself and my family, would have been a very practical measure," said Lawson.

" Oh, you can out-talk me, of course! " said Steve, walking about in a desperate effort at self-command. " You've done it before. You're a specialist in wire-drawn distinctions between right and wrong — you can easily get me muddled. I suppose your idea is that as long as a man manages to keep out of the penitentiary, he's as moral as they make 'em. Nobody needs to be any more honest than the circumstances permit! " said the young fellow, ferociously quoting old Daniel Garrard. " Impoverish yourself! Impoverish *nothing!* You could have started all over again without a cent and inside of five years, you'd have been just as well off as ever. Impoverish your family? Why, don't you suppose that we'd all rather have gone without than lived in luxury inherited from that old Judas? Why didn't you tell us, and give us a chance — ? "

Mr. Rudd rose up in his turn, at last betraying something like impatience. " I'd ask you to be reasonable, only it would be like asking you to have a sense of humor," he said, bitingly. " You're as childish as Eugene, working yourself up into these hysterics over nothing — "

Steve stopped abruptly in his pacing; he looked at his father hard. " This is enlightening," he said at length. " I see now why Eugene broke with you. He found out, too! Somehow I *thought* there was something more behind it — something besides his drinking."

" I am not going to discuss Eugene with you," said his father with a kind of caustic deliberation. " I'm not going to discuss anything with you, until you get into a frame of mind more nearly resembling sanity." And hereupon the head of the house of Rudd walked out of the room and down the steps and into the waiting automobile which rolled him away officewards with, in a manner of speaking, flags flying and all the honors of war.

He could even laugh a little as he reviewed the encounter. " Tainted money " was a phrase going the rounds of the press

just then, and Lawson told himself that the boy had merely taken up that catchword. He was quite eloquent and entertaining on the subject at the luncheon-table at the irreproachable club where he and a handful of cronies gathered every day. It was a dim, wealthy, fastidious place with elderly waiters, a well-known cuisine, Victorian traditions of exclusiveness.

"The young people," said Lawson, over his sherry cocktail; "are forever finding out all of a sudden that everything is not invariably for the best in this best of all possible worlds, and without stopping to observe that human beings can't be perfect — "

"Be a deuce of a tiresome place if they were!" somebody grunted.

"Quite so! But, without stopping to see that great fundamental truth, and without noticing that, as it is, we're a good deal of an improvement over previous generations, and are going on improving slowly but surely — without knowing or noticing these facts, they immediately go screaming around, wanting everything to be set right, and everybody to reform, according to their standards."

"Take off your coat and give it to your neighbor, hey? There's something about that in the Bible, isn't there?" said the other man. "And what would the neighbor do with *his* coat, logically? Looks as if there would be a grand swapping around of coats!" He eyed Lawson's well-cut suit appreciatively. "Would you throw in the pants, Lawson?" Whereat the whole table grinned, and their talk presently passed to other matters.

Steven did not turn up at the office, a fact which nowise surprised his father. "The boy has some sense of humor after all — and that's the next thing to common-sense," he thought with a mingling of amusement, regret, tolerance. When all was said, there was something fine and high about the young man's fiery foolishness; if they must quarrel — and occasional quarrels seemed inevitable between the average parents and the average children, Lawson told himself philosophically — he would rather it were over this piece of dead-and-gone knavery, than upon the ignoble subjects of such quarrels in general: idleness, low dissipations, money

or property. "He'll get over this Sir Galahad feeling directly. He'll realize that I myself have always acted decently and been square, no matter what the poor old gentleman did — which can't be undone at this date," the father thought; and with a half-smile: "Fancy my telling his mother! And all of us going and living in a tenement-house until I got on my feet again!"

When he reached home, Mrs. Rudd was out as usual, at a tea perhaps. Lawson did not see her until he came down into the drawing-room dressed for dinner, a little early; there was Mrs. Lawson, elegant as a Romney portrait, in a trained afternoon toilette, with a great muff, and with a long, eminently becoming fur scarf disengaging gracefully from her shoulders, while she held converse with the butler. She turned her amazingly fresh, youthful face towards him with a little cry of exaggerated horror. "Mercy, Lawson, are you ready *al*ready? I had no idea it was so late. I must fly! What's this sudden departure of Steve's about? Does he have to go to New York on business? Why, he's getting to be quite important, isn't he?"

## CHAPTER III

THE Astorbilt model tenement called St. John's Buildings is situated, as nearly all the other half of the world knows, on a street towards the upper end and east side of Manhattan Island, within shouting distance of either Avenue A or the river. It takes up most of the square, and being of the latest fireproof and sanitary construction, with walls of dressed stone, a great, broad-arched entrance through which any number of delivery-wagons may drive abreast, and an inner court whence iron stairways ascend to the upper floors, it has a foreign, mediæval look not unpleasing and assuredly not often met with amongst tenements. Mr. Steven Rudd, for whom that last word evoked, as with most of us, a hazy picture of tumbledown wooden rookeries, slatternly women, unhallowed garments strung on clothesline, or festooned out of the windows, ancient garbage-cans, terrifically soiled babies — young Mr. Rudd, I say, arriving one cold afternoon via the Third Avenue Elevated and a walk across town, was infinitely surprised and impressed by the spectacle of St. John's. To be sure, there were milk-bottles and more or less dubious bedding airing on some of the fire-escapes, and derelict papers rustled about the enclosure where a push-cart man was carrying on a thriving trade from window to window; but these details contributed a local color without which, Steve thought, the place would have been almost more of a model than one cared to see — too good to be true. He had the human dislike of perfection. Looking about, he found a small, particular door, and a small round-topped window with a grille, behind which might be divined some sort of office, where in more lordly institutions a janitor would have been installed. Through the window he could make out a desk, a high stool, a key-rack; and in answer to his ring there appeared sure enough an authoritative-looking person in

overalls, with a pipe and furthermore with that universal badge and sign of the janitor's profession, a monkey-wrench.

"Good-morr-rnin'!" said this official in a richly Hibernian accent, adding, after an appreciable interval, manifestly on that second thought which is rumored to be always best: "Sor!" And meanwhile he promenaded his eyes, in the highly descriptive Gallic idiom, over the young man from head to foot.

"Does Mr. Eugene Rudd live here?" Steve asked.

"He does!" said the other, winding up with an exhaustive survey of Steve's Bond Street valise, standing on the pavement alongside. "Sor!" he added, as before. "Up th' firrst landin'; it's th' dure to yer rright." He replaced his pipe, but as Steven made a motion, took it out again to remark, with a manner nicely balanced between inquiry and accusation: "Ye know him?"

"Why, yes. Yes, of course I know him."

"Well thin, ye *know* him!" said the other cryptically. "He's in. He's been in a matter of a coupla da-ays forbye. Ye wouldn't be th' gintleman thot was phonin' two-three times?"

"No. I'm a relative. I've just got here," said Steven, his face clouding. For some reason — or rather for no reason! — he had confidently expected to find Eugene sober, ready with his tireless and boundless sympathy to listen, to be interested, to agree, to advise; and the hint conveyed in the above statements was infinitely disheartening. Perhaps the warden of St. John's read as much in the young man's face for he said quickly, with true Irish good feeling, "He's all rr-ight by now, I'm thinkin'. Sure ye'll foind him all rright. Loikely as not 'twas wan of thim colds he has by times. Turrible he has 'em!"

"He's lived here a good while?" said Steven.

The janitor said he had *thot!* Sivin years Mister R-rudd was livin' there, and as fine a gintleman entirely — He was still talking when Steve reached the door on the first landing, having in his undue hurry omitted a small ceremony which the other for his part probably had in mind very distinctly, for it was not without disappointment that he looked after the young man — a young man who, by his

appearance should have both pockets lined with money, and to whom a bit of a tip would mean nothing!

Steven rang, and in a moment heard a steady enough step across the floor inside; and Eugene himself opened the door. "Laundry?" he called out, extending a hand with a coin in the palm. "Got change for a dollar?"

His voice was reassuringly clear — as clear, that is to say, as Eugene's voice ever was; it must have been many a year since the poor scapegrace's tones or enunciation had been those nature bestowed upon him at the beginning of his ill-starred career. Steve, though he could see the other's face only imperfectly in the half-light, felt a good deal relieved and heartened, and said: "No, it's not the laundry. Hello, Eugene!"

At the words Eugene started and peered at him and peered again; he exclaimed aloud, falling back a step. "*Steven!*" he shouted, and like the janitor, eyed Steve all over, but as one unable to trust his own vision. He looked around the young man, and down and up the courtyard with its serried windows, as if expecting to find an answer there to the riddle of this apparition. "*Steven!* What the — ?" Words left him; he could only stand and stare.

"May I come in?" said Steve.

Eugene mechanically held the door open, and as Steven stepped within, mechanically closed it. In another second, however, he recovered enough to ask: "For the Lord's sake, Steve, what are you doing *here?*"

"Why, you invited me to come and see you any time I was in New York, didn't you?" Steve reminded him. "Well, here I am!" He set the valise down in the middle of the floor.

Eugene's eyes followed the movement, then returned to dwell on him a long instant. Then he said quite collectedly now: "All right! But what's happened?"

Neither of them thought of shaking hands in the flurry of the meeting; and it was now Steve's turn to be taken aback. The quickness and accuracy of the other's intuitions somehow caught him unaware.

"'What's happened?'" he echoed, with an attempt at jocularity. "What makes you think anything's happened?

Is it phenomenal for you to have a visitor in St. John's Buildings?"

"A little," Eugene retorted, good-humoredly. "You see I'm not under any illusions about the attractiveness of my way of life, or the place where I live it. What's it all about, anyhow, Steven? Here, wait a minute! Sit down, get your coat off. I've got some coffee on the stove — "

He vanished abruptly into an inner room, whence there issued at the moment a prodigious hissing sound of something boiling over, accompanied by a cloud of agreeably odorous steam. Steven obeyed him, looking around meanwhile. Eugene's particular tenement appeared to consist of three cubicles arranged side by side; the main room in which Steven was sitting, and by inference each of the others, measured about eight by twelve feet, and had a single window at the outside end; next to it was the kitchen, as he judged by Eugene's activities and by glimpses of a gas-range, a sink, a laundry-tub, some shelving, all of doll's-house dimensions; beyond, presumably, there was a bedroom. Steven, taking stock of the immediate surroundings, found them of monastic simplicity and cleanliness. There were bare walls, a bare floor, a solid old black table, a case of books, two chairs; but a row of geraniums flaming in their stoneware pots enlivened the window-sill.

"Had your breakfast?" Eugene asked, coming back with the coffee-pot in one hand and a tray in the other.

"Yes, thank you, on the train. Haven't you had yours?"

"I never take anything but this coffee," said Eugene. He set the apparatus down on the table, shoving aside the pipes and papers collected at that end, sat down himself in the remaining chair, and poured a cup. The tray and pot and cream-jug were of pewter, possibly antique, meticulously clean, winking with polish. "I had just finished dressing when you came," he said. "Finished shaving — with the edge-razor," he added dryly, and took a sip. "It's rather lucky you didn't come a day or so ago."

"That wouldn't have made any difference to me," said Steven, awkwardly.

Eugene shrugged. "What made you come, anyhow? You have an air of unpremeditated adventure. You look as if, in

plain language, you were completely and entirely on your own."

"Well, I am. It's queer how you guessed that right away."

Eugene eyed him over the rim of the cup. "Not so very queer," he said with a grin. "But what's up? Have the Rudd Chemicals gone bust all of a sudden? Chemicals are unreliable explosive sort of stuff at best. Don't you know where your next dollar is to come from?"

"No, and I don't care so long as it's not one of their damned dollars!" said Steven, with a violence which might have been melodramatic if it had not expressed so genuine and deep-seated a feeling. Eugene put down the cup, and dropped his hands on his knees; he was opening his mouth on a question when Steve forestalled him with a torrent of words.

"I found out something. It was an accident — nobody told me — I found it out. I mean Father and Uncle Elihu didn't tell me. They would never have told me. But I don't believe it's ever any good to try to hide things like that; there's that old saying, *murder will out!* I stumbled on this — just stumbled on it. Eugene, you know what it was! Of course you never told me either; you thought you ought not to, in your position — or maybe you thought I knew already, like the rest of them. I didn't. I never imagined such iniquity — and for the sake of money! It's revolting. As soon as I found out, I felt just the way you must have. I felt I couldn't touch another cent of it. I told Father. We had a sort of scene — the whole business is unspeakable — degrading. He said I reminded him of you; that's how I discovered you knew about the thing, too. So then I got out. I've come here to you. I knew you'd understand."

Eugene's features, which had reflected only variations of astonishment and inquiry during most of this wild harangue, brightened and softened indefinably towards the end of it. There was tenderness, and fellow-feeling, too, in his look. "You wouldn't stand for the Metaderma, either, Steve? I thought they'd quit making that old stuff. But *you* wouldn't stand for it either, hey? Well, well, poor Lawson!" he ejaculated with a kind of whimsical and humane irony.

"The Metaderma? You mean the Pancurata. Why, they *have* stopped making it. Of course that was a shameful swindle, too. I didn't know anything about it — I never thought about what it really must have been. But this has opened my eyes. No, I'm not talking about that but about the other, Eugene. The quinine — "

"The quinine?" repeated Eugene, vacantly. But Steven did not notice; he went on talking, going over the same thing restlessly and miserably, making motions to get up and stride about the room, but restrained at every impulse by the patent fact that one stride would bring him up all standing against a wall! There resulted a series of abortive jack-in-the-box movements which might have been comic if the young fellow's suffering had not been so real. At least Eugene Rudd was not moved to laughter; he sat with his hands on his knees, listening in a state of perplexity that at last became visible and unmistakable even to Steven.

"What's the matter? You look so — oh, I forgot I hadn't told you yet how I found out," he said, halting in the middle of another speech. "I didn't think how queer it would sound to you, after my expressly saying that nobody told me. They told *you*, I suppose."

"They told me a lot of things," said Eugene, hesitating slightly. "I — I don't believe they told me everything, though."

"Yes, but you're so quick, you guessed, didn't you?"

"I didn't have to do much guessing," said Eugene, grimly.

"Well, I found out for myself, in the strangest way. You'd never believe — ! It's as if some fate or destiny or — well — the hand of God were in it," said Steven, bringing out the last shrinkingly. "I — I don't believe in religion — creeds — all that, you know. I don't quite know what I do believe in — a person doesn't talk about it. It seems as if there must be Something higher than ourselves, but whether It would interfere in this way — ? Too much like some kind of juggling — and I'm not so important, anyhow. Only the sins of the fathers *do* get visited on the children, once in a while, maybe. But you'd think the best way would have been to stop the wrong-doing in the beginning. Well! — " he gave up the problem with a hopeless gesture. "Anyhow,

the way I found out was this: — " And he forthwith plunged into the story of Doctor Vardaman's diary, to which Eugene listened with even more interest than was to be looked for. " I couldn't do anything else, you see. I couldn't go on living on that money! " Steven declared again at the end.

The other was not so responsive as Steven had expected; indeed Eugene could scarcely be said to respond at all. He merely looked thoughtful and more or less troubled, and when at length he did speak, his words seemed startlingly inadequate. " They were a bad lot, some of the business-men of that generation. Some, not all! This quinine cheat, though — you couldn't go much lower than that. Still, I don't see what's to be done about it now, Steven."

" Why, that's almost exactly what Father said! " cried out Steven, after an instant of bewilderment. " You don't mean to uphold him — after breaking with him for this very thing? "

" I'm older now," said Eugene. But, as self-absorbed as Steven was, the studious indirectness of this reply, of some of Eugene's other replies, perhaps some unguarded or over-guarded expression on his face, struck a new idea like a sword into the younger man's mind.

" Eugene, you *didn't* know about this! You didn't know about it after all! "

" Why, I — I — no, I didn't, Steven," the other admitted. " I didn't mean to lead you on to talk and tell me about it either, but — "

Steven cut him short, gesticulating impatiently. " You couldn't have stopped me. And you've got as good a right to know as the rest of us, anyway. But do you mean to say you hadn't any suspicion of it, even? "

Eugene shook his head. " Nobody ever told me, either. They wouldn't, naturally."

There was a dead silence while Steve adjusted his mind to this new angle; what Eugene's was busy with, it would have been hard to guess. He musingly considered the younger Rudd, and finished drinking his coffee.

" Well then, if you never found out about the counterfeit quinine, what made you break away? What *did* you find out? " Steven demanded at length.

The other man answered with deliberate harshness. "I didn't need to find out anything." He spread his arms wide in a gesture that offered his entire self, body and soul, past and present, to public scrutiny and valuation. "Do you blame them?"

There might have been a time when Steven would have been silenced by such a hint; but now the young man doubted. Dormant memories sprang to life, thrusting upon him scraps of his father's talk, of Eugene's own talk, changes of expression, eyes that evaded his own. For that matter, Eugene was not looking straight at him now. "They didn't put you out. Father told me himself that you went of your own accord," said he accusingly. "Father said —"

"Oh Lord, never mind what he said! I daresay he tried to save everybody's face, mine included. What's the use, Steve? It's all over and done with these fifteen years. Can't you let it rest?" Eugene cried out disgustedly. Still, to Steven's sharpened eyes, the pose was exaggerated; still he sensed the over-acted dissimulation of an intrinsically honest man.

"Oh, cut out all that talk! You might as well tell me the truth," he said, with a kind of irritated composure. "You've given yourself away partly, anyhow, by trying so hard not to give yourself away. I know it's a point of honor with you not to say anything to me about the rest of the family; but there's no call to be quixotic. You can't poison my mind *now*, and nobody can accuse you of it. *You* turned up something, too, and you might as well tell me what it was. Look here, what was that you said when I started in to tell you? You thought you knew what I was talking about then. It wasn't the Pancurata — you called it something else. What was it you said? The derma-something? You began —"

Eugene arrested him with an uplifted hand. "Why, goodness gracious, of course I'll tell you," he said, with a resumption of that manner of detachment, not without cynicism, not without levity, yet not wholly unkind, which seemed natural to him; if he had any other outlook on life, higher or lower, he never betrayed it. "I would have liked to get out of telling, because frankly, the episode seems to me now to have been rather trivial — a sort of tempest in a teapot. The Metaderma was what I said —"

"Metaderma. Yes. What was it?"

"Why, Steven, it was a kind of hang-over from the old gentleman's time. The old gentleman must have been a bird!" said Eugene, wagging his head. "My own father — but still — ! After all, he died when I was only three or four years old, so that I can barely remember him. Iron-gray skilligans —" here Eugene swept a hand down either cheek to indicate flowing whiskers — "iron-gray skilligans, and false teeth! That's all I can recall of the late David, and taken with various disclosures, it's not surprising that I don't hold him in pious and affectionate veneration. The Metaderma was an off-shoot of the same idea as the Pancurata, only — er — more so. They were still making it along back in eighteen ninety-seven when I went into the office. It was a stuff designed to sell widely among the colored population, because of its peculiar virtue of bleaching 'em out — turning them into white folks, you know. You took it internally and externally, both; a bottle a week for six weeks did the business — it was a dollar a bottle straight, five dollars for six bottles. Money refunded if a complete transformation was not effected — always provided you had followed the directions implicitly —"

"For God's sake, don't laugh!"

"That's the way I felt too, Steve, when I first heard about it," said Eugene. "But being horrible doesn't keep it from being grotesque. There's one thing to be said: I believe the stuff was harmless; gallons of it wouldn't have hurt one."

"Well?"

"Well, I told you they were still making it when I came along. But the sales had fallen off, particularly in the South, where you'd have expected it to go like hot cakes. Maybe the colored brother down there was too well educated and didn't place any confidence in the labels and the advertising 'literature' — or maybe he wasn't educated enough, and simply couldn't read them. Maybe he was self-respecting and wanted to stay the way the Lord made him, and then again maybe he was afraid to take any chances on getting himself done over. Anyhow he wasn't buying the Metaderma. They were on the point of closing it out — quitting

the manufacture — " He interrupted himself to rise and search the table for tobacco and matches. Steven mutely refused; so Eugene picked out a pipe which he proceeded to clean and fill with elaborate care.

"They were going to drop it when Brother Elihu — *Brother Elihu!*" — Eugene interpolated, grimacing — "had a brilliant idea. Why not put young Eugene in charge of that especial branch down in Atlanta? It would be a good opening for the fellow — good enough for *him,* that is. He could learn the business." He paused, blowing through the pipe-stem.

"So *that* was why!" said Steven.

"Yes. The plan itself was flawless — only young Eugene refused!"

He spoke without venom, impersonally as if this bit of biography related to someone else; and Steven told him so, wondering. "I don't know how they had treated you before, but that offer seems to me the final indecency!" he said. "I suppose you've got used to the recollection somehow, you talk about it so coolly. Anybody might think it had all happened to another man."

"Well, it did, in a way. What's become of that Eugene Rudd — that hot-headed lad of twenty-one or so? *I* don't know! I daresay he's one of those stepping-stones of our dead selves by which we rise to higher things — as what's-his-name has so beautifully and poetically put it," said Eugene, glancing about the bare room in cheerful irony. He expertly tamped down a pinch of tobacco in the bowl of the pipe, knitting his brows thoughtfully the while. "I will say this for myself — since we're on the subject — that I've never regretted or wanted to take back a single word of mine on that occasion. And yet, Steve, if I had it to do over again, I know I'd do it differently."

"What *did* you do, Eugene?"

"Oh, we had a violent time, of course," said the other, striking a match. "I flew into a rage, and stormed away at both of them. A mistake, Steven," he commented, shaking his head. "Natural, but a mistake. I wouldn't fly into a rage nowadays. I'd simply say no, and let it go at that. It would be much more effective — a kind of dramatic point.

They were reasonable men, intelligent men. They'd have dropped it — the Metaderma, I mean. It wasn't paying, anyhow. I'm sure they did drop it afterwards. It was a mistake to assume right off the bat that way that they were both arrant scoundrels. The trouble was," said Eugene, drawing at the pipe with half-shut eyes, something like a smile appearing on his face; "the trouble was I honestly thought they *were* scoundrels!"

"What else could you think? It was a scoundrelly business," said Steven. He did get up at last, in a desperate need of some sort of action, and tramped about the contracted space. "I can't think what was the matter with all of them, from my grandfather down. They — why, they don't seem to have had the slightest sense of rectitude! They didn't have any morals."

"Why, Lord love you, Steven, they were all balled up with morals — they just lacked a conscience," said Eugene, rather amused. "At least that's the way I've figured it out. Take old David, the original sinner; I have no doubt he was a good man, a man without vices. Would *he* have put anything into his mouth that would steal away his brains, as — ahem! — others have been known to do? Not he! He never took a drop too much in his life. Which of the Commandments did he ever break? Never a one! He paid his just debts, went to church, helped the needy, lived honestly with his wife — his two wives! — held up his head and gave thanks that he was not as other men. All the while he was making the Pancurata and the Metaderma, and working off bogus drugs on the Government. Somehow he contrived to disassociate commercial success and common honesty. That generation seems to have been more able in that direction than the present. I don't believe there's nearly so much of that sort of thing going on now. The sun do move. Mankind does creep forward. Now your father wouldn't do that sort of thing, Steve."

"Only because they've got better ways of keeping track of fraud and punishing it nowadays. Father is too prudent; he'd be afraid of getting found out," said Steven bitterly.

"Shut up, you young idiot!" said Eugene with entire composure and good-nature, yet forcibly. "You know your

father isn't afraid of anything on this earth. Any fool can do wrong. Your father has too much sense."

Steven stopped in front of him, eying him perplexedly. "You always talk about him as if you liked him, Eugene — liked him and admired him. And yet Heaven knows you have no cause to!"

"Why, I *do* like him — and what's more, he'd like me, if I were anybody but who I am," retorted the other. "That time when we had the row over the Metaderma —"

"Yes, I was going to ask you about that," said Steven, with frank curiosity. "What did they say? I can't imagine what they could find to say."

"Why, each man behaved quite in his character. Brother Elihu — *Brother Elihu!* — got mad, and cussed me out, and told me some pretty unpalatable truths about myself, and — and said some things about my mother which were not true. My poor mother was not clever, but she was an honest woman. Oh no, your father didn't do anything like that —" he added, interpreting at once with his usual prompt *finesse* the pained and reluctant inquiry of Steven's face. "Your father wouldn't get down to any such mud-slinging level as that. He has ten times the intellect of Elihu, and he has imagination. He could see my point of view — put himself in my place. Only I had angered him hopelessly. Brother Lawson — *Brother Lawson* — was very quiet but cutting. I remember that at the last when I said I would go, intimating that I shook the dust off my boots on to the place forever, that Lawson said —" And here Eugene actually chuckled — "*Brother Lawson* said that I could go if I chose, and go to the devil for all of him! He said he would not lift a finger to save me from the jail which I *might possibly* escape! And when I screeched out at him at take back that insult or, etc., etc., Lawson said with the most admirable calm: 'Oh, very well, the jail you *won't* escape!' That was very neat, Steven, very neat. No question of it, your father's a very bright man."

"He said to me once that *you* were a bright man," said Steve.

"Did he, did he? Did Lawson say that?" cried Eugene, his dully mottled face suddenly reddening with pleasure;

then he controlled himself in some confusion. " Well, that was all that happened, Steven. Nothing remains now but to wash up these dishes — a sufficiently symbolic action!" With which he gathered together the coffee-service, and went again into the kitchen.

Steven followed him, offering to help. " Can't I do something? Make a bed or something?" he asked vaguely.

" No, never mind the bed. Better not go in there just now — I'll tidy it up directly," said Eugene, rather hastily interposing between his guest and the farthest cubicle. He went on smoking over the foaming hot suds. " What are you going to do now you've flown the paternal coop, Steve? Got anything in mind?"

" Why, no, nothing very definite," the young fellow confessed, feeling all at once both foolish and disconsolate. " I've got some money — a hundred and sixty dollars, I thought it would do for a few days — won't it?" he inquired in alarm at Eugene's countenance; " of course I know all about New York prices, but — "

" A hundred and sixty dollars! And he wants to know if it will do for a few days!" said Eugene, apostrophizing the ceiling with melodramatic intonations. " What does it look like, oh gilded youth? There be those who have never seen as much in one lump all their lives. A hundred and sixty? Can such things be? And he wants to do something — he wants to *work,* with all that in his pocket!"

" Well, I have to. It won't last forever," said Steven, determined to be practical. " I — I thought of trying the magazines again with some of those things I've written, you know. I've gone all over them, and — polished them off a little more. They aren't so bad, judging by the things that do get published."

" No, indeed! They're all right — but the magazines aren't a very reliable source of income," said the other, humanely enough. " If your stuff doesn't happen to strike the editor-lad just right, it doesn't make any difference how good it is as a literary production." He wiped the coffee pot round and round, considering. " Tell you what, there's a rich old whale over on Madison Avenue who's got a library that I'm cataloguing — that is, I *was* cataloguing," he

amended, with a grin. "I don't know whether I've still got the job. Might try him. I could ring you in as my assistant."

"But I don't know how to catalogue a library. I've no more idea how to go about it than the man in the moon!" protested Steve, horrified.

"Tut, tut, my son, you can learn. You've had a college education, a degree. It's nothing in the world but a sort of classified inventorying — takes some acquaintance with books and writers, of course. You have to make a beginning somewhere, somehow, and this is a good chance. Old Scads-of-it wouldn't know whether you were doing it right or wrong; he just wants a list of the books. You won't be taking advantage of him," said Eugene, in some amusement. "I say again, tut! And likewise, pish! You come along of me, young Steven, and let's make your fortune!"

## CHAPTER IV

MR. ADAM J. SACKETT'S house on Madison Avenue was a brown stone monolith, four stories high, counting in the "English basement" with which it was provided after the fashion of the decade '70–'80, during which it had been built. At that time each side of the street had presented an unbroken row of precisely similar monoliths; but twentieth-century taste in architecture had lately been at work amongst these other "English basements" and high front steps and batteries of windows. There were now Italian façades of cut stone, with balustrades, carvings and a good deal of floriated iron-work in a severe and rich style; some of the old mansards had given way to steep-pitched Gothic-looking roofs be-gabled and be-dormered, with intriguing casements; and nothing could surpass the successive entrances for ingenuity and variety of steps, landings, vestibules, lanterns, archways, grilles, miniature portcullises, and what-not. The Sackett residence arrived at a kind of distinction merely by retaining its erstwhile perfectly undistinguished front and approach. Within there were interminable aisles of large, dark rooms heavily upholstered rather than furnished, and apparently never aired. The windows of the double-parlors were draped with obsolete lace curtains and fringed red velvet over-curtains; a table in the middle bore about half a dozen Royal Worcester or Coalport cups and saucers, specimen pieces mounted on diminutive brass easels; and a bronze peacock, life-size, presided over both rooms from the top of a marble pedestal with a fat, spiral column. The effect of the whole was something between a Pullman sleeper and the stage-setting for the first act of, let us say, "The Mighty Dollar," that forgotten masterpiece of about equal date. It would have been difficult to imagine anything in the nature of a home more

thoroughly un-homelike, even in that era of un-homelike housing.

"Why, what could you expect?" Eugene said, upon Steven's making the above comment. "It wouldn't represent Sackett's taste, even if he had any. He bought it as it stands, with everything in it, lock, stock and barrel, at some sheriff's sale in partition, when some other forlorn old geezer without chick or child died and his estate came to be divided up, you know. I suppose it was a bargain."

"'Some other'? Why 'some other'?"

"Why, because Sackett himself is a widower or a bachelor, maybe, and lives here all alone, except for the servants. There's a whole tribe of them. I daresay he pays them monumental wages, and I daresay they laugh at him and sneer behind his back; his manners leave something to be desired, you know; I fear he will never become a social leader. Rather dismal — a middle-aged man who doesn't know what to do with himself and his money. He made it all in cheap whiskey — Sackett's Super-Rye, Sackett's Old-Vatted Anderson County, Sackett's Tomahawk Brand. Same blend all of it, a blend of God knows what — almost anything but whiskey, I judge. He's out of the business now, with a whacking fortune, and as I was saying, no way of spending it. Never drinks a drop himself! You'll see him — a very plain, quiet, decent man."

It was some time, however, before Steven's first view of his employer-elect. The servants indeed were abundantly visible, a crew of idle, overpaid and impudent underlings fully vindicating Eugene's slight sketch of them; but it may be worthy of note that after one essay in familiarity, none of them comported himself otherwise than with due decorum and as a well-mannered domestic should in the presence of either Mr. Rudd. The fact is curious and instructive, especially taken with the other fact that neither Eugene nor Steven had anything to bestow in the way of tips, or sought to assert any kind of superiority — "giving himself airs," as the kitchen and backstairs would undoubtedly have described it. Yet the butler, instead of slouching around in felt slippers, an ancient, spotted alpaca coat and Isabella-hued linen, spruced up noticeably after only a day or so of

the two gentlemen; and the maids, who similarly had been wearing all sorts of nondescript garments, with boudoir-caps, over their uncombed heads all day long, now took to their most dashing uniforms, aprons and attitudes, and displayed a fervid industry all over the house, but more particularly in and near the library!

This was the one livable spot in the whole dreary desert of Victorian magnificence; it occupied the entire front of the house, on the second floor, its ceiling vaulted majestically, and its high walls panelled with books; a mammoth stone chimneypiece where nobody ever ventured to make a fire, until Eugene profaned it with trash that had to be burned, gloomed at one end. The black walnut cases and tables and the wadded armchairs, and the saturnine marble busts of classic authors suited the atmosphere of a library well enough; and here the two Rudds labored day by day in an increasingly good fellowship. There were something like five thousand volumes, old and new, good, bad and indifferent, some few rarities, a first edition or so; but nothing offered any clue to the tastes or personality of the collector.

" It would be more interesting if Mr. Sackett had a fad for something — biography or poetry or caricature — anything," Steven said; whereat Eugene hooted with derision.

" Wait till you see him! You'll understand then. He's never opened a book in his life, not these nor any others. I told you he bought the library along with everything else, just because it happened to be here. The Police Gazette and the liquor-trade journals are Adam J.'s staples in the literature line — and he probably goes to sleep over them."

" Well, then, why does he want these catalogued? I shouldn't think he'd care how many there were, or what they were about."

" Wrong again, young Steven! He wants to know exactly where he stands on the whole deal. I'm to value the books as we go along, you know; and we're expected to see what items are missing from the sets, if any, and in what condition they all are. That's approximately what would be done if this were a stock of whiskey he had acquired. If whiskey, why not books? Mr. Sackett is a business man," said Eugene with gravity.

It was this same day, as they were busy together, Steven calling off, and Eugene noting down in a loose-leaf system of indices which he had himself invented, that the proprietor of the library strolled in upon them, unheralded, and in a not at all proprietorial manner, on the contrary rather like a chance visitor at some museum of oddities. Mr. Sackett was heavy-set, about the age of Steve's father, with gray hair, a good-humored face, a very careful and prosperous-looking suit of clothes, no diamond studs or cuff-buttons as Steve had expected, but with a signet-ring on one little finger and a double watch-chain and a Masonic charm, which more than made up the lack. Eugene, warned by the suspension of the reading, looked up from his notes and nodded, and the other nodded back in a style of great friendliness.

" My assistant," said Eugene, jerking his head in Steven's direction; " name's Rudd, too."

It struck Steve that he spoke in an unnecessarily loud voice, but when the other man said " Hey? " turning one ear, the reason became clear; Mr. Sackett was slightly deaf. Only slightly, though, or else he had cultivated a habit of observation, for he caught the name almost instantly, repeating it himself, before Eugene had time. " Rudd? Another Rudd, hey? " said Mr. Sackett, and shook the young man's hand with a genial and also an eminently shrewd glance out of his little, bright blue eyes. Then he asked Eugene how they were "coming on? "

" Not that there's any hurry," he said agreeably; " only I calculate from your finding you had to have an assistant that the job turned out heavier than you looked for."

" No. It's just about what I thought," said Eugene.

" He doesn't have to have me. I'm just learning," Steven cried out, painstakingly.

" Hey? Just learning? Well, now! " said the ex-whiskey dealer, his eyes travelling over Steve's athletic proportions with a certain mild surprise. " Well, now! " Mr. Sackett very deliberately pulled up the widest and thickest easy-chair, settled himself in it deliberately, and drew out a brown paper envelope, which he tentatively extended towards them both. "Have a cigar? No? Well, I didn't use to smoke in business-hours myself," he said, selecting one. This

he proceeded to light and smoke, still with the utmost deliberation, and in the evident purpose of killing time the rest of the afternoon with them. "Don't let me being here interfere," he said, observing them to hesitate, exchanging looks. "I'm just looking on. I don't aim to tell you nothing about your work. I don't know nothing about it myself. You just go on same as if I wasn't here."

So said, so done! They took him at his word, continuing to call off and write down as before, and by and by would actually have forgotten him, had it not been for his exceedingly strong cigar. On his side, Mr. Sackett had no appearance, as might be inferred, of standing guard lest they waste time or maltreat his books; he sat quietly, comfortably and unobtrusively, with wreaths of smoke curling around his head, wide awake yet in complete repose, "looking on," as he had promised, to the very letter. Occasionally he spoke: "Them covers are real tasty," "I guess that picture of that lady is what they call a steel-engraving, ain't it?" "If you'd like more of a fire to burn them old wrapping-papers and stuff up in, Mr. Rudd, I'll have the help fix it for you. It's none too warm here, anyhow." Such were Mr. Sackett's contributions to sociability; and the strange thing was that for all their terseness and fragmentary character, they did convey a distinctly sociable feeling.

The afternoon wore along, and at five o'clock, Eugene said to him: "Well, I believe we'll call it a day, Mr. Sackett."

"Sure! You musta put in your full union hours," the other agreed readily. "There's a nice little wash-up place, down in the hall, kinder in under the staircase. Did they show you that?" Being assured that they had been shown, he followed them to the head of the stairs, and remained there — below in the wash-up place, they could hear him moving about — until they left the house.

"He seemed to be wavering between a desire to see us off the premises, and a reasonable doubt as to whether it would look hospitable or mannerly," Steven said with a laugh, as they walked away. "Has he ever come and sat around that way before?"

"Two or three times. He never stayed so long, though. I believe he's lonesome," said Eugene thoughtfully.

The next day, when they arrived, there was, sure enough, a fine fire blazing away under the great carved mausoleum of a mantel, which did not look nearly so forbidding, being put to its natural uses. "Makes the place a whole lot cosier, don't it?" Mr. Sackett said in pleased accents, upon joining them at about the same time as before. "That was a good idea I had!" And again he sat by for several hours, smoking contentedly, throwing in a word now and then, until they finished up for the day.

This became a regular feature of the daily routine. It reminded Steven weirdly of tales of fairyland or adventure he had loved to read long ago as a romance-mongering boy. He entertained both Eugene and himself endlessly with fantastic inventions about Adam J. Sackett. As that the house was a ghost-house; it really did not exist at all; some fine morning they would walk over there only to find a city-park or a huge apartment-building on the site, and upon inquiry it would develop that they had been asleep forty years, and only a few doddering oldest inhabitants would recall with difficulty that there had once been a man named Sackett, living there in a brown-stone-front. Or: Adam J. was a modernized version of the Flying Dutchman, doomed to spend a bootless eternity amongst legions of books, until he read them all through — which he never could do owing to having cursed the alphabet when he was set to learn it in the primary grade. Or: he was a masculine Circe, surrounded by and gloating over the souls of luckless librarians whom he had turned into books, and only waiting the appropriate moment to ensorcerize Eugene and Steven themselves, after the same fashion!

"We must each wear an amulet, and make horns with our fingers whenever we see him looking at us, the way the Neapolitan peasants do to ward off the evil eye," the young fellow said solemnly; "also be very cautious in your references to the Prince of Darkness. Haven't you noticed a faint flavor of brimstone when he lights his cigar? He's just waiting his chance. I distinctly saw the head of Lord Byron nod in obedience to some secret sign from him the other day; it nodded and grinned fiendishly. Eugene, I say to you, Beware! You have not been over-respectful to Lord B."

Eugene laughed, and they both laughed. The fact was that, a day or so before, Mr. Sackett had asked, casually indicating the row of busts, if they were supposed to be likenesses of real people, or just fancy heads? "I should judge 'em to be likenesses, if you asked *me*. Because heads would be better looking," he observed acutely enough; and Eugene confirmed him.

"They are all portraits and quite recognizable," he said; "excepting that one —" and he pointed to Lord Byron. "To represent Byron with a stone head is misleading," said Eugene, without a smile. "In life he was a mush-head."

Mr. Sackett looked at him, looked at the bust, looked at Steven, and gradually began to chuckle. "Say!" he said finally, "You don't know what a jolt you give me then! I didn't expect a literary man would say a thing like that — make fun, you know."

Thus their days passed; and it may be questioned if this time were not, on the whole, the happiest of Steve Rudd's life so far. He was doing what he liked better and indeed may have been better fitted for by temperament than anything he had ever done before; he was earning very little money — but it was clean; he had moments of leisure for ventures in the art of letters not all of which were unprofitable; he had hunted up or run across a friend or two, mostly from college-days, young fellows like himself trying a hazard of new fortunes; he was twenty-four years old, in good health, and full of radiant expectations; what more could a man want? Steve was never bored nowadays; he never felt himself in the way, superfluous, only tolerated because of being his father's son. Sometimes he thought of his days in the office with wonder and contempt. "I don't see how I kept it up so long," he would say to himself. And could he have gone on keeping it up with old David Rudd's accursed money burning his fingers, burning into his conscience, whenever he touched it? Never!

There came a day, however, when his skies were overcast by an event the shade of which, to tell the truth, always lay along their horizon. Steven trudged to work alone, and down at heart; and there Mr. Sackett found him at the accustomed hour, getting on by himself with sufficient speed and accuracy, but in the same depression.

"Hello, where's your side-pardner?" Sackett inquired naturally, glancing all about. "Sick?"

"Yes. He's home, that is."

Their eyes met. Sackett said, "Oh!" and sat down fishing out his eternal cigar. "That's a pity," he remarked after a few minutes of smoking and contemplating Steven's industry. "About how often does he get those spells? Every three months or so, hey? Yeah, that's what I thought. You can't keep him off it, hey? Never mind, don't say nothing!" he interposed quickly, as Steven was about to speak; "don't explain. I knew about him, already, of course. It ain't necessary to tell me, and besides, owing to me being hard of hearing, why, somebody else might hear you — some of these hired help, you know — and there's no call for that, I guess. I'm pretty good at lip-reading, or face-reading — that's the biggest part of it — account of having had to practice so much. Say, tell you what: you knock off for a minute and set down here and less talk — not about your pardner, I don't mean. Less just talk."

Steven accepted this invitation, seeing that it was proffered, if bluntly like the rest of Mr. Sackett's speech, in real kindness of heart. He sat down and they talked. The young man was surprised, on review, that they could find so much to talk about; he had not supposed they would have an idea or an interest in common. To be sure his own part was mainly that of listener; Sackett asked him only a few questions about himself, and those not at all pointed, not at all searching, concerning only matters which might have come within any young man's experience, and which any young man might answer without embarrassment. As, where he had gotten his "eddication," and what he proposed to do after this present job, and so on. If the ex-whiskey-dealer felt any curiosity, he restrained it, whether out of a certain native courtesy or mere worldly wisdom, Steven did not know; but he liked Sackett the better for it.

Adam J. himself, as was abundantly evident, had had next to no "eddication" whatever, a lack which he looked upon as regrettable but not irremediable. Book-learning, he said — in effect — was more of a luxury than a necessity; you could get along and do well without it — witness his

own case; reading books didn't help a man in ordinary business any. But he realized now that it was a fine thing to fall back on, when you didn't need to work any longer. It was a way of passing the time; and the trouble was that if you didn't get it, the book-habit as you might say, when you were young, you couldn't get it when you reached his age, no matter how much leisure you had. Your mind wouldn't work that way.

In the course of this and subsequent conversations he told Steven a good deal more about himself, releasing impulses which he had probably held in check for nobody knows how many wary, patient, hard-working years. He was born in an Albany slum and began life 'tending bar in that city at the age of fourteen. For ten years or more thereafter, his career embraced such various yet somehow related industries as following the races, promoting prize-fights, running saloons, going steward on boats out of New York on the Panama run — "That was in the old yellow-fever days, too" — he interpolated reminiscently — and taking a fling at professional billiards. Then at last he got into the whiskey-trade; that just suited him; he began in a small way, of course, but he made money right along — never had any set-backs. He got out of it some two or three years previously, because he thought he had enough for any ordinary man; he knew when to quit; no sense working himself to death; he wasn't going to live forever, and he might as well rest up a little. Besides, he might be mistaken, but it looked to him like there was rocks ahead for the liquor-dealers. Prohibition or these here Suffragists would come along and knock the props from under 'em, one of these days. So he got out.

"And here I am, fifty-seven, though I don't feel that old, and not a thing on earth to do!" he said, manifestly holding himself up to examination before his mind's eye, and finding the spectacle one of serio-comedy, contradictory and confusing. "A young fellow like you prob'ly has the idea: 'Gee, it's easy enough to think up ways of spending money!' Well, take it from me, it ain't — and what's more, it ain't so much fun if you could think 'em up! Now I went and bought this house, kind of expecting it would entertain me; and it did, kind of, for a while. But I was getting tired of

it already when I run across the other Mr. Rudd, and got him to invoice these books. I knew all about him pretty soon — right at first, fact is. But I didn't mind — I like to have him around. He's company for me. There's nothing the matter with him, except just that one thing. Do you use any liquor, young man?"

Steven said no; he had always been accustomed to seeing it around the house, and took a drink sometimes — "But I — I really don't like the taste of whiskey," he said, ingenuously blushing over the confession. "And I don't believe I'd ever care very much for the effect, either."

"You're right. There's nothing to it," Sackett said. "Makes you feel good for a little, and then what? 'Taint worth while. Once you get that into your head good and hard, you don't need no laws to keep you off of it. And say, they talk about this dipsomania and drinking being a disease like — like having chilblains. All poppycock! There ain't any dipsomaniacs, but there's a mighty lot of damn fools!"

It was, to say the least, an unexpected pronouncement from the owner and exploiter of Sackett's Super-Rye, Sackett's Tomahawk Brand and all the rest; nevertheless Steven recognized that it came honestly. He found himself rather sorry for Sackett, resourceless and occupationless, driven for companionship to a come-by-chance couple like himself and Eugene. For all his slum origin, his intimate acquaintance with the shabbiest side of life, his own adventures in demi-scoundrelism, there was a certain naïveté and simplicity about this elderly whiskey-seller; and his isolation moved the other's quick sympathies. All sorts and conditions of men and women must have drifted into Sackett's life and out again; but he did not seem to have made lasting friendships with any of them, being perhaps barred by his deafness, perhaps by the caution his experiences had bred and fostered until it became second nature, perhaps by a queer kind of shyness that was not without its standards. "If I was married, I wouldn't be so kind of alone — even if we didn't get along together first-rate," was one of the things he said. "But I ain't ever known many ladies — nobody I'd have liked to try being married to, anyhow. A good many single men when they get to my time of life take and marry

their stenographer or some telephone or candy-counter girl they pick up somewhere. But that way of doing don't appeal to me. It would be all right for you; but at my age — " He shook his head.

They were well established in the safe friendliness which is always conscious of reserves, by the time Eugene was fit to come back, somewhat sallow and shaky but master of himself again. The work was now very near done; another week would see the end of it. Steven, visiting the booksellers and publishing-houses in his by-hours and acting on the suggestions of one or two friends, had purveyed himself another job, on probation, with the well-known importing house, Fulano, Tal & Company on Twenty-Eighth Street, where a tolerable familiarity with the foreign languages, classic and modern, would undoubtedly stand him in good stead. The salary was even less than moderate, but Steve could suit his wants to it; much as he would have resented being told so, there must have been a strain of the grandpaternal Rudd in him, some prudent and practical quality strong enough to overrule the habits and tendencies of a rich man's son. He told Mr. Sackett about the new position. " I bet I'll make good with 'em," he said, not boastfully but with ample confidence. And the other endorsed him with a laugh.

" Sure you will! But what are *you* going to do? " he wanted to know of Eugene.

" Oh, I'll get something," said Eugene carelessly; " I always get something." Which was no more than the truth, notwithstanding his well-marked failing. He was seldom out of employment; hack-work, to be sure, but drunk or sober, he invariably contrived to get it done well.

As for Sackett, he viewed their approaching departure with unconcealed regret. " It'll seem pretty quiet around here when you two go away," he told them wistfully.

" You ought to have somebody else come and fix up some other part of the house for you, Mr. Sackett," Steven said, casting about for suggestions in sheer humanity. " I know a lady that had a whole suite of rooms rebuilt — walls torn down and put up again differently — new mantels — new floors — new windows — everything changed all around, and

made over so as to go with one single piece of furniture that had been brought from Europe. It took two or three months, and she had a beautiful time bossing it all."

Mr. Sackett looked interested, if faintly incredulous. "That's a good story, anyhow," he commented, cautiously smiling. "One piece of furniture, hey? What was it made of? Solid gold?"

"No, it was an old carved chest from Italy."

"Eyetalian, hey? You mean she had everything made Eyetalian style to correspond? Well, there ain't anything like that to start with around here — unless you took that figger of a bird down stairs, and I don't know how you'd go to work with a thing like that. I wouldn't want any more birds on that order," said Mr. Sackett dubiously. "I might have some papering done though. New paper would be sort of cheerful."

He was a man of action; during the next two days they missed him from the afternoon conference, but the next day after that, heard him come in with a companion; and presently earnest parleyings rumbled through the rooms downstairs and here and there about the house, ultimately drawing nearer. The houseman brought a step-ladder; measurements were being taken. It appeared that Mr. Sackett's adviser was a lady; they could hear her clear voice pitched a little higher than was natural, probably, to carry her recommendations — "A color-scheme of rather high tones — the drawing-room walls panelled, with perhaps two or three pieces of lacquer and a Chinese screen — " "We have an old Spanish embroidered cope that would be ideal for the grand piano — perfectly stunning — " "*Dessus-des-portes* for the dining-room . . . I know of four old Dutch flower-and-fruit pieces — by Van der Douw, really excellent. I *may* be able to get them — just a chance. In our profession, we have exceptional opportunities, you know — "

"You *do!*" murmured Eugene with relish. "You've got one right now! *Dessus-des-portes!* Sackett's Old-Vatted Anderson County — *Wow!*" He retreated into a corner, turning his face to the shelves, suffocating with suppressed laughter, while Steven struggled with a rapidly strengthening impression that he had heard the voice before.

Even launched in this unaccustomed key at Sackett's ears, it was familiar; drawling, gracious, filled with an interest perfectly artificial yet perfectly assumed —

Mrs. Ballard appeared in the doorway of the library. She elevated a lorgnette. " Oh, but this is very nice, Mr. Sackett — full of possibilities! "

## CHAPTER V

THE recognition was simultaneous; Mrs. Ballard dropped her lorgnette with a startled movement, but she recovered it and her poise at once. For an incalculably brief moment, a mere speck of time, Steven was aware of a questioning uncertainty in her attitude, as if she would have said: " Do you want me to know you — or not?" It was conceivable that upon the faintest signal, she would have looked at him and accepted whatever incognito he went by, with the countenance of an utter stranger; at least, Steven felt that, in the familiar phrase, he would not have put the feat past her! In a lifetime of practice she had brought the art of suiting herself to other people's whims to a perfection rarely encountered in this world of failures. " Shall I know you, meeting you in this bizarre place and employment? Or would you rather I didn't? " she telegraphed. But before he himself could act, Mr. Sackett unknowingly settled all doubts.

" These are the two gentlemen I was telling you about that's been fixing the books," he said. " Two Mr. Rudds, Make you acquainted with Mrs. Ballard, gents."

" Oh, but we've met! We've known each other a long while. How *do* you do, Steven? " said Mrs. Ballard, summoning a charming smile instantly; and she went up to them, and gave each one a hand with exactly the appropriate degree of warmth. " Such a surprise! For a minute I had to stare — of course we were likely to meet any time, nevertheless I wasn't expecting it! "

Steven and Eugene mumbled something; upon Sackett, the incident did not seem to make much impression. The average citizen of New York is essentially incurious. "Hello! You don't say! Why, she comes from my home town, Albany, and you're both from somewheres out West, ain't you? Far enough apart! Artistic folks always know each

other, though; they kind of run together naturally, and doctors and lawyers the same way," was all his comment. "But don't it beat all how everybody gets to New York sooner or later!"

And from that on Mrs. Ballard took charge of the conversation; it should go without saying that everybody was immediately put at ease. Mr. Rudd — Mr. Eugene Rudd, that is — had been cataloguing Mr. Sackett's library? And Steven was his assistant? It must be very interesting work! She asked not one single question as to how Steve happened to be there instead of in his father's office where she had last heard of him; and as to the family they might not have existed, for all Mrs. Ballard let fall about them. Why was she thus reticent? Why, indeed! Contrariwise, she was quite expansive about her own affairs, explaining her visit to the Sackett house with a little air of humorous deprecatory importance, very feminine, very pretty. She was now a professional decorator! What, didn't they know it? She would have thought Steven, at any rate, would have heard through his friends, the Burkes. Oh yes! Full-fledged! For the last six months she had had her shingle out. Wasn't that what you called it, Mr. Sackett, when you advertised? Wait a minute!

Here she fished around in her bag, and presently produced from amongst an assortment of chintz and brocade samples, bits of paper covered with notes and rough drawings, unmounted photographs rolled together in a rubber circlet, etc., a little tea-colored card with old-English lettering in sepia, setting forth that Miss Frances Burke and Mrs. E. Van H. Ballard were now established in their studios at the Sign of the Lanthorn, East 10th Street (upstairs). Antiques, lacquered and painted furniture, old lustre-ware, Waterford glass, pewter, brass, filet lace and cut-work, petit-point, etc. They would decorate whole houses or single rooms. Correct period-work a specialty. Visits made and estimates furnished without charge.

"That last clause, 'without charge,' is what got me," said Mr. Sackett, with a solemn wink, whereat the lady laughed most amiably.

"Indeed I ought to be attending to my own business this

minute instead of keeping your two experts from theirs," she announced briskly. And to the others: "Do come and see us. Sunday afternoons, we have a cup of tea for visitors — it's our only day, of course. I'll love to show you the place." For once there was the note of absolute sincerity in her disciplined voice; she looked at Steven with real enthusiasm and pride. "We have some beautiful things. You must come."

Steven guessed that she would keep clear of mentioning Mary just as she had kept clear of any mention of his own people, unless he himself introduced the subject. So, feeling himself getting red but hoping that it would not be noticed in the twilight of the big, gloomy room, he got out, not too awkwardly: "Is — is Mary with you?"

"No. Oh, no!" said Mrs. Ballard, displaying — perhaps feeling! — a maternally indulgent amusement. "Fancy Mary trying to decorate somebody's house! It's my daughter he means, Mr. Sackett," she explained — and it was a lesson in the tactics of civility to see how she brought him into the talk, without effort, without emphasis, spontaneously, as if reminding an old acquaintance, who might not impossibly have forgotten the fact, that she had a daughter. "My daughter Mary is just like all the rest of these modern girls; a house to her is not a place to make beautiful; it's scarcely even a home. It's only where one sleeps and takes an occasional meal! Why, Mary has a position in the Mountaindale School for Girls, at Tarrytown, you know, Steve. She is the physical instructor there." And again Mrs. Ballard addressed Sackett with the camaraderie of equal age and social experience. "They *will* do somethings nowadays, Mr. Sackett. Girls and all, they're not satisfied unless they are at some kind of work. It wasn't so in our day, but times change and we must keep up with them, I suppose."

With some other desultory remarks, this incident closed, Mrs. Ballard leading Adam J. off, and the manservant with the stepladder and footrule trailing after them to the uttermost fastnesses of the house, in an aroma of questions, suggestions and diplomatic criticism. Eugene characterized the whole affair as an excessively "queer start."

"Think of Mrs. Ballard tying up in partnership to that plain, quiet, sensible, straightforward Miss Burke with her sandy hair and her big front teeth!" said he. "No two women more essentially different ever existed. I'd like to know how it came about. My guess would be that Miss Burke puts in the coin and the ballast of practical methods, bookkeeping, calculating, bargaining and so on, while Mrs. Ballard does the ornamental talking."

Steven admitted that it looked that way. "Francie must have got through that course she was taking, and set up for herself. That's pretty fine for a girl. But she's awfully bright; she'd be all right for the business-side of it. This other part seems to suit Mrs. Ballard, too." A desire which Master Steven would have cut off a finger rather than confess, even to himself, to bring in Mary's name, and hear what the other would say about her, led him to add: "And Miss Ballard's the physical instructor at some girls' school! I wonder how she got into that!"

"Oh, she could do it well enough. She's a well-built little thing, strong and active, and good at any kind of outdoor exercise. That's probably all that's necessary. It can't be a great strain on the intellect to teach gymnastics," said Eugene callously. Steven put it down for the only ill-considered or unappreciative judgment he had ever heard from him; but somehow it did not seem advisable to take up the cudgels for Miss Ballard and point out to Eugene how grossly he had underestimated her.

Next Sunday afternoon found him roaming about the confines of Greenwich Village; and erelong he came upon the Sign of the Lanthorn, which was that article itself, a fine, rough old specimen from some New Bedford windjammer of the last century, swinging at the end of an iron arm from the second-story front of a correspondingly fine and old brick mansion recently restored, and made over into apartments. There was a door of beautifully proportioned panels, painted green, with a half-moon-shaped transom, and a brass knocker and doorknob, and a scrolled iron foot-scraper. Within, a rather steep curving staircase with the authentic air of its period singularly outclassing modern copies, conducted Steve to the next floor, where some interior partitions

must have been removed, though with exceeding care not to disturb what Mrs. Ballard would undoubtedly have styled the "atmosphere." The landing had been widened; there was a Palladian window with a little iron balcony; doors opened on either hand, this into the rooms of Mr. Alfred Popham, Stained Glass Windows and Church Furnishings, that to Miss Frances Burke and Mrs. E. Van H. Ballard. Voices and movements could be heard behind both of them; from some locality more remote there emanated the sound of a ukelele and of a man singing; and Steven was aware of a young woman in a linen crash smock of violent hue, with hair cut short and hanging forward all around her face, tiptoeing out to another landing higher up and leaning over the banisters to survey him. Festoons of beads attached to her somehow rattled against the railing as she leaned.

His door opened; the smock scuttled off. "Here you are! I was hoping you'd come!" cried Francie heartily. She looked older, taller, less girlish somehow, but as nice, as wholesome as ever; her light red hair brushed up trimly, her crisp blouse a marvel of both the tailor's and the laundress' art, her neat-hanging skirt could have belonged to Francie Burke and to nobody else. No smocks and tassel-like coiffures for her! The studio, at the first glance, seemed to be two or more rooms thrown together into one large one, with perhaps others, closets or alcoves really, ranged upon the boundaries. Here were disposed in a picturesque huddle the antiques, the painted furniture, the lustre-ware, etc., promised on the firm's card; a score or so of mezzotints hung up on the walls made an effect of soft brilliance among eighteenth-century mirrors, empty frames and innumerable sconces and brackets; strips of needlework, vivid embroideries on parchment-colored backgrounds, and rococco cushions of satin and lace encumbered the Adam settees and the old oak dressers and benches that elbowed one another around the wainscot; and at his feet two or three Oriental rugs in a tumble resembled the sweepings of many-tinted fragments from a shattered cathedral window. In the middle of this extravagant disorder, the super-orderly Francie in her severe clerkly attire cut so incongruous a figure that it arrested the mind in curiosity and speculation; she was not

out of place — nothing and nobody could have been out of place in such a hodge-podge! — but, to borrow again from Mrs. Ballard, she did not "compose" with the rest of the picture. One felt that the linen-crash smock with her beads would have been much more appropriately housed there.

"Isn't it in a muss, though?" she said cheerfully, translating correctly Steve's look of interested perplexity. "We keep it like this all the time. Everything's clean, though it doesn't look so. Hang your coat and hat on the antlers, and come over here to the fire."

Steven did as he was bidden, and weaving about amongst the Burke-Ballard stock of goods, got up to the fireplace, which itself obviously belonged to the collection; it was supplied with a hob-grate, and an iron fire-back with somebody's coat-of-arms stamped upon it. A little old fireside sofa of faded red moreen, a wing-chair covered with flowered and striped calico, a tea-table that reminded him of Cruikshank's illustrations to some first edition of Pickwick Papers, were drawn up to form a species of dyke against any further encroachment from the shop properties. The spot, cramped as it was, had all the inherent seclusion, comfort and propriety of a hearth; the handful of coals glowed, the kettle whispered to itself, there was a homely fragrance of toast browning; somebody came from behind a high screen of russet leather with dull gilding showing here and there among its tooled traceries — and Steven's heart performed an unusual caper, in the nature of a somersault. The somebody was Mary.

She gave a jump and almost a scream at sight of him, and the cups and saucers she was carrying on a small tray all but went to the floor. Francie crowed with delight.

"Oh, *Steven!*" was all Mary could get out for an instant. Then her voice and expression shifted from astonishment to reproach as she ejaculated: "Oh, *Francie!*"

"I didn't tell her. I didn't say anything about your being in New York," said Francie. Suddenly they all three began to laugh.

The girls told him Mrs. Ballard was not there at the moment; she had gone out, giving the excuse of some slight errand, but actually no doubt in the amiable purpose of

letting them have the place to themselves for a while. "I *thought* Mother looked rather excited and mysterious when I got in town this morning!" Mary said. "Of course she wasn't sure that you would come to-day; but she and Francie kept the whole thing dark, anyhow." She faced him smiling, frankly pleased, without a trace of embarrassment. It could be no more possible for her than it was for him to forget what had passed at their last meeting; but she had decided to act forgetfulness at any rate, and Steve inwardly owned that she was right. How else could they continue friends? And to be good friends with her was all that he had any business to expect. Mary did not look a day older, he thought; she was as dimpled and fresh-cheeked as ever — even more so. The life of a physical instructor must agree with her, he said. Mary did color a little under his eyes, but went on spreading jam on her toast, defiantly practical.

"Why, of course! I have to keep perfectly fit the whole time, or I wouldn't look the part. I wouldn't be convincing, you know. You can't go around preaching balanced rations and regular hours for fresh air and exercise and all that, without making yourself into a kind of sample of what it all does for one," she said, waved the toast in the air and took a bite. "This is an orgy, coming down to Francie's every Sunday and stuffing on sweets," said Mary. "The rest of the week I'm terribly strict with myself."

"Oh, you don't live here, then?"

"Gracious, no!" Both girls shrieked hilariously in unison; and both began to explain. If Steve could see the accommodations — ! Mrs. Ballard had a cubby-hole to herself; Francie bunked on any old lounge or divan or day-bed in the studio; if they sold it, she had to move to some other piece of furniture. There was a bathroom, thank goodness! They had behind the screen a "one-hole" gas-stove and with it and the grate-fire they sometimes got their breakfast, never any heavier meal — "On account of the *cookiness*," Francie said seriously; "Mrs. Ballard says a studio is just like a woman's hair. It can smell of almost *anything*, incense or cigarettes or even French perfume — *anything* except cooking!"

"*I* live at Miss Ogden's — the Mountaindale School.

That's where *I* live!" Mary announced pompously. "We rather sniff at Bohemia and the Bohemians. Tuition twenty-five hundred a year (*payable in advance*) and extras. We can't really allow our girls to mingle with the — the *herd!*"

Steven now recollected that his sister Hester had gone there for two years. "Mother picked it out after looking over about two hundred prospectuses. Hester liked it. Edith wouldn't go there; *she* picked Bryn Mawr on her own hook. She said your Mountaindale was too flossy; I believe she thought all of them were."

Mary nodded. "Edith wouldn't like it," she agreed impartially. "There aren't many girls, and the course isn't very strenuous. I have them for horseback riding, hockey, basket-ball, swimming — all those things. I like it — I mean I like teaching, you know."

"They like you, too," said Francie.

Mary nodded again, affirming quite simply and openly that they liked her. "At least they've re-engaged me — and that's pretty good proof," she said. "I'm glad. I was so anxious to make good. Now let's talk about you for a while, Steve."

"No, first I want to hear more about these interior-decorators."

So Francie took her turn. She had got through her course at the Art Institute; and, greatly fearing, greatly daring, had taken some money of her own, a few thousands that had come to her by her grandfather Burke's will, and gone into the business — "Not here, at first, though," she said. "I was up on Forty-Sixth, just off the Avenue. It was too expensive — perfectly awful rent and everything else to correspond. I've learned a lot since then — and it's not quite two years! But one learns fast in New York. I was as green — !" She shook her head with a pitying smile. It appeared, however, that she had really acted all along in what even much older and wiser heads would have supposed to be a practical enough manner; that is, she had bought out a Mrs. So-and-So, a person of some repute, the owner and manager of what was on the surface a "going concern" in trade parlance. Alas, as Francie soon found out, nothwith-

standing her efforts, some of which owing to youth and inexperience were doubtless misdirected, the concern did not go, certainly not at any such gait as had been promised; it barely limped. Perhaps it had never been so steady on its feet as the former proprietor had represented, though Francie made no charges or complaints on that score, being either too proud to admit that she had been taken in, or too considerate of the other woman.

"I don't know where I'd have been by this time. I'd have hated to give up and get out — go back home. I wasn't going to the family for help," the girl said, her young mouth settling momentarily into a line of unyouthful firmness. "I don't know where I'd have been if I hadn't come across Mary and her mother. That was pure luck. They were living down at Cos Cob then, and Mary was coming in town every day to go to that Hygiene and Physical Culture place — "

"It was a kind of normal school," Mary interposed, parenthetically. "I had to learn how to teach, of course. And then we had classes in anatomy, and first-aid work — jiu-jitsu — some nursing. They give a diploma."

"We ran into each other at a Childs' place," Francie went on. "Afterwards I got them to go around to Forty-Sixth just to see it. I was blue and lonesome, anyhow. But while they were there, the first customer I'd had for days came in. It was all nothing but luck. Along came this lone, stray man and saw a banjo-clock in the window and thought he'd go in and ask the price, and what it was for besides a clock! He thought it was some kind of a machine, and really wanted to see it *go*, I do believe. Anyhow he wasn't intending to buy it, at all. I was in the back of the shop with Mary, so he happened to speak to Mrs. Ballard first — he took it for granted she was a clerk — "

"*Mrs. Ballard?* He must have been one sure-enough hick!" Steve commented forcibly.

"No, he was all right — he just didn't know," said Francie humanely, although she did smile a little at some recollection. "The thing was that *she* had an inspiration and let him keep on thinking so! She says she made up her mind on the spot to sell him that clock — she just wanted to see if she couldn't! And, Steven," said Francie, in impressive

tones, " she *did!* She stuck the first price on it that came into her head — it was twice what I'd put on — and she sold it to him! Then she went on, and sold him an old Revolutionary belt and holsters and *Washington Crossing the Delaware* in a funny old Victorian black and gilt frame that I thought I'd never get rid of in this wide world. Why he wanted it I can't imagine, but she made him think he wanted it, anyway! "

" You didn't interfere? "

" We got the giggles, and had to go and hide behind that screen," Mary said, pointing to it. " Mother kept right on just as if she'd been at it all her life, until it came to taking his name and address and seeing about how the things were to be sent, you know. And then she said: '*Just a minute, please, I must ask the management about that!*' And didn't she come back and call '*Miss Burke*' in the most business-like voice; and Francie marched out and they went through all the proper motions without batting an eyelash! " said Mary, rocking with laughter. " The man never knew — he never suspected a thing! "

" Why, we couldn't let him. It had gone too far by that time; we had to act it out," said Francie, with some gravity. " He might have thought he was being made fun of, and gone off in a huff — my solitary customer! But that's what started this whole thing," she waved her hand around; " that's what gave us the idea. Mrs. Ballard found this place; it's ever so much cheaper than the other, and we can both live here — after a fashion. We don't mind; we're not really uncomfortable. And people like it, somehow. Lots more come than ever did at the Forty-Sixth Street shop; and they don't seem to care if it *is* all cluttered up this way. I like things in order myself. It was beautiful up at Forty-Sixth," said Francie, with a faint sigh; " but we couldn't do any good up there, and here we're getting along. It's slow, of course, but we *are* getting along." She poked the fire pensively, evidently regretting the Forty-Sixth Street place still, against her better judgment. " Mrs. Ballard is perfectly wonderful. I don't know where I'd have been without her," she reiterated generously.

" Stuff! Don't talk that way! " Mary cried out. " It's —

it's all Francie's money, every bit of it, Steve. I don't see why you shouldn't know it — I don't see why everybody shouldn't know it. Mother thought she could do it, and Francie let her try; and then by good luck it turned out that Mother *could* do it, sure enough. She was never so happy in her life; she's told me so over and over again. She was fairly withering away in that horrible second-rate Cos Cob boarding-house, sitting around waiting for me to get through my course. We wouldn't have had much of an outlook, even then. I had great plans for supporting both of us when I got a position, but you know how it is in New York, Steve — " here Mary stopped short with a subtle change of expression. " Or *do* you know? " she demanded, eying him doubtfully.

" I do! " the young fellow assured her, coloring and smiling awkwardly, but with an accent that enforced conviction. " Been scratching around myself for six months — that's long enough to find out a few things about New York."

There was an infinitesimal pause, questions which neither girl liked to ask point blank, passing through the minds of both; but Steven answered them unasked. " I had a fuss with them at home and — and, well, I just up and got out. I wasn't doing much good in the office, anyhow," said he; and having got that far, found no difficulty in outlining to them the rest of his experiences and activities. There was another little silence after he had finished.

" Why, we're all working, aren't we! Don't the strangest things happen, though! " Mary exclaimed finally in a surprise so open and naïve, that both the others burst out laughing.

## CHAPTER VI

A FEW years from now Steve Rudd will probably concede upon a review of his début in New York that he had astonishingly good luck. The association with Eugene would have been convenient and instructive, if nothing else; but, in fact, it set the younger man upon a certain way which, left to himself and his own random experiments, he might not have found. Later, at the house of Fulano, he was getting along well enough, but might conceivably have spent a good many more years and much labor without proportionate profit, had not one of his superiors most opportunely broken a leg, tripping over a bundle of newspapers at the foot of the Subway steps in the rush one night. Poor Mr. Klingmann was laid up for nearly three months; Mr. Rudd valiantly assumed his duties, carried it off well, and the ensuing first of January " got a raise " to speak technically, both in salary and importance. The young man realized that it was a windfall of chance such as he might have waited a lifetime for in vain.

" It doesn't make a great deal of difference how much ability you have, unless you're something phenomenal — which I'm *not!* " he confided to Mary, valuing himself at once shrewdly and humorously. " New York's full of ability. I sometimes get to thinking that I can't go out on the street and throw a stone without hitting some fellow that's got more brains or a better variety of brains that I have. However — ! " Steve grinned and tapped his forehead. " ' A poor thing but mine own,' " he quoted cheerfully. " I'm not discouraged. But what I started out to say was that ability of itself wouldn't serve; you can't get much of a foothold here without some good luck. Right now, I'm having mine, and I mean to make the most of it."

" Aren't you doing any writing any more? "

"Why — yes. Once in a while I try. And once in a while I get something accepted. Verses, you know — "

"Oh, Steve, I think that's wonderful! What are they in? Can't I get the magazine?"

"Oh, they aren't anything — just little verses — light stuff. Rondeaux and ballads, the kind of thing Locker-Lampson used to do — only, of course, mine aren't in the same class with his. Mine will just about pass," said the young fellow, trying hard not to be conceited — or, at any rate, not to show conceit! — over his achievements. In his heart of hearts, Mr. Steven Rudd probably considered himself as good as any Locker-Lampson that ever held a pen. As for Mary, she proclaimed that to be her opinion, openly; she had never heard of Locker-Lampson, and a rondeau vaguely presented itself to her imagination as something written somehow in a circle — the name suggested it. But her admiration and above all, her warm belief in him were ineffably sweet to this rising author.

They had fallen into the habit of meeting at the Lanthorn every week; but this regularity was robbed of significance by the fact that the studio on Sunday afternoons was gradually coming to be a favorite place of gathering for any number of other eager, fresh-spirited young adventurers among the arts. They hailed from everywhere, except the city itself; they had positions in church-choirs, or they were understudies in some theatrical company, or they painted at the League, or they had gone into a broker's office on "the Street," or they worked for one of the newspapers. It was not Bohemia; rather it might have been likened to an island off the Bohemian coast. The girls invariably had some self-effacing mother or some ungifted sister sharing the boarding-house back-bedroom, towing patiently along at rehearsals. The young men were never out-of-pocket or out-at-elbows. They had homes where they sometimes went back to visit, in Topeka, in El Paso, in Sandusky, in Knoxville; their families wrote to them and sent them Christmas-boxes; there were snapshots of Dad pushing the lawn-mower, and of old Spot asleep on the front steps, and of Mother with Mattie's baby, strung all around their cheap quarters, to say nothing of photographs of their class, and of sundry "home

girls" to whom they referred with a bashfulness or a painstaking off-handedness equally tell-tale. If some philandering went on amongst these young people, it was no more than what might have gone on in their own homes, and of identical quality; very likely they were all familiar with the charming pages of *Trilby* and the *Vie de Bohème,* but something sane, something manly and womanly, some peculiarly American gift of humor made it plain to them that the whole charm of the life therein portrayed resided in the portrayal; the life itself, they discerned to be in the main very dingy, the people who led it not too clever. Like Steve, like Francie Burke, they were one and all too strongly imbued with the ambition to "make good" to waste time on these hectic banalities.

Perhaps Francie was not the sort of young woman to attract any other and freer kind of society, wherever and however she lived; she was not highly sophisticated, she was merely upright and sensible. But had she been of an easier fibre, there was still Mrs. Ballard, and the studio might have had a worse chaperon. She moved among the young people, an unconscious yet most eloquent exponent of her only creed, that of manners, incapable of awkwardness, of the least descent into bad taste. Sandusky and El Paso were not at all familiar with her type, which belonged to an older generation and possibly to a social order of which the conventions were much more subtle and intricate; undeniably she set up a certain standard; one could not witness that spectacle of inveterate self-control without being impressed by it.

"I don't believe Mrs. Ballard ever lets go of herself for a single minute," one extra-observant youth said to Steven; "of course it's your bread and butter to keep your temper; you'd have to learn to, even if you didn't want to for your own sake. But she never lets go in any direction — temper or anything else. She's got it down to a fine art. You know her and Miss Burke pretty well, don't you? You used to know each other before you came here? Has Mrs. Ballard always been like that?"

"Oh yes, as long as I can remember," said Steven, and he added further that she had been very prettv as a younger woman.

"She's bright too; she has lots of sense. It *takes* sense!" the other announced with deep conviction. He did not specify what it was that took sense, but Steven understood. Afterwards he reported this unbiased judgment to Mary, with laughter.

"Well, he's right. Mother *is* clever," said Mary, soberly when her first amusement had passed. "I don't mean she's clever like Francie; it's in a different way. I think they're a wonderful combination; neither of them could get along very well without the other. Francie has ever so much character and originality, and she doesn't mind work and trouble, and she knows her profession down to the ground. But, Steve, she doesn't know *people.* Mother does; Mother's spent her whole life studying people. And that's just as much a part of their business as Francie's end of it. It was all Mother's doing when they went down to Tenth Street. Do you know why she made that move? She had it all thought out. She said to me: 'Francie will never make a go of it, with that elaborate place she's got; it's perfectly uninteresting. What people like is some little hole-in-the-wall shop with everything higgledy-piggledy, where they can drop in and mouse around, and imagine they're "picking up" bargains. The average person dearly loves to "pick up" his antiques or curios; in a place like Francie's, he's sure to think that she's overcharging and that the things aren't genuine, anyhow.' Mercy, the people I've listened to by the hour while they bragged about the gems they'd 'picked up'! Oh, you needn't laugh," said Mary, though by this time she herself was smiling. "You know it's so. Anyway, Mother finally persuaded Francie to move down here — and the proof of the pudding's the eating! Why, Steve, I've seen Mother let a set of old hammered iron hinges go for less than they cost just so that a customer could go around patting himself on the back for his remarkable taste and keenness about 'picking up' — and then she invariably gets out even or better than even by selling him a lamp or a basket or something, at a good big profit! He's in such a good temper, you know."

Steven shouted with laughter over her ingenuous exposition of Mrs. Ballard's business methods. "But what does

Francie say to it?" he wanted to know. "*She* doesn't work the customers that way?"

"Steve, she *can't!*" said Mary seriously. "She knows she can't, so she just leaves all that to Mother. Why shouldn't she? There's nothing wrong about it."

"Oh, I didn't mean to intimate anything of that kind." He meditated awhile. "But don't tell me they roped in — er — that is, they didn't get old Sackett by those tactics? I can't believe that."

"No. That just happened. He saw their advertisement, and liked it. But Mother did most of the — the managing, afterwards. That was a splendid order; one or two more like it would set them on their feet solidly. They haven't quite finished with him yet. He seems to want them to go ahead and do just what they please to the house, without giving a thought to the money it takes. Mother says it's delightful to be so free; it's a great experience. She says it won't add anything to their reputation — it won't pay that way; because the poor man doesn't know anybody, and hasn't any friends to show it to; and that's the best sort of advertisement," said Mary, looking thoughtful. "But they'll make money on it. Besides she's really interested. Mother loves pretty things. She's had some before-and-after photographs taken, just to show what they can do with what looks like a hopeless proposition."

It will be seen from the above fragments which were fair samples of all their talk that Mr. Rudd and Miss Ballard, whatever was in the mind of either, stuck to admirably safe topics nowadays, though they were much more frank and direct than ever before. Mary had spoken to him of her own affairs, as well as of her mother's. It appeared she had borrowed money of Mr. Stillman to embark upon the Institute-of-Hygiene venture. "I went to Uncle John and told him what I wanted to do," she said. "You see I'd thought and thought, and it seemed to me about the only thing I *could* do — go into athletics, be a professional coach at some game or something like that. Men do it, I thought, and why couldn't I? Especially as long as I hadn't any talent for anything else, and couldn't take the time and didn't have any money for a great long course of study. If I'd been

brainy like Francie — ! But I'm not, so there wasn't any use bothering!" said the girl, philosophically. "I went to Uncle John, and he was very nice. He listened just as if I'd been a man. When I got all through he asked me how much I thought I'd need, and I told him, and he said all right, he'd let me have it. But he said I must understand that it was a loan; he wasn't giving it to me; I must pay him back as soon as I got to making a fair living. He said it didn't do anybody any good to help them too much. And was I willing to go ahead on that understanding? I said: 'That's all right, Uncle John. I may be pretty slow pay, but I'll pay. I'd rather have it that way.' Then he said that was the talk, and something about responsibility putting backbone into people — I can't quite remember all he said now, I was a good deal excited, you know — and then we shook hands like two men, and that was all. It's so funny, I was dreadfully afraid of him at the beginning, and it turned out to be as easy!"

"You've seen him since?"

"Oh yes, whenever he's in New York. He comes often, you know. I haven't paid him a cent yet, but I'm going to — I have a little of it saved up. Steve, do you know I've never said a word to him about paying since that first time? I've got a feeling that he doesn't want me to — "

"That's right," said Steven quickly. "He doesn't."

"Time enough to talk when I've got the money," said Mary. "He knows I can't do it right off." To another question, she answered with a laugh that she didn't believe Uncle John quite knew what to make of her mother. "I don't think he had any confidence in her at all, until he went down one day and found an old Swiss cross-bow and a rusty old piece of armor, the kind they used to wear rather like a sleeveless sweater, you know; Francie says they called it a 'back-and-breast.' Well, Mother sold him the things, and he seemed to be very much impressed! He sent Clara down, and she bought something, too. Clara never did care anything about us, though, you know. George is just the same as ever; he's a dear! I felt so sorry about the baby."

"Yes, George was all broken up. He told me that he could have stood the disappointment better if the poor little

thing had been born dead, or had died at once; but living a month and then dying — ! He wanted to have a little girl, and it turned out to be a little girl and everything seemed to be going along beautifully. It was tough luck. But of course they'll have others."

Miss Ballard made no reply to this last piece of prophecy, maybe because the subject was one which even the astoundingly free-spoken young men and women of the present generation avoid discussing together in too much detail; or it may be that she entertained some doubts that the George Stillmans would enlarge their family as suggested. Mrs. George was not at all a maternally inclined person; on the one occasion when they had talked in confidence since her bereavement, she had been quite bitterly eloquent about the disadvantages of motherhood. It was "horrid"; you couldn't go anywhere for months and months; they might talk as they pleased about clothes, *nothing* looked nice; you were terribly afraid all the time that you would never get back to your natural figure again; and for that matter, women who had more than one baby never did; they never looked the same; no kind of dreadful disease could be so ruinous to your appearance. *She* was not going to let *her*self be spoiled that way, all dumpy and flabby! Men were so queer, so selfish; they didn't seem able to understand. They actually thought you *loved* to go through all that suffering, and be all out of shape and disgusting, etc., etc. Mary could still hear Hester's excited little voice, ascending into bird-like shrillness now and then, while she volubly descanted on these wrongs, not abating one item in consideration of George's presence. He sat by, troubled and awkward, sometimes venturing a deprecatory mumble.

"You — you mustn't pay too much attention to what she says, she doesn't mean half of it. Her nerves are — they're all unstrung, you know — everything she's been through, you know," he explained miserably as he took Mary down in the little gilded elevator from their gilded hotel-suite. "The baby was awfully cute, Mary, I — I wish you could have seen her. She had such pretty eyes," said poor George wistfully. "But anyhow you mustn't attach too much importance to the way Hester talks just now. It's been a pretty bad time for her."

Mary responded with warm and comprehending words, but she thought with a wrench at her heart, as she went off in the taxi which George insisted on providing for her — out of the corner of her eye, she saw him tip the chauffeur — Mary thought that it had not been and was not likely to be nearly so bad a time for Hester as for George himself. Hester, to tell the truth, did not look much like the invalid he represented her to be, and perhaps had persuaded himself into believing her; on the contrary she was as blooming, fresh and *soignée* as ever in an imported toilette, and her much abused figure had lost none of its ravishing proportions and pliancy. The room was piled with boxes from half the milliners and modistes in New York; furs, lace *négligés*, dashing sport shoes and coats disputed possession of all the chairs. Hester had been shopping for three days, in preparation for Newport; it appeared that she hadn't a rag to wear — impossible to get anything at home. They were going to "Journey's End" later in the summer, when George might run on up to that little place of his in Nova Scotia. None of that for Mrs. George, however! According to her report, it was a dismal hole, nothing going on, and nobody you cared to know.

Numbers of the Rudd connection, of course, passed through the city from time to time; do not all roads in these United States lead to New York? Steven saw Hester, too, and the rest of the family once in a while, excepting his father; somehow Lawson was always out of the hotel, or he had not come with them on this particular trip; he had gone on ahead, or would follow later. The father and son had not met since that fateful day in December, more than two years ago; if either one was sore at heart, he kept it to himself. Eugene Rudd once asked Steven if he ever wrote home, and if they knew what he was doing, how he lived.

"Why, of course!" said the young fellow, stiffly. "I didn't run away, and I'm not in hiding. They know all about me. I — I don't hear from my father direct; that's not to be expected. But I've a letter from Mother here now; you can see it if you like."

"Oh, I can see it if I like — and be damned to me for an inquisitive busybody, hey?" said Eugene, with perfect good

humor. " Never mind, I don't want to see your correspondence, Mr. Rudd." After which little tilt they dropped the subject, nor, by tacit agreement, was it ever again brought up between them.

Readers of this history, however, may care to know that at this time Steve was living in another set of pigeon-holes similar to those Eugene occupied, on a higher floor of the same building. From camping with an iron cot-bed and a kitchen-table and chair, he had gradually advanced to such luxuries as a shelf of books, mostly in foreign tongues — any member of Fulano's staff could get whatever he wanted at cost — and sundry other furnishings acquired from " real " second-hand shops of " real " junk-dealers, as he informed the firm of Burke and Ballard with pointed emphasis. He had the ladies up to tea, and entertained Jack Burke and Mrs. Burke when they came east to visit Francie. Mrs. Burke made a famous Welsh-rarebit on the occasion; and they all professed great surprise at the homelike possibilities of this cramped corner in a tenement-house. Not long afterwards Steven heard in regard to it from a totally unexpected quarter, to wit: Mr. Adam J. Sackett!

" I'm told you've got a real nice cozy place of your own up there to St. John's Building," this gentleman remarked, encountering him one day on the street. " Hear it has very marked atmosphere, and reflects your personality in a very marked degree — " And seeing Steven reduced to inarticulate astonishment at the above expressions, which indeed came with a weird and unnatural effect in strong contrast to Mr. Sackett's ordinary style, he grinned, then chuckled, then laughed outright.

" I got that from Mrs. Ballard. Why, I sh'd think you'd have guessed right off! " he said. " Ain't it nifty, though? " And here, while Steve was still speechless, Mr. Sackett tilted his chin upwards, raising an imaginary eyeglass and surveying an imaginary room in a grotesque yet entirely recognizable parody. " Very nice! " he drawled mincingly; " nice feeling in that panelling, don't you think? And it's so difficult to ketch the neo-classic spirits of the First Ompeere, too — hoo, hoo, ho, ha, ha! " said Mr. Sackett, exploding in a laugh that caused passers-by to turn and stare. He punched Steven in the ribs. " Ain't it great? "

"Why, *you* seem to appreciate it fully, Mr. Sackett," said Steve, obliged to laugh himself. "I'm sure Mrs. Ballard will be glad she has succeeded so well. She deserves to succeed; she's genuinely interested and very artistic —" he halted, as the other, facing him, screwed one entire side of his face into a wink of combined humor, sagacity and satirical import.

"Sure! She's all that — and then some!" he announced. "Say, young man, I owe you something for tipping me off to this house-decorating business. I haven't had so much solid enjoyment since I quit work. D'ye know that Mrs. Ballard's a smart woman? Yes, sir, that's what she is, a smart woman. Look at all the money she's got out of me, what with the *dessoo-day-ports* and the Chinese fiddle-faddles and all the rest of it. I buy 'em all, you know, whatever she steers me up against, just like a lamb — just like I didn't know she got a rake-off on each and every one of 'em. Why, why shouldn't she?" he asked openly, as Steven made a movement of dissent. "'S all right. She's got to live. And I'm willing. It entertains me. I'm on all the time, only she don't know it; she thinks I'm an easy old bird — and *that* entertains me! Pretty woman, too — of course she's not young any more; but you know my taste. The young ones don't appeal to me. The way they dress nowadays, you can't tell half the time whether they're coming or going. In my young days, they had some figure to 'em, and Mrs. Ballard naturally belongs to that set — about twenty-five or thirty years ago. Tell you, you knew what corsets were for in those days."

"Well, I'd like to see the house when it's all finished," said Steven, rather precipitately; he was remotely disturbed by the tenor of these remarks. "It must be very much improved."

"It ought to be at the price," said Sackett, with feeling. "Why, I'd be glad to have you see it; and the other Mr. Rudd too. You bring him along. Tell you what, we could have a dinner. That's it, we'll have a dinner! I'll see if Mrs. Ballard and the other young lady, the young one, I'll see if they can come. We'll have a dinner — swallow-tail coats and white ties and everything, like these society plays

on the stage. You've got one, haven't you? A dress-suit, I mean? That's the kind of thing Mrs. Ballard's used to. Say," he added, with renewed amusement; " you'd ought to see the hired help stand around when she speaks to 'em. And she don't speak rough, either. You'd ought to see them; it's a circus! "

Amazing to relate, this festivity actually did come off with the company indicated, excepting Eugene who, alas, happened to be " sick " when the date — New Year's Eve — arrived. Steven put on formal dress as required, and went over to Madison Avenue, and was received in the transfigured drawing-room by the host, who looked not absolutely comfortable, but pleased and eager in an obviously brand-new suit of evening-clothes about which he urgently requested Steve's opinion. " I give the tailor a hundred and seventy-five for this outfit. You only get about one full dress-suit in your life, so what's the use being a piker about it? " he pointed out reasonably. " Do you think the back sets right, though? "

" First-rate! " Steven assured him. " The house is beautiful. I'd never have recognized it."

" Hey? Yes. Look here, these are the right kind of shoes, ain't they? The young fellows are always up on points like that. I just had to take the clerk's word for it. They seemed to me kind of neat; thing is I don't want 'em too dressy for a man of my age." Being assured on this question, too, he took time to notice Steven's other remarks. " Yes, it *is* changed. I'll take you all over it after dinner. One of the beds has a pink silk spread with lace over it and these here little flowers like on a hat, you know. Three hundred iron men! I says to Mrs. Ballard — she'd been talking some more about ' atmosphere ' — I says: ' My, my, you wouldn't think air — just plain *air,* would come so high, now, would you? ' She laughed — she has to laugh at my jokes, you know! " said the ex-saloon-keeper, winking with a sudden exhibition of his defeating shrewdness. " Always laugh at your customer's jokes — that's a matter of principle! Say, I sent a car down for the ladies. They'd ought to be here by now, seems to me."

Steven reminded him that the holiday crowds and cabs

were very thick; to which Mr. Sackett assented absent-mindedly, walking about, fidgeting with his watch, furtively examining himself and straightening his white waistcoat before the pier-glasses. Steven sat down on an "Ompeer" sofa, slim-legged, with brocaded satin cushions in tender hues of blue, cream and cinnamon, outlined with silver thread; the walls and draperies repeated the same shades with an effect of pale richness; peacocks, pedestals, Worcester china, red velvet curtains, great lumbering chandeliers had all been deposed, and in their place were Mrs. Ballard's panellings, her Aubusson carpet, her severely beautiful white marble mantel with the pair of Wedgwood vases, her sconces in a delicate glitter of prisms. And presently here was Mrs. Ballard herself, conspicuously suited to this setting, with her gray hair dressed high and modishly, and a trained black velvet dress, and a becoming twist of chiffon around her throat which had once been as prettily round as Mary's, but was now a little too thin. Steven wondered to see that she quite outshone Francie, who had the air of a well-born young page in attendance on some countess; but Francie had not cultivated the social arts with Mrs. Ballard's assiduity; and perhaps indeed would never acquire the older woman's suave distinction, no matter how hard she tried. It was difficult to imagine her trying, however; as Mary had said of her, she did not know *people*.

It was no doubt owing to the apparently effortless efforts of the older lady that the ceremony of dinner went off so successfully; yet in fairness it should be noted that Mr. Sackett cut no bad figure at the head of his table. He was rather silent, rather watchful of his own knife and fork and of the others' methods of handling theirs; he addressed Mrs. Ballard scrupulously as "ma'am" and Francie with not quite so much care and deference as "miss." But he was not afraid of the servants and did not bully them; he ate with a moderation evidently habitual, and drank barely enough to keep his guests in countenance, though the cooking was good and the champagne above criticism. "Yes, I expect I ought to know something about liquor," he said simply, in reply to some appreciative comment. There were rich folk of Steve's and Mrs. Ballard's acquaintance, of their supposedly

Brahmin caste, who might have profited by a lesson or two from this old retired whiskey-seller upon such points as how not to be pompous, affected and ostentatious. Whether his manners were governed by common-sense, a certain right feeling, or merely the wary study of his fellow-men, they were good enough manners; and if his grammar was imperfect, he never failed to speak to the point and with essential clearness. So Steven thought, and wondered if Mrs. Ballard agreed with him. What Mrs. Ballard thought or felt, though, was impossible of surmise; it was even likely that she herself did not know the actual woman, the true Ellen Ballard was buried so deep beneath layers of caution, policy, self-restraint, polite artifice. That she was sincerely interested in her new profession could not be doubted, however; it was manifest in the frankly critical, almost proprietary survey she sent about the rooms.

"You see I was right, Mr. Sackett. For a little party like this, you need this little place," she said not without triumph, reopening some previous argument, it would seem, as they sat about the table in the elegantly coquettish, painted breakfast-room. "The dining-room is perfect in spirit, very gracious and hospitable in a splendid way — but it's altogether too formal, too spacious; it's only suitable for state occasions — when you give a dinner to the President, for instance — "

"I don't aim to invite Woodrow yet awhile," said Sackett; "He's not expecting it of me anyhow. I've always voted the straight Republican ticket."

"Well, when you ask Mr. Roosevelt, then," she retorted briskly. "What I insist on your noticing is that we'd be lost in that great *salon* to-night, so few of us. And on the other hand see how intimate and charming this room is!"

"Intimate and charming. You said it!" assented Sackett, with the faintest possible twitch of the eyelid on Steve's side. He looked around the table, genial and satisfied. "I call this a nice size party to have, two and two."

"I wish Mary were here," Francie said. "It must be ages since she's been out anywhere."

"Who is 'Mary'?" their host asked alertly. And, on being told, "Your daughter?" he said, eying Mrs. Ballard. "I didn't know you had a daughter."

"Yes, indeed. She's only a year or two younger than Mr. Rudd. Oh, I'm an old woman, Mr. Sackett!"

Mr. Sackett's rejoinder was not the obvious compliment; instead he said: "I'm not as young as I was myself." The two seniors looked at each other companionably; for the moment they felt much nearer together than the young people across the table.

"Well, to-morrow's another year, anyhow!" said Steven, feeling it incumbent on somebody to avert silences and gravity. "They were beginning the regulation racket — tin horns and all that — when I started up town, and the cabarets were filling up. Listen to that, now!"

A siren on some boat anchored up the river had set up a wailing salute, ending, by some deft manipulation on the part of the artist in charge of it, in a series of staccato sobs nicely diminishing in volume. "Old Nineteen-Thirteen's hitting the trail!" said Sackett, when the final goblin ululation had died away. "We'd ought to have a drink to Nineteen-Fourteen. Somebody give a sentiment. Mrs. Ballard, you give a sentiment, won't you?"

"Nineteen-Fourteen! Peace on earth, good-will to everybody!" said Mrs. Ballard.

"Peace on earth, good-will all around!" said Sackett, with approval. "That's all right, I guess. I thought you could think up a good one, and you did! Nineteen-Fourteen, good-will all around! That's more likely to come true than most New Year's wishes you hear. It's not so far-fetched."

## CHAPTER VII

ALL this while, this three years or more, it is not to be supposed that Mr. Steven Rudd's family were sitting in sackcloth and ashes because of the young gentleman's headlong withdrawal from home and their society. His mother and his sister Hester, even had they known the cause, would not have been greatly interested, much less impressed; if there was a moral lesson involved, it would have escaped them; they would have serenely lumped old David's transactions in quinine with all commercial transactions of all men everywhere. Such matters appertained strictly to "business," and were therefore not to be questioned or cavilled at, not to be understood and most emphatically not to be bothered over by any woman. Steven's departure they explained to themselves after much the same formula — if they took the trouble to explain it at all; when it came to explanations to other people, outsiders, both were ready; they would have been sincerely mortified had they failed in the feminine accomplishment of explaining, smoothing over, saving everybody's face. Steve? Yes, he was in New York, writing. You know he always had that turn; at college he was very good, really clever, people said. Yes, he was in New York, that's where everybody that wanted to do anything of that kind always went; they're all the time looking for *material,* you know. Steve was just like all the rest, the ones you read about — it must be the most ridiculous, unconventional, Bohemian, happy-go-lucky existence. Imagine: he pressed his own trousers! Oh yes, my dear, he had written them about pressing his trousers, and making coffee; and living in some weird, out-of-the-way hole with a lot of other literary and artistic nuts — this was Hester's version — like himself. Perfectly ghastly, but Steve *loved* it; it exactly suited him; he was *absolutely* happy. Of course they would have much preferred for him to stay at

home; it was hard not to see him for such long stretches of time — here Mrs. Rudd would look down with a little grave air of maternal self-sacrifice highly edifying to see — but you cannot have your own way about things like that; you cannot live your children's lives for them, etc., etc. Steve's verses and other trifles coming out sparsely in the periodicals — not the most distinguished periodicals, I fear! — they greeted and circulated in a pleased flutter, but without too much enthusiasm, which they would have considered foolish, if not underbred. Their attitude, in short, was admirable, a pattern for all mothers and sisters of black sheep; for that Steven was a black sheep, was what each one of them believed in her secret heart.

As for Lawson, his friends and club companions noticed that he began to look older during this time, to look his full age, that is; heretofore, strangers, and even old acquaintances, had uniformly guessed him at half a decade younger. It was a natural change, but not a few put it down to disappointment over that boy of his; there was a general understanding that he had had trouble with that boy. But contrary to the mother's experience, Steve's father never was called upon for explanations. The gray-headed brotherhood, with their keen, tired faces, with their shrewd, practised, combative wits, with the load of memories, regrets, old unrealized dreams and resolute new ones, burned-out husks of desire they every one carried, refrained with an instinctive humanity from probing him; were there not questions they themselves would have winced to answer? Even when some rumor of Steven's literary achievements reached them via wives and daughters, they did not consider the news likely to cheer the senior Rudd; from their point of view, and as they guessed reasonably, from Lawson's, it did not redound greatly to the young man's credit, or promise much for his future.

"Rudd's boy is writing poetry, I understand," Daniel Garrard would say, slightingly — only Oom Dan'l pronounced it "portry" after the artless style of his youth — "Well, I'm not in a position to judge; I haven't an idea how much they get paid, for instance. But even supposing what he wrote was good — " said Mr. Garrard, with an expression

which would indicate that the opposite was probably the case — "even say everything he wrote was good, and he could get it printed, it's a mighty uncertain source of income, seems to me. Just put it to yourself this way: you've got a grown daughter, and one day some young fellow that you never laid eyes on before comes into the office and wants a private interview. And along towards the middle of it you find yourself obliged to say: 'Look here, Mr. Saphead, I want you to understand that I haven't got any prejudice against you personally, and I should be the last man on earth to stand in the way of her happiness. But I've got to know more about you before I allow her to take any such decisive step. Are you sure you can support her the way I have — the way she's used to? Are you sure you can support her at all? And if so, how? In plain language, how d'ye make your living?' And suppose he tells you: 'I'm a poet!' Now I leave it to anybody at this table — I leave it to any man here what he'd say. Portry! Huh! I'm sorry for Lawson Rudd!"

Had it been another man's son, Lawson might not improbably have been of the same mind as Mr. Garrard, and grinned with the rest at the above imaginative effort; nor, for that matter, can it be denied that poetry writing as a means of livelihood has an air of unreliability even to the followers of the other arts, none of which are conspicuously reliable. As it was, however, the elder Rudd took his son as seriously as the latter could have desired; he said in the family and to intimate friends that Steve's work appeared to him very good — light, of course, but quite up to the standard of the average magazine; perhaps as he went along and his talent matured, he might do very well. In the meanwhile he was not wholly dependent on his writing, he had a position, a sheet-anchor to windward — that was a sensible thing to do, in fact it was the only sensible thing to do. With which impartial statements, Mr. Rudd would proceed to another subject. It was an attitude that defied alike criticism and sympathy, as completely as did his wife's and Hester's, not because it was so well assumed, but because, unlike theirs, it was essentially honest.

For Lawson believed in his own judgment of his son's

gifts; and he knew that Steven was no black sheep. The father could see a wrong-headed justice in the younger man's view, and Steven's consistency commanded a certain respect; he had the courage of his high-flying convictions; he would not bow himself in the house of Rimmon. His unreasonableness was exasperating, yet there was something admirable about the spirit of it. Lawson found that what hurt him most was not Steven's condemnation of David; hardly from the most liberal and easy-going of moralists would that ancient sinner have obtained mercy; but his descendants need not be excommunicate, too. Steven's assumption that this unoffending second generation of Rudds should "do something" to atone for the long outlawed crime, and that not having done "something" they were co-sinners with the actual criminal, wounded his father to the quick. "He ought to know better," Lawson thought with anger and pain. "He ought to realize — ! Perhaps he will when he gets a little older. Elihu and I weren't pleased or proud ourselves when we found out about this miserable business; we didn't like it or approve of it. We simply couldn't help it. The thing was done and past mending. What's the matter with the boy? He has plenty of sense. Why can't he *see?*" A good many times a day, but more often at night, would he rehearse the dreary argument, seldom escaping, by the way, an unwelcome recollection of the other recalcitrant member of the family, Eugene. He was a black sheep, if you choose — a drunken fool. It somehow appeased Lawson's conscience to recall that Eugene had begun his drunkenness and folly a good while before that break over the Metaderma which he thought himself too good to sell. Too good, forsooth! They were well rid of him, as his subsequent career had amply proved; and yet — "We were all fools, the three of us. There wasn't much to choose between him and El and myself!" Lawson sometimes reflected with sour mirth, visioning again the scene in the office, the shouting and swearing and loss of temper on all sides. "I don't know what got into us — or what got into *me*, at any rate. The Metaderma wasn't worth it; Eugene was pretty nearly right. At least there was something to be said for his standpoint. If he had only not taken it quite the way he did —

and then we all got stubborn. I wouldn't act that way nowadays. None of us would, not even Eugene, I daresay. We're all twenty years older." The confusing thought arose that he had not acted "that way" in Steven's case; he had kept himself well in hand, conducted the unhappy affair with all possible patience and kindness — and the result had been precisely the same!

His mother and sister brought Steven's letters to the head of the house to read, trying dutifully to avoid the slightest hint of their suspicion that the father and son never heard from each other direct. It was easy to see, the two agreed in private, that something had happened, but men dislike so for women to mix into affairs of that sort — quarrels, unpleasantnesses; much more tactful to pretend ignorance; Lawson, for his part, played the game conscientiously, if in not nearly so finished and convincing a manner; this is a branch of the social arts wherein men cannot compete with the other sex. "Well, this is quite interesting, what Steve says about the book trade," he would remark, handling the letter with a mighty effort to speak naturally. "I see he's met Mr. Cook again, our own Mr. Cook. I remember Marshall Cook when he was a clerk with the Utopia Buggy Company, keeping books, not writing them! Something new for Mrs. Ballard to go into this decorating and house-furnishing. And Mary teaching in a girls' school. What next? I noticed the Ballards seemed to have disappeared somehow this last year or so — " and so on, and so on, fancying that all this gossip, in which he was never known to indulge on any other occasion, diverted attention from his real eagerness for tidings of Steven, what the young man was doing, how he fared. It was a pathetic bungle, which Mrs. Lawson witnessed with the tolerant contempt of an adept.

The Stillman family, one and all, were now brought into closer association than ever with the Rudds, by reason of the marriage. To be sure, Mr. and Mrs. George had an establishment of their own; in the beginning they had tried the paternal roof which was wide-spreading enough, in all conscience, to have accommodated any additional number of Stillmans, a great stone erection with a feudal-looking square tower at one corner of it, and acres of park all around.

But, big as it was, there was not room in the same house for the two ladies. Clara was charming; Hester was charming; they were devoted to each other; George and his father never had a word; they all led an ideal existence together — in spite of which they presently decided to lead it separately! The young Stillmans went off and built a fascinating Elizabethan cottage of fifteen or twenty rooms, where they entertained hosts of friends, not one of whom ever met Clara there, strange to relate, in view of that mutual affection upon which both Hester and she so strongly insisted.

Stillman senior (whom people were now beginning to call "old Stillman") was a frequent visitor; he was fond of his daughter-in-law and petted her and loaded her with presents of a cost and quality which seemed unconscionable even to her own father. Lawson sometimes remonstrated. "My goodness, John, Hester really didn't want that thing; it was only a passing whim, and she'll tire of it before you can turn around," he said at every fresh extravagance. "I believe I've always been a fairly indulgent father. I've given her everything she asked for, in reason, but I've always drawn the line *somewhere*. You'll spoil her, if you keep on this way."

"Oh, bosh! Hester's the only young, pretty thing we have around," retorted the other, with the bravado of conscious guilt. "Why shouldn't I spoil her?"

"But there's Clara — "

"Yes. There's Clara," Mr. Stillman assented dryly. "It's a good thing she didn't hear what I said just now!"

They had been asked to the Elizabethan cottage for dinner at eight that evening, and were standing in the drawing-room before the painted and marble-topped console which had brought forth Lawson's most recent expostulations. It was a museum piece, bought at a museum price, but suited its present setting well, for the drawing-room and indeed the whole house were in a daintily flamboyant style, brittle and expensive as — one might fancy — the mistress herself. Hester had not come down yet, and Mr. Stillman looked at his watch. The butler came in with circumspect tread, and gathered up their empty cocktail-glasses.

"Isn't George home?" Lawson asked.

"Yes. I brought him. Hester was using their car. He's had plenty of time to dress; I don't know what can be keeping them," said the elder Stillman, and he spoke to the butler: "Where's Mrs. Stillman, Michel?"

Michel paused with the tray. He was a very prince of butlers, skilful, impassive, experienced and sophisticated to the point where, George used to say, you might let off a string of fire-crackers without warning under his ear, without causing him to turn his head, or spill a drop. But now Michel actually hesitated, at a loss; he rearranged the glasses with motions betokening uncertainty. "Mrs. Stillman is — she will be here in a few minutes, sir — that is —"

"She's not sick?"

"Oh no, Mr. Rudd. It's — it's —" At this point Michel appeared to make up his mind to resign all responsibilities. "It's the cat, sir," he said, with calm.

"The cat?" cried out both gentlemen.

"Yes, sir. It's quite sick, sir."

They looked at each other. "It must be that big cat she's had so long," said Mr. Stillman at last. "What's the matter with it?"

"I really couldn't say, sir. Mrs. Stillman sent for the veterinarian. She sent Raymond with the car," said Michel, his decorous imperturbability now entirely restored; he lingered, deferentially awaiting further questions, and was withdrawing as deferentially when Lawson spoke to him.

"Where is Mrs. Stillman?"

"She's down in the laundry with the cat, sir, I think," said Michel, lingering yet another moment with supreme good manners; but they let him go this time.

"Hester's always been very fond of that cat — if it's the same one," said Lawson. "It must be pretty old, now."

"Yes. I suppose that's what's the matter with it. Quite a tragedy."

They sauntered aimlessly about; the house was very quiet, save for doors shutting distantly, and a clock striking half after eight.

"I'm afraid it *is* going to be a tragedy," Lawson said: "though it's not easy to kill off a cat. Nine lives, you know. How d'you get to the laundry, John?"

"I think I know the way. You go through the pantry somehow —"

They started off, the apparition of their portly middle-aged figures, looking more portly and middle-aged somehow in evening-clothes with wide fields of shirt-fronts, creating some commotion amongst the maids and dishes. And after various adventures from which each carried away a blurred impression of carving-knives and corkscrews, of white tiled surfaces and glass cupboard-doors, of smells of fish and sauced entrées, of laughter and talking in the servants' dining-room abruptly hushed as they passed, of blind leads ending in dumb-waiters and broom-closets, they finally brought up at the head of a flight of stairs plunging down to a darkness made visible by one electric bulb at the bottom. A man rushing up collided with them on the landing. "Huh, beg pard'n!" he ejaculated without looking, shoved Mr. Stillman aside, and rushed on. They saw what looked like a hypodermic syringe in one of his hands.

"Must be the doctor," said Stillman.

George came to the foot of the stairs. "Is that you, father?" he exclaimed in surprise; and gave another exclamation at sight of Mr. Rudd. "I didn't know it was so late." He turned his head, calling back: "Here's your father, Hester!"

"Oh, do please make the doctor hurry!" said Hester's voice, distractedly.

She was kneeling on the cement floor beside the prostrate, black, furry figure of the cat, inert on a piece of carpet; rags lay near at hand, the veterinarian's satchel open, with steel tools grimly gleaming within. There were cold, soapy, and cellar-like odors. Hester, in a featherweight evening frock with strings of beads across her bare shoulders, made a fantastic picture as she hung over her pet with vain coaxings and endearments.

"So sick, Dingbats? Did the doctor give him nassy old med'cine? Never mind, Dingbats get all well now! Get all well right away! Want me to stroke your head? Poor Dingbats!"

Dingbats raised his head with difficult effort at the touch, fixing on his mistress the brilliant and distant stare of

death. There was something appallingly human in it, in the vacancy of his small, round, chinless face; dying, all creatures are alike; but poor Hester did not know.

"There, he's purring! He tried to purr! He must be better. Don't you think he looks a little better?" she appealed to the veterinarian as he came running back with the hypodermic needle ready. He looked at the animal, and dropped his hand.

"Hold him up on his fore-paws, Mrs. Stillman," he said, kindly; "it'll be easier for him —" But as she obeyed, the little body drooped together between her hands.

Even Hester understood then; she burst into a genuinely agonized wail. "Dingbats, Dingbats! Oh, he's dying! Oh, doctor, can't you do something? Poor little Dingbats, he's gone, he's gone, he's dead! Oh, what shall I do, what shall I do — !" Her voice trailed off in sobs; she sank down on the laundry-floor, in a huddle of lace, chiffon, flummery, forgetful of dress for the first time in her life. The men stood around awkwardly.

"Never mind, Hester, I'll get you another cat," said her father-in-law in a well-meant attempt at consolation; but it only provoked a new storm of sobs.

"I don't *want* another cat! I don't want any cat ever again! Poor, poor little Dingbats, he was so furry and sweet!" She glared at the doctor vengefully through her tears. "Why didn't you do something? There must have been something to do. I don't believe you knew what was the matter with him — I don't believe you know anything at all —"

"Oh, come now, Hester —" Lawson interposed hastily, glancing at the veterinarian with apology; but that medical practitioner remained quite unmoved.

"There's not much you can do for a cat," he explained philosophically, beginning to repack the satchel. "Everybody feels bad to see their pets die — worse than they do over folks sometimes."

"Well, we don't need to go without our dinner anyhow," said George in a harsh voice, which caused both the older men to eye him wonderingly. He went to Hester and lifted her to her feet. "Come, Hester, you can't do anything, you know —"

"I don't want any dinner. I couldn't eat a thing. Go and have your old dinner, if that's all you care about — "

"I guess we owe you something, Mr. — Doctor — Er — " said the elder Stillman, hastily, in fact, rather peremptorily urging the other toward the stairs, as he felt in his pocket. Lawson followed them, leaving George still arguing not too gently with Hester, and Hester still hysterically refusing to budge.

"I'll send a maid down to her, hadn't I better?" her father suggested feebly; and above stairs he did hunt up one of them and despatched her to the chamber of mourning, before himself sitting down to their belated dinner. George moodily joined the two older gentlemen, after a while; and, the meal over, moodily took himself off again.

"It's very childish of Hester making so much fuss," her father said to his old friend; Lawson was annoyed and somehow humiliated, not able to divest himself of a feeling of responsibility for Hester.

"Oh, she can't help it. One gets very much attached to a pet. They develop very attractive little ways; and often show a surprising degree of intelligence," said old John, not in the least aware that he was accurately describing the cause and nature of his own regard for Hester!

They smoked a cigar or two together; and Lawson took his way homewards, earlier than usual, in an obscurely discontented mood, which he accounted for on the theory that he must be lonesome, although lonesomeness was a complaint from which he had never suffered before, nor, to be plain, would he ever before have regarded the society of his family as an antidote for it. But just now he had a sense of isolation which he decided must be put down to the absence of his wife; Mrs. Lawson was at Palm Beach, whence she might be expected home in another month, but meanwhile it was gloomy coming back day after day to his great house with nobody to welcome him. How scattered the family was! How diverse their interests! The automobile came to a halt before his door, and as he got out, Lawson was struck by an unexpected stir within the house, rumors of which even penetrated to the street; lights were going to and fro in some of the unused rooms; and before he could fit

his key into the lock, one of the servants, who as a rule were not too punctilious about their duties when there was no one to wait on but himself, came scurrying and opened the door. In the hall, the spectacle of a mob of trunks, hat-boxes, bundles of travelling rugs and what-not, arrested him; a staid person, with the air of a housekeeper, trained nurse or professional woman of some sort, was standing over the luggage, apparently directing the disposal of it. Lawson stared helplessly; he had never seen her before in his life and here she was giving orders in his house! He wheeled, addressing a look of interrogation to the parlormaid, who was obviously in a great state of flutter and excitement. "Mrs. Rudd? Has she come back?"

"No, sir — no, Mr. Rudd. It's Mrs. Gherardi. She just got here — not half an hour ago. She wouldn't let us telephone you."

## CHAPTER VIII

IT did not require any great gift of penetration in Lawson to guess what had brought his daughter home in this abrupt fashion, unheralded, and without her husband; for that matter, every servant in the house had a suspicion, and a tolerably close one. That there had been trouble between the Gherardi pair could not be doubted; as to what kind of trouble her family and indeed anybody that knew Edith would wait her pleasure to hear, secure in the conviction that she would tell the truth, any sort of mystery, secrecy or pretence being utterly foreign to her. "We'll have a talk to-morrow, Dad. It's too late now," she said, after kissing and clinging to him with perhaps a shade more warmth than usual; she had never been demonstrative. And Lawson, like the rest of the world, had to bide her time.

She was not yet out of bed the next morning when he left the house; but her father was not used to the appearance of his womenkind at the breakfast-table, and her immediate resumption of all the familiar ways pleased him. He liked to think of her upstairs in her own room — a grave, gray, ascetic room, which it had suited her to furnish with nunlike simplicity, and which had been kept without change — asleep under his roof; once more she was the daughter of the house. "Mrs. Gherardi is very tired. It's always a hard crossing at this time of year — very rough. She's very tired and I don't want her disturbed. Tell the cook to be sure and have everything on the tray nice and hot, and — and the way she likes it — er — muffins and things — when they send her breakfast up," he said a little fussily to the butler, as he was leaving.

"Thank you, sir. Mrs. Gherardi left orders last night, sir," said the man, without moving a muscle of his well-trained countenance. Lawson was divided between vexation and amusement. He might have spared his pains; of course

she had left orders. Trust Edith! She never forgot anything, and always knew exactly what she wanted. For the first time in weeks he went to the office in good spirits; and all through the day, opening the mail, dictating to Miss Parker, holding council with his managers, going out to luncheon and playing a game of billiards, and coming back and starting to work again with all steam up — all through his day, the thought of Edith at home warmed his heart.

It had seemed to him, after that one brief glimpse of her the night before, that she looked pale, even a little worn; but if so, it must have been merely the natural fatigue of a long and trying journey, for in the drawing-room that evening, it was the same Edith as of old who came to meet him with her head up, her springy step, her daring assumption of beauty that vanquished adverse judgment. Had there been a dozen Helens or Cleopatras in the room, everybody would still have turned around to look at Edith, the father thought with fond pride. Lean and long in a black-blue dress, the pailletted corsage flashing and flexible as a shirt of mail, with a slender circlet of gold around her straight white temples ending in a crest of defiant feathers sprayed with brilliants, she was a Valkyrie — a Valkyrie from the Rue de la Paix, with a flame-colored ostrich fan instead of a spear!

"By George, Edith, you look stunning!" her father said in boyish admiration. "That paint-brush thing on your head is quite regal."

She named the celebrated French man-milliner from whose *atelier* the whole confection had come, with a laugh. "He says he likes to design for me; and he says, moreover, that I am the only woman whose own designs he has ever consented to carry out. '*Madame connait si bien son genre!*' That's a tremendous compliment — if he doesn't tell everybody the same thing!" She turned with a slight gesture. "This is my friend, Miss Stannifer, Dad."

Hereupon there rose up from one of the brocaded drawing-room chairs a short, spare, firm-featured lady, about forty-five years old, in a sedate evening toilette of black *crêpe de chine,* with a black velvet band around her spare throat whereon shone, also in an extraordinarily sedate manner, a small diamond star — it *shone,* nobody could have said it

sparkled. Lawson recognized the baggage-master of last night.

"Miss Stannifer used to be secretary and governess for the Gräfin von Falkenberg — Alice Hilliard, you remember, Dad? Then she came to me," said Edith, as if this information would instantly clear up the question of Miss Stannifer's status, supposing it needed clearing up; and in fact, Lawson received a measure of enlightenment, though he wondered mightily within him that Edith should have found it necessary to employ either a secretary or governess. Miss Stannifer, for her part, appeared to take this species of card-index introduction as a matter of course. She bowed calmly.

"Alice Hilliard? Oh, yes. I knew her father very well," said Lawson, explanatorily. "Rather lost sight of Alice lately, of course. She must have been over there for fifteen years. Isn't she a good deal older than you, Edith?"

"Oh, yes. She was one of Clara Stillman's set of girls. They all came out the year of the Spanish War —"

"Sh-h!" said Lawson in tones of mock horror, at which a reserved smile appeared on Miss Stannifer's somewhat immobile visage.

"We've seen a good deal of each other, though," Edith said, waving the flame-colored fan. "Her girls are very sweet — and quite like American girls. They'd had Miss Stannifer for ages."

"Madame von Falkenberg was anxious for her daughters to speak English — her native tongue, that is," said the ex-governess, in a clear and sharply-defined utterance, like the striking of a clock. One scarcely needed to be told that she herself was English.

"They wanted me to teach them Americanese — our slang, you know," Edith said, and laughed again.

There was a short silence; nothing, apparently, remained to be said about the von Falkenbergs; but, by a happy chance, dinner was announced, rescuing the company from a discussion of the weather. In past years, Mr. Rudd had been accustomed to the presence of a governess about the house; his own girls had always had one, generally some black-browed young French woman, whose speed and accuracy in

the use of her own language moved him to respectful surprise. It was incredible that anybody should speak French that well! Sometimes she would bring the children to breakfast with him, but she never appeared at dinner. Miss Stannifer, however, had the air of being perfectly habituated to handsome dinners in a handsome house; she was a gentlewoman — an English gentlewoman, not entirely free from the naïve insular superiority.

" Those are hominy croquettes around the guinea-hen fillet — a specialty of ours. I think you'll find them very nice," Lawson said in his quality of host, observing her to look a little askant at the dish. But at these words, she adjusted a pair of gold *pince-nez,* and examined the hominy croquettes attentively.

" Ah, I see. One of your queer American dishes. I suppose one gets used to them, in spite of the way they look. Thank you, I don't think I want any of it," she said, in her distinct speech, waving it aside; and went on eating the rest of her dinner — " Just as if she had paid us a pretty compliment, by George! " Lawson said, describing the incident to his luncheon-club with chuckles. He did not fail to add, however, that Miss Stannifer's manners were fundamentally those of a person of good sense and good breeding, and moreover displayed a thorough acquaintance with the world. " I don't quite know how she managed it, but the minute Edith and I felt ready for a little family talk — private affairs, you know, things nobody cares to discuss before strangers — the minute we were ready, Miss Stannifer somehow disappeared! Nothing marked about it, either; no excuses, no awkwardness, no stealthy creeping off. She simply wasn't in the room! " he said, not without enthusiasm. " I never knew anything to be better done."

The minute he referred to came not long after dinner, while they were sitting over the tray of coffee and liqueurs in the drawing-room. All during dinner there had been an interchange of questions and answers about old friends — who was married, who was dead, what had happened in the four years or more of Edith's absence. And now she said: " I heard from somebody that Eleanor Maranda — Eleanor Loring — was going to get a divorce from that Loring man, or else that she had gotten it, I can't remember which."

"Yes, I believe she did. Of course they kept it very quiet. That can be done, you know. No need for publicity or talk."

This piece of indirect counsel, like many other calculated kindnesses, went calamitously wide of the mark. Edith gave her father a straight look, momentarily setting her straight lips. "I don't see why there should be any effort to keep such a thing quiet," she said; and after an instant, added deliberately: "I daresay you know that is why I have come back home this way, father. To get a divorce."

"I — I was afraid so," he admitted. "I have been afraid for some time that — that things were not going well." Lawson had never liked his alien son-in-law, never entirely trusted him, but a sense of justice, the desire to do his whole duty, to observe those time-honored doctrines of patience and moderation in which he had laboriously schooled himself, impelled him to add earnestly: "I hope you haven't acted too hastily. But if you begin to feel that you have, don't be stiff-necked about it, Edith. Don't let your pride stand in the way of a reconciliation. Young people — and old ones, too! — often have misunderstandings, and between two people who really care a great deal for each other, a misunderstanding is the bitterest thing on earth. Now — "

Edith did not interrupt him; one of her gifts, sufficiently rare in a woman, was that of never interrupting. Be the matter great or small, the speaker wise or foolish, Edith invariably heard all out with the strictest attention. So now she did not interrupt her father; with her cool, light eyes fixed on him, she moved her fan; ceased moving; resumed. Lawson all at once felt his words and the thought behind them to be running out, so to speak, as a river might lose itself in sand. He halted, and after a proper interval, she answered him.

"I know you think it right to give me that sort of advice. It *is* right. But I have made up my mind. I have thought of everything. You know I generally do."

"Yes, you do!" her father said. "Only this is — Have you seen an attorney?"

"No, not yet."

"Well — er — can you get a divorce on this side? With your husband over there in Germany?"

"I don't know as yet. That's a mere detail, however."

A mere detail! Well, perhaps it was, her father said to himself, in comparison with the central fact of Edith's determination; she was the embodiment of cold purpose. "Er — ah — it will be incompatibility, I suppose?" he hazarded. She couldn't very well allege desertion or non-support!

"No. Statutory grounds," said Edith. The fan waved.

Lawson turned very red; his generation never mentioned anything so ugly in a mixed company; women were not even supposed to know what this particular phrase meant. He had to remind himself that Edith belonged to what was practically a new race; other times, other manners; and it might be that the fashion of calling a spade a spade made for decency in the long run more definitely than calling it an agricultural implement, or pretending that there was no such thing at all. Following up this reasoning, his next question came logically, nevertheless he stammered and hesitated. "You — er — I — there can't be any doubt? You — you have — the charges can be proved, in short?"

"Oh, certainly. I wouldn't make a charge that I couldn't prove. I found him. I found them together."

Her father sat an instant benumbed. *"You — you found them together?"* he literally gasped. *"You found them — you yourself?"*

"Yes. The girl happened to be one of the maids. Frieda Schuler; from Bremen, I believe. A very handsome young woman," said Edith, with complete detachment. "I had engaged her only about six weeks before, so she had not been in the house very long. Of course I don't know how long it had been going on — between Rudolph and her."

"You mean to say this — this thing occurred in your own house?" her father articulated with difficulty.

"Yes."

Lawson Rudd stood up, trembling all over; his strong, ageing face turned gray; between his set teeth he ground out an appalling curse. Not in years, not in his whole life had he known such a surge of anger; it was not merely that generations of clean-living ancestors revolted within him; a primordial instinct went storming through his blood. Of the pair, Edith was the composed one! She gazed at her

father a little apprehensively, and spoke part in soothing, part in remonstrance.

"Why, father! Why, *father!* Don't look so! Don't feel so! It's all over now."

He dropped back, a good deal shaken, controlling himself with a severe effort. "I — I beg your pardon, Edith. I — I forgot myself. I said something — I beg your pardon!"

"Never mind. I knew you'd be angry. Maybe I wouldn't have liked it if you hadn't been angry; though, of course, it's not really worth while," Edith said; and she repeated: "The whole thing is over now."

She spoke with no slightest trace of feeling. It *was* all over, Lawson thought, looking at her; Edith's youth was all over; some zest of life that had been within her was done away with, cut out and the wound cauterized. There was nothing left but a husk of passionless flesh, a chilled-steel tool of intelligence. And she was not yet twenty-seven years old. After a while, she said: "Shall I tell you about it, Dad?"

"If you choose," said Lawson. "If it isn't —" If it isn't too painful, he was about to say, but stopped. It did not seem as if anything would ever pain Edith again. She made a little gesture with the fan, as if to put aside his concern, began to speak and went on speaking with an impersonal composure which was manifestly genuine; there was no hint of bravado, of emotions melodramatically held in check about it. Her main, indeed, her whole anxiety seemed to be to lay the facts before him clearly and in their proper sequence.

"Of course I knew before — I had known for a good while that Rudolph was — was not like an American husband. There was always something of the sort going on. But this time I didn't suspect. A servant-girl, you know. One doesn't think of them in that connection, somehow. I found out by the merest accident — the sort of accident that happens on the stage. Everything about it was utterly banal.

"We had been asked to a musicale. Rudolph came home earlier than usual, and wouldn't eat any dinner; said he had a furious headache and would have to chuck the party and get to bed, but I must go by all means — to be seen in the best houses, in the right circle, was always so important for

people in our position. It was as commonplace as that; the oldest trick in the world — only it is generally the wife getting the husband out of the way! In the meanwhile Alice von Falkenberg had telephoned that she would stop and pick us up; Count von Falkenberg had some kind of business — he's in the Foreign Office, and all the diplomatic service seem to be very busy just now — and she would have to fetch him home later, but she didn't want to go by herself. I was glad afterwards that everything happened just in this way. Alice came for me. On the way she got to talking about her governess, this same Miss Stannifer. She said Hilda and Janet didn't need her any more; they are almost grown, and are going away to school in Geneva. Miss Stannifer had been with them over ten years, and Alice felt rather badly about her going, but at the same time didn't feel justified in keeping her on, and Miss Stannifer herself has a good deal of spirit, and would not want to stay anywhere without a well-defined place and duties that balanced her salary. She wouldn't be contented as a figurehead, or pensioned off; she wants to work. Alice told me she had even taken up stenography this last year, with the idea of fitting herself for another kind of position, though her eyesight isn't very good; she's not young, you know. The whole thing seemed pathetic; Miss Stannifer is a lady — a clergyman's daughter, very well connected — all that sort of thing. It means so much over there. Everybody that goes to Alice's house knows Miss Stannifer. It was a good deal on Alice's mind; she kept talking about her — suggested that I might take her for a companion. At the time, of course, I was a little bored; but afterwards I thought how fortunate it was. Don't you want to smoke, Dad? You always used to smoke after dinner."

Lawson took a cigar, with some idea of humoring her, though conscious all the while that Edith was the last woman in the universe to demand humoring. He was wondering inwardly what Miss Stannifer had to do with the matter, and where all this talk about her would lead; but that it would lead somewhere, and was vital to the story, nobody that knew Edith would doubt.

She went on. They had gone to the von der Schacht

musicale, but came away early, before midnight; they were the first to leave, Madame von Falkenberg's call for her husband necessitating it. He bore some official title which Lawson could not understand, though Edith reeled off the intricate German syllables glibly, having, for her part, acquired considerable facility in the language during these years of residence. Her friend set her down at her own door, at something past twelve; she let herself in and went upstairs.

"They were not expecting me back so soon. And besides they had had champagne. It made them reckless," she said, her fan swaying gently to and fro.

There was a long silence. Lawson's cigar had gone out; he discovered on mechanically attempting to smoke that he had crushed it well-nigh to powder in his clenched fist.

"Very disgusting, all of it!" said Edith, in her cool voice.

Her father struggled unsuccessfully to imitate the same coolness, as he asked: "Well? What did you do?"

"I went away and left them. I went to my own rooms. I sat down and thought for a little. Then I rang my bell and after a while — for all the rest of the servants were asleep or gadding about somewhere, or had perhaps been paid to leave the house — after a while one of them came. It was not my own maid, but a sort of kitchen helper, a Bavarian peasant-girl, smelling terrifically of potato-peelings and dish-water. I don't suppose I had ever spoken to her before, or even seen her very close. The poor thing herself was rather frightened, and kept curtsying and apologizing. Really, though, she suited better for what I wanted than my own maid. I had her make up a bed for herself in my dressing-room. 'You must sleep here to-night,' I told her. 'In the morning early, we will get up and pack some trunks.'" Edith paused reflectively. "They are perfectly astonishing, those people. They obey like sheep. Fancy my giving such an order to any servant over here! She would have tried to worm some explanation out of me, or else would have pretended to do what I said, and then slipped off and sent for help to the nearest lunatic asylum. But this one never asked a question, or said a word; she did exactly what I told her to, even to going to sleep on her pallet on the floor!

" In the morning we got up and packed everything, and I sent for a cab to take us to — "

" A cab? What had become of your own machine? "

" It was reported to be out of order at that precise moment," Edith said tranquilly. " I suppose orders had been given to interfere with my going or to embarrass me as much as possible. However, I went."

She had gone to a hotel, the largest and best-known in the city, with her peasant hand-maiden, engaged a suite of rooms, and telephoned to Miss Stannifer. The latter, who had already left the von Falkenbergs and was *en pension* in a humble quarter, came at once. " She has never left me since, day or night," Edith said.

" I suppose, of course, you explained the situation fully to her? " said Lawson, still in a fog about the necessity for Miss Stannifer.

" Oh, yes, she knows all about it. After she came, I sent back the poor Bavarian. She went just as submissively and unquestioningly as she had come. They are certainly extraordinary! " Edith reiterated.

" Well, *then* what did you do? "

" Nothing except see about steamer reservations. I did think at one time of going to our Ambassador; they had always been as nice as possible to me, and I had some idea of getting advice from a man. But, on second thoughts, it seemed better not. He is there for public affairs, not private; and I didn't want to do anything that could bring in the name of any official from this country. I might have put him into an unpleasant or difficult position, some way. So I never went near the Embassy. All of them called, though. Alice came to see me, of course. And Rudolph came."

" He did? "

" Yes. I didn't see him. Oh yes, he came again and again, and his father and mother — all the family. They were quite wild — in a dreadful state of mind. Not because of me, you know." A wraith of a smile passed across Edith's features to see her father sit dumfounded at this information. " Oh, not about me at all! They were worried over Rudolph. They were afraid his career would be ruined forever. It *is* ruined," said Edith without venom, simply as a statement of fact.

This, which she appeared to consider amply explanatory, only served to puzzle her father still more. "Well, Edith," he said at last; "if his career professionally or financially or any other way has all gone to pieces, I am vindictive enough to be heartily glad of it. But as a matter of fact, that's not what usually happens, in these cases. You know the world — you know what its judgments are likely to be about the man and the woman that — that go wrong this way. The man always gets off the easier of the couple. Monstrously unfair, but that's what happens. It wouldn't exactly ruin a man over here, unless — well, it wouldn't ruin him, generally speaking. I've always supposed that over there they were much more lenient than we are."

"It all depends," said Edith, impartially. "In one way they are distressingly rigid. Rudolph could have carried on an intrigue with a brother-officer's wife, or with some woman of title, or even with a *figurante* in the Imperial Ballet, or a celebrated *demi-mondaine* — provided she were celebrated enough! — and nobody would have said anything. But a chambermaid! Oh, impossible! Low! Vulgar! Stupid! He'd be dropped from all the clubs, everybody would cut him dead on the streets; and, *pour comble,* when it got to the ear of the All-Highest, Captain Gherardi would presently receive an official intimation not at all delicately or indirectly worded that his military services were no longer required by his chief or his country. That's what they meant by my ruining his career."

"*Your* ruining it, hey? Seems to me he did it himself."

"Yes, but they wanted me to overlook it, to keep quiet about it, and go on living with him, you know."

"Huh!" said Lawson, in a snarl.

"Oh yes, they were all very tragic," said Edith, moving the fan steadily. "His mother came to see me, and made a terrible outcry."

"I don't see what she could find to say," said Lawson, baffled.

"Well, my mama-in-law — she's very stout and high-colored and dresses in black silk with lots of passementerie — started out by reasoning with me. She told me I was very young, and didn't know anything about men, having been

brought up with such crude American ideas. Men — married ones and all — must have diversions and variety. It was the part of a good wife to shut her eyes to certain things. Everybody had had some such experience as mine. Even Rudy's papa — ! I said I quite understood about Rudy's papa. We were sitting opposite a mirror just as you and I are now."

Lawson's eyes travelled involuntarily to the glass whence his daughter's reflection returned the gaze superbly. He had enough imagination to visualize the scene, the little, fat, excited German *hausfrau,* red-faced, tearful, middle-aged, dowdy, a caricature; and Edith, ineffably cool and exquisite, assuring her that she "quite understood about Rudy's papa!"

"She went almost into hysterics, and I think she would have scratched me, if Miss Stannifer hadn't been there. It was a very coarse exhibition," said Edith. "So strange! They had all shown good enough manners before, nevertheless I had had a notion that down underneath they were — well, rough, you know, violent — *er — common,* as Mother says. And sure enough, they were, only worse than I could have imagined! After that, Rudolph's father came. I was expecting a visit from him, too, of course; they seemed to think that it would make more impression on me if they came one after another all day long, instead of all at once. It was very tiresome. The first thing Herr Gherardi did was to order Miss Stannifer out of the room — or to order me to order her. I said, very well, and she went out. Then he began in that loud, blustering, overbearing way they have, as if by bawling and lots of words they could put you in the wrong. *He* told me that I was a foolish, selfish, short-sighted, high-tempered young woman. I must behave myself; what did I mean by this outrageous conduct? I would have to be taught a lesson; I would not be allowed to carry this any farther, and so on. I did not say anything; there was no use, you know. I sat and listened, and looked at him. After a while he stopped of his own accord."

Lawson thought he knew why the other father had stopped "of his own accord," under that steely and measuring eye. For the first time during this sorry recital, he felt a desire

to laugh. He'd like to see anybody bluff Edith! "Well, what did you say to him?"

"I said: 'A little less noise, Herr Gherardi, if you please!'" said David Rudd's granddaughter; and a certain likeness to that flint-hard old worthy, flitted across her face, startling her father not a little. "That seemed to take him aback, somehow. He hesitated and sputtered for a minute. Then he went ahead on another tack, quite fatherly this time. He said in a grave, warning, significant way that I must remember what my own conduct in the past had been; that I was in no position to criticize my husband for this sort of imprudence, or to assume superiority —"

"What? He said — ?" shouted Lawson, half-rising, gripping the arms of his chair. "He deliberately hinted — ?"

"*Father!*" said Edith, as before. "Do, please — ! What is the use?"

He commanded himself once more. "To be sure! But what next? What was the next step in the persecution?"

"Oh, he kept on in that paternal-advice style for some time. I didn't say anything. Finally he stopped; I think he was more or less flustered by my simply sitting listening and watching him. I suppose he had expected me to get angry or frightened," said Edith, speculatively. "I didn't. And that must have upset his calculations. When he stopped I asked him to please be more specific about when and where and with whom I had erred as a wife in the same way that Rudolph had as a husband; I said I should like to know. He wasn't ready for that, either, and fumbled around a good deal, and at last wanted to know where I had been myself the night I had come home and alleged that I had found Rudolph. I said a person so well informed as he professed to be ought to know already; but that I had no doubt the Countess von Falkenberg would be glad to tell him. He'd forgotten about that. Oh, they *are* so dull! Their lies are the most childish things imaginable — it's an insult to one's intelligence to be expected to believe such stuff. Then he fumbled around some more, and said it was very suspicious my leaving my husband's roof, and going off to a hotel by myself. I said that I had literally not been 'by myself'

without a woman companion for one single instant since that night, and that I would not have the slightest difficulty in proving it to him or anybody."

Enlightenment flooded her father's mind. *"Oh!"* he ejaculated.

"He knew that to be the truth. For that matter he knew all along that personally I was absolutely unassailable; he just thought he could bully me. When he found that he couldn't he rather went to pieces — lost control of himself, and blurted out that it was easy to manufacture proofs; that two could play at that game; that I had plenty of my dirty American dollars to bribe people with; but that he had money, too, which he would not hesitate to use, if I didn't come to my senses and abandon this attitude. So I could go on at the peril of my own reputation — and a great deal more in the same strain. By that time I was beginning to be pretty tired of him. So when he stopped to take breath, I said: 'Miss Stannifer!' and Miss Stannifer came out from behind a screen where she had been all the time. She only went out of one door and came in at another! I said to her: 'Kindly read from your notes what Herr Gherardi has been saying to me.' So she started to read, all about the bribing and everything. Then he bounced up, shrieking that this was a *verdammt* trick! I said, yes indeed, it was! With that he went raging around, calling me names, perfectly crazy. And when he got out of breath again, I said: 'Miss Stannifer, have you taken all that Herr Gherardi has been saying?' And she began to read again!" Edith paused with her first smile; it was bright as a new sword. "Oh, Dad, you've no idea what a comedy it was to see Miss Stannifer with her fountain-pen and her eyeglasses, and to hear her in that precise voice reading out all the things he had said, indecent and all. She never balked at one of them! He was almost petrified. You know even he could understand, though it must have gone awfully against the grain with him, that it would be impossible for any sane human being to doubt Miss Stannifer for a minute, or to associate her with anything disreputable; even if one didn't know anything about her, and a great many people do know all about her, on account of her being in the Falkenberg house for so long. But one only has to look at her, anyhow."

Lawson gazed at his daughter in stark delight. He chuckled; he swore again, this time without apology. " By G—d, Edith, there's not a woman in creation that can touch you! And mighty few men! " He drew a long breath of satisfaction. " He must have seen you had him bested all around. He couldn't have had much to say after that."

Edith considered, with a slight perplexed wrinkle between her brows. " Why, father, he did a very queer thing. All at once he burst out stamping and raving and saying that all Americans were *verpfleuchter schweinhund* — and worse things than that! — nothing but barbarians, who didn't know how civilized people lived. And that we were just like the English, a lot of upstart, unscrupulous, cowardly, hypocritical fools who thought we owned the world. And that we'd all better look out; presently we'd find out who was who; presently we'd come to the end of our rope; presently we'd be taught something, and — oh, I don't know how much more there was of it! He fairly foamed at the mouth. Even if it had all been true, it had nothing to do with Rudolph and me. I can't imagine what was the matter with him. They don't like Americans, and sneer at us, and make it unpleasant for us very often; but Herr Gherardi's talk was that of a madman. Perhaps he simply had to have some outlet for his anger, and took to blackguarding my country, since he couldn't do anything to me. As soon as he held up for a second, I said: ' Miss Stannifer, have you got all that down? ' "

Lawson rocked on his seat with laughter. " You don't mean to say that she'd been taking that, too? "

" Oh, yes. I had given her orders to take everything he said, and she meant to do it. There she was, faithfully toiling along after him with her note-book! She did say: ' Herr Gherardi has been speaking so fast I'm afraid I've missed a word here and there, but — ' and then she straightened her glasses and began to read. He'd been so furious I think he hadn't noticed her at all, but when she began he gave one grand, final explosion and rushed out of the room. That was the last of *him*. There were others of the family, mostly the women; but it was just about the same thing over and over again. Not interesting."

In the silence that ensued, Lawson picked out another cigar, feeling that he might smoke now with some relish. He surveyed Edith with a keen pride, not all paternal; there entered into it, besides, something of race, something inherent in American ideals and traditions. "I wish I'd been there," he said.

"I'm thankful you weren't!" she retorted frankly. "You'd have been killing somebody — or horsewhipping them, at the least. It was better as it was. I can take care of myself."

## CHAPTER IX

THE return of Mrs. Edith Rudd Gherardi, and her motives for returning — of which she made no secret — created no such commotion in or outside the family as might have been feared. Amongst most American communities there exists a sentiment against foreign marriages which does not exactly amount to prejudice, rather to a vague uneasiness, influenced by a not at all vague conception of the worth of our own marriageable population. Why should any American young man or woman go seeking a spouse from another nation? Abana and Pharpar are better than all the waters of Israel. As a rule, it is not without a subtle satisfaction as of prophets vindicated that we hear of such matches turning out failures; and Edith's case was no exception. There was not much surprise expressed, and very little curiosity. Some reporters called, of course; but were sent away defeated, yet by good management on her part, not antagonized. Her uncle Elihu, on hearing the story, uttered a single trenchant comment.

"Why, Gherardi must be a damn fool!" said Elihu. "Their own house! He ought to have known better."

"Edith would have found out just the same, sooner or later," said Lawson. "She *had* found him out, in fact; she stood it till it got too rank. A man can't get away with things like that forever."

"I haven't got much use for 'em anyhow," the older brother remarked superfluously. "Now a live American business-man like George — that's the kind of husband our girls ought to pick out."

Lawson was silent. The truth was that everything was not running as smoothly in the George Stillman household as might have been desired. The two families were aware of friction somewhere, without being able to locate it.

George was taciturn and glum; Hester inordinately restless. There were never any clashes about bills or expenses; obviously Mrs. George had everything she wanted, including her own way; then what was the matter? Edith, with her sharp, pale eyes and her fresh experience, may have had a guess, but if so she kept her own counsel.

She herself was somewhat restless, but with ample excuse, as everybody felt. So that when, after three or four months at home, broken by nervous flights about the country, to Pasadena, to Aiken, even to Panama and the Bermudas, she divulged a plan for setting up a separate establishment for herself, an apartment somewhere with Miss Stannifer and a couple of maids, there was scarcely any opposition. Her mother had some fears that the proceeding would "look queer," but these were soon quelled. "Edith has always been so original! Nobody thinks much of anything she does," Mrs. Lawson sighed resignedly. To her father's objections, Edith replied with those frank and reasonable arguments which always had weight with him.

"There doesn't seem to be any place for a divorced woman in our scheme of society, Dad," she said. "I never thought about it before, I never noticed; but now I feel it all the time. Everybody knows that I am perfectly all right; that there's no scandal about me; yet look at me! I'm not Miss Rudd, and I'm not Captain Gherardi's widow. My friends are all married and interested in their homes and husbands and babies and in one another's homes and husbands and babies, but not the least bit in me. We haven't got anything in common any more. The ones that aren't married have all gone in for some kind of art or charity or something, and don't miss me particularly. I'm too young for the oldest set, and too old for the youngest. The débutantes and the young chaps they go with bore me to death, and they don't want me around, even for a chaperon. For that matter, their mothers don't consider me entirely eligible as a chaperon, though they know I'm all right. Wherever I go, I'm a sort of fifth wheel. I think I'd do better to take your allowance and go away and make a new start somewhere, in New York with Steve, or near him. He doesn't need me, either, but Steve and I have always been fairly congenial."

"*I* need you, Edith," said her father wistfully; whereat she kissed him with one of her flashes of tenderness, precious because so rare. Nevertheless she held to her resolve, characteristically; and when the family started for "Journey's End" that summer, stopped off in New York, despite the heat, and spent a week canvassing Long Island, the Oranges, the Hudson towns, as well as the apartment-house districts of the city itself, winding up triumphantly at last in the neighborhood of Park Avenue.

". . . The *Montrose* is really a small hotel," she wrote; "but my suite is one of the housekeeping ones, with a kitchen. Everything is on a two-by-four scale, of course, except the prices, which seem to me monstrous after Europe. But I remember how ridiculously cheap I thought everything over there at first. I shall have a great deal of fun managing; and please don't take this for a hint and increase the allowance. You know I always have plenty of money, and yet somehow always have everything I choose, no matter how much it costs! I often think it would have been much better for me if I had had to work for my living. I really don't care much for money — though it certainly is convenient to have it."

Her father read this part of the letter with a smile which faded presently as the late David with his ideas on the same subject stalked unbidden through his mind. He wondered what Edith would say could she know what Steve knew of this money which she handled so well; would she share her brother's repugnance? Lawson had a kind of reluctant conviction that Edith would do nothing of the sort — reluctant because the hard common-sense that governed her made her seem altogether too much like old David himself.

She had seen Steven, naturally, and reported him to be looking well and in a modestly jubilant state over having had a one-act play accepted by the management of the Rose Players. ". . . One of the companies that have a tiny little theatre and give their performances with hardly any scenery or accessories, depending entirely on the acting. There must be a dozen such here. The Rose people have set out to be different from the others; for instance, Steve says they

have a hard-and-fast rule that any play submitted must be in the present day and dress — otherwise they won't consider it, no difference how good it is. Nothing mediæval or Oriental or fairylandish goes! I suppose that kind has been done to death; or maybe these people just want to be odd. . . . I met the director, a Mr. Harding, a very nice fellow. He dreams of a municipal theatre, and asked me ever so many questions — most of which I couldn't answer! — about the ones abroad. . . . Steve's play is called '*Melodrama.*' There are only about half a dozen people in the cast. I went to a rehearsal, but it was all rather mixed up, none of what they call the 'business' arranged yet, and the actors obliged to go over every scene several times, piecemeal, with constant interruptions and suggestions from Steve and the manager and everybody. . . . They all say you can't possibly tell how any play is going to take with an audience, but I was immensely surprised that Steve could do so well; some of the dialogue is awfully good.

"He has some very nice friends. I don't suppose they will exactly take me in, as I don't do anything literary or artistic, but they will at least tolerate me; anyway, the Ballards are here, as you know, and every now and then somebody else from home turns up. I don't think I shall be lonesome. I never saw such a change in two women in my life as in Mary Ballard and her mother. They look prosperous, for one thing, but it's not that alone. They both have more confidence somehow — seem to be more reliable and settled than they ever did before. There always used to be something about Mrs. Ballard's smile that seemed forced as if she were on some kind of strain all the time. Well, every vestige of that is gone; when she smiles nowadays, you feel that it's because she's amused, not because she wants to be agreeable. I asked her if she would help me fit up my rooms, and was simply astounded when she said: 'Oh, pshaw, Edith Rudd, you don't need any help! You know what you want better than anybody can tell you!' and she looked straight at me and laughed. *Imagine Mrs. Ballard!* She always used to have an axe to grind for Mary or herself, and never missed a chance to grind it. So then I said: 'Well, I have to buy furniture anyhow, and can't you steer me to

the good shops? ' Because you see, Dad, I'm pretty sure she and Miss Burke must get a commission on what they can sell in that way; otherwise there wouldn't be much in it for them. She agreed to that. . . . Mary and Steve seem to have settled down to a sort of good-fellows-all-around basis. There's nothing sentimental going on in this circle, anyhow, I fancy. Everybody has work to do, and they're all pals, not lovers. Perhaps I notice it more because I've just come from such a wretched nest of intrigue and sham emotion, everybody making a business of being in love or pretending to be. Pah! It was sickening! Here, it's all clean and wholesome. . . .

" I've met that weird Eugene Rudd, by the way. Don't quite know what to make of him, but Steve likes him."

It began to be very hot and New York closed its houses, seeking the mountains and the seashore. Business was so dull that the Lanthorn put up its shutters, too; Miss Burke going off to a resort in Michigan where her mother was staying, Mrs. Ballard with Mary to a farm-house up in Vermont. " Journey's End " was knee deep in midsummer bloom by the time Edith reached there, and Clam Beachers were coming over in droves, as usual, of a Thursday afternoon, for the spectacle, and Mrs. Rudd, as usual, was complaining about them. Stillman, senior, was there for a few days; all the country-houses in the neighborhood were full, and there was visiting backwards and forwards. It was very gay at Clear Harbor; the links were over-crowded, the roads hummed with motor-cars, the smart yachts went flashing along off-shore. Into the midst of this bright, careless summer life dropped the news of War.

Though there had been rumblings and threatenings in plenty beforehand, no one was ready for the thunderbolt. They read the black two-inch-high headlines on the terrace at " Journey's End," unbelievingly; it could not be true; it was a rumor, swelled to giant proportions by these sensation-mongering newspapers. Only a few nights before they had seen afar off and low down on the horizon the lights of a big ocean-liner standing out for Southhampton and Cherbourg. Everything was going on according to routine; it was impossible that the sane, pleasant, orderly universe should be so rudely and foolishly disturbed!

Alas, it was only too possible! The guns boomed at Liège; the liner came back; the yachts, one and all, scurried to port; the telegraph and cable offices grew very busy. Old John rushed off to the New York offices. George came down pell-mell from Nova Scotia, where he had been roughing it in solitude. Lawson began to talk as if he had better be at his desk. Mrs. Lawson gave thanks openly that she had not gone over as she had planned.

"Really, it was the most fortunate thing after all, about Edith. I had expected to make her a visit, you know. Of course, her — er — her coming back in — in just this way, changed everything. I can't help feeling that it was providential. I should have been there now actually in the middle of it all, and Heaven only knows *what* I should have done! Everybody is having such a time trying to get home."

Edith's own comment was interesting to her circle, coming as it did with a certain authority, and moreover in an impersonal style that relieved the audience as much as it surprised. They said to one another that they had been afraid of some embarrassment at first in mentioning the subject before her; and as to asking questions — ! She was in a position to know all about Germans — *some* Germans, that is, the upper class, the ruling class; she must have had perfectly wonderful opportunities! Still, you didn't like to ask her questions; you didn't know what minute you might — you might — well, it would take a great deal of tact, that was all. But she didn't seem to mind talking about them — the Court and the Army and the Navy and their politics and all — in the least; and never spoke with any spite or resentment, just quietly told what she had seen and heard and what her judgment was. It made you feel that everything she said was true — not exaggerated.

"Oh, no, I don't think a German naval commander would hesitate over sinking the *Kronprinzessen Cecilie* or any other boat, if he had orders," she said; "and he would be quite likely to have orders. The passengers wouldn't make any difference; if they could escape by the ship's boats, very good! But if not, if there weren't enough to go round, or if everybody got drowned, I don't think the Germans would care. They would reason that passengers had no busi-

ness to be on board; and that they themselves must do their duty, regardless of any private feeling. Nobody has any business to get in the way of a German when he is doing his duty; or if anybody does get in the way, he must take the consequences. If some superior officer tells a German soldier to cut all the women's heads off in any enemy town, or to cut his own mother's head off, for that matter — why, it's his duty, and he must do it, and it would be very silly of the women or of his mother to object! Oh, I assure you, it's quite true! I've heard them say so over and over again. They're terribly literal and practical, you know." And in reply to the outcry that this aroused, she merely smiled, "Wait and see!"

"Well, I'm glad we're out of it, anyhow," her father said, "We're all going to have pretty hard sledding as it is, if it lasts any time — " and added some remarks about dye-stuffs, potash, and such recondite matters, which were unintelligible to the rest of the family excepting Elihu, who assented gloomily.

The world waited and saw. And in the course of this waiting and observation sundry members of the Lawson Rudd domestic staff vanished therefrom, to the great dismay and annoyance of Mrs. Lawson. First the chauffeur, who was French; then the man in charge of the water-works system and the other engines of their private utilities outfit, who was a Canadian and had been with them six years. Then a skilled dairyman, an invaluable person scarcely to be replaced for love or money; he actually wept in saying farewell to a little black Kerry bull which he had raised from a calf and of which he was very fond — but he went. Then Walter McCrae, old McCrae's boy, already a gardener of experience, the logical successor to his father; it seemed that Angus of the lame leg had already gone, surrendering a promising position with a firm of landscape architects in Philadelphia; he got himself accepted, lame leg and all, for some sort of "meelitary duty" as the father told his employers — "Though I couldna juist name it," he explained circumspectly. "They made no pother aboot the lad's leg. It's like they're takin' what they can get and thank the Lord 'tis no waur!" Mrs. Rudd was not profoundly inter-

ested in Angus, but concerning the other desertions she made loud complaint.

"I *cannot* understand it! Of course Antoine had to go. He was a reservist, or whatever they call it, and, anyhow, being French, it was natural that he should want to. I was prepared to lose Antoine. But the rest — ! Why they should rush off in this insane way, and leave us high and dry, after we have always treated them so well! I make it a rule never to talk about servants; it's so tiresome — besides being really underbred. But this is a little too much. There are plenty of men without them, and they don't owe anything to the old country. It doesn't seem to me that there was any good reason for England to go into this awful war, anyhow — "

"England had to go into it, Lucille," said her husband heavily. "She couldn't stand by and see these other countries destroyed; she knew she'd be just waiting her turn. Might as well go in first as last."

"Not at all! If they just paid Germany enough — fifty or a hundred millions, something like that — if the English had only done that, they'd never have needed to fight at all. And the fighting is going to cost them ever so much more," retorted the lady, acutely and practically. It was one of the few occasions when she abandoned her lifelong principle of agreeing with the man of the house.

## CHAPTER X

SOME time in the autumn that rising young man of letters, Mr. Steven Rudd, came before the public with his first play. It was produced by the Rose Company of Players at about the same date that the American wheat-schooner *William P. Fry* was overhauled at sea off our coasts and scuttled and sunk by a German raider — a glorious exploit which somehow did not evoke either the fear or the admiration which the Imperial Government most reasonably expected. In the meanwhile another patriotic and zealous Teuton was caught in an attempt to blow up a railroad bridge between Canada and the United States at a point upon our northeasterly borders, for which the authorities callously sentenced him to jail and the stone-pile; true worth which evidences itself by this species of activity is seldom appreciated by the vulgar herd. The newspapers expressed varying degrees of astonishment, perplexity and indignation; there was a great deal of diplomatic correspondence going on; the enemy's use of dum-dum bullets was discovered by an Eminent Personage on one side and the news transmitted to an Eminent Personage on this side with appropriate sorrow and horror. The enemy did not retaliate with like "discoveries" of their own; it was not necessary. "*Wait and see!*" had been Mrs. Edith Gherardi's advice, and she now would have been amply justified in saying "*I told you so!*" only Edith never descended to anything so obvious and easy.

*Melodrama*, coming on the boards at this time, was encouragingly noticed — and notice of any kind, flattering or the reverse, was held to be encouragement for a theatrical offering in those crowded days. As the Rose Theatre never put on a piece for longer than a week, its popularity could not be gauged by length of run; nor, as *Melodrama* shared the bill with two other plays, could the size and

constancy of the audiences be taken as a vindication. But Steve professed himself satisfied to remain in doubt. The curtain went down on it every night in applause as lively as could be hoped for from an audience which was supposed to consist entirely of those whom certain irreverent members of the community have nicknamed "highbrows." There was a superstition that it was not in the nature or habit of a highbrow to become unduly demonstrative in either approval or disapproval.

"I've known all along that the real test would come not with this play but with my next one," the author told his intimates shrewdly. "If, after *Melodrama,* Harding or any other manager wanted a play from me, then I'd feel that I'd made good — in a small way, of course. Well, they do. I've heard from two men. That doesn't mean I'm Young Shakespeare, but it means something. It means a lot of hard work, for one thing," the young fellow added soberly, yet incapable of repressing a certain elation.

"Go to it, oh youth!" said Eugene. "Produce, produce! Once I thought I could do it — but was undeceived. I did not pipe the proper cadence — was out of tune with the times or the fashion somehow. '*A Grecian poet I, but born too late!*'" he quoted with a laugh and a flourish. "In other words, I was a flat fizzle! But you seem to have struck the right gait. Amble on, amble on!"

"You didn't have any luck!" said Steve awkwardly, conscious that everybody in the gathering knew unerringly what had interfered with Eugene's succeeding; Eugene himself knew. "It's almost all in the acting and stage-managing, anyhow."

Mr. Sackett went and witnessed a performance, so that the audience was not pure and undiluted highbrow upon one occasion, at any rate. "Well, I thought yours was real good — just as good as either of the other plays, anyhow. They weren't any of 'em exciting. I guess that's modern style. Things don't happen right bang out before you like they used to have in plays twenty-five or thirty years ago. Like *Two Orphans* or *The Mighty Dollar* or *Ingomar* — any of those old-timers," he said rather regretfully. "For that matter, you take Shakespeare; there's almost always

*something* going on, on the stage where you can see it and hear it, in Shakespeare. He don't let you down with just talking about it. Now yours being named *Melodrama* I was sort of keyed up, expecting something to come off all the time, so when nothing did come off, I won't say but what it was a little disappointing. Not to the rest of the audience, though," he added quickly, in an amiable anxiety to save the author's feelings. "Everybody around where I was sitting, was on to the whole situation from start to finish, and pleased to death when it turned out the way it did. I heard one lady say it was 'soul-satisfying,' and I judge that's how all of 'em felt."

Such is the perversity of the average literary laborer that Steve winced a little at the above comment which should have satisfied him deeply; the trouble was that he thought he detected about it a faint flavor of cults and catchwords. "Soul-satisfying" — *gr-r-r!* Eugene glanced at him, grinning.

"You don't consider that the common, everyday events of life have in them something piercingly dramatic, Mr. Sackett?" he inquired gravely.

"Mine ain't had," said the other with simplicity. "I only recollect one circumstance. It was when a man come into my bar that I was running down to the Mobile race-track in eighty-nine and shot another man that he claimed had made trouble with his girl. The other man had a gun, too. That was what you might call dramatic, both of 'em shooting, and everybody else ducking, and lots of noise and smoke. And singular thing: there was a nigger named Jason round the place that I just kept to run errands and clean up, empty the spittoons and so on, you know. Well, sir, this nigger crept out and grabbed him — the fellow that started the shooting — by the ankle, and threw him and sat on him till we got the police. The other man was dead by that time. Reason I say it was singular, I never heard of any nigger before or since, having that much spunk. I wouldn't have believed it if I hadn't seen it. The jury found manslaughter and they sent him up for life, but I expect he got pardoned out after a while. They most always do. The whole incident would have done for a play, in the old days,

just as it stood — barring Jason. People wouldn't have thought that part true to life."

" No. '*The actual is not the true,*' as R.L.S. said," Eugene remarked, wagging his head.

Mary came down from Tarrytown Saturday evening, and sat with her mother and Jack Burke, who chanced to be in town for a flying visit, and Francie in one of the boxes, the most enthusiastic auditor the play had, not even excepting the lady whose soul was satisfied. Phrases of that sort did not enter into Mary's vocabulary, and it is possible that many of Steve's well-wrought subtleties of dialogue and suggestion escaped her. But she honestly though him wonderful; wonderful to be able to write a play, wonderful to get it put on a stage and acted, wonderful to have other plays milling about his brain, waiting their chance, so to speak, to be written and acted. In the long run a belief so devout and unquestioning may well be to the self-doubting artistic temperament of a worth beyond rubies, beyond the approval of the most discerning critics, and far more of a stimulus. Steve, who nevertheless did not have too high a conceit of his work and accepted adverse comment with patience and attention, fairly warmed his heart in the glow of Mary's admiration. On the other hand he felt no resentment at young Burke's frankly delivered opinion.

" The play's all right, Steve, and, anyhow, you got it acted — but it's a good deal of a gloom. I'd rather see something more cheerful as a steady thing, though this is great once in a while," said Jack; and he supported this judgment by haling the box-party and the author himself to a roof-garden after the Rose performance, whence, I am bound to state, they all returned home in much higher spirits than Steven's effort would have induced. Jack was a staunch patron of the *Oh, Take a Look!* and the *Airy Fairy* school of entertainment as expounded by various eccentric male comedians, several dozens of stunningly pretty young women, magnificent settings and a powerful orchestra; he unblushingly proclaimed himself, in this respect, a member of the proletariat. " I can't even work up much enthusiasm over Francie's junk-shop," he confessed. "We're all tremendously proud of her and of everything she's done, making good right

here in New York in competition with the best people in the country. We think Francie's some girl! Trouble is, I can't see that she fills a long-felt want exactly. It's all very funny and picturesque and all that, but what's it good for? And all that long-winded talk about '*values*' and '*tying the decoration together*' — it gets *me!* Mrs. Ballard's very good at that, I notice. I expect considerable of the credit ought to go to Mrs. Ballard."

"Yes. She's done a deal of work. It's a kind, though, that she's very well fitted for; nobody minds working hard at a job they like."

"It certainly agrees with her all right," Jack said thoughtfully — so thoughtfully that Steven looked at Mrs. Ballard the next time they met with sharpened interest. It was true; she seemed younger, fresher, he thought; he spoke about it to Mary, and to his sister Edith. The latter agreed indifferently; but it seemed to Steven that Mary flushed and looked obliquely while answering with warmth that Mother was *perfectly wonderful;* and that then she dashed along talking about something or somebody else rather too abruptly — yet all the while there was a gleam of uneasy mirth in her eye. Or had he fancied that, too?

Edith was now a settled tenant at "The Montrose" where her tiny apartment with its sparse yet adequate and thoroughly comfortable furnishings, its calculated illusion of spaciousness, curiously reflected her personality. Her father had a *pied-à-terre* there, when he came to New York; and this winter he came much more often than ever before, and showed the strain of the harassing times. "You will be as free here as at any hotel," Edith told him, and it was the literal truth. He was freer than in his own house! The young woman had a masculine genius for companionship, never solicitous, never obtrusive, yet invariably at hand when wanted. Lawson fell into the habit of talking to her about his affairs — where was the woman of whom he had ever made a confidante hitherto? Edith heard in detail how dead everything had been during the first months of the War; how things were beginning to look up now; about the munition-factories working overtime and the soaring prices of chemicals. The Rudd Company could ship next to noth-

ing through to Germany; but the demand from England, France, Russia — !

"And I'd rather deal with them, anyhow. My sympathies are all with them," he used to declare roundly. "We're supposed to be neutral — but who is really neutral in his heart? It's the nature of men to take sides; we can't help it. I don't think that I'm influenced by personal feeling; I think I'd have been against the Germans, even if you'd never had your experience. The way they're conducting this war has showed them up." He talked of going across in the spring.

"You may be here in time for Steve's new play, then," Edith said. "They're going to bring it out about Easter, I believe. Who? Oh, the same people, the Rose Company. If they keep on, they'll finally make Steve a fashionable fad — among the elect, the cultured few, you know," she smiled a smile of lazy irony. "I haven't much patience with that sort of thing myself. But for a writer, an artist — why, it must be the very breath of their nostrils, and what's more to the purpose, it's bread and butter in their mouths! Steve deserves it; he *is* clever."

"You ought to have been a boy, Edith," her father said.

"I daresay I'd have made a pretty fair boy," she agreed musingly. "I'd have liked working. I couldn't go into any sort of business now, because I haven't had the training."

"You could learn. I'm sure you could learn anything you undertook," said Lawson — not too warmly, however. "Only I hope you won't — I'd rather you didn't. I don't like women in business."

"Oh, have no fear! I shan't learn. I'd want to be at the head of things from the start, I'd rather bungle along my own way than have anybody show me or order me. And that's a very impractical spirit," said Edith, manifestly amused at the spectacle of her own futility. It was not long after this conversation that she asked him one day in another moment of intimacy and sympathy: "Father, what was the trouble between you and Steve?"

After a little pause, Lawson said: "We didn't exactly have any trouble; I mean we didn't quarrel in the ordinary sense. I suppose that's the general impression, though."

"The general impression probably is that Steve misbehaved in some way, and that you found it out," said Edith coolly. "That's what Mother and Hester think. It's natural."

"It's very unjust, Edith," said her father heatedly. "He didn't do anything wrong. Anybody that knows Steven ought to know that whatever mistakes he might make, he is incapable of anything low or unbecoming."

"Oh yes, I was sure of that," Edith rejoined, unmoved. "But people will talk, you know. When they've tried to pump me, I've always said that you and he didn't get along. That's near enough to the truth, I daresay."

Lawson looked at his daughter, acknowledging to himself that he was a little afraid of her, now that the time had come to tell her this truth. Not of her condemnation, for he knew in advance almost to a certainty that Edith would not condemn either Steven or himself; it was her judgment on old David Rudd that Lawson feared. His mind stood in wonder before his own inconsistencies; he had found Steven foolish, unreasonable, quixotic; Steven had angered and pained him. Edith would be and do the exact reverse; and instead of relief at the prospect a miserable anxiety invaded him. Supposing she should admire her grandfather? — or merely laugh? — or shrug the whole business away, as too trivial for consideration? None the less, he braced himself to tell her, impersonally, with a painstaking avoidance of exculpation; and was confounded again at the relief with which he heard her first comment.

"The old man must have been fond of money!" was all Edith said; but it summed up the case against David, nor had all Steven's heady indignation expressed a verdict so final and so scathing. After a moment of thought she asked one or two questions characteristically pointed. "I suppose there was no possible way of finding out how much he made by these government contracts?"

"No. If there ever was any record, it had disappeared from the firm's papers before your Uncle Elihu and I took charge."

"*He* wouldn't have been likely to keep such a record," said Edith dryly. "But I thought the Government might

have. There are places in Washington — official bureaux — for things of that sort, aren't there? "

Decidedly Edith thought of everything! It had never once occurred to Steven to make such an inquiry. "Yes," said Lawson unwillingly; "but, Edith, the plain truth is that your grandfather covered up his tracks too well. They all did. I don't think a single one of the men who — who did that sort of thing was ever brought to account for it." And answering her unspoken thought, he said earnestly: "If it had been a matter of making restitution in the exact sum — handing it back to the United States Treasury — well, we might have done it. Only that wouldn't have wiped the slate clean. That money, of course, had entered into the foundations of the business. Well, Steve thought, I believe, that we ought to have wrecked the business in some way and begun all over again! That's ridiculous. But even supposing we had been insane enough to do such a thing, would that have squared things? Why, not at all! *You* can see that, I'm sure. But Steven couldn't, and that's the sole trouble, as you call it, between us."

"Yes, I can see it. Some scores can't ever be paid," said Edith. She was thoughtfully silent for another instant, then said: "Steve's all right, though, Dad." She made no attempt at mediation; in fact, by tacit agreement, neither one of them mentioned the subject again.

The winter wore along; and towards spring Steve's play, *The Toiling Masses*, began to get in shape for production. Meanwhile the staff at Fulano's had been thinned out by the loss of sundry of its foreign members, and Mr. Rudd was advanced once more in consequence. This, at least, was the reason the young man himself alleged. "It's an ill wind that blows no one some good," he said to Eugene cheerfully, and was surprised at the lack of response from the other — he who was, in ordinary, so responsive.

"If the wind that's blowing now in Europe takes to blowing on this side, you'll have nothing to rejoice over!" Eugene growled. And he discoursed fiercely upon the assurance lately given to the country through the medium of the press by a certain exalted official to the effect that were the United States menaced by any foreign power a million men would

spring to the defence between the rising and the setting of the sun. "We think ourselves so sharp-witted, so practical, so efficient — and yet we listen complacently to drivel like that! Whatever happens will serve us right!" he would cry out, stalking restlessly up and down his cramped quarters, with the pipe dead between his teeth. "We invite calamity. We wash our hands like Pilate, without half Pilate's excuse. We shirk every responsibility — and still ingenuously demand to be respected and admired!"

"Well, I never heard anybody say anything in particular against Pilate," said Steven, wondering at his vehemence. "Come, Eugene, we have troubles of our own, haven't we? Mexico, Japan, Labor, Votes for Women, all the rest of it? This isn't our quarrel."

"I'm not so sure that it isn't. I'm not so sure that it's not everybody's quarrel," said Eugene gloomily. "Oh, go along, Steve! You're young, you're occupied with your own affairs. Some day you'll wake up —" with which he would get back to work, though with obvious effort, driving himself. The work was of the same quality as ever, but alas, such demand as there had been for it fell off notably this winter, owing to his uncompromisingly non-neutral attitude. The periodicals for which he was in the habit of writing shied at sponsoring views so one-sided, and set forth, as they hinted, so intemperately; that they were set forth also with great vigor and lucidity and were in the main unanswerable, nowise commended them. Some of the editors who knew and liked him, remonstrated; but by far the greater number of the manuscripts were rejected with perfunctory phrases which Eugene interpreted with scoffing. "This fellow signs himself Herman Klumpf — strange that there is no place in his valuable publication for any criticism of German methods in Belgium!" he remarked. Or, "*The Uplift* thinks me a little too ready to condemn the attacks on the English coast-towns, which are '*perfectly justifiable from the point of view of military necessity about which the layman is unable to judge.*' But the chap that wrote that is in all probability a layman himself! I should like to tell him that it is not important that a layman should be able to judge, but highly desirable that he should be able

to *think*. I suppose they've got a heavy list of German advertisers. That's their real argument."

April came, and the window-boxes bloomed along the upper reaches of the Avenue, as if war and rumors of war were things belonging to another sphere. The date set for *The Toiling Masses* arrived. It may have been a mere coincidence that Steven's father came on to New York that week; the city was full of perturbed business-men from the Middle West and indeed from every other quarter of the compass, so the fact that Mr. Rudd's son was about to bring out a play at this time should be of no especial significance. Lawson's old friend Stillman was in town, too, waiting for a steamer; the train which brought him from the Pacific Coast had been held up by a belated blizzard crossing Wyoming, so old John had missed the sailing of the *Lusitania* on which he was booked, by half a day — a vexatious circumstance. It was imperative that he should be in London before the middle of the month, he told Lawson, frowning and fretting a little. He had plans for going from thence to Russia; this delay was most annoying.

Steven himself knew nothing of these visits; Edith, the close-mouthed, did not tell him for some reason. The first performance had been set for a matinee; and the young fellow went down to the "Rose" on the momentous afternoon in a good deal of excitement. He waited in the wings all through the first number on the programme, a charming conceit entitled *Death in the Pot* wherein a lady of uncertain — or perhaps too certain — morals inadvertently poisoned the wrong lover. Steve knew the author, a lank girl in a mediæval-looking tunic, with black hair cut short; and he watched her go out for her curtain-call, and shook her thin, feverish hand when she came back with whispers of applause, and the private aspiration that he would be saved from making such a fool of himself, if the audience accorded him a like compliment. His own play came next. One of the actors, after a prolonged survey through the peep-hole, came and stood by him with encouraging words. A certain well-known exploiter of the drama on Broadway was in one of the boxes, he reported. "And we may talk, and we may talk, Broadway's the place!" he remarked enigmati-

cally. "There're some of your friends in the box opposite. Mrs. Gherardi and somebody else."

"Somebody else? Er — a lady? Ladies?" queried Steven, thinking of Mary; but she had lamented not being able to come on account of school-hours. He was not surprised that the other man remembered Edith, after having met her only once or twice; everybody always remembered Edith, and whatever group she happened to be associated with at the moment was likely to be pointed out as "Mrs. Gherardi and somebody else."

"Yes, two men. You ought to go and take a look at them. Typical Tweedledum and Tweedledee!"

Steven went to the peep-hole; he came back wearing so startled a look that the actor observed it, even in the half-light of their corner. "What's up?" he thought, but prudently refrained from inquiring.

"Why, it's — it's my father and a friend of his," said Steven. "I didn't even know he was in town."

"He thought he'd surprise you, I daresay," said the other, considerately dissembling his own surprise. There had been some prince-in-disguise tales about Mr. Steven Rudd circulating among the theatrical small fry whence they inevitably penetrated to the greater; one by one the performers went and inspected the two elderly, well-dressed gentlemen in Mrs. Gherardi's box, and speculated as to which was Rudd senior. A day or so later when a cut of John Stillman came out with others in the papers at the top of a column with the caption: "Railroad Kings Confer," they all recognized it.

As for Lawson and John themselves, it is doubtful if either one had ever enjoyed a dramatic performance so much in his life, though both were enriched by memories of the most famous plays and players of two generations. Charlotte Cushman, Jefferson, Adelaide Neilson, Booth, Terry, Salvini — whom had they not seen? And what productions of Shakespeare, of Sheridan, of Sardou and Scribe! Lawson found that *The Toiling Masses* in its one act, "compared very favorably — " as he said, desperately feigning a critical detachment. "And the company seems to me entirely adequate."

"Why, it's first-rate! It's fine!" old John rumbled in accompaniment. "Why, Steve's way up, Lawson, right at the top! Always knew he was bright, but — Just see how much better his is than that Borgia business, that poisoning bee they started off with!"

Edith looked from one to the other surprised and secretly touched, for all her cool-heartedness. "How fond they are of each other!" she thought. "Mr. Stillman is pleased because Father is so pleased. And how much Father thinks of Steve, how proud he is!"

It was just after Steven's curtain-speech — which Mr. Rudd declared, with the same elaborately indifferent air, to be in very good taste, really — during the wait before the third and last piece that they began to be aware of some subdued stir among the seats; the ushers hurried about and there were whisperings and questions, and people here and there got up and went out. Lawson, who was naturally observant, was the first to notice, and to call the others' attention. "Something's happened," he said, alertly. "I think there's an extra out. Another big battle over there, maybe." He spoke to a passing usher, but the lad shook his head.

"I don't know, sir. They say the Germans have torpedoed some ship."

"Another sensational rumor! It must keep 'em on the hop inventing them!" Mr. Stillman said with contempt. They all agreed that it was unlucky for the third play to have this conflicting interest aroused at this moment; the restlessness of the audience was plainly to be sensed.

"Good thing for Steven that his is over!" said his father contentedly. "It'll be hard to get people's attention fixed, in competition with this other excitement."

"I sometimes wonder how we can be interested in anything except what's going on over there in Europe," said his friend. "Still we've got to have some distraction. They say the soldiers on leave fairly crowd the theatres in London and Paris and they can't get the entertainment too light and silly for them. Slap-stick farces, tumbling, dancing, all that. You can understand it. Poor devils! I'm curious to see London; it will be so different."

Outside with the rest of the crowd in the chilly spring

twilight, Mr. Rudd got hold of a newsboy, as they struggled towards their automobile. Everybody was getting hold of newsboys, their unintelligible shoutings filled the air. " Here, now we'll see what the excitement's all about," said Lawson, unfolding the paper, as he took his seat. The next instant he exclaimed aloud; they all exclaimed, and studied again the tall black type in a silence of appalled faces.

" It's a story — it's a newspaper story, all exaggerated! " said Stillman at last. " They wouldn't — "

" Yes, they would! " said Edith.

Her father said: " The *Lusitania!* Why — why, you might have been on her, John! You'd have been on her! "

" Oh, pshaw, this isn't authoritative. See, down here it says: '*It is rumored* — ' "

" Well, there was a lot of talk before she sailed," said Lawson. " The Germans were threatening something of the kind — "

" They wouldn't do it, though. Nobody would," the other persisted stoutly.

" Yes, they would," said Edith again, with her still face.

. . . . . . .

Steven, reaching St. John's Building later, with the taste of his modest triumph still rich in his mouth, though dulled, as must have been the personal thought and feeling of every honest and decent man, by the overpowering tidings, stopped for a word with Eugene. The latter had not gone to the theatre that afternoon; he was at home as the light streaming through his transom, and sounds of movement within indicated. When he opened the door, Steven stood in astonishment at the tumbled and confused aspect of the rooms, always so orderly. There was a packing-case, and papers and straw were strewn about; Eugene's iron-bed, dismembered, lay in a straightened heap of wreckage, and there in the middle of the floor stood his forlorn old trunk and suitcase with clothes and shoes and books, just as Steve remembered them on another day, five years ago. But on the present occasion Eugene was entirely sober and master of himself. He had taken off his coat and with shirtsleeves rolled up and his pipe going comfortably, went back to work amidst the dunnage as soon as he had let Steven in, without waste

of time. It struck Steven, before he could frame a question, that there was something brisk, happy and decided in Eugene's movements, as of a mind made up, definitely at ease.

"I haven't been evicted," he said, looking up and grinning around the pipe-stem at Steven's half-uttered interrogation; "I pay my debts and live cleanly, even if I haven't altogether foresworn sack. No, I'm not asked to go. I'm going!" He rolled some wadding together and rammed it down into a crevice of the packing-box with a victorious gesture. "How was the play, Steve? New laurels?"

"It was all right. But have you heard? Have you seen the paper?"

Eugene waved it away. "I've heard — I've seen. That's why I'm going."

"Going where?"

"To Canada," said Eugene, in as matter-of-fact a manner as if he had only announced a change of tenements. At sight of the other's face he broke into a laugh. "You look as if I had said I was going to Senegambia! I don't expect to make my home in Canada," he went on, busily packing; "so I am about to dispose of some of my property. Mrs. Dugan across the way bought the bed, and himself will be over in th' marrnin' as soon as he gets back from his job, to ta-ake it awa-ay. Dugan's night-watchman somewhere, yez know. Would you like the pewter tea-set, Steve? It's the genuine old stuff. Ask Mrs. Ballard if it isn't — "

"What are you going to Canada for?" said Steven, though he knew before the words left his mouth.

"To enlist, to be sure. And after this, if questioned, you'll kindly remember that I come from — from — let's see! — I come from Trasheap, Province of Ontario. Was born there, in fact. I am a loyal subject of the English Crown — "

"They won't take you, Eugene."

"Maybe not, officially. But in that case, they will take me unofficially," retorted the other, tranquilly. "There are ways and ways."

"You wouldn't last a week in the trenches," Steve urged. "Eugene, do be sensible!"

"Who said anything about trenches?" said Eugene.

"What, I can pass coal in a stokehold, can't I? I can hitch up a mule. I can scour a camp-kettle. Be sensible? Where's the point of being sensible a time like this? I'd rather be a fool and get a whack at a German! I tell you I'm going. If you still think the fight is none of my business —" he quoted Tom Sawyer with relish, "'I 'low I'll *make* it my business!'"

Steven looked at his drink-blotched face with a feeling balanced between pity and impatience and admiration; no man on earth could be less fit physically, or show a finer temper. He acquitted Eugene of any impulse of curiosity or desire for adventure; no, this piece of crazy chivalry was of the same fabric as the rest of his ill-fashioned character, woven through perplexingly with the same strand of right-feeling and manliness. Steve abandoned argument; he helped him pack, remembering that other time, and wondering if Eugene remembered it. But the latter apparently had nothing on his mind, least of all old shameful memories. He whistled jubilantly as they worked, he made jokes about his shabby belongings; he drew all sorts of fantastic pictures of the future, vowing that he meant to come back a field-marshal at the very least, and strutted about, aping Napoleonic attitudes with his hand in his waistcoat. "Think of our joining hands with the French after all these years and bitternesses!" It was "our" already with him. "At any rate, if I do stop a bullet, I hope to be finished on the spot," he said, in a flash of seriousness. "I want to die all over, and at once."

They went down to the train together. It was the night-express for Montreal. Eugene had not had any clear idea of where he would go in Canada; Montreal would do as well as any place, he averred with boyish carelessness. The through ticket took two-thirds of his money, and he elected to sit up all night, rather than pay for the sleeping-car, though Steven pressed the money on him. "I can curl up anywhere. And I'm too excited to sleep, anyhow," he said, happily. They got into the crowded, malodorous day-coach, and all at once the moment for parting came.

Neither one of them knew what to say; perhaps Steven would have been more affected if he had believed for an in-

stant that the other could carry out his hare-brained scheme; but it seemed impossible that any recruiting-sergeant would pass Eugene Rudd, and notwithstanding his boasting, his pathetic eagerness, what could he really do, or in what way be of any conceivable use? In a week, a month at farthest, he would undoubtedly be back in New York. They shook hands. The car was busy with people coming and going, and a man near them leaned through the open window to shout after a departing friend: "Well, so long, Jim! My love to the folks!"

"There, that's just what I want to say, too, Steven!" said Eugene, a sudden and quite transfiguring tenderness appearing on his worn, ill-used face. "So long! My love to the folks. Don't forget that!" The train pulled out, its red tail lanterns receding slowly; and presently even they too vanished into the dark.

## CHAPTER XI

THE temper of the country was so belligerent for a while that Steven made sure from day to day of seeing Eugene back, ready to enlist under our own flag, instead of the British. The young man himself tingled with anticipation, and chafed and wondered at the delays, the discussions, when — as it seemed to him and to a very considerable body, perhaps a majority, of our citizens — there was nothing to wait for, and no point that admitted of discussion. But the weeks wheeled around; public sentiment calmed down; and Eugene did not return.

He had promised to write; but Steve scarcely expected to hear unless the impossible had happened, that is to say, unless he should have been accepted for some sort of service; to confess failure in such a gallant quest would be too much even for Eugene's ironic spirit. He had the cause at heart, took his offer of himself seriously, and was pathetically confident that others would take him seriously. In the meanwhile scores of literary and journalistic adventurers, amateur and professional alike, were hurrying to the great scene; *all of it they saw and part of it they were* might well have been their motto — or rather the motto they hoped to earn. They took impartially risks and favors; gave an immense amount of trouble, and no doubt corresponding good cheer; were paid inordinately high, and would have delightedly gone through the same experiences, hardships and all, for nothing. Throughout the length and breadth of the country, every public print teemed with their writings; they came home and lectured; they travelled up and down with lantern-slides; between them and the battered heroes of the War who were doing the same thing, there never was a time since the trade of writing — not to mention the trade of printing — was invented, when it came in for such universal appreciation. If Eugene Rudd had only bided his time, he

might have been of their number; Steven himself was approached often enough. Everything was always arranged for the correspondents, it was pointed out to him; they went everywhere and saw all there was to be seen; he would have no trouble — some hazards and discomforts, of course, but think of the experience, the opportunities, the "material" — enough to last him the rest of his life!

"I *am* thinking of it," Steven would answer, stubbornly. "I don't know that I'm so keen to make capital out of other people's losses and sufferings and hideous trials — that's what it comes to, in the long run. There are plenty who don't mind doing it, or don't see it in the light that I do; let them keep on! I shan't be missed. If I ever do go, I'll go on my own, and get along with the people of the country the best I can." And when it was suggested that some might say the real reason of his refusal was that he was afraid: "They won't say it to my face," quoth young Mr. Rudd, ominously. Nor, in fact, did they.

He used to meet Mary at the Lanthorn and talk over all these matters with her. Not seldom they had the place to themselves, for by this time the Lanthorn and what might be called its allied industries were driving so rushing a trade that the proprietors had scarcely a moment they could call their own. Overnight millionaires, their purses bulging from traffic in munitions, in automobiles and automobile-supplies, in ores, in chemicals, in grain, in leather, were now crowding into New York by the hundreds. And one and all they were clamoring for clothes, jewels, house-furnishings, works of art. They stopped at nothing, cost what it might, that would enrich and beautify lives which hitherto had sadly lacked so much of richness and of beauty. They were pathetic and grotesque and also, as Mary profanely put it, they were a gold-mine, a windfall, a god-send, to people like her mother and Francie. And not only to these two, but to all the musicians, all the painters and poets and costume-designers and pageant-producers and cabinet-makers and landscape-architects — "And actors and playwrights," she interpolated slyly, "in New York City. They can't go anywhere else to spend their money, and most of them seem to be crazy simply to spend it. They buy the wildest things at the

wildest prices — especially the women. You'd think they would all be wanting Doucet and Callot costumes and pearl necklaces two yards long, wouldn't you? Well, they do buy ever so many things on that order; and then there seems to come a time when they all suddenly take a notion to be patrons of art! Mother says it's epidemic among them, like measles. She and Francie had to go to work and dig in the Library and the Museum, and cram up on Oriental rugs and Chinese porcelains and Renaissance stuff, you know, so as to talk the proper patter."

It was true. Honest Mrs. Newdollar from Oilville, Oklahoma, who married Jim Newdollar on a thousand a year, and who had been cooking meals and mending clothes — and washing and ironing them too, sometimes, if the truth were known — for him and the children these twenty years past, whose highest ambition used to be a tiled bathroom or a course in music for Mamie, or a Ford car, or a Swede maid-of-all-work — what now to her were all these pitiful simplicities? She was ashamed when she remembered them and herself in those petty days. A tiled bathroom, indeed! Her new house had half a dozen or more tiled bathrooms; Mamie was going East to school at twenty-five hundred dollars a term; there was a car in the garage for every member of the family; the kitchen and backstairs fairly pullulated with servants. Somehow in a little while she began to tire of this heaven; something was missing from it which she vaguely suspected of being spiritual or intellectual; and it was probably at this moment that the bacillus of æstheticism invaded her. Why could she not have a cult or a collection? Jim could afford it. Being an American woman she promptly had one! Erelong photographs of the Newdollar sunken gardens, the Newdollar music-room, the Newdollar gallery of Italian landscapes, the Newdollar tapestries, enamels or what-not filled the fashionable magazines, followed by "write-ups" in the papers. It was a day of innocent triumph for innumerable Mrs. Newdollars, and of generous harvests for innumerable Mrs. Ballards.

"I should think your mother would be very successful with all of them," said Steven. "Judging by Mr. Sackett, you know. He was very much pleased with everything she did."

"Yes, Mr. Sackett was very much pleased with everything she did," Mary intoned, after a second, in so odd an imitation of his own words and manner that Steven was taken aback, and eyed her suspiciously. Mary, perching in an old stuffed chair with a cover of Victorian needlework, stirred a marshmallow round and round in her cup of chocolate, eying him back with a kind of determined blankness. She had on the style of costume she affected, declaring it to be the only one suitable for a physical instructor, a neat, trig, consummately tailored cloth skirt, a white blouse and smart tie, a small watch in a leather strap around her slim, firm, tapering wrist. But for the feminine suggestion of this last, and but for her bright brown hair, which would wave softly in spite of the stern intention of her coiffure, she looked like a boy. And at the moment, a twinkle of rather boyish roguery showed upon her features and vanished in a trice. But Steven caught it.

"What are you making fun of me for?" he demanded.

"I'm not making fun of you," said Mary, with the faintest possible emphasis on the last word; she appeared to reconsider, and added: "I'm not making fun of anybody."

"Well, what's the joke then?"

"There isn't any joke," said Mary. Then, after a pause, meeting his still inquiring and dissatisfied gaze, she suddenly let loose incomprehensible words. "At least, it ought not to be a joke, only — well, I suppose I'm awful, but somehow I *can't* think of it seriously, that is, as seriously as I ought. You're going to know before long anyhow, so there's no particular harm in telling you. I should think you might have guessed already. Haven't you noticed *anything?* Men are so funny, they never do seem to notice!"

"Notice?" echoed Steven vacantly, staring all around the room. There were no changes of any importance in it, or in Mary, at whom he also stared exhaustively.

"Yes. Goodness, it's been plain enough! Mother and Mr. Sackett — " Something in her expression told him the rest.

"WHAT?" he screeched.

"Shh! Why, yes. Why, he was tremendously taken with her from the very first."

"My great governor!" ejaculated Steven feebly. Mrs. Ballard and Sackett! He realized with horror that he wanted to laugh — that he was on the verge of laughing uproariously, and began precipitately to talk, to stave it off. "I don't know why I'm so surprised. Your mother is so attractive it's easily understood — about *him,* I mean. But, I — somehow I wouldn't have thought that she — um — er — " He gave up in relief for Mary herself was smiling broadly. "Oh, ho, ho! Ha-ha-ha!" The studio resounded with their laughter.

It was not wholly unkind. To the two young people, this belated romance was pretty and moving in spite of the comic touch. They sympathized even while they laughed. "Poor mother!" said Mary. "I didn't think she'd have him. But after all — "

"After all," said Steven. "Why shouldn't she? Why shouldn't they both? When is it going to be?"

"This winter some time. They're going to Palm Beach." She halted, and then said with guilty amusement: "Steve, Francie and I heard the whole thing!"

"What whole thing? Heard what?"

"Why, when he — he asked her, you know — "

"Here, you — you'd better not tell me," interposed Steven, hastily, reddening. "You don't want to tell anybody, you know."

"Why, Steve, we couldn't help it. We didn't mean to hear. It was one afternoon here in the studio. We'd both been in the bathroom, washing our heads, and we were just starting to dry them by the fire when we heard somebody coming in. So, of course, we went scrambling back, we didn't want to be caught, in kimonos and hair hanging all around, all wet and stringy. So we kept perfectly quiet, and Mother thought that we'd gone out, and I daresay Mr. Sackett never thought about us at all. *He* doesn't know to this day; Mother does, because she found us afterwards, but she only laughed, or pretended to. You know how Mother is. He began right away, the minute they got inside — "

"Why didn't you cough, or something?"

"We didn't either one of us think quick enough, and you know if you don't do it right off, you'd better not do it at

all. We'd have gotten out of the way if we could; but you can hear everything in this little place, whether you want to or not. And, besides, Mr. Sackett's a little deaf, you know, and doesn't always know what his voice sounds like, or just how he's got it pitched, and Mother had to speak pretty loud — "

Again they both sat lost in mirth. " He told her she was the most elegant lady he'd ever seen," said Mary. " And oh, Steve, *what* do you think? When he — he came to the point, you know, Mother said: '*This is so sudden!*' just like a *girl,* just like *anybody!* Did you *ever?* "

Steven didn't ever. " All the same, it's all right, and I'm glad of it! " he asserted, stoutly. " He'll be good to her, poor old chap! "

" Yes. And she'll be nice to him. Poor Mother, she'll have it easy for the first time in her life."

Afterwards Steven, meeting Mr. Sackett on the street and thinking to save embarrassment, went up and congratulated him openly and shook his hand with warmth, attentions which the bridegroom-elect received in a very becoming manner; he had no idea of being embarrassed, as it seemed! " I've always admired Mrs. Ballard highly. Of course she's not young any more, but neither am I," he observed liberally. " You know my opinion on that point, anyhow. The parties' ages should suit, I've always thought. Now to some people we might look foolish going into this thing at our time of life, but I guess that won't worry us any. She'll have everything she wants, and I figure she's too smart and too reasonable to want the earth. And I'm going to have a real home, and somebody to leave my money to. Lemme tell you, young man, you don't know how much that means! "

The bride-to-be, for her part, was far too accomplished a woman of the world to allow anybody to suffer from embarrassment on her account; Steven noticed, however, that instead of resorting to any of her sophisticated devices, she merely took a leaf out of Sackett's own book, treating the matter with a plain and simple philosophy. " The fact is, we are both lonely, and we are on the way to being *old* and lonely. It's not that there is nobody to care for us, but that we ourselves have nobody to take care of. You really

have to feel that you are necessary to somebody, if you want to be happy. Now, Mr. Sackett is entirely alone, and while I love Mary — well, Mary is a dreadfully self-reliant girl," said her mother, with smiling regret. "I don't feel as if I could do anything for Mary nowadays. Whereas I am looking forward to managing Mr. Sackett's house and laying down the law about what kind of ties he must wear, with the most extraordinary pleasure!" She spoke in a manner not too humorous, not too serious, which Steven found in very good taste. He no longer laughed.

Indeed, strange as it may seem, nobody laughed; the middle-aged couple had chosen their attitude so well that it defeated ridicule. Even the exalted Van Huysens and Dunwoodies reconciled themselves to the match with scarcely a murmur. Mr. Stillman, himself a man of the people, met Sackett with cordiality; Clara was civil! She and her Aunt Ellen may have had a tilt or two, but Mrs. Ballard was not likely to come off second-best from that sort of encounter. Perhaps if Sackett's bank-account had not been calculated to inspire respect, the relatives might have perceived certain disadvantages about his birth and manners and previous career, but it is singular how completely an income of fifty thousand a year appeases hostile criticism!

Steven was not invited to the wedding; he heard about it afterwards from Mary, who with two or three of the bride's nearest relatives — the groom had none, which in everybody's private opinion was most fortunate — made up the wedding-party. "Mother looked lovely!" was Mary's enthusiastic report. "He was a little nervous. The whole thing was pretty solemn, but nobody cried, though once I rather felt like it. After it was over, we had luncheon at the Ritz; everything was done well, in a nice quiet way. Then they went to the train in that gorgeous new Rolls-Royce he got for Mother. I feel as if they were going to be very happy. They — that is, Mr. Sackett — spoke about my going to live with them, but I'm not. I don't want to."

"Girls that do things always get so independent," said Steven, experiencing a subtle dissatisfaction. "You all want to live by yourselves."

Steven himself was not living alone nowadays; he had lately moved from St. John's Buildings to similarly diminutive quarters at "The Montrose," on Edith's representation that they would be better off nearer together now that both lacked their accustomed companion. For Miss Stannifer went back to England not long after Eugene Rudd's departure; indeed, the Englishwoman had been restive ever since the outbreak of the War and only the hard necessity of earning a living kept her on this side. It was more than ever a necessity now, so many of her people were in the service; two nephews fell in the fighting around Ypres, fine lads of whom she had been very fond. She got letters from home full of sadness, of dogged British pluck. There were tales of outrage and infamy the truth of which she did not question — like Edith, she had lived too long in Germany! It was Edith herself, at the end, who counselled her to go. "If it were my people, my war, I'd go — sometimes I've half a mind to go anyhow, only I don't believe in useless women fussing about," said Edith, with more feeling than she often permitted herself to show. "You go! You can do something in an office or a hospital, and they need *everybody.*" So Miss Stannifer packed up her meagre belongings and went; she was attached to the cool, self-contained, hard-headed young woman, odd as that may seem, and cried at parting from her. There may have been a tear in Edith's chilly, gray eyes, too.

So Steven moved over to "The Montrose"; the brother and sister had always been congenial in spite of, or possibly because of, fundamentally different characters and dispositions, so their *ménage* was pleasant enough. And in the meanwhile Steven heard at last from Eugene. The letter was several weeks old by the time it reached him, and necessarily vague as to names and places; for Eugene had not only got to the other side, but actually to France, though nowhere near the Front. He was working in a base hospital somewhere behind the lines, he reported, in the best of spirits. "Had all sorts of adventures and set-backs getting here, and I was expecting to write you all about everything in detail, but find I can't for two reasons. Number I: writing in detail is not encouraged by the censor. And Number

II: I'm so dog-tired whenever I get a minute off duty that I generally just roll over and go to sleep where I stand, in my habit as I live! . . . I'm billeted at a little farmhouse with a manure-heap in the courtyard directly in front of the door and under all our windows. The hospital is in some municipal buildings — can't be more explicit. As it is the Boches come over and drop a bomb in our neighborhood once in a while. Red Crosses and other hospital signs are nothing to them; they'd just as lief take a shot at a hospital as at a battery of 75's — much rather, in fact, because the hospital can't hit back. I am still in hopes of getting even with them some day, I mean in a scrap of my own up at the Front. Of course we're going to be even, more than even! We're going to beat them flat. '*On les aura!*' as these French people all around keep saying. But I'd like to beat one German flat, all by myself. . . . I am regularly enrolled, but have been assigned right along to this nursing-duty, or the kitchen, or stretcher-bearing; that's the way they use the kind of fellow I am. It's all right, and I don't resent it, because it saves some fit man for the real work in the trenches. At first the wounded were pretty bad, but one gets used to it. And when I saw those Red Cross women nurses standing up to it, the most horrible things, intestinal wounds, things you can't speak of — I say when I saw those unflinching women, it made me so ashamed I took a brace. The women are wonderful anyway; what do they want to vote for, when they can do so much that's more worth while? . . . Lots of Americans over here, some of them flying, some ambulancing. When do you suppose the U. S. will get into the fight?"

## CHAPTER XII

WE re-elected a President the fall of that year, moved thereto, so many people thought, by the argument set forth in a catch-phrase of wide circulation that He Kept Us Out of the War. Lawson Rudd, of the Rudd Chemical Company, voted for the opposing candidate, maybe from habit — being an Ohio man, a native Republican — and maybe out of some unformulated conviction that to have kept us out of the war was not so creditable a proceeding after all. The Rudd Company was reported to have earned fabulous amounts of money the last twelvemonth, mainly in foreign commerce; but the risks and uncertainties of foreign commerce were increasing day by day, and perhaps Lawson thought that his chemical products might well have been kept at home to serve prospective needs of our own. He had become a strong-voiced advocate of both conservation and preparedness; and warmly commended the son-in-law for going up to Plattsburg to take military training during August and September.

George himself displayed little enthusiasm about it; anything was better than staying at home all alone, he said glumly. But George had grown to be rather morose and uncompanionable and difficult to please of late, in contrast to the genial, easy-going chap he used to be; people remarked the change and speculated upon it not too charitably, it is to be feared. "He's not drinking. It's not that, anyhow," Mr. Rudd said to his daughter Edith, in discussing the young Stillmans, with a troubled brow. "I believe that's been hinted around, but it's not so. I'm pretty confident in my judgment about drinking men. It's much more likely to be overwork; these times are a good deal of a strain on everybody. I feel it myself; we all do. We're all nervous and strung up, in our different ways."

"Hester isn't," said Edith, smiling coolly. "Hester is

perfectly serene. She was just saying the other day that you and Mr. Stillman had made so much money out of the War that you wouldn't have anything to worry about the rest of your lives, and wasn't it wonderful? Too good to be true!"

Her father did not answer. There had been times before — perhaps many times — when certain aspects of his wife and Hester had caused him a kind of leaden-heartedness. He combated it by telling himself that they were only women; that all women were "like that." They didn't understand; it was not fair to expect them to understand, and hopeless to try to put understanding into them; let them continue in their diverting and harmless practices and ways of thought. Now he found himself repeating these familiar arguments on behalf of Hester, but with conscious insecurity. For there sat Edith, a living proof that all women were not "like that." He even fancied he could detect a note of lazy satire in her rendition of Hester's views.

"Edith," he said suddenly. "Do you suppose that that is really all that Hester thinks about the War? That it's been a wonderful opportunity for us to make money? Do you suppose that is the only way it touches her?"

"I don't know. I haven't heard her say anything else about it," said Edith. "Hester is very literal, very direct, you know, Dad," she said, not unkindly; "I'm sure she doesn't want anybody to suffer; she would rather have everything pleasant and happy. But as long as the War is going to go on, anyhow —" Edith lifted one shoulder slightly — "I suppose she thinks it's lucky that someone can get some good out of it."

"I see," said Lawson. But he was in truth trying not to see, trying to hide from himself something that repelled him intolerably.

It was at the New York hotel where the family were in the habit of stopping that this talk took place. Lawson and Mrs. Lawson had just come down from "Journey's End"; Hester, for whom Plattsburg or the resorts in its vicinity had no attractions, as it seemed, had spent her summer between Newport, Bar Harbor and the paternal roof, and after

the stay in New York for the imperative duty of shopping, would be going on to Hot Springs. George was coming from camp; the Stillmans were in town, too. It would be quite a family party; and was probably looked forward to, by all hands, with the peculiarly tepid enthusiasm which family parties commonly inspire. Edith, going up to see them late in the afternoon, found only her father; but presently the two ladies came in, sparkling and exultant from a round of the shops, with tales of the most distracting uncertainties between purchases, frequently solved by the decision to "take both and be done with it!"

"Fifteen hundred for the mink set and eighteen for the ermine — and Hester simply could *not* make up her mind! I said: 'Only three hundred dollars' difference, why *don't* you have the ermine, since you haven't anything suitable for evening wear?' But she kept on hesitating and *hesitating*, and finally there didn't seem to be any way out of it except to have them both; because, you know, she would have been eternally regretting the one she didn't take. And one can't have too many sets of furs, anyhow; they are always such a wise purchase."

"Then after that, we went to Tiffany's, and oh, Dad, we found the most adorable way to have Mother's dog-collar made over — !"

"Well, I don't know whether I'll have that done after all, Hester, it will take so many more stones. However, they're going to submit designs. But show them what we *did* get — show them your vanity-case — !"

Their pleasant, excited voices made a charming hurly-burly in the room; Lawson and his other daughter duly looked, listened, admired, their posture resembling that of the elders around a Christmas-tree. Neither of them practised a severe self-denial, but their extravagances acquired dignity by being purposeful — or so they thought. Hester, as Edith used to say with a laugh, would go out to buy a bathing-suit, and like as not, come back with a skating-costume! They did not shop, she declared, they flowed in and out of the Fifth Avenue doors, sweeping all manner of unaccountable things with them, like any other flood.

In a pause of the chatter, when Mrs. Rudd rang for tea,

and while she was giving the order, Edith inquired: "Where's George?"

There was a second of silence, all of them looking towards Hester, who did not look at anybody, the animation suddenly dying out of her lovely face. "Why, *I* don't know. He must have got here by this time, though."

"What train was he coming on?" her father asked.

"Why — why, one of those trains from the North — from the Adirondacks, I suppose."

"Didn't he say?"

"No. Oh, yes — that is, maybe he did, but I've forgotten. I never can remember things like that," said Hester half defiantly, half sulkily. There was another little pause. Hester seemed to feel that it implied some sort of criticism, for she flashed a suspicious look around. "What *are* you all staring that way for? If anything had happened, I should have heard long ago. But I don't believe anything has. George is big enough to take care of himself, I hope," she said sharply.

"Of course, of course, he's all right," said Lawson, thinking that she was secretly anxious, and meaning to soothe her. Edith glanced at him with the shadow of a smile; her mother looked faintly disturbed. And just at the moment, the elevator clicked discreetly at the other end of the hall; they heard footsteps, and in walked George and his father.

Without any dramatic intent on their part, the entrance, falling so pat, took on a dramatic significance; all at once the sense of approaching climax descended on the room. George looked lean and browned and hard as nails from his campaigning, but as sullen as before; and old John was visibly worried. He and Lawson had had luncheon together that very day, and having parted so recently, now exchanged only a nod; but Mrs. Rudd welcomed the two men with an effusion which her better taste all the while condemned. *Somebody* must do *something*, she reasoned with a feeling approaching panic. The men were absolutely of no use; there were her husband and Mr. Stillman standing dumb; there was George glowering at Hester; there was Hester sitting, swinging her foot, making no move to greet him; and finally there was Edith, silent too, but self-possessed, rather

amused if one might judge by her expression. Yet anybody could see that an explosion of some sort was imminent. Poor Mrs. Lawson gallantly cast herself single-handed into the breach.

"Mr. Stillman! How lovely! I was *so* sorry we missed you to-day! However, I daresay you and Lawson had a much better time without us! *George!* Here you *are* at last! We were just talking about you. Hester was just saying — "

"We were just talking about Hester — Father and I," said George, not pleasantly.

"Oh, *were* you?" said Hester, also not pleasantly. Thus did the Stillman couple greet each other after a separation of weeks. Mrs. Rudd cruised, resolutely smiling, past these speeches like a ship in a reef-strewn channel.

"Isn't Clara with you? Why *didn't* you bring Clara?" she pressed them fervently. "We've missed each other two or three times — so busy always in New York, you know — so much to do! But I did hope to see Clara this afternoon, at any rate. I do wish she had come!" It was the solemn truth; never before in her life had Mrs. Lawson desired to see Clara so earnestly; Clara, in these circumstances, would have been as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. The younger Stillmans, whatever they did, would not let anything happen in Clara's presence! Mrs. Lawson telegraphed appealingly to Edith, who actually did bestir herself a little in response.

"You're looking fine, George!" she said cordially. "Why are we all standing up? Won't you sit here, Mr. Stillman? We're going to have some tea presently. Not that that is much of a temptation to you, I know," she interpolated good-humoredly. "But you can have a stick in yours, if you like. It's not half bad that way."

"Thanks, I guess I don't want anything to drink, Edith," said old John. But he did sit down; everybody sat down, the assemblage thereby momentarily assuming a specious air of sociability like any ordinary informal gathering. Mrs. Rudd breathed more freely; she would have breathed with entire freedom, in fact, if only Hester had not continued so dangerously nonchalant. George, to be sure, was lowering

still, and the other men were still uneasy; but you can always manage men, they're so afraid of hurting you somehow, thought the experienced lady not without contempt; whereas other women — !

"Had a good time, George?" said Lawson.

"Good enough. They kept us busy."

"Well, that — that did you good, no doubt. That's what you went for," said Lawson, mechanically keeping his tongue going while he sought some better inspiration. He was not skilled at the double performance which any woman can conduct with ease; Edith viewed it with perceptible enjoyment, but his wife intervened, scenting catastrophe.

"Exercise — fresh air —" she murmured. "It must have been *ideal* —"

George cut her short, getting up again with a rough movement. "Oh, what's the use of our all talking around as if nothing was the matter?" he demanded, in a loud and hard voice. "You all *know*. I'm sick and tired of it!"

"He means he's sick and tired of *me!*" Hester explained to the rest, with ostentatious patience.

"Well then, I *am!*" shouted out George. "If you'd act right — if you'd act the way a man's wife ought to — ! But you've worn me out. Damn it, there's not another man in the country that would have stood what I have, stood it as long without saying anything —"

"Hold up, son!" interposed old John, heavily. "If you keep on, you'll say something you'll be sorry for the rest of your life." He turned towards his old friend. "Lawson, we've been talking about this; we've talked about it before; but we were talking again as we came along to-day. I've tried to reason with him. I thought if you'd talk to Hester —"

"Oh, *reason!*" said George savagely.

"Oh, *talk!*" ejaculated Hester, with an hysterical imitation of a laugh.

"What has Hester done, George?" said Lawson.

"Done? Oh, mercy, what haven't I done? I've done *everything!*" cried Hester, in shrill irony. "Oh, I'm perfectly terrible!"

"Please, not so loud, Hester, *please!*" her mother implored. "It's — it's not *nice!*"

This argument, notwithstanding that it was the weightiest poor Mrs. Lawson knew, might not have availed much, but for a timely reinforcement, namely: the arrival of a servant with the tea, which acted upon the angry voices, the red, excited faces like a charm. Everybody was silent while the man rapidly and skilfully disposed his tray upon the table; and being a well-trained menial, he himself was not only dumb but deaf and blind to boot, until Mr. Rudd felt in a trouser-pocket! After that little ceremony, he slid out of the room, closing the door with disciplined noiselessness; the silence lasted yet an instant.

Mrs. Rudd began to arrange herself at the tea-service in a desperate effort to restore the ancient sanctuary of convention. It was pathetic and admirable to witness. "Now won't you all have *something?* Mr. Stillman, a sandwich, anyhow, even if you don't care for tea? They look delicious. Edith, one lump? I've forgotten how you take yours!"

"Just a minute, Lucille!" said her husband, scrupulously courteous to her, as always. He had taken advantage of the lull to reassemble his forces, as it were; the initial outbreak had been so sudden, so violent as to shake even Lawson out of his habitual readiness and steadiness. "Just a minute. I don't think anybody cares for anything just now." He looked from one to the other of the young people. "Let's have this all out first —"

They accepted the invitation simultaneously!

"Mr. Rudd, she —" George interrupted.

"Father, he —" Hester began, stormily.

"One at a time, now — that's how we'll get to the bottom of this," said Lawson with all the persuasive authority at his command. "You haven't been getting along. Well, when two people don't get along, it's almost always the fault of both, isn't it? One can't make the trouble all by himself — or herself," he interlined somewhat hastily. "I'd like to hear each side separately. And maybe you'd better hear each other — *listen* to each other, I mean."

"I told 'em all that, too," said the older Stillman resignedly. "I suggested that there might be misunderstandings. Why, the best of friends have misunderstandings, let alone husbands and wives!" said John, guiltless of satirical intent. He shook his head. "No use!"

"We haven't had any misunderstandings," said George, scowling. "I've been made to understand, that's all!"

"You *see* how he is," said Hester, appealing — to the other men, not to her mother and sister! — for sympathy.

Lawson surveyed them both with a sensation of helplessness such as he had never known till that moment. "What has Hester done, George?" he repeated. "Just *what* is the matter. And then, Hester, you can tell me what George has done," he finished, with an eye on her, which in childish days, Hester had been wont to heed; now she only pouted and looked aside.

"Oh, I can't talk about it," said the young man fiercely and miserably. But in spite of that declaration, he went on talking about it, all the while aware unhappily that the arraignment amounted to nothing; it was only an incoherent protest against an injustice which no one but he himself could feel. "She ought to stay with me, and she keeps going away. Lots of the men up at camp had their wives staying around somewhere so as to be near them. She could have come — but she wouldn't. She never does go anywhere with me —"

"Well, you go such horrid places," Hester interrupted. "Like that nasty Nova Scotia. All mosquito-y and never any bathroom to myself. I don't *like* places like that. I don't see why I should have to go there." She appealed again to the older men. "Why shouldn't *he* go somewhere *I* like?"

"I do, I have! I've done everything she's ever asked me! I've done my best —"

"If you shout that way, George, they'll hear all over this floor," Edith counselled calmly; her voice was like a dash of cold water; but the conflagration — to continue the figure — was too well under way now to be extinguished even by a deluge of prudent advice.

"Now she's determined to go to Hot Springs, and I want her to come home and stay home with me and she won't do it. She doesn't care for me —"

"I suppose you think you're acting in a way to make me care for you," said Hester, in silver-tongued sarcasm. She regained her self-command in proportion as poor George lost his.

" It wouldn't make any difference how I acted. You don't care for anybody. You — you haven't any heart, you — oh, what's the use!" He flung down before the others what seemed to him the utter outrage; *there* was a proof, at least, there was something they could understand. " Why, she cried more over that cat of hers that died than for her own baby — our baby! She felt worse!"

" Well, but the baby was so little — only a month old. It didn't know anything," said Hester reasonably. " I'd had Dingbats ever so long, and he was so dear!" Her lips quivered. " He had the dearest ways!"

" And now she doesn't want any more children. She's afraid, or she thinks they'd be too much care, or something. I suppose it *would* interfere with her running around and having a good time. That's the kind of wife she is," said George bitterly.

" Oh, it's all very well for you to talk! As if *you* had any of it to go through —" Hester began; they were evidently upon a familiar source of discord. But Edith now took a hand, to the vast relief of the older generation present, who, as has been hinted heretofore, could not get accustomed to this up-to-date frankness.

" What all this comes to is just what Dad started out with," she said judicially. " You aren't getting along. Now, then, what do you want to do about it? Get divorced?"

Put baldly thus, it cannot be denied that the thing had an unhandsome sound; it gave them all pause. " I want her to act right, that's all. We — we haven't got anything to be divorced about," said George after a minute, calming down now that his wrongs, such as they were, had been stated. They waited for Hester, who however sat looking down sulkily, and would not reply. It was indeed impossible to guess whether the suggestion satisfied, offended or frightened her; whether she was startled and confused by it, or with feminine caution, would not commit herself for or against.

" You don't know what you want to do — or you can't make up your mind?" said Edith. " Well, one or other of you will have to start proceedings — in court, you know,

it's all very tiresome. I don't believe George wants to — ?" She looked towards him interrogatively.

"We haven't got anything to get a divorce for," he grumbled again; "if she'd act right — if she'd stay with me and — and — "

Edith waited patiently, but as usual with those who expended their eloquence upon her, George presently found himself without another word, with scarcely an idea, even! That steadfast attention fairly fettered the mind.

"Then you won't make any move?" said Edith at last. "Very well, neither will Hester. She's not going to try for a divorce."

Hester flared up again at this cavalier announcement. "*You* got one, Edith!" she snapped out.

"That, I suppose, is just what put it into your head," said Edith unmoved. "You want to get into the limelight, too. It's not a very agreeable place to be, however; you wouldn't like it, Hester. Being divorced isn't pretty, before or afterwards. You'd get tired of it very soon, and then what would you do?"

"Don't be hard on her, Edith, she's nothing but a child," expostulated old Stillman, moved more by some steely and ruthless quality to be felt in Edith herself than by anything she said. She smiled.

"A child of twenty-nine — or is it thirty, Hester?"

"You k-know you're only s-saying that to be hateful!" sobbed Hester, fairly quelled. George made a movement towards her which he checked in embarrassment, meeting Edith's glacial eye.

"Never mind, George, Hester won't get a divorce, and you'll scuffle along together well enough, I daresay, after she's got over this craze."

"Well, Edith — er — " her father began — and then words failed him too!

"We can't have Hester making us all ridiculous," said his younger daughter inexorably; the disturbing likeness to Grandfather David Rudd came out on her every feature as she spoke. "People would be saying that divorces were contagious or ran in the family, or that Hester was getting in line, and Mother would be the next — "

"Edith!" cried Mrs. Rudd inexpressibly shocked. "*Edith!*"

"That's what they would say. There would be all kinds of cheap jokes going around. It's all silliness, and Hester shan't do it. One divorce is enough for us," said Edith. And every one of them felt that the fiat had gone forth!

## CHAPTER XIII

HOWEVER high-handed Edith's method of settling the differences between the Stillman couple, everyone else in the family was devoutly thankful to her; the end justified the indefensible means. For it was a settlement; Hester went around with the airs of a martyr; George went around with the airs — his friends said — of that comic paper celebrity, Old Man Grump; but neither one of them dreamed of re-opening the divorce question. Perhaps in their hearts they were as glad as the others of Edith's sledge-hammer decision; there is a certain peace in defeat. As for that young sister to Solomon, she never added another word to her ultimatum; she was instinctively aware of the weakening effect of words. She went serenely about her business, and her unquestioning self-confidence, which was not without a hint of disdain, somehow enforced obedience.

She did indeed give some account of the affair and of her own despotic intervention to her brother, flavored with acid comment. " I had no idea till I came back from Europe this time what a number of fools there were at large in our society. This divorce craze — ! People over here make a business of getting married just to be divorced afterwards," she said, with a cold impatience. " It's a fashion, it's a game. We're always going to extremes, always running things into the ground. Look at Hester and George: what is the trouble? There isn't any, really. She is restless and wants to be noticed. He has been over-indulgent and now he's too tyrannical. It's absolutely childish. Hester is the most to blame, though. Any foreign woman would think George the most marvellous husband that ever happened; she wouldn't understand what Hester was fussing about. Over there one has to have a reason, at least. But they do this sort of thing better over there, anyhow. I daresay it is

because their society is so old; they've seen everything, they've done everything, they've known everything; they've been at it a thousand years. It's all a kind of grand novelty to us; we're wild to try it. That is, women like Hester are. I'm not, and never was. I like people to be decent — and I was the one to have indecency forced on me! I believe Hester envies me the experience. She has an idea it must have been thrilling to be at the centre of a scandal, and to set everybody talking about you. What would poor little Hester have done in my place, though? What would dozens of these other women that go running around doing anything and everything they can think of to attract publicity? If they only knew, it wasn't splendid and it wasn't romantic the least bit; it was a dull dirty business. What do people over here want to go into that sort of thing for? It doesn't suit us; Americans are naturally respectable. But let me tell you, Steve, I think we're all due for a good shaking-up some day, and if the War comes over on this side we're going to get it. We'll have to stop thinking about ourselves for a while."

In the meanwhile she had found an outlet for the restlessness which, as Edith herself would acknowledge with cynical humor, beset her as persistently as it beset the rest of the women. She was working on a number of charitable committees: Devastated Belgium — the French Orphaned and Homeless — Persecuted Armenia — Servian Victims of the War — Polish Relief, and so on. There was no lack of opportunities to serve one's fellow-man; and Edith with her energy, common-sense and thoroughness would have been the most popular, but for possessing the defects of those qualities. She displayed entirely too much initiative, too much foresight, was too given to short-cuts that disregarded red tape and precedent; she cared not a jot for approval, much less applause. The worst of it was that she was almost invariably justified by the outcome; she had an instinct for the expedient measure, the direct way; and people can overlook any fault except that of being incessantly in the right. However, she worked on, armored in her indifference, with her eyes on the goal which she never failed to reach, no matter whose feelings and prejudices she overrode by the way.

It naturally fell to her to do all the disagreeable things, to tell all the disagreeable truths, jobs which she carried through as impersonally and impartially as every other job assigned her.

As all over the country Society does the same thing, Mrs. Rudd and all her circle in her Ohio city were furiously conducting good works also, that is to say, charity balls, charity theatrical performances, charity art-exhibitions, charity bridge-tournaments, dog-shows, rummage-sales. It is safe to say that more money was spent promoting these philanthropic enterprises than ever was realized from them; but what of that? No harm can possibly be done by getting people into the habit of giving, whether of their money or time or labor or mere good-will. Mrs. Lawson Rudd was on the list of patronesses for a score of entertainments; she personally bore hundreds of dollars' worth of expenses; she nobly made the acquaintance of women to whom she had never spoken before, yea, she invited nobodies to her house (for board meetings) and smiled upon social climbers and poured tea for them! It was heroic. Mrs. George Stillman did her part, too; she paid Mademoiselle Mantegna, the little Italian instructor in toe-dancing at Matson's Academy, thirty dollars to teach her that Egyptian dance she performed at the Benefit of the Fatherless Croats, and five hundred more to the New York artist who designed and executed her costume. This is to cite only two out of the many, many instances of disinterested benevolence.

The head of the Rudd Chemical Company was down for a round sum on all the subscription-lists, like everybody else. Lawson had always been a liberal man. "This is a worthy charity, Mr. Rudd," some petitioner once said to him in recommendation. "There aren't any unworthy ones, Mr. So-and-so," said Lawson, filling out his cheque. If he gave more nowadays, quite unheard-of sums, in fact, it was because he was making more; in mediæval times he might have built a chapel, or endowed an abbey. The profits of the business were fair; it was not Lawson's fault that they were increased by a barbarous necessity; the War with its monstrous demands, was none of his making. Then why did his contributions assume to him, against his will, the guise of

conscience-money. Elihu Rudd gave in amounts proportionate to his recent gains, too; Elihu was an honest and right-feeling man — in the main. But we may believe that he was not troubled by the recollection of the first Rudd's transgressions, nor did the Pancurata and the Metaderma ever break up a night's rest for Elihu. When all's said and done, why should they? His younger brother was of a slightly different mould.

All that winter, there was a sentiment in favor of France and Great Britain growing and gaining strength over the country; the keep-out-of-the-War motto, having served its purpose, had been cast aside. And it may be said that those who had enlisted our dislike, had no one but themselves to thank for it. The average American may love to be humbugged, but he exacts that the humbugging be well executed, a fine bit of work; lo, the Teutonic humbug was the absolute reverse; mortal man never invented trickery so obvious and so stupid. It offended the national vanity, even while it aroused the national sense of humor, a more formidable element of this race's motley composition than many outsiders are aware. The country was getting restive, suspicious, testy. If the German agents, open and secret, were active amongst us, their activities were set off by those of the avowed apostles of the Allied cause who came frankly, without lies, without bribes, not essaying to preach or teach, simply telling the truth. They talked, they wrote, they showed proofs. Society, in all its ramifications crowded to see and hear them; the women's clubs listened with shrinking flesh; the big ball-rooms of fashionable hotels resounded to the plain eloquence of their facts. Mrs. Lawson Rudd and other ladies of suitable means entertained them one after another: Madame la Baronne de Hautlieu, His Grace the Bishop of Bath and Chelsea, Mr. Algernon Sydney-Dysart of the British Commission, to name a few of the most elevated. The lesser sort went to hotels or were looked after by committees from the various organizations which had invited them here.

Among the last was one whose name, duly advertised on all the hoardings, with pictures of him in a Sam Brown belt holding the little Malacca baton English army-officers affect

between the artificial fingers of the artificial right hand he was reported to use so skilfully, caused some sensation in the Rudd family. This was Colonel Sir John Geoffrey Chandos Dulaney; he had been only Captain Dulaney in the diplomatic service, the second cousin of some minor English baronet, when they knew him years before in Washington. In those days he was as poor as Job's turkey, with a pedigree that went back to Hengist and Horsa, and no more expectation of succeeding to the title and estates than the man in the moon. Now four or five stout Dulaneys had come back — or perhaps had not come back — from Flanders and the Dardanelles to lie in the little ancient Suffolk churchyard. John Geoffrey himself had left a good arm at Passchendaele; and here he was, gray-headed before his time, with his lined face, with his patient resolute eyes, going up and down, telling the truth from fifty platforms a week to whomsoever, in this careless and comfortable United States, chose to hear it.

"Do you suppose Edith met him? Of course he landed in New York; she must know he is in this country," Mrs. Rudd said. "She meets almost all of them. I do wonder if they met."

Her husband detected the note of unusual interest without at all understanding it — so dense is the masculine intelligence. "Oh, very likely," he said, callously consuming *potage printanière*. "Why? What's he done? Is he out of the ordinary run? They aren't invariably interesting, and their experiences are a good deal alike. But Dulaney used to come to the house that winter you and the girls were in Washington, by the way, didn't he? Seems to me I recollect — "

"Lawson, he was *very attentive* to Edith," said Mrs. Lawson impressively. "Come to the house? Why, he fairly *lived* with us for a while — until she refused him. At least, I suppose she refused him, Edith's so reserved you never can get any satisfaction out of her. But he all at once stopped coming, and that's rather pointed. I should think you would have remembered."

"I couldn't keep a card-index of the young men that came to the house, what with Hester's and Edith's both.

And besides I wasn't with you three-fourths of the time," he offered in exculpation. "Well, if they did meet, again, what of it?"

The lady surveyed him. "Oh, nothing — nothing at all. I was only wondering."

A few days later, Mr. Rudd was not surprised, coming home in the waning afternoon to see a man's calling-card, though nowadays that was a sufficiently rare object with them, among the mail on the console in his hall, nor to hear the servant murmur, bearing away his coat: "Colonel Dulaney is here, sir. Mrs. Rudd says will you step into the morning-room?"

Lawson went accordingly into the little bright, cushioned, chintz-y place; there was a fire burning in deference to the evening chill of these early spring days, and a high silver vase of jonquils on the tea-table; his wife looked very pretty and animated and well-preserved over the cups and saucers. The tall English officer with a monocle in his eye got up and put out his left hand and spoke Lawson's name and his own, smiling.

"Mr. Rudd! I — aw — don't know whether you remember me? Aw — Dulaney."

"Good Lord, he looks twenty years older!" ejaculated Lawson inwardly; he would not have known him. It was a little awkward shaking his left hand; Lawson tried not to show it, and not to look at the right which hung gloved by Colonel Dulaney's side in a stiff position, but the other caught him and made an apology!

"Awf'ly inconvenient, but my right's out of commission, y'know," he said, simply.

"Oh yes, we'd — er — we'd heard about that," said Mr. Rudd; his wife murmured sympathy.

"Everybody seems to have heard. I rather fancy your newspaper-men must have published something about it," said the colonel. "Most amazin' chaps! I remember when I was over here before in nineteen-ten — " He went on with some anecdote about American newspaper-men in his pleasant English voice, chipping off a final syllable here and there. They sat and chatted. It might have been any afternoon years ago in the Washington drawing-room. There were

half a dozen fresh-faced young fellows about the British Legation in those days; now and again he would mention one of them — " Poor Gifford got his, as you Americans say, at Mons in the beginning. Nice fellow, Gifford! " " Marchbanks was in the Jutland fight. Eh? Oh, yes, on the *Indomitable,* y'know. They picked him up, but he died afterwards." They were all gone, all those boys, and the War thundered on above their graves; and more and more were going now, this hour, this moment, while the fire crackled behind the andirons, and the jonquils shone, and Mrs. Rudd, in delicately rich draperies, dispensed tea-biscuit; and their comrade called the roll of the dead with a kindly passing tribute. As an attaché at the Embassy he had not given the impression of being a conspicuously brilliant young man; good looks, good manners, and a good family had not improbably been his chief recommendations for the post. Yet all at once it seemed to Lawson Rudd that not one Englishman but all England sat by his hearth, and without a word said, expounded the creed of manliness, and loyalty to an antique and noble tradition.

" It makes us laugh the way the Germans blow about having won that North Sea battle," he said. " If they won, why don't they come out? Glorious victory! You Englishmen, even if you'd been beaten, wouldn't skulk in a corner like that."

" It—aw—doesn't look well," Colonel Dulaney admitted.

" You're holding your own so well here recently that the pro-Ally people on this side feel very much encouraged."

" Yes, you're quite all right, as long as we hold on," said the Englishman.

" We aren't all pro-Ally, that's our trouble," said Lawson, reddening slightly. " I think myself that it's about time for us to get in."

" Well, there *are* a good many of you in," Dulaney said. " And that reminds me — " He fumbled with that brave and unconsciously pathetic left hand in the pockets of his tunic.

" He saw Edith and Steve in New York, Lawson — "

" Yes, I — aw — met Mrs. Gherardi at a reception that was given us. And afterwards I took a little time off between speechifying — like this, y'know — and — aw —

dropped in at her apartment," the colonel explained — and to Mrs. Lawson's active imagination, a little additional red came up in his face. Sir John's complexion, to be truthful, had weathered to about the hue and texture of saddle-leather, so that any change in the color of it would have been pretty difficult to detect. He finally fumbled out a thin packet all over official stamps and seals which, however, had been already broken, and handed it to Lawson, rising. "Mr. Rudd — your son, I mean, of course — asked me to give you this. It's the notification — about the other Mr. Rudd, y'know. He said he thought you would like to see it. It seems the other Mr. Rudd had given your son as his next of kin, so naturally the company commander wrote him. They always do when they can — when they know any of the — aw — the circumstances."

"I see. Thank you," said Lawson, mechanically. He took the packet.

"Vimy Ridge was months and months ago; it's been a bit long coming," said Dulaney apologetically. "Your son said he didn't get it till after the first of the year. But we've had a struggle to keep up the mail service."

"Oh, I can understand that!"

"I gathered that this gentleman was not a very close relative," the Englishman said, evidently feeling that something further in the way of sympathy or appreciation should be expressed. "But blood's thicker than water. At any rate, he died like a man — doin' his duty — all that, y'know — and none of us can do much better than that — eh, what!" With which speech and in manifest terror of having said too much or been sentimental, Colonel Dulaney rather precipitately took his leave.

"What was he talking about? I couldn't quite understand, and, of course, I didn't want to make him go all over it again. Is there a note from Steve?" Mrs. Rudd asked.

"No. It's about Eugene. Edith told me he had gone over there," said Lawson, still standing with the letter in his hand, looking at it confusedly. "Dulaney seemed to take it for granted that I had heard already. But I hadn't."

"Heard what? Anything important?"

"Why, he's dead. He's been killed, I suppose."

She uttered a slight shocked exclamation — only a very slight one! Mrs. Lawson scarcely knew Eugene; she had all but forgotten his existence, which, for that matter, she had always understood to be of no moment to his half-brothers or to anybody in particular. "Oh! What a pity!" she said, and rose, pausing an instant. "I ought to go and dress. Lawson, you must, too; this dinner of the Gardiners' is to be very early. Don't forget!"

Left alone, Lawson at length opened the packet, but even then did not at once begin to read. Instead he sat for a while, staring into the fire. It did not seem possible that Eugene could be dead; after all these years of being a sort of skeleton in the Rudd closet. Lawson wondered to discover that one may miss even a family-skeleton; the old wrongs, old scores, old hateful memories come to be a part of our lives, not cancelled without regret. At any rate, one must guard against thinking ill of the dead; the dead who have no recourse. There had been some good in Eugene — a good deal of good; plenty of sense, if he had but used it; not unlikable he was, too, if only — It was all a sorry muddle. Now he had got his, as you Americans say. Lawson sighed and spread out the letter. It was dated the summer of the year before, and signed "K. Thompson, Capt." The writer explained that the number of the regiment and its location, along with other intimate details, must be withheld as a measure of military precaution which Mr. Rudd would undoubtedly understand. He greatly regretted having to report the death of Private Eugene Rudd (Ambulance Squad No. —, —th Div.) during an advance on the enemy's position. "According to statements made by two men of — Company, Pvts. James Bowers and F. X. Lebaudy, as they were all three going forward over the terrain just evacuated by the enemy, but still under fire, Pvt. Rudd being several yards in front of them and a little to the right, they lost sight of him over the rim of a shell-hole. When they reached this place, they saw him at the bottom of the crater, and also one of the enemy's wounded, an officer who was crying pitifully for water. Pvt. Rudd had unslung his canteen, and was stooping over to give him a drink when the German raised up and shot him through the body twice,

killing him instantly. Bowers and Lebaudy both assert that the German officer was lying with his back towards them in such an attitude that he could not have seen them approaching, that he must have believed himself to be alone with this one adversary in the shell-hole, and resorted to this ruse as the safest and surest way of despatching him; and further that there was no wound whatever on the body of the German except the one which Lebaudy (who reached him first) made in running him through with his bayonet. It must be remembered, however, that both of the men were very angry and excited, so that they may have been mistaken."

"Such bodies as were recovered after this engagement have been buried in a cemetery near by and the graves marked, Pvt. Rudd's among them; there should be no difficulty about identifying it after the war . . ."

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## CHAPTER XIV

LESS than three weeks after Colonel Dulaney's call, when that gentleman himself had not got as far West as Denver on his speaking tour, the United States declared war on Germany. Now — as the newspaper humorists sardonically pointed out — was the time for that million of springers-to-arms about whom a Secretary of State — recently resigned — had been so confident. Discomfiting to relate, the number that did spring, though creditable, was not nearly so large; pacifists and conscientious objectors suddenly came to the surface in every community, very active in promulgating their doctrines and highly likely — but this may have been a mere coincidence — to be named Schwartz or Schmidt. In spite of them, the recruiting went on; in spite of them, conscription measures were suggested, were argued over in Congress, were passed. The first Liberty loan was floated; the Stars and Stripes were raised in London, in Paris. Coming generations will not be able to understand the emotions with which their forebears beheld and took part in these events, what rooted beliefs we tore up, what time-honored prejudices discarded. What had happened to us, who, six months earlier, had been gleefully thanking Heaven and one man for keeping us out of the War? If you had asked that individual whose opinions are so often referred to, the Average Man, he would have responded with characteristic American flippancy that he guessed it was time to call Heinie's bluff, or that every boy in the country wanted to see himself in those nifty khaki pants, or that it was not every day you got the chance of a free trip to Europe; yes, he would have answered thus even if that moment on his way to the recruiting-sergeant! Not for worlds would he have acknowledged, perhaps indeed he had no words to explain the urge that

overcame his native aversion to the monstrous foolishness of war.

The Rudd Chemical Company, like every other industrial concern throughout the United States, now doubled and trebled its activities; Lawson himself shuttled back and forth across the country, almost without rest. He was one of the few men capable of thinking and calculating in sums of such staggering magnitude as the times demanded, and he entered into it with relish. He spent only two weeks at " Journey's End " that entire season, and then his visit assumed the aspect of a devastating natural cataclysm to Mrs. Lawson who saw their stately stretches of turf, the care and pride of years, ripped up and sown to corn and potatoes, as a priest might have beheld the desecration of his temple. The poor lady found it hard to adjust herself to these clanging days. After one or two final spasmodic flourishes during the summer, Society ceased to manifest itself as an organization for leisure and enjoyment. Normally there never had been enough young men to go around, and now there were none at all. They all went into the army at the first call; it was not necessary to draft these debonair lads, not a few of whose associates had been in France or England these three years already. Polo-players, tennis-champions, young fellows in their junior year at college, or just admitted to the bar, or just beginning in Dad's office — off they all went to the training-camps and troop-ships. Their sisters began to knit, or rolled bandages, or took courses in nursing and Red Cross work; some even cooked and gardened. The older women were officiating on boards, and struggling valiantly with domestic problems that loomed more menacingly every day — every meatless, sugarless, flourless day. Mrs. Rudd —but exactly what Mrs. Rudd and her type did, evades description for the reason that these charming women could not learn to do anything except be charming. I am sure they tried; I am sure Mrs. Lawson, who was as eager as anybody to help, believed that she denied herself in the matter of dress and house-furnishings; I know for a certainty that she had her automobile re-upholstered, and went without a new one. She was forever anxiously explaining her orders and purchases on the theory that the poor work-

people must be encouraged, must have enough employment to keep them in bread. Take the milliners and furriers, for instance. Their circulars were pathetic, the personal letters from those she had always patronized even more so; her tailor had literally begged her to get a new suit, only one new suit, and save him from bankruptcy!

"I spoke to your father about it, and he only laughed and said to rescue Anatole by all means, the more solvent people there were in the country the better! Now, you know, Edith, it was two hundred and fifty dollars, and *I* should have thought — ! They talk so much about thrift and economy — ! However, of course, your father *knows*," she said to her younger daughter, in some perplexity. "I was glad he told me, because that always makes me sure of doing right, and I want to do right. Still — Do you know, I'm sometimes afraid your father is overworking — I'm afraid he'll have brain-fag, or break down in some awful way. Now laying waste, simply *laying waste* 'Journey's End' — you haven't been there, you can't imagine what it looks like. And he used to be so fond of it! The gardens are practically destroyed — just a few clumps of hardy flowers left. It's a great deprivation to all those people that used to come in such crowds; the place was as good as a horticultural show to them without their having to pay a cent. I said to your father that I thought keeping it that way for the poor things as well as for ourselves was a *real* work of charity and self-sacrifice, but he only laughed."

"They were mostly summer visitors, and all the resorts around there were closed," said Edith. "There wouldn't have been anybody to come and see. You used to complain about them a good deal."

"Oh, but now it's different. One wants to do one's bit. There are quantities and quantities of carrots and cabbages and all those things in market all the time, and hardly anybody ever buys them; a greengrocer told me nobody liked them, and they fed them to the pigs often. I don't see the use of growing so many," objected the older lady, practically. "But your father seems to have gone perfectly wild on the subject. You don't know half the things he's done, Edith, or you would be as worried as I am. When we had that very

cold weather and there was so much trouble about getting coal, he telegraphed to McCrae and actually ordered him to let all the fires go out for the greenhouse boilers, and send word around the country to all the Clam Beach people and everybody to come and take the coal, all they needed! Of course McCrae dared not disobey, and so everything froze — all those orchids and wonderful things that he's spent years in collecting. Every single thing was ruined!"

"Did Dad do that, did he?" cried out Edith. Her thin, sharp face warmed and softened indescribably. "That was fine! He loved them so. That was great! That cost him something!"

"Indeed they did cost something," said Mrs. Rudd, not entirely grasping the other's meaning. "He gave simply fabulous prices for those plants — not to mention keeping up the greenhouses. It was frightful!"

"Well, now there won't be any of that expense any more, so you see it's all for the best," said Edith, without a hint of mischief appearing on her ably-governed features. If her mother amused her at times, she conscientiously refrained from showing it; Edith, on the whole, was a humane person. Mrs. Rudd was indeed visibly staggered for a second by this unexpected viewpoint, then she went on with her argument.

"Yes, but — but — He could perfectly well have had a carload of coal sent up there, if he wanted to help the people. It might have taken a few days, but they could have waited. It's these things that he does occasionally, not all the time, of course, that makes me uneasy. Now he's talking about going to Washington and going into some of that Government work where they get a dollar a year, you know. He seems determined to give up everything he has!"

"Oh, not everything surely! He will leave enough for you to manage the house and dress yourself and keep a few servants and two of the cars, anyhow. Dad doesn't want you to go without the necessaries of life, I'm sure," said Edith as before; but this time she surveyed the older lady with a certain lazy curiosity.

"No, of course not! He thinks it's patriotic, I suppose — but he doesn't need to be so *extreme*."

"What does Uncle Elihu say?"

"Well, I thought he seemed rather doubtful. He's much more conservative than your father, anyhow. He didn't say much one way or the other — just that it was all right if your father could stand it — the terrific strain. Everyone says it's a terrific strain." Mrs. Rudd's fair face, which was beginning to wither delicately as a Testout rose, quivered slightly. "I think we're giving enough — Steve and George and all those Liberty Bonds, and now your father — if he breaks down — "

"He's not going to, Mother. Never mind! Nobody's going to be killed or break down or go to the poorhouse. It's going to come out all right!" Edith assured her comfortingly, "Father just wants to be *in it,* you know. Everybody's *in it.* One *has* to be. *You* know how *that is!*" she added, measuring her words to the other's understanding and character with unerring judgment. She was really sorry for her mother, after a fashion.

"Yes, if everybody does, of course — " Mrs. Rudd sighed, brightening nevertheless. "Those horrible Germans, why *couldn't* they — ? Edith, I've never spoken to you about it before, but I should think it would make you perfectly happy if you could hear of Captain Gherardi's being k — at least, I mean being taken prisoner or — or something," she amended hurriedly, rather fearfully.

But Edith did not seem to be offended or repelled; she considered, turning the wedding-ring which she had never taken off, with her long, strong, supple fingers. "No, I wouldn't be happy to hear of Rudolph's death. There're things in the world that are ever so much worse than dying; and other things that are ever so much more important than living. I don't wish Rudolph or any of them any evil. I had the best of them, as it was; I beat them out. They know I beat them. That was all I cared about," said Edith, looking like Grandfather David transiently. "I don't feel as if I would ever care very much about anything again."

"We thought — we hoped — perhaps Colonel — " murmured her mother, and could get no further, aghast at her own temerity in getting thus far. Edith, however, in her surprising way, took up the unfinished sentence with a detached and tranquil good humor.

"You thought perhaps Colonel Dulaney and I would begin all over again? No, I'm afraid all that is done with for me. Finished — out of my life for good and all. It's a pity. But one can get along without it, you know, Mother. It's not everything — it's not the whole of life."

Mrs. Rudd sighed again. "Well! We couldn't help hoping — we like him so much — and he's quite celebrated now. But you always know your own mind." With which Mrs. Lawson — who had been commissioned by Hester and was moreover keenly anxious herself to find out how the old romance stood, whether "he" had "asked" Edith once more, and how she had answered — discreetly abandoned the enterprise, plunging into other subjects — the Red Triangle, Edith's war-work and what-not.

Hester, by the way, was also engaged in war-work. Why not, since "everybody" was in it? Hester had the most fetching olive-drab uniform imaginable, fitted to a nicety by the best tailor in New York, and worn with a visored cap and little stout boots, in which she went down-town every day — when the weather was decent and she got up early enough — to study wireless telegraphy. She belonged to Volunteer Radio Corps, Unit Number One. The course presented monumental difficulties which, however, she was in process of overcoming with the assistance of every male instructor in the school. One and all they took the greatest interest in her, much more than in any of the other pupils; these she reported to be about evenly divided between "weird" young women in lingerie waists, cheap furs and excruciating high heels, and "weird" middle-aged ones in run-down clothes as far behind the mode as the others were in advance of it. Hester thought both types distinctly *common*, and so, she opined, did the men; at least, these latter did not take any trouble to show them as they constantly did Hester. For that matter all the common ones, the ex-public-school-teachers, ex-shop-girls, ex-stenographers, and so on, seemed to learn their business — and incidentally to mind it — with characteristically common ease and rapidity. They were all emphatically "on the job" — a phrase of theirs which Hester delighted to quote.

And who so happy and devoted nowadays as the Stillman

couple, Hester in her uniform and George in his? We may believe that honest George, who had rushed up to Fort Benjamin Harrison within a week of our declaration of war, with no idea in his head other than that which took scores of loyal and conscientious men there, namely: a real feeling for his country and desire to do his duty — we may believe, I say, that George was as much astonished at the reconciliation and as unable to account for it as any outsider and on-looker. It signified nothing to him that Society had collapsed, and that Patriotism had become ultra-fashionable. He only knew that Hester was divinely sweet, as she had been in the days before they were married, and on their honeymoon. No more denials, disappointments, small hatefulnesses, teapot-tempests; it was heaven! And she looked so pretty in her olive-drab; she was so adorably absurd with her radio unit, her anti-Kaiser, anti-autocracy, anti-frightfulness enthusiasm! As for Hester herself, she was perfectly sincere; her patriotism was as genuine a sentiment as any she ever harbored in her life. All her friends' husbands were enlisting; it was Lieutenant This and Captain That at every turn; to be an officer's wife — maybe an officer's widow, quietly distinguished in mourning with those universally becoming sheer white collars and cuff-bands! — was dramatic, picturesque, *le dernier cri.* And George made a fine, soldierly figure in his uniform, shouting orders on the parade-ground in a voice of thrilling authority! He had no occasion these days to complain that his wife would go nowhere with him; when he was home on furlough he could not stir a foot without her. During the first months of his military apprenticeship she followed him to Chillicothe, to Louisville, to Montgomery, setting up successive establishments with a cortège of servants and household goods which would have bankrupted any "poor lieutenant" — Hester's favorite style of referring to their status — in a week. It was only upon his appointment to Camp Hope where the ground had scarcely been broken for the cantonments, and there was not a habitable house to be had for love or money, that she was persuaded to remain at home. Bless thee, Bottom, thou art translated! George was radiant, even though more or less bewildered; he seriously

thought of remaining in the service after the War was over.

Notwithstanding his wife's fears and predictions, of which he made kind-hearted and reassuring fun, Lawson did go into the Government employment at that official wage which caused Mrs. Lawson to look upon the proceeding as an incomprehensible vagary on both sides — the United States' and her husband's. A dollar a year! Why not be sensible and ask and receive a salary worthy of the head of the Rudd Chemical Company? Everybody was talking about the enormous sums the Government was paying to mechanics, shipwrights, day-laborers, and all that class; but it appeared that gentlemen would work for nothing. Indeed, Mrs. Rudd was not the only person to be struck by this phenomenon. "Lawson even pays his own especial stenographer out of his own pocket. I believe he would have provided all the rest of the office-force and rented the office too, only he has to be with the other heads of departments in the Government building, or else travelling from one end of the country to the other," Mrs. Rudd said. She would have followed him about, taking a leaf out of Hester's book, if he had allowed it. "But when he has to stay in New York at headquarters, he's with Edith, and that keeps me from worrying. Eh? My dear, I don't know. I never have understood a thing about Mr. Rudd's business. He's not with the Food Administration, though; it's something else, the Bureau of Distribution and Assignment, I believe. No, he doesn't wear a uniform, and he's not a major or anything. He could have been, but the idea seemed to amuse him."

It may have had ironic aspects of which Mrs. Lawson was ignorant; Lawson sometimes surveyed himself and his patriotic activities rather grimly. Financially he was giving up a good deal — what would have been a sizable fortune to many men; physically the work *was* a strain, serving notice on him every day that he was no longer a young man, that he was even getting past middle-age; morally, he did not know whether he was trying to satisfy the desire to square a long overdue account — which, alas, could never be squared for all his efforts — or whether he might not have done the same thing, if David Rudd and his nefarious quinine had never existed. "I don't want any credit for the

little I'm doing. It's nothing more than what I ought to do, and what hundreds of other men in my position are doing," he said to his friend Stillman with energy. "Every man in the country must get his shoulder to the wheel, in one way or another. I don't want any credit for it."

"Don't worry, Lawson, you're not going to get any!" said old John, grinning a grin full of humor and worldly wisdom. "You're too rich. Any man with all the money you have or are supposed to have, is next door to a rascal, and if he goes to work for Uncle Sam, it's only because he's — what's this new word they're using all the time? — Camouflage? He's only camouflaging. If you don't believe me, go and ask these Socialists and I. W. W.'s and friends of Labor, and the rest of the pop-eyes."

The railroads had all passed under Government control by this date, so Mr. Stillman might presumably have been without a care or a responsibility; but, as a matter of fact, he worked as indefatigably and to as good purpose as ever. The two old friends used to meet at luncheon, which was a simple function nowadays, nobody having time for anything but simplicity. Lawson had always been a man of plain tastes in the matter of eating, and as for John, it reminded him of the days when he was a ticket-seller behind the little wire window in the dirty, ill-lighted railroad office down on Third Street where the Kentucky Bridge came in; to grab his hat and run across the street to the chop-house, to climb on a tall stool and bolt down a piece of pie and a cup of coffee, exchanging light banter with the waitress meanwhile, were no novelties to John Stillman. He remarked that these cafeterias were cleaner and better run and that the stuff they served was of better quality than on Third Street forty-five years ago; his own appetite had not fallen off greatly, considering. Lawson's youth had lacked these experiences, a fact on which the other used to rally him sometimes. "You were one of these gilt-edged boys, old man Rudd's son. But you didn't turn out so badly after all. You're a pretty fair average American."

"Average yourself, and see how you like it!" Lawson would retort, and then both would laugh as if they had uttered consummate wit!

But it was the truth; they were average Americans. Not for all the money they had made, not even to be young again, would they have exchanged the privilege of living and being Americans in these times. Fears, regrets, uncertainties and forebodings would have been proper to their age; they felt none, sharing to the full the astounding national confidence. They complained bitterly of costs, yet paid promptly; found acrimonious fault with the Administration, but obeyed it to the letter. They were ashamed of the heroic clap-trap that was being mouthed on all sides, yet perceived that it veiled some organic truth, solemn and enduring. As close as they were to each other, they were quite inarticulate about their own brave deeds, or hinted at them with the deliberate levity practised by their race when most in earnest; nor could anything have better displayed their average-Americanism.

It was one day after he had been out at one of those luncheons, going and coming with an indiscriminate mob of office-boys, office-girls, elevator-men, mechanics and clerks in the democratic companionship which was becoming more and more popular nowadays, that Lawson, sitting down to his desk, presently became aware of some stir at his door; his stenographer — it was the faithful Miss Parker, not quite so young as she used to be, but capable as ever — gave a slight scream. There was a young man in uniform on the threshold, no unusual sight about the Government offices, where uniforms outnumbered civilian suits ten to one; but Lawson, turning around at the noise, started up and his swivel-chair trundled backwards, skreaking.

## CHAPTER XV

BOTH father and son had undoubtedly rehearsed what they meant to say, how they would greet each other when they should meet again, many times over, and were letter-perfect in their parts. But neither could get out, or for that matter remember a single word of his carefully-studied speech. Instead, after an instant of silence, Mr. Rudd executed a clumsy parody of a salute, with the wrong hand, and Steven said: "Hello, Dollar-a-Day!" And they shook hands; and there the formalities ended. Miss Parker, who was not without tact, slipped out quietly as they sat down together; moreover, she stood guard outside the door for half an hour, fabricating prodigious stories about the importance of the interview to whomsoever applied to see Mr. Rudd. "I guess the Lord won't lay those few little white lies up against my record," she said recklessly. "It *was* important, anyway. His own son, all the boy he's got, going over there to fight! And they hadn't seen each other in five years!"

Lawson put his hand on the young man's shoulder. "Is that a lieutenant's bar you've got on, Steve?"

"Yes, sir. First."

His father put on his eyeglasses and examined the first lieutenant's insignia gravely. Steve's shoulder felt big and strong under the khaki. "I think you've filled out a good deal. You're broader in the shoulders than when — than you used to be. Is that the training, or were you getting that way, anyhow?"

Steven said he believed it was both; he soberly reached out and felt his father's arm. They were really exchanging a caress, though either would have died sooner than admit it. "I'm built something like you, Dad. I daresay you were just about the same size at my age." He paused a moment. "You knew I'd gone in, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes. From Edith, of course. And I've seen your letters to your mother." It was Lawson's turn to hesitate; then he said diffidently: "I was glad to hear that you'd enlisted, right at the first, before there was any talk about the draft."

"Well, I always meant to go if we got into the War. The drafted men are all right, though. They're just as willing as anybody. They want to get over there, and clean up the job, and get back home as quick as they can, just the same as all the rest of us."

"We've — we've been rather hoping, Steven, that you might not be needed over there, after all. That is, we were hoping until this last news — the German advance. Things don't look very well just now, but I believe it's the enemy's final effort. They can't keep it up long at this rate."

"Well, I'm not supposed to talk, but talking to you ought not to count — you're in the Service yourself. I'm pretty sure that we'll start inside of another twenty-four hours. We've got orders — the kind they always give just beforehand."

"Twenty-four hours!" echoed Lawson. Had the words been lead, they could not have settled heavier on his heart. "Twenty-four hours!" For the first time he realized what incalculable agony War meant; all that he had heard, had read, had said himself, he now saw as so much idle breath — words, words — meaningless sound and fury. He wanted to cry out: "Here, take *me!* I've had my life. Don't waste my son's! He's just beginning. At any rate, don't take him now! In a while — in just a little while — "

Steven went on talking; he was cheerful enough. His father had observed the same cheerfulness, the same matter-of-fact manner, and utter absence of hysterical enthusiasm in all the young fellows. Was it because they were young, and didn't realize, he queried inwardly; or was it that they were young and did realize? They called it a job; unspeakable suffering, irreparable injury, death itself would be incidental to it — and they still called it a job.

"I've written to tell Mother," Steve was saying. "If we'd had a little longer notice, I might have got leave, and seen her, or she might have come on here. But it's too late

now. We have to say good-by the night before anyhow, you know. They won't let anybody go near the ships. I was glad to find out you were here, though; I was afraid you might be off somewhere, and then I wouldn't see you."

"Does Edith know?"

"Oh yes. We got in from Camp Dix this morning, and I went up and told her the first thing."

"We'll all go and have dinner somewhere to-night, to give you a send-off," said Lawson, with assumed heartiness, emulating the other's philosophy as best he could.

"Well — er —" And now Steve's manner altered so markedly that his father looked at him in new wonder. He reddened and even squirmed in obvious embarrassment. Lawson jumped to a conclusion with an activity which would have done credit to a woman. "It's some girl, of course," he thought in mingled amusement, sympathy and sadness. "It's natural, it's right. I'm only his father." And aloud: "Made another engagement?" he asked easily.

"Why — I — no, not exactly, but —"

Here, with a tap on the door, Miss Parker thrust in a face of mystery. "Mr. Rudd — that is, both Mr. Rudds — there's a young lady here —"

"A young lady?"

"I told her to come. We both decided she'd better meet me here, so as to save time," Steve cried; and they rose automatically as Miss Parker ushered in Miss Mary Ballard.

She had on some kind of a uniform, too, that of a Red Cross nurse, Lawson guessed, though, in the confusion of his other guesses, he could be sure of nothing except that she looked very rosy and pretty and smiling and appealing. "Engaged? Why, great Scott, they were going to be married! Steven had nailed a minister and he had the license in his pocket all the time," he said afterwards, in giving an account of these bewildering happenings. "Hey? Ask my blessing? Ask nothing! If there was a thing on earth they could get along without it was my blessing. They just thought they'd drop in and let me know about it so that I could go to the wedding if I liked. Most casual proceeding I ever witnessed. But that's the way young people were doing in those war times; and after all, it's their business,

they are the persons most concerned. I don't know if Steve and Mary were even engaged at all. They'd known each other a long while, and I rather think they suddenly found out that they cared too much for each other to separate without — without a definite settlement, in short; Steve's going precipitated matters. It was a real war-wedding, if ever there was one. Nothing to it at all; easiest thing in the world; you put on your hat and go around the corner and get married!"

He could not remember later the exact order of events in the hurry of this helter-skelter day; all the conventional preliminaries to a wedding went by the board. His own preparations actually did entail no greater thought and effort than taking his hat and going out with the pair of them. He heard Steven pressing Miss Parker to go! And he heard her reply with unquestionably sincere regret that oh, my, Mr. Steven, she'd like to the worst way, but she just couldn't, she had so much to do, she wasn't the boss like Mr. Rudd; but anyways, she'd think hard of both of 'em at half-past-three (didn't he say that was when it was set for?) and she wished them just all the happiness in the world, and — and — and he's going to come back to you, Miss Ballard, don't you believe he ain't for a minute! She was giggling hysterically and wiping her eyes at the same time, as she ended. Lawson had never thought of Miss Parker otherwise than as a wonderfully dependable and satisfactory machine for which he had the kindly feeling which we all have for good machines; he paid her handsomely, was punctiliously polite, sent to inquire when she had a sick day, and remembered her with a substantial cheque and a box of candy every Christmas. But Miss Parker, as a guest of his — at his son's wedding! What would Mrs. Lawson have said? But why not, Lawson asked himself in sudden impatience, in Heaven's name, why not? All at once he remembered the little service-pin on the front of Miss Parker's plain blouse, and that she had a brother or nephew in the army; just such another young man as Steve, no doubt, just such another straight-eyed, practical unheroically heroic young man, who might easily be Steven's superior officer.

As they stepped out of the elevator, there was Edith, tall,

homely, elegant, a little excited for her, in a smart spring suit and furs, with violets in her corsage, standing at the edge of the sidewalk by the door of an almost unbelievably splendid automobile; that is to say, its splendors would have been wholly unbelievable, had they not been duplicated by another drawn up a little farther along against the curb; even case-hardened New York brokers and bootblacks turned in passing to give these noble vehicles a second look. Mr. Rudd caught sight of Miss Burke within one of them and of Mrs. Ball — No! Great Heavens, what was her new name? — with a man of about his own age, who, it did not take the wisdom of Solomon to divine, must be Mr. Ball — that is, the new one, whatever his name was. But Edith was talking to the occupants of the other motor-car, a neat, small, dressy gentleman with eyeglasses and a pointed beard, and his neat, small, dressy wife — it was Marshall Cook, the novelist, and Mrs. Cook, who used to be Miss Bessie Grace. Lawson forgot and called her Miss Grace as they shook hands. It appeared that the Cooks, being in New York, had just happened along and seeing Edith, stopped to chat; they had not known about the impending event, but now Steven asked *them*, and Mary joined in!

" We're going to be married — You're just in time — Of course it's awfully short notice — but we didn't have any time to let anybody know, and we can't wait — Won't you come? I wish some of the other people from home could be here — There're probably plenty of them in town; if we run into anybody else, we'll ask them." They performed in chorus.

The Cooks looked at each other, and at the young man and girl; it was impossible to see or hear them without warmth stealing around the heart. " Why — I don't know — are you sure you want us? " said little Mrs. Cook. " Your own families — ? "

" They aren't here — only Dad and Edith — Mrs. Gherardi. It's to be at Saint Simon's, in the chapel — Why, right away, as soon as we can get there. Do come — oh, wait a minute! You make them come, Mary! " The prospective groom dashed off after another young officer at that moment striding by. " Kent! I say! Oh, Kent! "

Mr. Rudd found himself being taken up to the other automobile and being introduced to Mr. Sackett — in a perfect necktie; and addressing the lady first as Mrs. Backard, and then, correcting himself, as Mrs. Ballett. Francie Burke nodded to him, smiling. Steven came back with the officer, a Captain Kent.

"He's coming! I wish I'd had time to get some of the other fellows. I'm in his company, you know, Dad."

The captain confided to Mr. Rudd seriously that it was the best company in the division. Another automobile was called, a taxi which trailed in the rear of the other two like Cinderella in attendance on her step-sisters; and presently they were all in the little chapel of Saint Simon's where the decorations from some recent patriotic celebration were still up, the colors of the Allied Nations making a brave show along the dark carvings of the choir-stalls and the gallery. Their party did not fill two pews. Captain Kent went on duty as best man. Some one volunteered for the organ, a young girl in the trig costume of the Women's Motor-Corps, the minister's daughter, as they learned. Mr. Sackett was to give the bride away; Lawson hoped that Steven had not forgotten the ring.

He thought of the other weddings — sibilant crowds filling up the church, the overpowering flowers, his wife's diamond dog-collar, the house redolent of roses, champagne, hot *entrées,* an occasional whiff of gasolene from some recalcitrant automobile stalling noisily among dozens of other motors under the windows. He looked around on their hastily gathered company, the plain service-clothes, the flags grave and proud overhead. The young people were starting out on their great adventure, high-hearted, undismayed, in the shadow of the greatest adventure men had ever undertaken. Well, that was right, that was as it should be; we were down to essentials now. Just so had the forefathers started out. Let men and women marry, raise up children for the state, hand on the torch.

It took less than ten minutes, being shorn of those ceremonious accompaniments about which Lawson had been thinking. They all shook hands and there was some kissing among the women. In the vestibule, Captain Kent excused

himself on the plea that he had an appointment with the regimental veterinarian to look over some mules. Mr. Sackett remarked with a grin that a military man's life had more variety in it than you'd suppose! " It's all in the day's work, heh? Mules and weddings and guard-mount and revolver-practice," said he. " And ain't it queer, anyhow, how we're all of us ready for anything nowadays? We take whatever comes along and don't think anything of it! "

They went down the steps; some of the passers-by looked up and smiled broadly at the strapping young soldier and the girl, so obviously bride and groom, and half a dozen street-urchins formed in line raising a piping cheer. Lawson scattered a handful of small change among them. " Run along, you little devils! " he shouted jovially. He was determinedly sanguine; everything was going to be all right; Steve would get through all right. " I don't know whether you feel it," he said to the two older men; " but there seems to me to be some kind of big irresistible movement all through the world, something unseen. This physical force we're all exerting wouldn't get anywhere without it. Just as if the combined sense of right of all the people in the world were somehow getting into action, making itself felt in some way — ? " He looked at the others, tentatively, and saw that both understood.

" Going through everything kind of like yeast, hey? " said Sackett, smiling himself at this homely figure. " That's so! "

Cook fingered his pointed beard. " I remember," he said thoughtfully; " reading somewhere in Stevenson's letters some whimsey of his which he put into a stage direction: '*A stately music. Enter God.*' Sometimes I'm reminded of that these days — "

Sackett looked rather startled at the reference. " I don't quite get you, Mr. — ? I think a lot of the U. S. I'm as patriotic as the next man, I hope. But I wouldn't say that our going into the War was — was the equivalent of the — the Almighty — "

" I wouldn't say it, either," said Cook. " Something dramatic about it struck me, that's all."

Neither of the others followed this subtlety, though Law-

son, who had an imagination, thought he glimpsed something of it. But Mr. Sackett good-naturedly asserted again that he didn't get the idea. "You're another writer, my wife tells me," he said, scrutinizing the little man closely but without offence. "They're a good deal alike. Every now and then they say things a person don't quite get on to. You put me in mind of the other Mr. Rudd — " here he glanced at Lawson expectantly — "*You* know who I mean, of course. Every now and then he'd talk like that."

"I used to know Eugene Rudd," said the author. "He's over there, isn't he?" He too looked at Lawson.

"Yes. He went two years or more ago. He was killed. It was at Vimy Ridge, I think — or while the fighting was going on in that part of the country."

All three felt a little shocked that they should have fallen upon such a topic at such a moment, and cocked an eye apprehensively towards Mary. "He was an interesting man. He wrote very well — those articles for the *Planet* — " Cook murmured lamely.

"I liked him," said Sackett. It was all the epitaph Eugene Rudd ever got; possibly he would not have asked any better.

They went and had a luncheon somewhere, without wine, on account of Steve's uniform. For that matter, wine would have contributed only a little to their spurious gayety, Lawson thought; he was sure that every member of the party, except the bride and groom, was fighting down the same depression as himself. But Steve and Mary were happy; they were as happy as if there were no parting, no war, no horrid chances in perspective. It was the attitude of all the youth of the country, not fatalistic, not resigned, not spiritually exalted, simply the supreme expression of common-sense, right feeling, manliness and womanliness. Age stood puzzled and profoundly abashed before it, asking again and again the same question: do they know what they are doing, or is it that they don't know?

It seemed to Steven's father that they knew very well. "I've got my pay and there are no personal expenses that amount to anything, you know," the young man told him in their one moment of privacy. "That will take care of

Mary comfortably; and then we're all insured. She'll get that, of course."

" I — I hope not, Steve," said Lawson miserably, almost in a groan.

Steven looked for an instant as if he did not understand; then he laughed. " Why, I hope not myself, Dad! But it'll be all right, whatever happens! "

This was really the last word they had together; the wedding-party separated shortly after, the guests moved by a humane desire to let the young things have some time to themselves. Mr. Rudd, in his position, might without doubt by some energetic manipulations have got permission to see his son aboard ship, but Lawson made no effort that way. " Who am I that I should be favored more than other fathers? " he thought humbly. There was a strange comfort in sharing the common heartache. The transport was the *Leviathan* erstwhile the *Vaterland,* and she lay at her pier, with her four great funnels in sight from Lawson's office-window, strongly guarded, to be sure, but making ready for departure before the eyes of all the world, as if hostile spies and plotters had never existed. They learned she was to sail at noon the following day.

" Must make the Germans mighty sore to think of that two-million-dollar boat taking our troops over by the thousands! " Sackett observed with relish. " Maybe they won't want to blow a hole in her because of the two million. But if I was in Uncle Sam's place I wouldn't take quite so many chances on 'em; no use making it easy for 'em, anyhow. The boats have been going out of here in broad daylight, loaded to the guards with our boys, bands playing and flags flying, and the whole town turning out to see them go. You'd think with all this talk of enemy aliens and bombs and so on, the authorities would keep it quieter."

" You don't know where they go after they get through The Narrows, though," somebody said. " Nobody knows but the captain and the Navy Department, they say. Uncle Sam has the whole business pretty well thought out."

The office-day was over, and Lawson went with Edith back to her apartment; and was presently sitting down to table with her in her tiny dining-room, about which there

was that modish austerity of which she alone had the secret. Father and daughter rigidly adhered to their social code, appearing in evening-dress, and going through the prescribed ritual of their class, for which neither one of them at heart cared a jot. "We mustn't break up our regular habits just because we all happen to be doing things we've never done before," the young woman said inflexibly. And it was a fact that the small ceremonies of their daily life somehow tranquillized them at a time like this. After dinner she made his coffee with the dash of orange-juice and burnt brandy that he liked, and Lawson resolutely smoked a cigar that seemed tasteless, and they talked about the day's news from the Front.

In the morning there arrived an excited telegram from Hester and a night-letter from Mrs. Rudd. Lawson said he would give them to Mary after — after everything was over; that would be better than breaking in upon them now in their last hour or so together. Time enough when Steve had gone. He walked down to the office, taking for a good omen the bright, blowing spring day; and he went up to his own desk and signalled for Miss Parker, who came in dry and quick and business-like as usual; and they got to work with their ordinary greetings. The morning wore along; once in a while there would be a burst of noise, martial music and hurrahing in the street twelve or fifteen stories below; the offices were used to such demonstrations these days. But at noon, Lawson got up and went to the window.

The four funnels were gone; the ship was out of her berth, in mid-stream, moving slowly. He stood awhile watching her; a number of the office-force congregated at other windows, and somebody came and offered him a pair of field-glasses. "You can see them real plain, Mr. Rudd, not the faces, of course, but you can see the crowd on the decks — " Lawson shook his head. He stood and watched in a haze of unrelated fancies and recollections. His brother David's face when he left a good-by for the family — fragments of patriotic speeches, Lincoln's, Patrick Henry's, that he had recited school-afternoons when he was a boy — "Lafayette, we are here!" — Eugene, poor fellow, meeting death by a treacherous trick — Steven, at ten years old, getting off his pony to give McCrae's lame boy a ride —

A band in the street struck up "Over There" blaring raucously. *A stately music!* Lawson almost smiled, but he remembered the rest of it. *Enter — ?* The funnels were out of sight now, but even at this distance, though faintly, he could still hear the cheering as the transport dropped down the bay.

THE END

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