THE GIRL THAT GOES WRONG

REGINALD
··WRIGHT··
KAUFFMAN

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THE GIRL THAT GOES WRONG

By

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

Author of "The House of Bondage," etc.

NEW YORK
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To

SOLOMON SOLIS COHEN

PHYSICIAN AND FRIEND

BUT FOR WHOM MY WRITING-DAYS

HAD ENDED BEFORE THIS BOOK WAS UNDERTAKEN

R. W. K.

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MARIA PERIPATETICA

Sad painted flower, cast unwist
Into Life's lap; poor face that Fate
Has mocked at, drunk to, smitten, kissed,
Until I read the rune thereof
With more in it to love than hate,
With more to pity than to love:—

What nights were thine; what morns were theirs
Whose sleep was incense, vital, rare,
Burned into ashes unawares
Before thy desecrated shrine;—
Thy barren bosom freed their care,
Because its milk was bitter wine.

Of all that loved and let thee go
Is there not one whose lips impressed
Their stamp upon thy memory so—
Or dark or fair, or black or white—
His eyes outsparkle all the rest,
The casual Antonies of the night?

Off all the mouths thy mouth hath drained,
Off all the breasts thy breasts have sought
And clung to, mad, desired, disdained—
In that long catalogue of dole
Is there not one who something taught,
His soul embracing thy lost soul?

MARIA PERIPATETICA

That fair first lover on whose head
Thy maiden shame and passion place—
Living and loving, or purged and dead—
So rich a crown of memory
That to thine inmost heart his face
A sinning saint's seems—is it he?

Or is it some poor drunken fool,
Wiser than thou—God save the mark!—
In that salacious, brutal school
Where beasts, as thou and I are, sweat
Over the lessons in the Dark,
That thou recall'st with dear regret?

Perhaps some country lad, who came
Fresh from his home to town and thee,
Is closest, his the charmed name,
Who with the parting tears fresh shed,
With all his sweet virginity
Thy sacramental table spread.

My canker-eaten rose, what then?
My scape-goat of an outworn creed,
"All things," said Paul, "unto all men"—
So thou who with the setting sun
Farest nightly on the endless road,
To all men mistress, wife to none!

But mine to-night, though not to kiss!
I lay my head upon that breast
Whose scar our sisters' safety is,
And from our darkest misery
To beg thy mercy is my quest,
Lest that we perish utterly.

MARIA PERIPATETICA

Forgive our women's scornful glance,
Our poor, pale, pure maids decorous,
Virgins by purse and circumstance;
Forgive the tearing tusk and claw;
Forgive the law that made thee thus;—
Forgive the god that made the law.

R. W. K.

THE GIRL THAT GOES WRONG

I

INTRODUCTION

THESE are not the sort of stories that I used to try to write. They are not fiction at all. I wish they were. I wish with all my heart that these things which I have seen and these black biographies which I have verified were but the visions of a night of weeping, whereafter "joy cometh in the morning." But the world—which means you and me—has not so decided. That which I testify is not "the whole truth," because we have not yet sufficiently progressed to bear the publication of truth entire; the worst must still be left to your imagination. And yet my testimony is, I assure you, "the truth and nothing but the truth."

Why, if it be so terrible, should I ask you to read it? I shall try to make that clear in a few words.

In New York City alone there are, according to the last authentic figures that came to my hand, and not counting those who break the conventional ethical code in secret, 30,000 prostitutes. The life of such women in such a trade—the calculation is as certain as those of the insurance companies—averages five years. This means that, for New York alone, there must be secured 6,000 new public women every year—and every year that number is secured. From the

most conservative accounts obtainable, it is safe to say that, in all of our large American cities and most of our small ones, there is one prostitute to every one hundred and sixty of the population—men, women, and children. About one-half of these prostitutes come from the rural districts, and the majority are native-born.

Now, do you see why I ask you to consider this problem? You may believe in the abolition of prostitution or in its supervision by the state. You may believe in the still commonly preached standard of sex-morality, or you may believe in the standard both commonly reprobated in public speech and commonly advocated in private action. However you regard these matters, concerning the forcing of girls into prostitution there can be no two opinions among fair-minded people. It makes no difference whether the force be applied by economic circumstance, by brute strength, or by trickery and seduction: that force should be employed is abominable.

Do you consider that you have no responsibility for what constantly happens to girls at some place distant from that in which you live? You have a responsibility; but, for the present, we shall waive that. Do you think that you have an excuse for not greatly caring about the fate of immigrant women in the United States? You have no excuse; but, for the present, we shall waive that lack of excuse also. Let us assume the selfish attitude: I ask you to consider this problem because it concerns your own daughters and sons, your own sons-in-law and brothers-in-law, your own sister, your own sweethearts, your own body and soul.

When *Leslie's Weekly* courageously opened its columns to the serial publication of the stories now gathered into this volume, I said that, with all necessary changes of names, dates, and places carefully effected, and with the composite frequently presented as the individual, what I have told is a part of what I have seen with my own eyes. Nevertheless, I do not ask you to accept my unsupported testimony. It would be possible to summon any number of corroborating witnesses; yet, if you doubt that the conditions that I am to speak of extend from one end of the country to the other, then:

Write to the New York Probation Society for its first report and read the statement concerning conditions in New York made by District Attorney Charles S. Whitman.

Secure a copy of the latest report of the Vice Commission of the City of Chicago.

Read some of the publications of the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis.

Write to your Congressman for a copy of Senate Document No. 196, and note the testimony of a corps of Government experts whose investigations extended from one end of the country to the other.

There are a few of my witnesses. As, however, the stories that they corroborate are, after all, the results of personal investigations, a personal explanation should, perhaps, precede those stories.

My own interest in the problem of prostitution began a good many years ago when I was a reporter on a Philadelphia newspaper. One bitterly cold night, or rather morning, I had been detained at my office until two o'clock. As I stepped into the street I

was, I recall, nearly driven against the side of the building by the gale that was blowing. The sleet cut at my cheeks and the pavement was like the surface of a frozen pond. I noticed that the thoroughfare was almost deserted and yet, just under a sputtering electric light, I was accosted by a lonely woman.

There was no mistaking her trade, and there was nothing attractive about this practitioner. Her ringed eyes were hard, her rouged face was prematurely old, and her red mouth was cruel.

I asked her why she was working so late and in such weather.

"I'm doin' it," she said—and I can still hear her hollow voice—"because I need some more money on my kid's boardin'-school bill. The bill's got to be paid to-morrow."

That woman told me a story that I subsequently investigated and found true. She had been inveigled from a country town, taken to the city, and then, by the man that had said he loved her, turned upon the street. When her child was four years old, she had taken the little girl to a certain educational institution—not a charitable affair—and the officials of that institution, with whom the woman was perfectly frank, had agreed to take the child and educate her on three conditions: The woman must consent never to see her daughter again, she must consent to having her daughter brought up in the belief that the mother was dead, and she must pay the bills regularly.

That mother's love proved itself absolutely unselfish—the woman kept her bargain.

This was the incident that started me on my inquiries. After some years of work in other cities, I

rented rooms in an East Side tenement house, on the island of Manhattan, on the outskirts of the district in which lived many of the people of whom I was to write and from which still more of their sort are daily recruited. Here my wife and I pursued our researches in a living medium.

I studied these people and lived among them; but not as a patron, nor as a customer, not as a slaver on the one hand, or a benefactor on the other; not as a preacher or as what they call a "reform spotter." I went among them on the terms of simple human fellowship. I studied them in puritan Boston and hypocritical Philadelphia, in Chicago, Minneapolis, Baltimore, Washington, and Denver, as well as in New York. I came to know them in London and in Paris, in scores of our larger cities and smaller towns.

Our method in New York is a fair example of my general line of work. There we established a nominal residence, in which to see our former friends, near the field of our labors, but we also rented rooms in other sections, and it was mostly in these other rooms, when not on the streets or in the dives, that, among our new friends, we passed our time.

Many persons have asked us whether we employed any disguise. We did not. I had embarked upon this work with a capital of less than seventy-five dollars, and, as we did only enough magazine writing to keep us alive, we found that the clothes with which we started were soon disguises sufficient for all practical purposes. Twice, because of arrears in rent, we were served with notices to quit. Several times, after a night in the darkest corners of some

city, we returned to go to bed with no guess as to how we were to buy our breakfast.

I recollect one tenement in which we occupied a place on the top floor. It was called a model tenement, but a generous hole in the roof provided a constant pool of water for our floor, with results that proved nearly fatal. I protested. No repairs were made. I stopped paying rent. The agent came to the house and sent up word that he wanted to see me. As it happened that I had been hurt in a little affair the night before, I returned a message to the effect that if he wanted to see me he could climb to the seventh story.

The agent climbed and arrived panting and furious. He was a thin, sleek man in a comfortable fur coat. When I explained my trouble, he laughed.

"Why," he said, "any roof is likely to leak. I have a leak even in my own home right now."

"All right," I answered. "I'll trade you residences."

He did not accept my offer.

Whenever we went about our work, we found that we quite soon came to know well the women whom we were studying. We knew them as friends. In one place, when we had, which was rarely, more money than we thought we ought to carry about with us into dives, we gave it for safe-keeping to a woman that had served two terms as a pickpocket. In all the cities where I studied, when there was more cash than could be immediately used—which was less often—I could always lend it to the girls, with the absolute certainty of repayment. And, go where we would, when we were in need of more money than

we had on hand—which was the most frequent situation of all—we could borrow small amounts from these women. From positions of such intimacy I studied the problem before me in all its phases—in houses, flats, tenements, and in the darkened streets and doorways; from the places patronized by clubmen to those patronized by sailors, peddlers, and thugs—and although we found that conditions were in some degree worse in such cities as New York and Philadelphia than in certain other towns, that difference, when it existed, was always one of degree and never one of kind.

I remember well the first real prisoner—the first real white slave—to whom I talked. She was a girl from Wilkes-Barre, Pa., and I asked her whether the life was as bad as people said it was. I shall never forget the look that came into her face as she answered:

"I don't know what they say, but it's worse than they can say, because there's a lot in it that there ain't no words for."

In every city I found that most of the girls had been forced into prostitution—in what manner and by what means I shall presently indicate. In several I found the old brass-check system of payment still in vogue. But in all, whether they are paid by cash or by credit, I found that—as the victims have to pay their masters and mistresses for clothes, food, and lodging, and as the rates charged for these things are beyond all reason—the girls are uniformly kept hopelessly in their owners' debt.

One little Chicago slave of the street—she was scarcely sixteen years old—pointed out to me, what

many another has since confirmed, the manner in which her kind are robbed.

"Room rents," as she put it, "is somethin' awful, and the women that rents the rooms know we've got to pay them whatever they've a mind to ask."

"And how about your clothes?"

"Well, we need showy ones, and the second-hand stores where we get them—society ladies sells them there—spot us the minute we come in, and up go the prices accordin'."

"Where do you eat?"

"There's a slew o' restaurants that are really run just for the girls in our business. Ours is hard work and it needs hearty food, but those restaurants we've got to go to (they won't serve us in lots of the others) charge us Auditorium prices. Then there's always medicine; there's miles to walk every night; there's bad weather and hard times when there ain't a cent to be earned, and yet all the while there's your fellow waitin' round the corner, with his hand itchin' to take all you got and his fist shut to crack you one on the jaw if you don't give up."

Why don't they run away—these girls—from their "fellows"? I used to wonder about that, and they all gave me the same answer. When I first put the question it was to a Philadelphia victim.

She looked at me with eyes full of amazement.

"Who? Me? Where'd I run to?" she replied. "If I ran to another man, it'd be the same thing over again. If I started out for myself, my fellow'd find me an' kill me—or, if he didn't quite finish the job, he'd have me pinched. An' if I tried to get some other sort of work before I'm too broken down to

do any other sort—well, I never learned a trade, an', anyhow, who'd have me?"

You think of the reform schools—nearly all of them semi-prisons—to which, in most of our States, we send thousands of these offenders. What about them? I asked that question of nearly all the prostitutes that I met, and once again I received a uniform reply. I give it here in the words of a Boston street girl.

"Weren't you ever at a reform school?" I inquired.

"Yes," she answered; "an', honest to God, I learned more of my business there than I ever learned on the street."

From the women that I knew I learned in what saloons the slave traders "hung out," and I hung out there, too. At first I was avoided. But at last, because I did not seem anxious to discover anything, I discovered all that I wanted. The traders at last talked before me freely, and I have heard them, in one city and another, discuss their wares in much the same tones and terms as those in which horse-dealers talk of horseflesh.

It is only too easy to learn to be a white-slave trader. The small boy, brought up with no advantages, is necessary to his family as a wage-earner. He is taken from school before the permitted age and put to work in a factory on a false affidavit, falls into some trifling trouble and loses his job. He gets the chance to act as a "lighthouse" or scout for a mature trader, who pays him well. Then he gets a girl of his own and by physical punishment forces her to go upon the street for him. Sometimes he be-

comes a waiter in a low saloon, and offers his personal chattel to his drunken customers; but generally he is unfitted by this time for any steady work. Occasionally he owns three or four slaves and "farms them out" to business acquaintances in other neighborhoods or other cities, and often he sells a girl into a house, either for a lump sum or for royalties on her earnings.

Wherever there is hard luck looking for better times, there you will find the trader looking for slaves. Wherever there is poverty longing for comfort, discontent sighing for relief, hunger gasping for food, there stands the trader with his easy air and specious promises. He is at the factory door when it opens to release the pallid workers for a breath of night-air. He is at the cheap lunch-counter, where the underpaid stenographers get their sandwiches from underpaid waitresses. He is waiting around the corner for the servant and the shop-clerk. Sometimes he offers marriage, always he offers economic independence. The thing is done, and, once done, blows and starvation perpetuate the slavery upon the ignorant, and threats of arrest and the certainty of public disgrace weld the shackles about the ankles of the more knowing.

There, in the briefest possible terms, is the situation. The thing exists. It exists in your own city, your own town. It threatens your own flesh and blood. What are you going to do about it?

Suppression—efforts to close the houses of prostitution—is a failure; it is a treatment of the symptoms, but a neglect of the disease. Individual reformation that deals with effects and forgets causes

has never yet appreciably diminished the ranks of public women. There remains, then, among the policies more prominently suggested, a general system of sane education in sex-hygiene.

As every student of the social problem well remembers, the bitterest cry of the girl that goes wrong is, "Until it was too late, I didn't know!" It is a fact that nearly all our boys are left to discover the fundamental truths of life from the worst of teachers —their own ill-trained minds. It is a fact that nearly all our girls are kept in ignorance of the full realities until they learn them from their husbands, or until, as is increasingly the case, they learn them, to their ruin, from a man whose sole purpose is seduction. Ignorance is not innocence. Genuine innocence implies a complete, clean knowledge of the truth, and all children may secure that knowledge in their own schools or their own homes.

"Does anyone," asks the president-emeritus of Harvard, "protest that such an educational process will abolish innocence in young manhood and womanhood? Let him consider that the only alternative for education in sex-hygiene is the prolongation of the present awful wrongs and woes in the very vitals of civilization."

Out of a prurient prudery that, only a few years ago, forbade the very mention of prostitution and its accompanying ills, we have thus advanced to a position where educators declare that the silence of the puritan has been the ally of the vicious. This means much. Such a system of education as Dr. Eliot suggests would mean more. It seems to me, however, that there is still another step to be taken.

What this step is and why it appears to me to be necessary, I shall try to indicate in a book to be published in the near future.

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN.

"The Gardens,"
East Ayton, West;
Yorks, England;
20th August, 1911.

II

THE GIRL THAT WAS BAD

YOU must have met Gammage before. He is the sort of man whose existence is passed between an effort not to miss the eight-six into town and an effort to catch the five-eleven home. He is one of those pale, nervous men who live in the suburbs and have no sense of humor. He works in a place that he vaguely describes as "the office"—nobody knows precisely what sort of an office, and nobody precisely cares. He works hard and he accomplishes just what is expected of him, and no more. He talks a little about what he used to do when he was younger and had a better job, and he talks a great deal about his country club. He goes to church twice on every Sunday, and on Saturday afternoons he plays golf. Gammage is a highly respectable man.

He is married, of course. All the Gammages are married. And my Gammage's Mrs. Gammage is what her husband describes as "a mighty fine woman." She is little and timid and devoted, and she is wholly sure that her husband is the best possible man alive. She was sure of it when they married thirty years ago, and she is just as sure of it to-day.

"Of course," she once confided to me, "I don't know much about Edward's business affairs—I don't

think a wife ought to interfere in such matters, do you?—but I'm sometimes inclined to think that he isn't wholly appreciated at The Office."

"Dear me," said I, "that's impossible!"

"Yes, it would seem so, and yet he is not advanced so rapidly as he ought to be. In fact, he isn't advanced at all. And he works so hard, poor dear!"

The poor dear felt the same way about it, and I happen to know that he had a good deal of trouble in keeping his family up to that standard of living required of members of his golf club. That is one reason why, when I remembered his three children, I was surprised to be told that there was to be a fourth.

"Isn't it rather expensive?" I ventured.

"They are worth their weight in gold," said Gammage.

"Certainly," I answered; "but, then, you can never sell them at par."

Gammage was distressed at my ill-timed levity.

"It's this way," he explained. "It may sound brutal, but it's the truth that if you have several children you won't feel quite so terribly if you should lose one."

I don't, here and now, undertake to censure that philosophy of parenthood. There are a good many phases to the question, not all of them germane to the present subject; but I do believe that, things being as they are, the Gammages were not well enough off to bring up so many children as they wanted in the way in which they wanted to bring up their children, and I do know that Gammage felt terribly indeed when he lost Sarah.

She was the eldest child, and I have rarely seen a prettier. Even as a dimpled baby, she won the hearts of all of us, and as she grew older she completely enslaved her father and mother. She had golden hair and eyes that were as black as eyes can be, and her cheeks were pink and her smile the smile of a young lady that knows her power. The Gammages declared that there had never been a youngster like her, and, if we didn't quite agree to that, we were none of us rude enough openly to dissent.

I remember that Sarah was the merest sort of a tot when she learned her first "piece," and I sha'n't soon forget how proudly good old Edward told me about it.

"You've got to hear her say it," he declared, "if you want properly to appreciate it. It's the first three verses of that 'Excelsior' thing, you know, and I give you my word I never before realized how much there was to the poem."

He used to try to give us an imitation of her recitation.

I happened in at his house one evening a week later. It was somewhere about ten o'clock.

"If you had only been an hour earlier," said Mrs. Gammage, "we'd have had Sarah recite her piece for you."

"You don't mean to say that you keep the child up until nine!" I ventured.

"Oh, no," Mrs. Gammage explained. "It isn't that we keep her up; it's that she won't go to bed."

"Wouldn't you like to hear her?" asked Edward.

"Of course I should. I'll come earlier next time."

"But I can get her now."

"What? Waken her?"

"She won't mind. She likes it."

He got her—got her in spite of my remonstrances. It seemed to me that she minded a good deal; but she was bribed with candy and placed upon the dining-room table—we were having a late salad, I remember—and there, after she had dug her round fists into her beautiful eyes, she stood up and triumphantly gave her recitation. When she had finished, we pretended we were at a play and that she was the star. Her parents applauded vociferously; Edward threw her a faded carnation from his buttonhole, and Mrs. Gammage kissed her and rewarded her with the promise that next night she could stay up as long as she pleased.

Do you wonder that the child did it again? She did—several times. They got to be rather hurt if callers didn't ask for Sarah's "piece"; they formed the habit of serving the child as a kind of extra course, after the coffee, when there were guests to dinner, and once, when Sarah replied to an encore by kicking over Tommy Campbell's cup and soiling the tablecloth, her father and mother became almost hysterical over her budding cleverness.

It was that same summer that the Gammages passed their two weeks' vacation at a small boarding-house in the country—one of those places where all the "guests" spend their time explaining to one another that they "have come here only for the quiet," for fear they will otherwise be suspected of coming for economic reasons. One day Sarah, the landlady being ill, was found to have inundated the

kitchen garden with water, in an endeavor to "make the flowers grow like Mrs. Bronson does," and, though the flowers were ruined, the guests all thought this remarkably funny and said so in Sarah's hearing.

The inevitable followed. There was a tank on the roof, the only means of filling the single bathtub, and there was a spigot to tap the tank when there happened to be an oversupply of water. Sarah, on an unoccupied afternoon, climbed to the roof and, turning the spigot, watched the entire supply run off by way of the drain pipe.

Nobody thought that funny. Everybody complained to Edward, and Edward, who had come in hot from golfing on a poor links and who wanted a bath, lost his temper and gave Sarah her first spanking.

"You are a bad girl!" he declared.

"Then why," asked Sarah, "did you all laugh when I watered the garden?"

Edward was at a loss for reply. Besides, there were reasons for believing that his domestic expenses would be materially increased that winter, and his employer had just written, in reply to a letter from Edward, that he could not grant Gammage's request for an advance of salary at the conclusion of the vacation. Gammage was in no mind for casuistry.

The boarding-house roof was not the only goal of Sarah's climbing. In the yard of her suburban home there were two trees, and for ascending these she early developed a ready ability. When the Gammages returned from the country and an occasion had arisen to make her father threaten fresh punishment, Sarah slipped from his hands, ran into the yard, and had

reached a perch in the lower branches of one of the trees before her father discovered her. Of course he could reach her and lift her down, and of course he did. But he had not really been very angry, and the child's manner of escape struck him as so remarkably funny that he laughed and forgave her for whatever she had previously done. He told his friends, and she heard him.

Upon that hint Sarah naturally acted. It was obvious that, after an offense, if you could slip away and climb a tree, you would be performing something amusing enough to end all danger of punishment. It worked on two or three occasions. Then Sarah learned to climb higher, and at last Gammage, ascending in pursuit, fell, sprained an ankle, and straightway flogged Sarah just as hard as if she had not climbed at all.

The entire affair impressed the child as inexplicable. She could make out no logical sequence between crime and punishment, and her parents never helped her to a solution of the riddle.

Two facts were, however, clear in Sarah's young mind: the most delightful thing in life was to attract applause, and the one sure way to secure applause was to be a little different from one's fellows, to go a little farther than one's neighbors went. Upon these facts she thenceforth ordered her conduct. She would be scolded, she would be whipped, but she was soon certain to hear her parents laughing about the offense to their acquaintances.

"We must tell you what Sarah did yesterday," she would hear them say. "Naturally, we had to punish her, but it was really too funny for anything."

They sent her to dancing-school, where she at once became the best and wildest of the dancers. They thought that funny, too. Gammage had, you will remember, no sense of humor.

"I suppose," he smiled at her upon her return from her second lesson, "that you'll be having a little sweetheart now."

"Why?" asked Sarah.

"Because," said her father, who liked to consider himself epigrammatic, "most of the girls wouldn't."

Sarah tossed her long locks. She had pretended to scorn boys, but now she began to think differently. From the third lesson she returned radiant.

"I've got it!" she announced.

"Got what?" inquired her parents.

"One of those things you were talking about last week—a sweetheart."

They enjoyed this. Remembering what Gammage had said upon the subject, they thought that the child's action was evidence of their influence upon her—which, in sober truth, it was. So Sarah's sweetheart came to be one of their staples of conversation with Sarah.

When the first of her brothers had appeared, Sarah was not a little put out. Theretofore she had focused attention with small effort; now she had to try harder, and as the number of junior Gammages increased, the hard lot of an elder child was made for this child harder, because she had been taught first to expect and then to demand so much.

Nor was that all. In the smaller Sarah certain definite characteristics had been implanted, cultivated,

admired; and now, as time went by, these same characteristics appeared to be regarded as anything but admirable in the larger Sarah. She could not see why, but there was no denying the condition. There came at last a period when she was punished nearly every day for something of a sort that, in the old days, had won her nothing but the applause she so greatly craved.

Gammage did not explain it to her. He never even supposed that an explanation was necessary. Besides, his expenses grew and his income remained as stationary as Gibraltar—and his nerves deteriorated accordingly. To be sure, there was Mrs. Gammage; but, then, Mrs. Gammage was all day busy with the other children.

"You're just a bad girl," said Gammage.

"Indeed you are," chorused Mrs. Gammage. "And I don't know where in the world you ever got it from, I'm sure."

At first this hurt her. Then she rebelled, denied, fought. But in the end repetition did what repetition always in the end will do: Sarah earned her ready-made reputation.

She was fifteen then and at school. For some time she had half the boys in the place at her heels, for her beauty had grown with her years and her parents had begun by admiring her talents for heart-breaking. Also, Mrs. Gammage being overoccupied at home, Sarah had a good deal of time to herself.

Tommy Campbell was the first person to speak to me about it.

"Have you noticed Gammage's oldest girl lately?" he one day asked me.

"Sarah?" said I. "Why, no; I don't know that I have. What about her?"

"Boys."

"Well, she always was pretty and it's no wonder that she should be popular."

"I know; but there are boys and boys. Besides, I saw her coming out of a matinée in town last Wednesday with a fellow I didn't like the looks of, and from what I hear from my own youngsters she's pretty frequently a truant from school."

"She does like admiration."

"She does that; she's been taught to. They used to feed it to her with her milk bottle. The result was that she didn't wear well. Most of the young boys out home have got tired of her and now she's looking elsewhere."

He heard a few more things a little later, and at last he induced his wife to intimate some of them to Mrs. Gammage.

But Mrs. Gammage only shook her head.

"Not our Sarah," said she.

Then the matter came irresistibly to Edward's attention. Leaving his office at an unexpectedly early hour, he almost collided with his daughter, who was supposed to be at school, in loud and merry conversation with a cigarette-smoking youth of twenty on a city street corner.

"What's this?" said Gammage.

"It's my friend, Mr. Walker," said Sarah, flushing a bit, but trying to see things through. "I want you to meet him, father."

Father scarcely glanced at the youth; he knew the type.

"Why aren't you at school?" he demanded of Sarah.

"Because—I—I was excused to-day and I thought I'd come in town and surprise you. I was just on my way to your office."

"Well, you've surprised me, all right. Now come along home. I'm going to give you a spanking."

He took her with him, angry and humiliated. He kept his word about the spanking and he locked her in her own room for twenty-four hours.

"You may come out when you have repented," he told her.

"I won't repent," said Sarah. "I'm too old to be whipped. You always used to laugh when I told you the boys liked me."

"That was different; you were younger then."

The next morning Gammage came to her door.

"Are you sorry?" he demanded.

"No," said Sarah; "and, what's more, I'm not going to be."

"I believe you are a thoroughly bad girl," said Edward.

Of course, at last, Sarah decided that it was better to say that she repented; but, equally of course, the whole thing had, within a month, to be gone over again. The only difference was that this time Mr. Walker had been replaced by Mr. Foster. Then, during the summer, Mr. Foster resigned in favor of a Mr. Dalton, who said that his home was in another city, three hundred miles away. Next January Edward was forced to force Dalton into a wedding, in order, as Gammage put it, "to save the family name."

It was a sad little wedding, with the Gammages in

tears, Sarah looking unduly radiant, and Dalton looking as if he wished it were a funeral. They left that night for the young husband's own city, and for a while things were quieter. Sarah wrote that she was very happy, that Dalton had a good business position —she never knew for certain what that position was— and that she was really sorry to have been always such a bad girl.

And after that she did not write again.

It was perfectly simple; it happens every day, only Gammage would not have known of it if Tommy Campbell had not happened to run across Sarah in the city to which her husband had taken her. It wasn't Dalton's own city at all, and as soon as Sarah had ceased to be interesting, Dalton deserted her. She put the baby in a foundling asylum. She couldn't go to work, because she did not know how to work, and she couldn't go home, because she knew that she would be regarded as a bad girl. She was a bad girl, she concluded, and so she actually became what is generally so described. Tommy trapped her into betraying her real address, and then he telegraphed to Edward.

Gammage forgave her and brought her home, where she lives now with her little girl. She has managed to learn dressmaking and to make a living by it, but that trade Edward regards as rather a disgrace to the family. She actually makes clothes for the wives of some of his friends in the golf club, near which she has rented a small cottage; and Gammage still talks about it in his weaker moments, to his friends.

"I can't understand it," he says. "It is too ter-

rible—altogether too terrible! We gave her so much love—and then to think that she should go wrong! Why, you must have known how we used to admire her. Everybody noticed it. We didn't deny her anything—not a thing. Of course she's all right now, but her life is a ruin—a ruin—and it has made her hopelessly hardhearted even to her mother and me. We have offered again and again to take her little girl into our own home and bring her up precisely as we brought up Sarah, and—would you believe it? —Sarah absolutely refuses to let us have anything to do with the training of her daughter?"

III

THE GIRL THAT WANTED ERMINE

THE New York man that built the apartment house never told why he called it "The Chaucer." Certainly he had not chosen the name because of any personal admiration for "the morning star of English song." He lived on Riverside Drive, owned a string of bucket-shops across the continent, and found that the racing pages of the daily paper satisfied his deepest cravings for imaginative literature. He had never read a line of "The Parlement of Briddes," would not have understood it had it been read to him, and, if he had ever heard of the Canterbury Pilgrims, probably confused that little band with a musical-comedy company. Nevertheless, an apartment house has one human attribute—to be respectable, it must have a name; and so, the thing having been built and the hundreds of other apartment houses in New York having pre-empted all the titled names of Europe, the owner of this house was doubtless forced to "drop into poetry."

Certainly there was nothing poetic about "The Chaucer." A young newspaper reporter who lived there used to remark that if architecture was indeed frozen music, then "The Chaucer" was cold-storage ragtime. It stood, far uptown, in the middle of a block of other apartment houses so precisely like it that, had it not been properly labeled, its oldest tenant

could not have told whether he lived at home or next door. It resembled both the other side of the street and the block beyond, and, when he looked at its cluttered front of red brick, with white stone facings that glared through the bars of interlacing fire-escapes, the newspaper reporter described it as a handsome pile, delicately combining the early day-coach school with the late Pullman period. Though it presented to the street a painted face, its rear wall was slatternly; though its woodwork gleamed in the lamplight, the noon sun showed the cheap veneer. To quote our newspaper reporter for the last time, its name should have been The Porthos.

Even from the inanimate to the animate, like calls to like; make-believe people seek make-believe houses. The inhabitants of "The Chaucer" partook of their surroundings. They were bank-clerks newly married, lads in brokers' offices who wanted the sham of "bachelor apartments," maiden ladies that boasted cousins in the society columns, and small businessmen with ambitious wives. Everybody in "The Chaucer" was more than respectable, for everybody was "correct"; everybody pretended to more means than he had and floundered in debt to do it. The presiding demon of the house was The Proper Thing.

It was The Proper Thing that ruined the Dowlings.

"I will not do it!" said Mrs. Dowling, on the one occasion when her husband had suggested that they go to the gallery of a theater.

"But, Ella," he had weakly protested, "we simply can't afford to pay the speculators' prices for downstairs seats."

"Then," said Mrs. Dowling, "we can better afford to stay at home. I won't sit in the gallery; it is not the proper thing."

They paid the higher price and sat downstairs.

All that, however, was some years ago, and Dowling, who had been a clerk in a lawyer's office, was, like the Pennsylvania German in the story, "dead again." His last illness had been a long one. The entire house knew that it was severe, and not to have had the highest-priced physicians and both a night and day nurse would have been to confess the truth of the family's finances; so Dowling died as he had lived—beyond his means. But he had, by some economic miracle, been able to stagger along with his insurance premiums, and he left his wife a policy worth—in spite of the loans made upon it—nearly fifteen thousand dollars.

A policy worth nearly fifteen thousand dollars and a daughter that straightway threatened to cost three thousand dollars a year!

Letty Dowling—"Letty" had been her father's name for her; both mother and daughter always used the full name Letitia—Letty was not altogether to blame. Mr. Dowling had told her that she must go to the best finishing school, "just as soon as things look up a little"; and from the day when Mrs. Dowling had clothed the infant in a cambric dress, with a silk bib and several yards of "real" lace, the mother had sedulously cultivated in her offspring the desire for all that was pretty, expensive, and worthless.

"Why not?" said Mrs. Dowling. "I guess that anything that's good enough for a Fifth Avenue girl isn't any too good for my daughter."

Thus Letty had grown to fifteen years. She had grown in a home—if home it may be called—where the parents deferred to her, where they preserved to her and even to each other the mask of prosperity that, from long usage before their neighbors, had become a habit of life; where the child was the focus of an admiration that would have regarded as almost sacrilegious any suggestion of social supervision for its object. She was as pampered as an old maid's pug dog and as uncared for as a wolf-cub.

In order not to spoil herself for the finishing school, to which she was never sent, she left the public school the year before her father's death. In order to keep herself occupied in the meantime, she walked up and down Broadway with two or three girls that were just such products as she was of just such conditions as were hers. She lived in an atmosphere of matinées, candy, and taxicabs; knew the story of every romantic play and the marital history of every popular actress, and kept on her bureau the photographs of a half-dozen actors, which she had sent to the originals for autographing. Erect, lithe, golden-haired, and blue-eyed, she was pretty; overdressed and overcoiffured and wearing the false air of worldly wisdom that she had picked up along Broadway, she looked three years older than she really happened to be. She had always thought that her parents were well-to-do, because they gave her all she asked. There was not one atom of positive harm in the girl and not one atom of active usefulness. It was a case of beautiful stagnation, of waste.

When Dowling died, his widow thought of investing the fifteen thousand. But there were some imme-

diate expenses to be met, and when these were cleared away others took their place. Mrs. Dowling decided to wait until she and her daughter were once more, as she expressed it, "on their feet." By the time they had assumed that erect posture, the fifteen thousand had shrunk to ten and—Mrs. Dowling was still young—a prosperous real-estate agent was attentive to the mother. It seemed quite unnecessary to deny herself a few luxuries; she did not invest the money.

After that, things moved rapidly. Mother and daughter lived at the rate of five thousand a year. The real-estate agent retreated, but a commercial traveler appeared to be on the point of proposal. Another five thousand disappeared. Then the commercial traveler went into that mysterious country that he called his "territory" and never returned, and the widow began definitely to seek a husband. As Letty's sixteenth birthday approached, Mrs. Dowling found herself confronting a bank balance of three thousand dollars, with no prospect of increase.

It was on a night at this period that Letty and her newest friend, Jane Hervy, whose family lived just across the street, came from a theater and, with the rest of the audience, turned into brightly lighted Broadway.

"I don't feel like going right home," said Jane. "I don't feel like it a bit."

She, too, was overdressed and overcoiffured; but, unlike Letty's, her face was pale and nervous.

"I don't feel like it, either," Letty confessed; "but where can we go?"

"Let's"—Jane's eyes sparkled—"let's slide into a café and have some Rhine wine and a rarebit."

The suggestion was golden with the lure of novelty.

"I'd love to," faltered Letty; "only——"

"Only what?"

"Only I'm broke, dear."

Jane's face was all surprise. "No money?" The idea was new to her.

Letty nodded woefully. Not so long ago the idea had been new to her, too; but within the last few weeks her mother had begun to be surprisingly "close," and Letty, ashamed to acknowledge this and unwilling to forego her pleasure, had that afternoon pawned her seal-ring for the price of the theater ticket.

"Not a cent left," said Letty.

"I think," retorted her companion, with mature feminine divination, "that your mother's real mean."

"She's not!" flashed Letty.

"Well, I think so, anyhow. Look at your furs! You said yourself they were worn out. But never mind; this will be my treat."

Letty did mind: most of the treats had lately been Jane's. However, though she had often been in Broadway cafés for afternoon tea, she had never been in one for evening Liebfraumilch. With a sense that something wonderful was about to happen, she succumbed.

Nothing did happen. Nothing ever does—at first. What she ate and drank was pleasant only because it was unusual, and what she saw only annoyed her because, whereas her street clothes had not seemed amiss at the same table on many an afternoon, she was now shamefully conscious of their inadequacy among the scores of brilliant toilets about her. She

laughed and chatted with Jane, but her eyes were on the women, and she wished she was at home.

At the next table sat two men and a woman. The one man's face was hidden, but his companion—who might have been forty years old and was large and stout, with a heavy dark mustache and a red face—looked at Letty with a gaze that she had often encountered, but never understood. She did not understand it now, though she was pleased that she should have attracted the attention of a man of such maturity in the company of a woman so richly clad. She looked at the woman, whose back was turned, but whose shoulders were covered by a broad boa of ermine. Letty did not know whether to be flattered by the man's glance or envious of the woman's furs.

When the girls rose, Letty hooked her commonplace mink fur about her throat, and, in passing, surreptitiously touched, with longing fingers, the ermine boa. She thought afterward that the red-faced man must have observed the gesture. At any rate, as they reached the door, a hurrying waiter overtook her and Jane and placed in Letty's hand a card. Almost instinctively Letty's fingers closed about the piece of pasteboard.

" It's just one of my cards that I dropped," she explained to Jane.

But, once she was alone in her own room at " The Chaucer," she looked at the card, found that it must have come from the red-faced man, that it bore a name wholly unfamiliar, and that it asked an appointment with " the prettiest girl in the room."

Well—Letty kept the appointment. She was

pleased by the tribute to her looks, but angry that a stranger should have approached her; she was afraid of she knew not what, but her head was turned by something that she could not describe; she was sure that the adventure was one not to be narrated, but she was hungry to be a part of the gorgeous company that she had seen in the café—so she kept the appointment.

Again nothing happened. There was simply a decorous luncheon—no more. And a few evenings later there was an equally decorous supper.

"I should think you'd be ashamed of me," said Letty, on this occasion, to the red-faced man.

"Ashamed?" He raised his thick eyebrows.

"My clothes; they're good enough," she explained, "but beside all the clothes in this place they're positively shabby."

He dissented; but he so dissented that she knew that, in his heart, he agreed with her. Very soon she found herself telling him of her troubles and confessing to the attraction, not so long since, of that ermine boa. He rather shocked her by offering to buy her such an ornament. A few days later he even showed her a beautiful fur in a Fifth Avenue shop-window; but Letty held aloof, and the red-faced man did not press her—he merely gave her to understand that the boa would be hers for the asking. He was still all that Letty thought he should be; but she often passed the shop alone and lingered by the window.

One day, at noon—her usual rising hour—Letty stalked, kimono-clad, into the dining-room for her breakfast.

"I think," said Letty, "that I have made up my mind what I want for a birthday present."

The choice of a birthday present for herself was one of Letty's annual annoyances. A dozen things, each more expensive than the last, were always decided upon and then discarded.

Mrs. Dowling, from behind the coffee urn, looked up almost apprehensively, a tremulous smile on her weak, round face.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Well," said Letty, in the midst of an unstifled yawn, "I want a set of ermine—hat, boa, and muff."

The mother bit her lip.

"We can't—I'm afraid I can't give you all that," she quavered.

Instantly Letty's blue eyes flashed.

"Why not? All the other girls have them. It's midwinter and my mink neckpiece is a fright, and the muff is molting."

"I—I just don't think I can afford it, dear."

"Not afford it? Why not?"

"There are so many expenses and——"

"And I'm one of them? Mother!" Letty had been to the theater the night before, and after the theater had stopped, with the red-faced man—of whose existence her mother was, of course, ignorant—at a café, where they had eaten a supper that had not wholly agreed with Letty. Once more nothing had happened, but Letty's temper was none of the best. "Didn't you just buy yourself a new hat?" she demanded. "And weren't you just talking about buying a silver cigar-case for that horrid Mr. Theis"—Mr. Theis was the matrimonial fish for whom Mrs.

Dowling was then angling—" a silver cigar-case for his Christmas present?"

The mother bowed her head. She did not know how to explain.

"Exactly," said the daughter. "And yet now you sit up there, when I'm ever so much worse dressed than the other girls, when I'm freezing to death—freezing to death!—and you won't buy me a set of miserable furs, and you call me extravagant and you say I'm ruining you!"

"Letitia," wailed Mrs. Dowling, "I never said anything of the sort!"

"You thought it, anyhow. Yes, you did! I saw it in your eyes. I don't want any breakfast. I don't care if it does make me sick to go without it. You needn't coax. I can't bear to be spoken to so meanly."

She whirled out of the room.

Such scenes had, of late, been of growing frequency, for, contrary to all previous customs, Mrs. Dowling had, within that autumn, thrice refused her daughter's requests either for money or its equivalent. But heretofore the end of the squabble had been different. The child had been followed to her own room, petted, cajoled, wept over, and finally given what she had wanted. Now Mrs. Dowling knew, at last, that she must call a halt. She wept, but she did not follow.

Letty, in her bedroom—among a collection of school pillows and college flags—flung herself down on the couch by the window. She, too, cried; but the mother's tears were those of impotent sorrow, the daughter's those of balked desire. At first Letty cried softly, for she thought that Mrs. Dowling

would come to her relief. Then, as Mrs. Dowling did not come, the girl cried louder, as a summons. And when the summons was unanswered, Letty's grief became a howl of genuine self-pity.

In the midst of it, however, she came to a sudden pause. She had raised her face to the window opening on a miscalled light shaft, and there, only a floor below, in the wing opposite, she saw a young woman at her toilet.

The woman was not very pretty and not personally attractive, but it was at once evident that she was engaged in making herself so. Letty watched her, fascinated.

The woman, clad in lace négligée, sat before a mirror and had at hand a smaller glass that she frequently brought into use to examine the back of her head and neck. Her dressing-table was covered with silver-backed brushes and combs, manicuring implements, and numerous bottles, boxes, and jars. She remained there, and Letty remained watching, for two hours.

The woman dipped her fingers into one of the boxes and rubbed them on her face; then she went over her face with a soft rag. By the light of a gas-jet flaming at her elbow, she peered hard into the large mirror, while for forty-five minutes she clipped, with a strangely curved pair of scissors, at her eyebrows, finally delicately penciling what remained of them. On a thin stick she deftly rolled back one eyelid after the other, skillfully plying the pencil the while. She rouged the right cheek and the left, scrutinizing each in the hand-glass, and touching, rubbing, and retouching until their glow was equal and

properly distributed. She rouged her lips; she applied a powder puff. She fitted upon the top of her head a great mass of false curls, patted it, pulled at it, adjusted it and readjusted. And she placed on the curls, with such a gesture as that wherewith a queen must don her crown, a beautiful ermine toque.

Letty forgot her tears. She watched the woman until the toilet was completed, and then she went downstairs. The woman was just stepping into a well-appointed automobile.

Letty turned to the negro that was at once day-clerk, telephone operator, and hallboy for "The Chaucer."

"Who's that?" she inquired.

The boy showed his white teeth in a broad grin.

"Miss Millicent," he answered.

"Millicent what?"

"I think her las' name's Duval. Somethin' French, anyhow. But all the young men that come to see her jes calls her 'Miss Millicent.'"

"Is that her auto?"

"I dunno. She has it every day."

"Does she live all alone?"

"Yessem."

Free! The woman was free and rich and happy. Letty went out for a walk and lingered long before the ermine boa in the Fifth Avenue shop window.

For all the week that followed she said nothing more about birthday presents to her mother, and her mother was too well pleased by this silence to risk disturbing it. Letty passed her time spying upon Miss Millicent. She watched the woman's toilet, her comings and goings. She saw the gas burning deep

into the night in Miss Millicent's apartments, and she saw the handsome young men that entered there. She heard their laughter and the late music of a piano.

Then there came a night when, after the theater, the red-faced man induced Letty to drink a little champagne, and when she told him about Miss Millicent.

At one o'clock Mrs. Dowling received a telephone message from her daughter, who said that she would sleep at Jane's.

The next afternoon Letty returned home. In the hall she stopped to hide, under her long coat, an ermine boa. Five months later she disappeared.

Her mother never saw her again.

But I did.

IV

THE GIRL THAT STUDIED ART

I DID not intend to tell this story. It was not included in the original plan of the present series, because I wanted the present series to be solely typical and because I believed that the case in point was exceptional.

Now, however, I know better.

I returned to Paris a few weeks ago, after an absence of some years. On our second evening in the city, my wife and I were sitting in front of the Café Pantheon, just where the Boul' Miche' meets the Luxembourg Gardens and just where the greater arteries of the Quartier Latin pump back and forth the life blood of the student section.

It was a spring evening—such an evening of spring as one finds rarely anywhere save in Paris—and grave-faced young men of all nationalities, in the absurd costumes of no nationality at all, were sitting about us and strolling by—young men with women that were both young and old, slim figures upholstered to an impossible rotundity, plump figures squeezed to an agonizing slimness, pink cheeks powdered to simulate death, and cheeks like the dead's painted to mimic health.

"There," said I, "is an American girl. I know she is American, because she looks so studiously French."

"And there," said my wife, "is another."

They fluttered by like the rest—like all the moths that circle the flame—some with one man, some with two, and some alone. Many stopped and looked over the seated crowd, waiting invitations. We caught one's crayoned eye, and she sat down.

"Hello, America!" said she. "Do buy me a beer!"

Unusual? So we thought—then. But on the next evening we met more American girls like her. And on the next.

I got their stories. Rather, I got their story. We verified the details—the two of us. And then I recalled again the story that I had not meant to include in this series and decided to include it, because, after all, it was just this story that I had now heard told again! It is typical—I do not say of all young girls sent abroad, unfriended, to study music or art, but I do say of a great number.

What I remembered was not a boulevard in Paris; it was a certain street in Denver. Perhaps you know the street I mean. It is a street of one-story houses with two rooms—the back room that is a bedroom, and the front room that is a show window. There are little doors opening into the front rooms; on each door is a brass plate bearing a Christian name only. In the show-window, which is always open, sits the woman that uses the name on the door-plate.

Not so many years ago I was walking down that street. The hour was early—for this portion of the city—and the street had few pedestrians. I was thinking of other things and I was singing, half aloud, a French nursery rhyme.

Au clair de la lune,
Mon ami Pierrot,
Prete-moi ta plume
Pour écrire un mot.

I got so far and then I stopped. Another voice—it must once have been a woman's voice—had taken up the simple melody:

Ma chandelle est morte,
Je n'ai plus de feu.

I turned. The singer was seated in the open window at my elbow.

There is no need to describe her. It is enough to say—it is surely enough—that she belonged in that frame.

"Where did you learn the song?" I asked.

Her lips, stiff with paint, tried to curve into the trade smile.

"I was born French," she said.

I shook my head. "The name on your door is an English one."

She shrugged.

"As if the name mattered," said she.

"At all events," I insisted, "the accent does. Yours was abominable."

At that she flashed. Now, one is not tender of a natural gift, but we are all jealous of our acquirements. I pressed my point and she confessed that I had guessed rightly. In the end she told me all that there was to tell.

*   *   *   *   *   *   *

"I always wanted to be an artist," she said. "When I was a mere bit of a girl I wanted it. I

tried to draw pictures long before I could write the alphabet, and I grew up to believe that there wasn't anything else much worth while.

"We lived in Baltimore—my father and mother and my two brothers. We weren't really Southerners—my parents were born down East—but we were poor; and later, because I didn't like to be poor without any good reason for it, I used to tell people that my family had been ruined through its loyalty to the Confederacy. As a matter of fact, father was a foreman in one of the mills and my brothers both worked on the railroad.

"Well, as I say, I always wanted to be an artist. I know now that I hadn't much talent. I might have managed to do a few illustrations, some day, for the fashion-page of a newspaper; but as for making anythink like a real living at art, that would never have happened. I was just a sort of possible second-class so-so—which is what most girls are who try to break into the game. But I thought I was a genius. I so hard wanted to be a genius that I thought I was.

"It's no joke wanting terribly to be something that it's just not in you ever to become. Deep down in your heart, where you never know it, you mistrust yourself, and that makes you hate everybody else. It makes you bitter.

"The worst of it was that my own family encouraged me. They were so kind that if I'd said I was an angel, they'd have seen the wings, and they loved me so much that they'd have sold the carpets to buy me an aureole—especially mother. I just went among them living on their praises, and by and by I never

seemed to put my foot on the ground—simply lived in the clouds from sunrise to sunrise.

"Well, of course I couldn't spare the time to learn to cook or sew, and of course I couldn't waste my inspiration over the regular studies in the public school. I didn't see what use an artist would have for a needle or a frying-pan or a history of the world. What I wanted was an instructor in art with a large A; so naturally poor father drew some of his building-association cash, and mother, she got up the stocking from the mattress, where she kept what she could save from the market money, and they sent me to a man that said he knew all the art there ever was.

"He didn't. He was only one of a tremendous army of fakers that are making a living out of the brand of fool that I happened to be. Even I found that out at last, and then I changed him for another that was just as much of a sell.

"Don't get it into your head that I was bad or even fast. I was only a simpleton, like lots and lots of girls that go abroad to study art every year. I read no end of books about artist life, but they were the sort of books that cover things over and turn your head instead of showing things up and keeping you sane. I knew about as much about the real facts of life as I knew about the real facts of art.

"Those books helped a lot. They were all Paris —a Paris that never was and never could be. You know what I mean—studios and music and dancing, chafing-dish suppers to-night and the Prix de Rome to-morrow. You have a good time and the government buys your masterpiece for the Luxembourg, and you marry the poor painter that loved you and

that turns out to be a Los Angeles millionaire in disguise.

"After about a year of that I decided it was Paris or nothing. I'd never wanted to begin drawing anywhere short of the life class, and now—— Well, no Peabody Institute for me.

"So I went to Paris. Yes, I did. I figured it all out—from the books, of course—and I proved to the satisfaction of the family that I could live in the Latin Quarter on thirty-five francs—on seven dollars—a week, and live well.

"'Are you sure about this?' asks father.

"'Sure,' say I. 'Nearly everyone does.'

"Don't ask me how they got the money together. I hate to think about it. It makes me sick. But they got it—enough to send me over on a second-class boat that I thought was a palace till we had our first rough day, and enough to keep me—at seven dollars a week—for the first month. They'd starve and they'd pinch and they'd borrow, and they'd send me the rest weekly.

"I won't tell you about the chill I got when I got off the Antwerp train at Gare du Nord, and I won't tell you how I felt when I found that the French I'd worked up was no more French than it was English—and not so much. What'd be the use of telling you? They all go through it, those art girls—nearly everyone.

"Somebody'd given me the name of a pension on the Rue St. Jacques, and I went there, and about the time I owed my first bill I remembered that I hadn't counted on my washing—that I hadn't counted much of anything in that thirty-five francs a week. Nearly

everyone makes that little mistake—they all told me so. You can't be happy in Paris without enough to live on any more than you can be happy while you're starving anywhere else.

"I don't mean that I really starved. I only mean that I had to miss some meals and had to skimp the others. I mean I was underfed and badly clothed and rather badly housed. I couldn't ask for more money; they were working their fingers to the bone, back in Baltimore, to give me what they did give, and I couldn't have had it in my heart to ask for more, even if they had more to send me. I was just homesick and lonely and poor.

"Well, there's no use giving you details. I guess you can see how it was. There was a little Italian boy, a student, in our pension, and he used to take me out for a stroll up the Boul' Miche' of an evening, and sometimes, when he felt flush, we'd stop at the Café Pantheon for a glass of coffee. I was just ready to fall into anybody's arms when he told me he loved me—that's the way with nearly all the girls over there; but I knew he was about as hard up as I was, and so I asked him how in the world he ever expected to be able to support a wife.

"You ought to have seen his face! He was a pretty boy, with curly black hair and the big black eyes of a baby, and there never was such an innocent child as he was when he answered.

"'Why,' he told me, 'I mean we can do better together, keeping house in a little studio of our own, each paying a share, than we can do this way at the pension. Marriage? Why should we marry? We love each other!'

"I got mad, of course, and I asked him if he really meant me to do such a thing as he proposed.

"'Surely,' says he, with that innocent look of his. 'Up here nearly everyone does.'

"Well, I wouldn't speak to him for a week; but at the end of that time, the idea being in my head, I began to look around, and I found that what he told me was the truth. Most of the girls and boys were perfectly frank about it—to each other—though you're never supposed to say anything about it to an outsider. Lots and lots of them keep house that way together, because they say it's cheaper and more companionable, and most of them separate at last, perfectly good friends, and never meet again. The fellow goes away and marries and never tells his wife, and the girl goes away and marries and lies to her husband.

"So in the end I did what nearly everyone else did. I gave in.

"We had a little room at the top of a house in a crooked street just off the Rue de la Sorbonne. We tried to learn to cook and we tried harder not to be lonely. There were enough couples like us to give us plenty of company, and I really did begin to get along some with my work.

"We never had but one quarrel that was anyways serious. Victor—that was his name, only I always called him Beppo—got up before me one morning to cook the breakfast, because I wasn't well. But it was cold and he was cross, and when he brought the coffee and rolls over and I spilled the coffee, he slapped the tray out of my hand and then smacked my mouth. I burst out crying, and then—

we hadn't heard any knocking, because of the noise we made—the door opened, and there was Mother.

"My mother!

"An uncle of hers had died. I remember his name was Ezra and he lived in Lowell, Mass. Well, he'd died and left her five hundred dollars, and she'd come over to Paris as a surprise for me. . . .

"We got home somehow. I couldn't tell you how, if my life depended on it. I know we came by the next boat. I tried to explain to her that all I'd done was just what nearly everyone does, but you can't explain some things to your mother. She said she wouldn't tell father or the boys, but she said her heart was broken; and I guess it was, for after father was killed next year in the mill, she just kind of withered up and died.

"You might think that would be the end of me, but it wasn't. I saw how bad I'd been, but I saw there was no good to be gained by only crying, so I kept my crying for the nighttime; and when Jim married and went to 'Frisco, and Charlie married and went to New Orleans—Jim and Charlie were my brothers—I traveled with Jim as far as St. Louis and tried to get a place as a housekeeper.

"You see, I'd worked hard since I got back from Paris. Mother had taught me a good bit about housework there toward the last, and I was still rather young and pretty and I had got a little polish from my trip abroad.

"I found a place. It was in the house of a well-to-do man that had just lost his wife. He had a little daughter and didn't want his home broken up. When I learned he'd lived abroad some, I just didn't

say that I had, too, and by and by he got to liking me, and at last we were married.

"We started West on our wedding trip. He asked me questions. I did what nearly everyone else does that has done what nearly everyone else does over in the Quarter—I lied.

"But somehow I didn't lie very well. Somehow I let it out that I'd been an American student in Paris. I guess I'll never forget the look that came into his face then.

"'I know what that is,' he told me; 'for, you see, I was once a student in Paris myself.'

"He put his hand in his pocket and handed me all the money he had about him.

"'What's this mean?' I asked.

"'It means that you can go as far as this train will take you,' he said; 'but I'm going to get off at the next stop.'

"He did, too.

"I went on to St. Jo. I got here a year later. I've been here ever since."

* * * * * * *

The woman stopped her story. I looked at her again, and I saw that her life had nearly completed its work upon her.

"What was that reason you gave for giving in to Beppo?" I asked her.

"The reason was that I was just doing what nearly everyone else does over there," said she.

"And why did you lie to your husband?" I inquired.

"I—I don't know. Well, I suppose I was just finishing in America what I'd begun in Paris."

V

THE FATHER THAT WAS CAREFUL

THERE were three of us sitting that night in the office of a Lieutenant of Police in Detroit. There was our host, the Lieutenant; there was my friend Thorley, and there was I. It was a Saturday evening, but the hour was still too early for the week-end rush of arrests to begin, and so we had been smoking long cigars and telling long stories. Apropos of one of these, the Lieutenant made a not altogether original remark.

"Love," said the Lieutenant, "is blind."

I nodded—after all, I was a guest.

But Thorley was not a guest; his was one of those wonderful souls which are invited everywhere, but are everywhere at home.

"Love," said Thorley, "is not blind by nature, it is not blind at birth; the wrong lies in the fact that most lovers, being too weak to resist modern conditions, commit the infamous crime of blinding it. We accept old aphorisms, inherited traditions, worn-out conventions. We ask no questions—there is the fundamental error—we ask no questions. Well, we have been told that Love must be blind; and so, when we find our love seeing little human needs and lacks in the loved object, instead of trying to supply those needs or remedy the lacks—instead of being true—we deliberately heat our irons of lies in the furnace of

convention, and with them we burn out the eyes of Love."

"I guess you're right," nodded the Lieutenant, with the air of a man that hasn't the least idea what his friend is talking about. "Have another cigar."

"Thank you," said Thorley. He chose the cigar carelessly, bit the end and struck a match.

I was sorry for the bewildered Lieutenant. I wanted to rescue him, to divert the conversation; but I could think of nothing more diverting than the weather.

"It's a warm night," said I.

"Pretty warm," replied the Lieutenant, "but not so bad as it is sometimes. I recollect the summer of 1898—or was it 1899? I know it was a couple of years before I was——"

"Blind!" interrupted Thorley.

He spoke from the midst of his blue smoke wreaths, like an Hellenic oracle. It was as if the smoke had shut from him the trivial sounds of our digression.

"Blind!" repeated Thorley. "Yes, we blind Love. And the worst of it is that we do not know we do it—still less how much we do it. We say that Love is blind—and what do we mean? We mean that the man and woman attracted to each other can't see each other's faults. I tell you that there is no love so blinded—I refuse the form 'blind'—I tell you that there is no love so blinded as the love of parent for child."

The Lieutenant looked at me and grinned. He grinned openly, as if to say, "The man's started; he's off; there's no use trying to stop him. We'd a

sight better just sit still and let him run down." There was no offense in the grin; the Lieutenant knew, and I knew, that, for all the effect that they would have on Thorley, the words might as well have been shouted—and Thorley pursued:

"I used to live in a town of about fifteen thousand inhabitants, some seventy-odd miles from St. Paul. It was a pretty little town. It was as clean as Sunday, it was as well regulated as Swiss watches used to be, and it was as carefully laid out as if it had been ready for its funeral. Mohawk—I shall call the town Mohawk, for the excellent reason that that was not its name—Mohawk was proud of these things. It was, moreover, so proud of the fact of its once having been able to get along without a police force that it would not have a police force even long after crime had become as common in Mohawk as church-going was. People said that the organization of such a force would 'reflect upon the good name of the town,' which was absurd. What they did not say was that it would also raise the taxes, which was what really worried them.

"But the greatest pride of Mohawk was its schools —its public schools. It had eight of them, including the grammar and high school, and, as far as they went, they were really almost equal to the demands that were put upon them. The teachers were nearly all Mohawk girls; the superintendent was a graduate of some little college in the foothills of Idaho, and the school board, which was regularly re-elected as fast as its individual terms expired, was composed of small shopkeepers, none of whom had ever continued school after the age of fifteen.

"As a matter of fact, however, this school board was composed of one person, as I have found that most school boards are in these happy days, when we still leave two-thirds of the education of our children to the tender care of party politics. You men must be aware of how the scheme generally works out. One member of the board, originally no better qualified than the rest, takes an interest in the work and makes a hobby of it—not a serious occupation, because he has his private living to earn and his political boss to please; but a hobby. He likes to visit the schoolrooms and have the teacher defer to him and the children look awed. He likes to be known as a Power. Consequently he is willing to undertake most of the work; and the rest of the board, having businesses of their own, are quite willing to let him have his way. They elect him secretary, both corresponding and recording; they tie up the whole job in a neat little package and place it in his lap, and go home to bed. After that, they meet once a month and vote 'Aye' to whatever he proposes—the unvarying minority, representative of the other party, as consistently and ineffectually voting 'No'—and so that one man becomes the real school board. It was thus in Mohawk.

"In Mohawk the school board was composed, in this manner, of Mr. Joel Nilson. Subject to the interference of the municipal boss, he ran it. In all practical matters of administration, Nilson was It.

"I do not propose to blackguard Nilson. He was a well-intentioned man. He was honest, according to the prevailing criteria. His father had held the same position on the school board that Joel held, and

Joel so honored his father that he saw nothing but aspersions upon his parent in every proposition that hinted at the need of any change of school arrangement or curriculum from the system that the elder Nilson had ordained and established.

"Nilson had a wife and family, and I never knew a man more devoted to his children. If the school board was his hobby, his children were his passion. There were four of them, but at the time I'm speaking of only one of them remained at home. This was the younger girl, and, as Nilson's love was now centered upon her—in accordance with that animal law which lessens parental affection as soon as the offspring can shift for itself—I'll tell you particularly about her in a moment.

"He believed, this school director, in all the old ideas about the bringing up of children, and he had brought up his own children accordingly. Jim, the eldest of the lot, had left Mohawk when he was only eighteen or nineteen; had married one of his neighbor's children rather suddenly—too suddenly, the other neighbors said—and had moved to Chicago, where he was a floor-walker in a department store and didn't get on well with his wife. George, the second boy, but the third child, hadn't turned out to be the marrying kind; he was rather wild, and, the last time that I saw him, he was a faro dealer down at Durango—somewhere in Colorado or New Mexico, I remember. Lou, the elder daughter, had been married off before she had a chance to develop into anything positive—either good or bad—to a La Crosse lumber dealer, who was twice her age, but had plenty of money. This left Lena, the youn-

gest, at home and just about to enter her second year in the high school.

" I wish you could have seen Lena as I saw her then. Beauty is a quality so rare that we have despairingly dropped into the habit of attributing it to mere prettiness. Very small children are occasionally beautiful, and some women; but a girl at the high-school age—almost never. Well, Lena was the exception.

" She was rather tall for her years, but her figure was developed to meet every requirement of her height—perfectly developed, without any of that extravagance at any one point which means poverty at some other—a phenomenon so characteristic of merely pretty people. In consequence, she had grace of the only absolute sort—the sort that is unconscious. To see her walk made you remember your own school days and Virgil's goddesses, as you then read about them and believed in them.

" I don't like our lazy mental method of classifying everything as one ' type ' or another, but I suppose you fellows would better understand me if I said that Lena's type was the Scandinavian. Of course both she and her parents were Americans by birth, education, and ideals; but her blood was Norse, and she showed it. Her hair was very plentiful and fell in long plaits down her back, far below the waist, in just that tone of ripe corn that Rossetti loved to paint and write about. Her skin was clear as a brook and as pink and white as an old-fashioned English rose garden. And her eyes were large and round and as blue as the sea at Marseilles. Her features were regular, as beautiful features have

to be, and accordingly placid. I don't say she was intellectual; she was just beautiful—just beautiful and good and competent and clean. More than anything else, she reminded me of an early morning in spring, when the sun is fresh and the air bracing, when the sky is clear, and the dew is still sparkling in the grass.

"Well—there you are. Lena didn't stand at the head of her school class and she didn't stand at its foot. She knew all that the school had taught her; she was fifteen years old, and she thought the doctor brought the babies to one's house in a basket.

"I had a friend in Boston, a young physician, who had written what I thought was an excellent textbook in physiology—excellent, I mean, for high-school use. It told the truth. No hemming and hawing, no lies, no evasion. No undue emphasis, either, or any phrase that could be twisted into a salacious interpretation. Just the truth.

"Now, there's something about truth that proves the fundamental stability of real morals. I don't mean fake morals, or mere conventionalities, or twaddling sentimentalism; but that bedrock of morality which we have so covered up with the soil of prudery and the dust of tradition that we mostly lose thought of it altogether. When Truth comes into a room—even a schoolroom—she may bring along with her some companions that make the hard-shell pedagogues gasp, but all the real dirtiness that was there before her flies out of the window. Truth is just as essential an enemy of smut as light is of disease. She demonstrates the other eternal verities.

"But most of us are afraid of Truth. Perhaps that is only another manifestation of our savage inheritance that dreads the unfamiliar. I won't say what I think about it; I only point to the fact, and the fact, in this particular instance, was that no public school would accept my friend's little volume as a text-book. They would take it only with all reference to sex omitted.

"He wrote me so, and after I'd read his book I was on fire with indignation. I resolved to see what Mohawk would do about it, and I set out that night to call on Joel Nilson.

"I remember it was an early autumn evening, just before the reopening of school. The air was warm and scented. The last rays of pink were just fading out of the western sky, and, though the moon had not yet risen, there were one or two faint stars beginning to glimmer in the east.

"I lived outside of the town, and my way into it lay along a curving lane, heavily shaded. As I turned, that evening, one of the corners in that lane, I came upon a boy and girl standing facing each other. I think they had been holding hands. I know they drew apart rather sharply as I came into view, and, whatever they had been talking about, they stood quite silent till I had passed. The boy was Mark Higgins, son of old Billy Higgins, the political boss of Mohawk, and the girl was Lena Nilson.

"Generally speaking, Fate lacks the commonly accepted view of what constitutes the dramatic instinct —lacks it or differs with it. Not to-night, however. When I got to Nilson's house, Joel was sitting on the

porch and old Billy Higgins was sitting beside him.

"I told them about my friend's book. I went over by the parlor window, and there, in the little light that came through from a lamp inside, I read them the revolutionary passages.

"It was already dark on the porch and I couldn't very well see my audience. Joel's figure was only a tall, lank, stoop-shouldered silhouette, puffing at a pipe. Higgins was smoking a cigar, and when he drew on it I could just get a glimpse of his round, fat, good-natured, but altogether non-committal face.

"After I had finished reading, they sat for a while, smoking in silence. It was clear that Nilson, utterly dumfounded, was waiting for his chief to deliver the directing opinion. What Higgins was waiting for wasn't clear at all.

"'Well?' said Billy at last.

"I said nothing.

"'Gee!' said Nilson. 'What do you think of it, Higgins?'

"Higgins smoked for a bit—perhaps to marshal his mazed faculties.

"'I think,' he at last decided, 'that the schools that turned down that book didn't do enough; they ought to 've jailed that doctor for printin' it.'

"I suppose I should have expected this, but I hadn't.

"'What do you mean?' I demanded. 'Isn't it the truth?'

"Nilson answered me.

"'Truth?' said he. 'Course it's the truth. But what's that got to do with it? This world's full of

evil, but, just because the evil's here and so is true, do you think that's any reason for corruptin' innocent children by fillin' their minds with it? I never heard o' such a proposition!'

"I tried to be patient.

"'You don't call these particular bodily functions evil, do you?' I asked.

"'I call 'em somethin' they isn't any need to talk about—still less to fill up children's brains with 'em. Do you think I'd allow my daughter to be taught such stuff?'

"'But they all have to learn——'

"'They'll learn soon enough.'

"'From whom? Where are your eyes, Mr. Nilson? Can't you see from whom they'll learn if left alone—from whom they have learned or are learning? From themselves or from older children, who, in their turn, have learned from themselves—and all learned wrong, all learned dirt instead of truth, all learned their own ruin!'

"'Rot!' said Billy Higgins.

"'Worse'n that!' declared Nilson. 'It's wickedness—that's what it is—open wickedness an' unashamed! Think o' my Lena or Billy's Mark! You have a nice opinion o' your neighbors' children, Mr. Thorley, I must say! You have a nice opinion o' your fellow-townspeople! Learnin' dirt, indeed! What sort of a town do you think this is, anyhow? For twenty-five or thirty years we've had the best public schools of any place our size in the State, an' I guess what's been so good all that time's pretty good enough to-day. Learnin' dirt! Why, it's just dirt that you're askin' us to teach 'em!'

"'It ain't decent,' threw in Higgins.

"'It's truth,' I doggedly persisted. You can't argue with a man unless you have some inch of agreement with him from which to start, and I was younger then and so could only blunder about fundamentals.

"'So's thievin' the truth,' said Nilson, swaying his pipe for emphasis; 'but that's no reason for teachin' our children how to steal.'

"'You teach them honesty. Why not teach them purity as well?'

"'We do teach 'em purity.'

"'Where? Not in the schools, Mr. Nilson, because your school physiologies lie by suppressing the most essential facts of the whole subject that they pretend to teach. Not in your homes, because there you begin by answering your children's questions by fairy tales that are direct falsehoods; and when they discover that these fairy tales of birth are falsehoods, you merely try to stop them from thinking by a few futile commands. The only way that we try to teach purity is by a weak silence. Real purity is something positive; it isn't negative. It's action, not stagnation. When a man expects to be attacked, he prepares himself for it; he——'

"'Well,' said Higgins, 'we think a little too much of our children to believe they'll attack one another. We haven't got no slums in Mohawk.'

"'You have human nature!'

"'We have decent men an' women for our teachers. How do you suppose we could ask our teachers to embarrass themselves by teachin' such things to a roomful o' sniggerin' boys or girls?'

" 'It strikes me that you think rather poorly of our boys and girls,' I answered, 'if you think they would giggle over such subjects properly put before them, and rather poorly of our teachers if you suppose that they——'

"But Nilson interrupted this time.

" 'It's all crazy,' he declared; 'just crazy badness. How do the cattle learn these things?'

" 'They have instinct; whereas man, being a civilized animal——'

" 'Nonsense, Mr. Thorley! Nature provides.'

"I got to my feet. I saw that protest was useless, yet I couldn't resist a parting thrust.

" 'Nature,' said I, 'provides the impulse; but man has so directed Nature in everything else that he has to direct her in this if he wants her to conform to his own ideas of direction. Where is your daughter this evening, Mr. Nilson?'

" 'Eh? Lena? What's she got to do with this? She's over to Sally Schmidt's; they're studyin' their geometry together against school's openin'.'

" 'And, Mr. Higgins, where is Mark? I presume he is at a friend's house, too—studying his mythology?'

"Higgins was a sharper man than Joel. He gave no direct answer.

" 'My boy's old enough to take care of himself,' he said.

" 'I don't mean to imply,' I went on, 'that there is any harm in it, but as I came into town, two miles away from the Schmidt house, I saw Mark and Lena in Lowrey's Lane.'

"I put on my hat and went down the walk and

through the gate. They called me back, but I wouldn't turn.

"A few days later I had business that took me to Minneapolis for some weeks. After that I went to Daytona for my first winter in Florida. I didn't get back to Mohawk for any real stay until eighteen months later.

"When I did, I learned what had happened. Joel had spanked his daughter and locked her up in her room for a day and let it go at that. If he gave her any reason for her punishment—except in so far as it was a punishment for a lie—he told her only that he wouldn't have no daughter o' his spoonin' around country lanes with boys after dark, and he commanded her never to repeat an offense neither the cause nor danger of which he ever elucidated. Mark's father merely told his son not to be such a fool as to make calf's love to young girls.

"The result was probably inevitable. Both culprits regarded their chastisement as arbitrary and reasonless. They disobeyed the commands. Lena, in the town's phrase, 'got into trouble,' and Mark, again in the town's phrase, was 'responsible.' I have my own ideas as to who was really responsible. Anyhow, Mark never recovered from the disgrace—I think he eloped with one of the waitresses in the railway station's café some years later. His father had defended Mark against Lena's charges. Lena, when she saw that her own chances were hopeless, left town—ran away alone."

* * * * * * *

Thorley paused. He lit a fresh cigar.

"Is that all?" asked the Lieutenant.

" Quite," said Thorley. " The rest doesn't really matter."

" But you didn't see the girl again? "

" Oh, yes, I did. I saw her this evening. I saw her as I was going through the cell-room here. You know her. She was arrested a little early this week."

VI

THE GIRL THAT WASN'T TOLD

NEITHER of us who saw the end of this story can soon forget it. Even here, where I write it—with the peaceful Jura landscape stretching out before me—the scene of its telling becomes again clear. Looking from the window of a mountainside inn at Mesnay-Arbois, I see the white-capped peaks of the nearer Alps descending through steep gradations of pine-cloaked slopes and ending in tremendous cliffs, from the foot of which, cut by straight, white roads, sprinkled with pink vineyards and dotted by quiet, centuries-old villages, the rich plain stretches eastward as far as the eye can follow it. But from me, as I turn to my story, all these things pass.

Instead, I see the narrow, high-ceilinged room, with its double row of iron-framed beds. I see the young, careless doctor, passing down the aisle. I see the calm nurse, gliding from patient to patient. And on the pillows before me I see a face——

The summons had reached us at dawn. A hospital attendant had come to our tenement, climbed the seven flights of stairs and knocked at the door.

"There's a girl that wants to see you," he told us. "She says she used to live next door, an' once you loaned her a ten-spot. She says you'd know her by that."

"Is it Marie?"

The messenger grinned.

"It might be most anything," he answered. "She's down on our books as Doris White. But she wants to see you two, an' I guess you'd better be quick; she won't last any too long."

"She's—she's dying?"

"Fast."

"What is the trouble?"

"What you might suppose. Will you wait an' take a chance o' missin' her, or will you come now?"

We went with him.

It was Marie, this Doris—Marie, who had also been Vivian, and who, when her mother had presented the pink-and-white bundle at the church font eighteen years before, had been christened Ada. She looked at us out of eyes that had burned deep into her head. The skin—here leprously pale and there scrofulously red—was drawn as tightly as a new glove over the out-thrusting bones of her face. And when she saw us enter she smiled. . . .

It was thus that she told us her story.

Ada's parents had lived in a prosperous little city of Massachusetts, and had in some measure partaken of that city's prosperity. Their only trouble was that the prosperity was acquired and not inherited—the family traditions were of the sort that, being the product of penury, continue, even when applied to morals, to be penurious. The ancestors had been forced to pinch their pennies; the descendants, freed from that need, indulged the racial trait, though in the direction of physical instruction. They could afford to give their children pin-money, but they considered it highly improper to tell them the truth.

Of these children there were two: a boy and Ada. The boy, as boys will—if their parents do not anticipate them—learned for himself, and, as boys so neglected will, learned wrongly. Consequently, he was at school what they politely called " backward " because it would never do to give these things their real name. Consequently, he grew—if that may be termed " growth " which is really degeneration—to be what they still politely called " a little wild "—still because the correct term is "improper." And, again consequently—a final consequence that removes him from this history—he got at last into what they designated " trouble " (which means that he brought trouble on somebody else), and, having " got into trouble," promptly " got out "—of the town.

The boy was by five years Ada's elder, and his parents had learned nothing from their experience with him. When the girl arrived at the age when she should have had their advice, her brother was just entering the " wild " period, and, though his good father and mother were vaguely worried by such casual evidences thereof as reached them, they neither thought to question either the theory that begins by considering a boy's mind forbidden territory and ends with an assumption of the necessity for " wild oats," nor yet to reflect that, this world being what it is, the mind of a girl may require a little attention.

With both children their system of upbringing possessed the virtue of simplicity. With their son it grouped the whole matter of physical phenomena under a rule of non-interference. With their daughter it divided those phenomena under the two heads:

"Things that may be explained in words of one syllable" and "Things that one doesn't speak about."

"Why?" said Ada.

That portentous query was continually upon her lips. If the answer fell under the former head, they gave it readily; but if it belonged to the latter group, they replied:

"You are too young to understand."

"You will find out for yourself in good time."

"That is something that isn't discussed."

A common way to bring up a girl, and an easy way—for the parents.

It was not, however, so easy for Ada. She began by being puzzled. Then she resolved to unravel the mystery by inquiring of other children's mothers; and when the other children's mothers were equally cryptic, she was forced to put the query from her mind until that now seemingly marvelous time when, growing old enough to understand, the answer should present itself beyond all discussion.

That time came, as in the carefully shaped circumstances it was bound to do, just when Ada was worst prepared to meet it.

At fifteen the girl was ignorant of all the things that her parents said were not generally discussed. She was the perfect product of her domestic training—in respect of what she did not know, she was all that her father and mother wanted her to be.

Does that surprise you? If it does, you are one of two things: either you are a man from almost anywhere, or else you are a woman trained in the sort of metropolitan atmosphere that—well, that Ada

was not trained in. There are a great many men that commonly say it is impossible for any girl to reach the age of fifteen and not be what they call "wise"; but such men merely arouse unpleasant reflections as to the sort of persons their mothers and sisters must be. And there are a few women that occasionally say the same thing; but they are all, one way or another, women whose own knowingness was, to put it mildly, precocious. The truth is that most girls, if not properly taught, learn little of these matters until they reach the age at which marriage becomes possible—a fact whereof the divorce statisticians would do well to take cognizance and one that sufficiently explains what happened to Ada.

Ada had been to school—at any rate, she was attending what, for want of a better name, we call a school—and there, of course, she learned something about everything but herself. She could solve problems in algebra; she could decline any noun belonging to the first Latin declension; once a week she cultivated the delights of English through the medium of what was entitled "Sentence Structure and Paragraph Work"; she was able to give, on demand, the dates of all the British Kings and American Presidents, and, after some thought, she would manage to tell her French teacher the amazing news that *"l'oncle du frere de ma tante a des souliers."*

Didn't they teach physiology? Indeed, yes! In the grammar school they had given lessons from a little book—lessons that provided all the information which it is "nice" for a young girl to know. In the third year of the high school, if the pupil so long survived, she would get the same thing over again, with more

details. She would be taught the effects of tobacco on the heart; she would be shown beautifully colored pictures of a drunkard's stomach; she would even know all of the bones by name; she would understand all about a human being save how he came to be alive and how his kind continues. Then, if she went to college, she could take up biology—if she cared to; and when she began that study, she would find her instructors assuming that she had absorbed from the circumambient atmosphere the things that nobody had bothered to tell her at home or at school.

"But we needn't worry about Ada," sighed her contented mother. "She has an inquiring mind, which is a pity, but she is very calm."

She was calm—calm by the constant, unremitting exercise of all the powers of suppression that her young soul could master; calm through a sort of chronic hysteria. She had now supplied temporary answers to the questions that none of her natural teachers would reply to, and those answers were totally wrong. She had built makeshift walls to fill the gaps in the school physiologies, and those walls were just the sort over which the enemy could best enter. When she was with her parents, she was what they happily considered a model child; but, alone, she had depths of which they never dreamed. Ignorance, you see—not innocence. She was like—she was like a little girl that you know.

Then Ada's aunt, who lived in Boston, wrote, asking Ada to pass the Christmas holidays in that city. Ada, of course, wanted to go.

"But this is my busy season," protested her fa-

ther. "I can't leave the store, and your mother has already been to town for her Christmas shopping, so she can't take you."

"I am old enough to go alone," said the child.

"Why, Ada!" It was her mother that uttered this ejaculation, and the words were an established formula of condemnation for the expression of any sentiment that was "unladylike."

"I don't care!" pouted Ada. "I'm fifteen!"

She kept it up and she won. That was to be expected: the sort of parental "protection" that keeps a girl in ignorance of fundamental facts is always the sort that, when the test arrives, places its charge in precisely the position where the ignorance is most likely to prove fatal. Ada's aunt was commanded, by letter, to meet a particular train at the South Station; the conductor was cautioned to "keep an eye on" his young passenger, and Ada, much kissed and elaborately instructed, was taken, by her father, to a seat in the car.

The car was crowded, but there were a few of the double seats that still had only one occupant each, and over these the cautious guardian cast a deliberating glance.

In the first sat a stolid Italian, with a red bandanna handkerchief about his dark throat; obviously he would not do, because he was a foreigner, and, of course, all foreigners are villains. The second possible place was partially secured by a young American, but the fact that he was young and of the father's sex were against him. In the third seat there was a woman, but she looked poor—which meant dirt and roguery—and, besides, she had opened the win-

dow. It is only in European trains that citizens of the United States develop a passion for fresh-air-by-rail. Ada's father chose for his daughter the fourth and last vacant place, because it was beside a woman stout enough to be matronly and so very well dressed that she must be respectable.

"May my little girl sit here?" asked the guardian, making his best bow.

The lady—you could tell she was a lady by the elaborate coiffure that even her modest but expensive hat was unable completely to conceal—the lady looked up and smiled. Then she looked at Ada and smiled more sweetly.

"By all means," she said. "I shall be charmed. Is she going alone?"

She was enveloped—the lady—in a handsome traveling cloak, so that her clothes were not much in evidence. Also her hands were gloved.

"Quite alone," said the father; "but her aunt is to meet her."

"At Boston?"

"Yes."

"At Back Bay?"

"No; at the South Station. I have asked the conductor to keep an eye on her, but if you——"

The father hesitated. Not so the lady.

"I shall be glad to see her safely into her aunt's care," said she.

That sufficed. The father dismounted and the train pulled out of the station. The lady opened her traveling cloak and disclosed the most beautiful gown that Ada had ever seen. Then the lady drew off her gloves, and, as the child's eyes grew large

with admiration of the flashing rings thus exposed, she patted Ada's hand.

"How old are you, my dear?" asked the lady.

"I am past fifteen," said Ada.

"Indeed? You look two years older."

Ada blushed—she did not know why, but there were many things about herself that she did not know, so she changed the smile to a frown.

"I wish I was," said Ada.

"Wish you were older? Don't do that. Age comes soon enough. You are very pretty as you are. You are extremely pretty. Don't all the boys tell you so?"

Ada did not like this familiarity, but it came so suddenly that, before she was aware of her own sensation, she had replied that she was not allowed to see many boys and that she hated those whom she did see.

"Why, I think a girl should be allowed to know lots of boys," said the lady. "There are some lovely boys that live near me. Why don't you like boys?"

"They're conceited—and bad."

"Oh, that depends on the particular ones. The boys I know have lovely manners and they are forever taking their girl friends to the theater and sending them candy and——"

"I guess city boys are different from town boys," interrupted Ada.

"The boys that live near me are different," said the lady; and she went on to tell Ada a great deal about them.

Shortly after this, noticing the girl's eyes fixed on her rings, the lady expressed her surprise that such

pretty fingers as Ada's should be undecorated, and she "loaned" Ada a circlet of gold in which sparkled two diamonds. The younger passenger accepted the "loan" with a sullen face, but a softening heart.

"I'll tell you what we'll do," said the lady. "We'll take your aunt to luncheon when we arrive, and then we'll get an automobile and drive to the theater for the matinée."

And next? Well, next the train rolled into the Back Bay Station, and, as one Boston station was as another to Ada, and as the conductor happened to be just as busy as the lady expected that he would be, the lady had no difficulty in getting Ada from their car at that point, had small trouble in explaining that the aunt must have misunderstood the directions concerning what train was to be met and had no really great annoyance in bringing Ada to the lady's own house.

All this was on a Monday. On another Monday, three weeks later, Ada was shipped to New York. In that short time she had found an answer to some of the questions that nobody had previously answered for her. This answer, too, was a wrong one, but it was also a living one. How comparatively brief a time elapsed before we heard her story in the hospital, you have already estimated. Ada—just an ordinary girl, not at all a vicious girl—had become a common prostitute.

As that she lived and as that she died.

"I didn't know!" she wailed. . . .

I can see her yet—here, with the peaceful valley of the Jura outstretched before us, we can both see her yet—in the hospital bed, with eyes that had

burned deep into her skull, with the skin, now leprously pale and again scrofulously red, drawn tight and shining over the out-thrusting bones of her face. And once she smiled. . . .

"I didn't know. I wasn't bad, but I'd just never been told. Is it fair? Do you think it is fair? Oh, if I'd only been told!" . . .

After all, this is a dull story and a commonplace.

VII

THE GIRL THAT WAS ROMANTIC

"I ASSURE you," she said, "that the case is in no wise remarkable. There are, in every considerable American city, men that go in for this sort of thing. Their real business is the securing of young girls for the white-slave traffic; but, in order to protect themselves and in order to pick up a little money 'on the side,' as they call it, they procure licenses from the unsuspecting or uncaring courts and manufacture perjured evidence for persons wanting divorces. In other words, they are that most unspeakable of scavengers—private detectives."

This phase of the business was at that time new to me, and I said so.

"I knew," I told her, "that the average private detective is an unclean toad, but I didn't know that he would dare——"

"Why not?" she interrupted. "As a matter of fact, no daring is required. He wouldn't attempt it if any were. Detectives are not brave men; the nature of their work makes bravery and honesty alike impossible. When the detective is a white-slaver, his position makes him absolutely safe. He blackmails the erring wife and entraps the romantic girl—and he is protected by his badge on the one hand, and on the other by the hold that his alleged business gives him a chance to get over his victim. I have

had good reasons to look into the matter and I have found that what I say is true over all the land."

She was sitting in the office of a well-known girls' school in Indiana—one of the teachers regularly employed there. As I looked at her handsome, serious, refined face, I felt come over me the chill of conviction; and later, acting on what she now proceeded to tell me, I discovered that, at least in many instances, what she said was the truth.

" Five years ago," she went on, " I was connected with a school in Philadelphia. There I knew intimately—you see, I am still young—the girl of whom I am about to speak.

" The girl—we shall call her Madelaine—was not in any way different from a great many other girls. She was a strong, willful, full-blooded child—a good deal of a ' tomboy '—but with no more harm in her than there is in the purely feminine type. By the time she came to be eighteen and was just ready for her college examinations, she was as pretty as a picture—pink-cheeked, brown-eyed, golden-haired, and as powerful of muscle as most boys of her age. She played basketball in such a way that the other girls in the school were afraid to play against her—not really roughly, you understand, but just taking advantage of all the strength of body that the rules allowed her to employ—and she could serve a tennis ball with a speed that was more like a shot from a musket.

" Madelaine was rather good at most of her studies—there was at first no really great trouble there—but she was not fond of what are conventionally considered ' girlish ' things. She didn't care for sewing,

she would never have learned to cook if she lived to be a hundred, and she had no mind for sitting in a corner, with a college pillow under her head, reading fiction of the marshmallow variety.

"She was the only daughter in a family of boys, and I dare say that her parents had got so used to catering to the tastes of their three sons who preceded her that they didn't know just what sort of intellectual food most people considered fitting for a girl. In any event, Madelaine got to reading her elder brothers' books before her mother brought home any by Louisa M. Alcott, and, by the time somebody gave her 'Little Women,' she had hopelessly acquired the adventure-story habit.

"Mind you, I'm not saying that the average 'girls' book' is a strengthener of the moral fiber. It is anything but that, because it is namby-pamby, and you can't make red blood out of soap bubbles. Indeed, I've known—but that's another story—a good many girls to get into trouble just because they had been taught to believe that the real world was the honey and moonshine that they read about in the typical young ladies' piece of fiction. Nor am I saying that the typical 'boys' book' is any better. It is equally false, in another direction; and, because both are untrue, either sort is bad for its readers, as a rule, no matter whether the books are read by the sex for which they are written or by the other sex. My point is that an increasing number of girls, as every school-teacher knows, care more for the boys' books, with their herculean heroes and preternaturally wise detectives, and that these books (the old-fashioned dime novel bound in cloth and sold for a

dollar-fifty) are an evil influence on their reader, boy or girl.

"Well, Madelaine liked that sort. She could wriggle through an examination in the Iliad, she could pass in Latin composition, and she could escape 'conditions' in German, history, and mathematics. But what she liked—what, in fact, constituted genuine life for her—was the 'Young Detective in the Coal Regions' series, and she honestly believed that school and college were only patches of dry sand, carefully walled in by severe elderly people, but actually surrounded by a world of hair-breadth escapes and dashing feats of strength—a world devoted entirely to the commission and detection of crime.

"One of the teachers, recognizing something of the possibilities of these tendencies and knowing how the tendencies are spreading among our young girls, tried to take Madelaine to task.

"'Don't you know,' said she, 'that if you keep this up you'll flunk your English exams. for college?'

"Madelaine tossed her golden hair.

"'I've got enough to get me through without the English,' she answered.

"'But why not have the English, too, when it is just as easy?'

"'It's not.'

"'Don't you think "Woodstock" is exciting?'

"The girl laughed.

"'Exciting? That? Why, anybody that's really read anything knows what's going to happen three pages before Scott can get it off his chest.'

"'And "Silas Marner"?'

"'I should say not! Nothing's doing. And, be-

sides, when anything is, the author's always more interested in what she thinks about what her people do than she is in the people and what they do do.'

" 'Yet you must like the Shakespeare plays that are prescribed. A great deal happens in them.'

" 'Yes,' admitted the sub-freshman, 'a great deal happens; but, then, after anything has happened, the people gas so much about it. No, thank you; when I haven't any real books to read, I just make up stories out of my own head.'

" The teacher reported the case as hopeless, and, in June, Madelaine went up for her entrance examinations.

" The result had been foreseen. The candidate passed in most subjects, but failed lamentably in English.

" There were no immediately serious consequences. Madelaine, having read in her 'real' books how such things were done and guessing what had occurred, waylaid the college report, abstracted it from her father's mail, steamed the envelope, applied a little acid to those portions of the report that did not suit her, replaced them by more flattering marks, and only then put the letter where her parents would get it. She counted on 'making up the condition' unknown to them in her freshman year, and she had committed her little crime not so much out of any inherent viciousness—not even so much out of fear of paternal rebuke—as from a spirit of adventure dictated by the impulse for romance that had become her governing emotion.

" Things, did not, however, turn out precisely as Madelaine had expected. She went to college, but

she couldn't at once make up that condition, and, just as she had become passionately fond of the college's social life, her father's money was engulfed in a bitter business complication. At a sorry family council it was almost decided that Madelaine must give up her studies.

"'But I don't want to leave college!' wailed Madelaine.

"Her brothers looked out of the windows; her mother, face in hands, looked nowhere; her father gazed at the ceiling and seemed to derive thence the first faint rays of a pale inspiration. He had thought of a scholarship. Without a word to any one of the family, he went to the college to 'see about it'—and what he did see was the impossibility of a scholarship because of what his daughter had concealed from him.

"This meant that the family council was speedily followed by a family row. The father was badly upset by his business worries; his nerves were on edge; he openly regretted that his daughter, whom he upbraided for her deception, was unable to support herself; he said a great deal that he did not mean and a few of those things which, though we always mean them, we generally hold unsaid.

"His daughter went to bed crying. When she heard her mother ascend, on a mission of comfort, to the bedroom door, she stifled her sobs, and the mother, thinking her daughter at last asleep, forebore to enter. So Madelaine, lying awake through half the night, planned to support herself.

"Leaving the house stealthily the next morning, she went into the heart of the city. She bought a

newspaper and, over milk and rolls at a little lunch-counter, consulted its minor advertisements until she came upon this one:

> "'WE DELIVER THE GOODS.—Divorces assured. Secrecy guaranteed. Confidential investigation our specialty. Quick, quiet, certain. Branches the world over. CANNARDE DETECTIVE AGENCY.'

"The Philadelphia office, when Madelaine got there, didn't look like that of a concern with branches in any other country. It was situated in a dirty street, it was reached by a dirty flight of marble steps, and the front room, which the girl entered, was an uncarpeted apartment with a littered table and some well-worn handbills on the walls.

"'I want to see Mr. Cannarde,' said the girl.

"She was looking at a short, fat woman, whose eyes were bleared, whose cheeks were caked with last night's rouge, whose scant hair did not hide a riotous, hempen 'rat,' and who was partially garbed in a constantly gaping and very much soiled kimono. Madelaine had assumed that this was a servant.

"'I'm his wife,' said the woman. 'He's in there.'

"She shook her rat in the direction of the next room, which, apparently invited, Madelaine now entered, to find a place considerably like that she had just left.

"A fat man, pear-shaped, stood before her, dressed in a dark sack suit and with shoes that were noticeable because of their remarkably square toes. His head was gleamingly bald on top, where beads of sweat shone, and was fringed with reddish hair. His dark eyes were nervous and shifty; his mustache was

like a hairbrush; from the corners of his thin lips, below this, heavy, sinister lines ran up to his nose, and his skin was so coarse that his cheeks seemed as hard as the top of his head. Even to Madelaine he was not a pleasant object to look at, but Madelaine reflected that few of her detective heroes were that.

" 'Good-morning,' said the man. He smiled, and the girl saw that his stubby teeth were dirty. 'What can I do for you?'

" It burst from her in one long, excited breath:

" 'I'm a college girl. I have education. You must have use for a girl with education. I want to be a detective.'

" He looked at her, blinking his shifty eyes.

" 'You—you want to work for this agency?'

" She nodded.

" 'Why?' The query escaped him. It all seemed too easy to be quite, as he would have said, 'regular' —which means 'safe.'

" 'Because I want to make my living. Because I need the money.'

" 'Oh!' said the toad. Now the ground was becoming more familiar. They all needed, somehow, the money! He flourished a hand on which glimmered, as he meant that it should, a diamond. 'You need it badly?'

" 'Yes.' After all, she thought that this was the truth.

" 'But I can't'—his calculating eyes narrowed—'I can't employ anybody under the legal age.'

" She understood from this that he wanted her to lie about her age, and lie she did.

" 'I am just twenty-one.'

" He watched her and at what he considered the right time he said:

" 'Of course there will be a few months of apprenticeship, an' nobody gets paid durin' his apprenticeship in any business.'

" Madelaine's face fell.

" 'So I'll get nothing, then?' she asked.

" The toad hopped forward. He tried to look benevolent. He put a kindly hand on hers. His trained eye told him that he had erred.

" 'Oh, well,' he answered, 'I'll make that all right. Just you fill out this paper.'

" He handed her what purported to be an application blank (that is one of the ways in which these fellows protect themselves), and he leaned over her shoulder, but not too closely, as she supplied the answers. 'Do you drink?' was one query, and Madelaine wrote, 'No.'

" 'But don't you?' leered the toad.

" 'Of course I would if it was required by the case I was working on,' said Madelaine, remembering her pet heroes again.

" The toad drew a chair near her and looked at her hard. Once more he felt that this was all 'too easy.'

" 'You really mean that you're brave enough to do this sort of work?' he asked, still carefully wording his questions so as to spur her to the replies he wanted.

" 'Brave enough? Of course I am!'

" 'But you'd have to put yourself, perhaps, in situations that'd look compromisin'.'

" She didn't understand him, but, ' I'm not afraid,' she said.

" The toad breathed heavily. He always breathed heavily.

" ' You an' me,' he said, ' might be watchin' a runaway husband an' might have to make out we was husband an' wife.'

" Still she did not understand.

" ' I'm not afraid,' said Madelaine.

" ' Very well.' The toad pocketed the application. ' I'll write or 'phone just as soon as I need you; I'll call myself " Jack." You'll remember? "

" She assured him that she would. She went home, still resentful against her family, still silent. The next evening he called her by the telephone.

" ' Meet me in the ladies' waitin'-room at Broad Street Station,' he said. ' I've got just the case for you.'

" She met him. He told her that their work had to do with a divorce and that he and she must go to a house uptown—she still remembers that house—and must there observe a husband, who would have the next room. However, there appeared to be no great hurry, because he took her first to a Filbert Street saloon and there bought her what he assured her was only claret lemonade.

" Over this drink the toad grew sentimental. He told Madelaine that his wife was unfaithful, that Mrs. Cannarde had, in fact, a score of casual lovers, and that if he could find a girl to care for him, he would run away with her. But Madelaine was not overly interested in Mrs. Cannarde's affairs of the

heart, and so the toad conducted her to the house where they were to watch.

" 'How is it,' whispered Madelaine, when they entered the darkened hall, 'that the maid lets you go upstairs without saying anything?'

" 'Oh,' answered the toad, 'she knows me well. Just be careful not to make any noise.'

" They went upstairs, and, as they climbed, all of Madelaine's courage left her. In a girl so young, physical strength does not imply moral fortitude, and this child's heart fluttered until she nearly fell. When the toad showed her into a room and locked the door, though her every instinct now tardily told her the truth, she was fraid to cry out, afraid to protest, afraid for her life."

* * * * * * *

The woman that was telling me this story, the teacher in the Indiana school, stopped her narrative.

Now, after investigation, I know that the story is a common one, that the pseudo private detective is only one of the tentacles of the great devil-fish that preys upon our daughters. But then it was new to me and I gasped.

" How did it end?" I demanded.

" Generally," said my informant, " the victim is afraid to go home after what has happened and so is sold at once into slavery. Sometimes she goes home, but is recalled by threats of exposure."

" But in this case?" I persisted.

" In this case the girl went home and made an affidavit against the toad. If she ever has reason to believe that the use of that affidavit will serve a good

end, she will use it, regardless of all consequences to herself. As a matter of fact, where others are lost, she escaped the ultimate slavery, for I suppose she must have been, after all, a rather remarkable girl."

"She must, indeed," I agreed. "Think of her coming to you and telling you this."

"Oh, she didn't do that," answered the historian.

"But," said I, "how, then, did you learn it?"

"Simply enough—I was the girl."

VIII

THE GIRL THAT WAS WEAK

I MEANT to give this story another sort of title. I meant to call it "The Girl That Loved." But my Severest Critic objected.

"That won't do at all," said my Severest Critic.

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Because," said the Critic, "this girl didn't really love."

"But girls, for love, have done what she did."

"They have; but this girl wasn't in love, and her case is far more usual than the cases of girls that behave similarly because of love."

"Then," said I, "if it wasn't love with Hallie, what was it? You don't mean to say that she was vicious?"

"I do not."

"Very well; what do you say?"

"Get her to give you her autobiography as she gave it to me," replied my Critic. "After that, come back and write the story—and after you have written the story, I'll tell you."

I have obeyed. I have seen Hallie and, quite as she gave it to me, I have written the story

* * * * * * *

Hallie lived in a small town in Vermont. It was not, in the real sense of the term, a manufacturing

town, though there were a couple of factories in it, in one of which, ranking as a little better than the "hands," but far, far below any officer of the company, Hallie's father was employed. It was a town, in fact, like many that you must be acquainted with. Nearly everybody in it had lived there for a long time. The younger people were all natives. Each family knew—though, of course, the degrees of intimacy varied—every other family; and though there had now and then been little breaths of scandal here and there, these breaths were unfailingly stifled at their beginning, by one conventional method or another. The very poorest people prided themselves upon their respectability, upon their family's respectability, upon the respectability of their town.

In this particular, as, indeed, in most others, Hallie's parents were typical. Her father worked hard and earned little, but he was well thought of by the persons of his own class and well spoken of by his employers. The former regarded him as a splendid example of their sort; the latter always referred to him as "a thoroughly honest and conscientious employee," and he himself wanted nothing better than to continue to deserve such praise. Hallie's mother was the feminine counterpart of Hallie's father. She managed the little house and counted it as her highest honor that her neighbors should wonder how she could do so well on so little. She was a good cook and she kept the children—there was one other, a girl of six—neat and clean. Moreover, she "took in" the "plain washing," rather as a favor, from the home of one of the local mill-owners. Both husband and wife had been born and brought up in the town.

So had their parents. And their grandparents. In the phrase of the street, "they belonged."

Hallie went to the town grammar school and was about to pass into the high school. All of her friends went there—boys and girls together—and Hallie liked the boys as much as the other girls liked them. Sometimes they would slip her, these boys, little notes during school hours, rather because they loved the peril involved in this medium of communication forbidden by the academic authorities than that they had any burning messages to convey. The messages, as a matter of fact, sometimes were mere inquiries concerning the answer to a sum, sometimes youthfully rough-shod comments upon the teacher; and when they were at all affectionate, the affection was either shamefacedly expressed or more frequently hidden under a thin pretense of mere chaffing. After school, one or the other boys would often wait for Hallie around a corner, where his fellows could not see him and jeer at him, and protesting that the encounter was a chance one, walk out of his own way with her and as close to Hallie's home as he might go without attracting the attention of Hallie's mother and the smile that, from Hallie's mother, he would have received as silent ridicule.

All of which, as do most girls, Hallie enjoyed.

In the spring and during the summer the young people went for picnics into the woods that surrounded the town. The girls persuaded their mothers to assist them in preparing little luncheons for these picnics, packing the food in baskets, and the boys carried the baskets. Then they walked, the picnickers, to the woods and gathered flowers and ate

luncheon and at last strolled homeward in the pine-scented twilight. They were unchaperoned; their elders would have considered the presence of a chaperon as an inherent reflection upon their children's character—as un-American—and the young people would have paid no attention to a chaperon had one been there.

If you have been brought up in a large city you may not understand the parental attitude toward this particular matter; but if you have been brought up in a large city, you have, whether you recognized it or not, encountered a parental attitude that, allowing for the unessential differences of city life, is substantially the same. You have encountered parents who permit their children to go unchaperoned to "amusement parks," and if you do not know that amusement parks furnish situations which, occurring quickly, abolish the necessity for the first slow steps toward contact, it might be worth your while to find out. If, however, you passed your youth in a small town, you will have seen just what I have so far described of Hallie's town, and you will at least have heard of what I am about to tell you as happening to Hallie.

The young people of Hallie's town had always enjoyed themselves very much as Hallie and her friends had been enjoying themselves. Nobody there would have dreamed of questioning the propriety of such things. There is nothing wrong in young affection; there is nothing wrong in picnics. Hallie's parents had lived the same sort of life when they were in their youth. If, once in a long time, harm had befallen somebody—well, that was the fault of the individual

somebody; their child was of different stuff. Besides, their later lives had been so busy that they had forgotten much.

Yet harm did befall Hallie.

There was a picnic.

Somehow, as the boys and girls were strolling through the woods, looking for flowers that would not appear for at least a month, Hallie and her boy companion were separated from the rest of the party.

"I'm sure there are some flowers over here in a little valley that I know about," said the boy. "We'll go there and get some, and then we'll come back with a lot, and the other people won't have any."

He was one of the older boys, this George Stevens. He was in the high school and about to graduate and go to work as a clerk—not as a mere laborer—in the factory. He was nearly nineteen and his attention was flattering. There were girls among her friends that would envy Hallie.

One of these girls saw the pair as they made their way in the general direction that George had indicated. She, too, was strolling alone with a boy—a boy in the class below Stevens.

"Hello!" she cried, laughing.

"Hello!" said Hallie.

"Where you going?"

"Oh—for a walk."

The girl giggled.

"We're all to meet at the big oak at half-past four," said her companion.

"All right," answered George. "We'll be there."

But at half-past four o'clock they were not there.

They were not there until long after five, and then some of the party had grown tired of waiting and started home. As Hallie and George came up, empty-handed, from one direction, there approached from the opposite the girl and boy that had called to George and Hallie when they were starting out.

"You're late, too," remarked the girl.

"Are we?" stammered Hallie.

"Yes," George interjected. "We lost our way. What happened to you?"

The other boy grinned.

"So did we," he answered.

The incident passed as a joke. The other picnickers assumed that the two couples had been "spooning," as they called it. But Hallie, though her vocabulary was limited, did not believe that this was the word for the actions of the other pair, and the other pair repaid, mentally, in kind. Each, as it happened, did the other an injustice.

An injustice that time; but other times—other picnics, walks after school, walks along the shadowy streets of the town by twilight and into the always near and always inviting countryside—followed. The inevitable—or what in the circumstances was inevitable—occurred, and there was secret fear and shame and repentance, all gradually subsiding before the slowly dawning realization of no observable evil consequences. And then Hallie took other walks, not always with George, though with George oftener than with any other lad.

The observable evil consequences came, however, at last, as, sooner or later, they seem generally sure

to come. Hallie began by hotly denying her terrors. Then she whispered them to George, and George, turning pale, supported her denial. But finally she convinced herself that denial was useless, because the terror was a fact.

Again she sought George, and when she had convinced him, he looked at her wide eyes, at the tears that streamed down her cheeks, at the twisted mouth and contorted face, at all the tokens of grief that left her so unlovely to his gaze.

"Well," he said, trembling a little, "I don't see what we're to do."

She drew back from him as from a fresh fear.

"You're goin'—aren't you goin' to get a job?"

"Not if this came out, I wouldn't get it; and if I did, it's not enough for two."

"But, George"—she had, after all, to face this new fear, and so she extended her arms to him—"George, I won't mind that. I won't mind how little it is."

Stevens's face flushed.

"You won't mind!" he echoed. "I like that! I guess you wouldn't mind! But I tell you I would. Everybody'd know!"

"They'll know, anyhow——"

"Not about me they won't. And I'm not so sure myself."

"Not sure?"

"No, I am not. There were other fellows; you needn't pretend there weren't."

"I don't pretend. I haven't lied. I wouldn't lie to you. But it was you that was first, and it was you——"

"And you think I'd want to marry a girl that had been so free? You think I'd want to marry her even if I'd been the only one? I wouldn't marry a bad woman!"

They were in a country lane. It was afternoon and the sun was hot. Hallie put her hand to her head and swayed a little. She leaned against a tree.

"Come on!" commanded George. "Don't do that! Somebody might come along, and then what would they think?"

Always ready to his will, she staggered forward beside him, her frightened eyes on his tense face, his own angry eyes on the dusty road directly ahead.

"It don't matter what they think," she dully muttered. "They're soon sure to know."

"Not about me," said George again. His mind revolted. He had not intended this and he did not understand why he should suffer for what he had not meant to do. "Know about it?" he went on. "I tell you, I don't know about it myself."

She clutched his arm, her dry lips parted. He tried to draw away, but her convulsive fingers held him fast.

"You think——" she began.

But it is easy to believe what we want to believe, and George had now convinced himself.

"It wasn't me," he said.

"George"—she almost shouted it—"I swear to you——"

"Shut up, will you? Do you want to call the farmers? I tell you it was somebody else. You can't work any of these tricks on me. I know what's what. It wasn't me."

She could not move him. She tried until her nerves and his patience were both exhausted, but she could not change him from the position that he had assumed. She went home, slunk into the house like a thief, pretended to eat her supper while she was sure that suspicion must be dawning in her parents' eyes, went early to bed and lay all night awake, as she had lain for so many nights before.

In the morning, but only because she could stand it no longer, she told her mother. Violent sobs tore the elder woman's throat—ejaculations of anger, calls upon God to explain this unmerited visitation, and at last that fatal phrase:

"I must tell your father."

On her knees, weeping in her mother's lap, clasping her mother's waist, Hallie pleaded against this; yet all the while she knew that it must be done, and done that evening it was.

The father went through all that his wife had gone through—and more. He vowed that he would shoot George, that he would shoot Hallie, that he would shoot himself. But in the end his real self prevailed. He blamed Hallie heavily—she had brought shame to her parents, shame to a decent family that had never known shame before—but the paramount thing was not the wrong that had been done. The paramount thing was to cover the wrong and hide it; the paramount thing was to evade public disgrace. He would go to George's father.

The elder Stevens had, however, been forewarned by his son. He hesitated to tell Hallie's father, in such manifest trouble, of George's counter-charges; but he sent for George, and George, driven to the

wall, fought the parent with the same weapon that he had used against the daughter.

The girl's father nearly struck the lad, but he bethought himself that violence might lead to publicity, and refrained. In the end he returned to his house, convinced that a marriage was impossible, and passed hours in bringing home to Hallie a sense of the disgrace that she had brought upon her family.

Nor was the town less merciful. Who first published the scandal is beyond positive telling. Certainly Hallie's parents wanted to delay the evil as long as might be. Yet the girl's mother confided to a friend that she was in the depths of a great sorrow; the mother of the boy, informed by her cautious husband of but half the truth, whispered to a confidante that Hallie had made unbelievable charges; the friend and the confidante told others; the others remembered little things that they had seen, and thus at last the town learned the truth, resented the obloquy that Hallie had put upon its respectable reputation and prepared to punish the criminal.

Wherever the girl went, her fault followed. All saw her and she knew it; all that saw her were aware of what she had done, and, as they saw her, remembered it and resented it—and this she also knew. Her shame assumed a thousand shapes—a different shape for each individual that considered her and it. Now somebody shook a solemn head. Again somebody tried to hide—or pretended to try to hide—a spiteful smile. This girl pointed; that man leered. There were some that sighed; there were others that gasped. Many gaped and craned their necks, whispering; a few frankly tittered. Out

of his own character each observer made her a new object of reproach, and her sorrow-quickened senses missed not one.

Four of her friends, at four different times, met her salutation on the street with faces that were blanker than they would have been at the impertinent salutation of a stranger, until, cut right and left, Hallie would speak to nobody. Little children, vaguely instructed by their parents, ran away from her approach, until she was afraid to show herself by day and would go out only in the darkness. And at last, in the darkness, one of the town idlers accosted her and said something that, thereafter, kept her a prisoner within the walls of her own home.

Her own home! Hallie's mother had all the will in the world to help her, but how to help she did not know. She had a magnificent tenderness, but she had a still greater sense of the disgrace that was upon them all. Day long she wept over Hallie, but Hallie knew—even if the mother did not know it—that more than half of the tears contained a reproach, however gentle, because more than half of them were shed over that honor of the family which Hallie had thrown away.

Her father did also what he could; but he, too, could do little. He had talked for a while of sending her to Boston before the town could learn the truth; but the town had superseded him, and he now came home with the head bowed which had once been so erect and with a gloom that spoke always of the memory of a respectability that Hallie had filched from him.

And so at last the girl took matters into her own

hands. Nearly mad from her punishment, she sought to escape its continuance.

"I can't stand it!" she moaned, between sobs, to the midnight darkness of her room. "I can't stand it!"

On the night of a day when her little sister ran home crying because her playmates had been forbidden to consort with a child whose family included a wicked woman, Hallie stole away. She had a little money in a toy savings box, and this she used to get her to New York. There she kept herself alive by begging on the street until she went to the hospital. She did not know that in New York there were institutions to care for the sort of girl that a Vermont town could not abide, and so, as she was too unskilled to work and too afraid of death to starve, she soon put her baby in an asylum and herself upon the street.

She is still there.

* * * * * * *

That is Hallie's story as Hallie gave it me. I wrote it as my Severest Critic commanded, and my Severest Critic has read it through.

"Well?" said I.

"Well?" said the Crititc.

"You were right," I admitted. "Once I got the facts at first hand, I found that, in Hallie's case, it wasn't a question of love. She was too young."

"Yes," said the Critic, "she was too young. Hallie was one of the girls that are weak. She made a mistake and she couldn't stand its consequences."

"I'm not sure," I submitted, "that the lesser characters in Hallie's story were altogether blameless."

"They certainly were not blameless," replied the

Critic. " What Hallie couldn't stand was the disgrace; she couldn't stand the scorn of her friends, the jeers of the whole town; she couldn't stand the knowledge that, much as her parents regretted what she had done, they regretted still more its mere discovery."

IX

THE GIRL THAT WENT TO SEE

RACIAL generalizations are always dangerous. Concerning the Chinaman, they are almost always misleading. The only safe thing to say of him is that he is not widely understood, that things not understood have an essential lure, and that the lure of things not understood is a hazard of peril. Otherwise, Yellow and White are one.

Save for his unenlightenment, which is the fault of his governmental traditions, there is, indeed, nothing wrong with the Chinaman—as a Chinaman. When his traditions do not interfere, he is personally as polite as a French shopkeeper and economically as honest as a French peasant. This Young China is certain some day to improve; the rest she is equally certain some day materially to alter. But in the meantime the traditions remain, and though in Pekin they are as frank as Broadway or Pacific Avenue, in the yellow strips of our American cities they are woven through the crooked, cluttered streets like a web that is well-nigh invisible, but wholly tenacious. It is not good for the Occidental to become entangled therein.

Yet this last it is hard for the Occident to learn. Except the West, nothing tempts the West quite so subtly and strongly as the East or any manifestation of the East. It calls us. The shuffle of the heelless shoes, the clatter of the beaded curtains, the pungent

scent of the joss-sticks—they all call us. They are the Celestial Dragon, gaping eternally for the sun. We are young, we are obvious, we are hurried; how, indeed, can it be that we should long resist what is aged, mysterious, serene?

This, although she did not so concretely formulate it, was the question that, in the end, presented itself to Muriel.

Muriel was of the West, Western. She was of what San Francisco calls "an old San Francisco family." This is to say that her grandfather had been born and raised in Akron, O., and had followed the Argonauts to the coast in 1850, there to arrive in time to filch his share—or somebody's share—of the Golden Fleece. As he had then straightway married the newly-arrived sister of another pioneer (who came from Clyde, N. Y.), and as the pair had one son, who was a Californian by birth, the stock was clearly as San Franciscan as it was old.

In America, however, even the natural forces work more speedily than they work in alien climes, and the law of compensation does not long delay. As a rule, the generation that acquires begets a generation that disburses. Muriel's old San Francisco family was no exception.

Of course Muriel's grandfather had really cornered a great deal of money—so much that one man must have some difficulty in getting rid of it all. Still Muriel's "poppa" did his best. The ability to devote one's life to a single ideal was in his blood, and, by assiduously cultivating that ability, this son of a Jason accomplished wonders. He married at the age of forty, because he felt that he had by that time earned

a little diversion; and as his wife proved a true helpmeet, the pair so far succeeded in reducing the weight of the family bank-account that when Muriel was born both parents were thoroughly discontented with life and one was forced to earn their living by pretending to work in a bank.

But Muriel also had her inheritance. If she was born into a household that let no day pass without regretting the better days which had passed so long before it—and without any effort to conjure those days into a new life—she was just as surely born (or so the discredited believers in heredity would assure us) into a family that was by nature inquisitive. She felt, very early, that she had to be a pioneer. Her childhood was fed on stories of the grandfather that had listened to the ancient call and had obeyed it:

> Something hidden, go and find it, go and look behind the Ranges,
> Something lost behind the Ranges, lost and waiting for you. Go!

It was, since his money had disappeared, only the pioneer instincts of this grandparent that made her any better than the other girls in school—the girls whose fathers had come to San Francisco but a score of years ago and whose fathers' fathers were born across the Atlantic. If she were to retain her superiority, she must cease to follow: she must explore.

In brief, then, Muriel had an inquiring mind and an adventurous heart—a combination large with peril. When she studied physics, she was not content with being told the result of experiments; she was not even content with watching the underpaid instructor perform those experiments. She insisted upon performing the experiments herself.

When she was only fifteen one of her young companions told her that another friend had said that a certain Japanese beggar who frequented the warehouse district would, for "two bits," bite his hand till it bled. Muriel immediately started downtown.

"Where are you going?" asked her companion.

"I'm going to see if it's true," said Muriel.

And go—and see—she did.

Matters were bad enough with Muriel's family before the big 'quake, but after it there came a long period when they were almost desperate. The shock wrecked the family house, which was not "on the hill" where the family house had once been, and the fire came so close to ruining the bank that, in the first terrible days when the sick city fought its way back to rehabilitation as an injured man fights his way back to health, Muriel's father lost his job and could no longer even play at work. The result was a domestic atmosphere so highly surcharged with storm that the daughter passed just as much of her time as she could pass in any other atmosphere accessible.

Always she continued "to go to see." Long before she had been told that whisky produced intoxication. In order to prove this, she had taken three drinks from the dining-room decanter and retired to bed, whereafter, the theory being thus demonstrated to her entire personal satisfaction, money would not have hired her to touch whisky again. She could still remember the day when she had "jumped five hundred" with her "skipping-rope," merely to discover whether that exercise would, as her school friends assured her, result in either exhaustion or a fainting fit. She had smoked one of her father's cheap cigars

"to see what tobacco was like," and she had leaped from the second-story window in an effort to procure the sensation obtained by the blond-haired circus-lady that "looped the loop."

None of these things was of itself evil. None was undertaken with the purpose of offending other people or of harming herself. None resulted in any bad habit. But all confirmed the habit of "going to see."

You will, however, remark one peculiarity: Muriel's explorations had thus far missed Chinatown; she had as yet failed to encounter the lure of the Orient, had never yet seen the arched Dragon gaping for the sun. But that is easy of explanation, and, indeed, if you know San Francisco, you will have supplied the explanation for yourself.

In the days before the big 'quake, Chinatown in San Francisco was "one of those things better left undiscussed." In other words, it was supposed to be a spot set aside, by mutual male consent, for that contradiction in terms, "a necessary evil." The men all knew about it specifically, the boys all pretended to know about it theoretically, and the married women were all, though very vaguely, aware of its existence. Yet to one's daughter—well, one might about as well stop living on Pacific Avenue and begin talking about Pacific Street.

After the 'quake things changed. The splendid city climbed by its own effort from its own ashes and in the genuine glory of that accomplishment convinced itself that, where much was new and all was good, nothing that was old and evil had survived. San Francisco had been burned; Chinatown had been burned to cinder. The city had risen from the dead

because it was vital, but, because it was diseased, the town must have perished. One could, therefore, now speak more freely of the latter, and Muriel chanced to overhear her father talking of it to her mother.

"At any rate," said the father, with that righteous calm wherewith the one just man discourses of the unjust that have perished for their sins, "if the fire has done nothing else, it has helped San Francisco by destroying Chinatown."

"And," inquired his wife, "was Chinatown really such an evil?"

"It was a plague spot—though, of course, it's impossible for you to understand just how and why. Parts of it weren't safe for a white man without a guide—not to mention a white woman."

"But I'm sure Mrs. Gambell used to go there to teach in Sunday school."

"Oh, the Sunday school! That wasn't the real thing—that wasn't the real Chinatown. The white girls that went into the real Chinatown rarely came back."

"Why not?"

"Can't you guess?"

"I should think the police would have rescued them."

"That just shows how little you know about it. Besides, in the end they didn't want to come back. When a Chinaman wants a white slave, he doesn't have to imprison her; all he has to do is to teach her the opium habit."

Muriel's mother shuddered.

"How dreadful!" said she.

"Yes," said the father, "it was dreadful; but it is all ended now."

Muriel, who had been sitting in the shadow, ventured a comment.

"I think I'll walk down there some day," she remarked.

Her father turned quickly in his chair.

"I didn't know you were listening," he declared. "*I* think you will do nothing of the sort."

"The idea!" echoed Muriel's mother. "You see, Fred, what it means to a child to have a father who is unable to provide the kind of a bringing up that will properly protect her."

That criticism might have served to divert the paternal attention from daughter to mother, but Muriel again interposed.

"If the fire's wiped it all out," said she, "I don't see what harm there can be in going there."

"Well," responded her father, "you sha'n't go."

Muriel shrugged her shoulders.

"Then I don't believe it is all wiped out," she replied.

She was sixteen years old, and the passion for exploration had developed with indulgence. Within a week she had "gone to see."

The first time, though her family was never informed of it one way or the other, she did not go alone. With two other girls and a pair of boys she made the excursion in "a slumming party." They passed the beaded curtains and ate of strange, savory food. They inhaled the incense, they tossed the "prayer sticks," and, in the crowded streets, they gave smile for smile to the little yellow men that

shuffled by upon heelless shoes. There was no harm done, and the boys and girls liked it; but what most laid its hold upon Muriel was the sense that for each shadow which was revealed there was a great gulf of enchanting darkness which was kept mysteriously hidden.

What, she perpetually asked herself, was this that was concealed? She resolved to continue going until she saw it.

She returned, by day, to the restaurant where they had dined, now with a companion and now without. She got to know the Chinese dishes by name and was proud of it. Soon she got to know the waiters also by name, and of this she was still prouder. Once she ventured into the café alone in the early evening, and the proprietor himself waited upon her—he was flatteringly polite.

After that Muriel returned more often, and now always alone. She felt that she was rapidly paving, through the proprietor, a way toward the revelation of the mystery:

Something lost behind the Ranges. Over yonder. Go you there!

At home, conditions had become worse and were rapidly growing intolerable. Her father had been sitting idle, in the faith that the bank would end by sending for him; but the bank, having accepted a politician's notes in return for the politician's subsequently broken promise to secure for it a large portion of the city's deposits, sent instead for a receiver, and Muriel's father, who had been expensively educated in the trade of general incapacity, now proceeded to sink his remaining money in drink and to

lavish his remaining energy in quarrels. Muriel found solace in Chinatown, amusement in the proprietor's fascinating descriptions of things Oriental, and credit for her meals and tea.

One night she broached the subject of opium-smoking.

The proprietor raised his long, thin eyebrows.

"That is all exaggerated!" he said—his English was better than Muriel's. "Some of my countrymen smoke too much of the opium, but not many—not nearly so many as those Americans that drink too much of the whisky."

"Yet it's a bad habit, isn't it?" asked Muriel.

"Yes," replied the proprietor, "if you acquire it. But it is nonsense, this talk that says you get the habit from one smoke. You do not get it from a hundred smokes. A man—even a woman—can be temperate in opium as well as in wine."

"Are you?"

"Do I not attend to my business?"

"But you do smoke?"

"Perhaps once a month. I lie down in a beautiful room. I think of good things. I smoke and go to sleep, and the opium makes me dream only of the beautiful and the good. The next morning, refreshed, I return to my business."

Muriel wanted to hear further about those dreams, and the proprietor of the restaurant told her. She had not read the more glowing portions of De Quincey's "Confessions," as so many foredoomed victims have done—she had not read any of "The Confessions"—but the proprietor sufficed. She smoked a pipe of opium in his rooms that night, and

the only thing that happened was a sound sleep, a complete forgetfulness of the family jars, the memory of which had lately been breaking her rest. Nobody disturbed her. When she woke, the proprietor, still polite, brought her breakfast, and all that she had to complain of was a slight nausea and the absence of the predicted dreams.

"The sickness will not return," her instructor responded, "and the dreams will come the next time or the next. There is no hurry; one can wait."

"I don't know that there'll be any next time," said Muriel.

"Not soon," said the proprietor. "You must not get the habit. You must be temperate, as I am. One can wait."

So there was a next time. There were several of them. Muriel explained them to her parents by saying she spent the nights with a schoolgirl friend that had moved "over to Oakland." Then there were more next times, not a month apart, and during one of them the proprietor reminded her of her bill at the restaurant. . . .

Muriel had said that she was going to Oakland for the week end. When she came out of the stupor, a new week was half over. At first she was afraid to go home. Then she did not go. And then she did not want to go.

When her parents had at last told the police, and the police had at last, after searching everywhere else, reached San Francisco's Chinatown, the restaurant-proprietor had sold Muriel to another Chinaman, and she was in the Chinatown of Chicago. They never found her. At the time I saw her, she was the slave

of a Chinaman near Harrison Street, in Boston. That Chinaman had to keep her because, though she used to be pretty, she was not pretty any longer, and so her last master could not sell her.

The well-nigh invisible web had proved tenacious. Muriel had gone—and seen. The shuffle of the heelless shoes, the clatter of the beaded curtains, the pungent scent of the joss-sticks—these things had called her, not in vain—

> Till a voice, as bad as Conscience, rang interminable changes
> On one everlasting Whisper day and night repeated so:
> Something hidden. Go and find it. Go and look behind the Ranges,
> Something lost behind the Ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go!

X

THE GIRL THAT WAS POOR

IT was in New York, after seven o'clock, when Nada turned into the cluttered street in which she lived. She had walked north on Broadway to Tenth Street and then dropped into the great tide of black-clad girls sweeping eastward on their way from work. Their faces were tired and their feet heavy, but they had, most of them, a certain assurance of expression, a security of gait; and this, Nada reflected, must be because they were at least sure that the rooms to which they were going would continue to house them, because they knew that supper of some sort would be waiting, because, to-morrow morning, they would turn westward to work for which they had been definitely employed. Nada's step was more weary than any of these, and her face was dull and expressionless.

Yet she was a pretty girl. In spite of hunger and seedy clothes, in spite even of the devil of doubt that in her heart was slowly growing into a devil of despair, she was pretty. Her hair was plentiful and black, her pale face was delicately designed, and her large dark eyes were even beautiful. It was a raw night in early December, but Nada's coat was in the pawnshop on the corner, and one could see that poverty had not yet robbed her figure of all its possibilities.

Somebody had, in fact, already seen as much—somebody in a large, light-colored overcoat, with enormous shoulders constructed regardless of the wearer's shoulders beneath, and a carefully brushed derby hat set aslant upon a round head. This somebody was following Nada.

He had taken his stand on a crowded Broadway corner just as the working day ended, holding a cigarette between his yellow fingers and shifting from one high-heeled shoe to the other while he scanned the passing flood of home-going girls with the keen, cold eye that a horse dealer uses to estimate the horses driven by him in a horse bazaar. He seemed to hesitate about several of these girls; now and again he made false starts after this one or that, returning, when a few steps had been taken, to his post. But when he saw Nada, uncertainty fell from him and he tracked her through the crowded streets to this corner of the street in which she lived.

Nada was, however, too occupied with her own thoughts to feel that chill which runs through the body of one that is watched. The evening was cold enough to provide a more commonplace explanation for chilliness. She turned the corner.

The street was badly lighted, it was narrow, and it was swarming with returning workers, shouting children, and old women with shawls over their heads, carrying little bundles of provisions or kettles of beer. On each side were rows of houses, all much alike and all converted, by tortuous means, from the housing of one family, for which they were intended, into small apartments for the housing of many families.

The man in the light overcoat with huge shoulders

caught up with Nada. He took off his well-brushed derby, showing a head covered with sleekly arranged hair.

"Pardon me," he said, "but aren't you Miss Raynor?"

Nada had been so deeply preoccupied that it was hard for her to realize the meaning of any interruption. She raised her dark glance slowly to the speaker and saw that he was a very young man indeed, little more than a boy, in fact. She did not then understand that his lean face was preternaturally knowing, or what was the meaning of the broad red edges of his drooping lids.

"What did you say?" she inquired.

"I asked if you weren't Miss Raynor." The young man smiled pleasantly and his voice, though rough, was by no means repellent. "I'm Mr. Mitchell. Don't you remember meetin' me at the Ivy Social Club's dance?"

"No," said Nada, still puzzled; "you're mistaken. My name isn't Raynor."

"Not Miss Raynor?" Mr. Mitchell seemed almost incredulous. "But I sure must have met you at the Ivy Social las' Sat'day."

"I'm afraid not," said Nada. "I haven't gone to any dance for a long while."

"I'm sorry. I beg your pardon."

"There's no harm done."

"No, there ain't, is there?" Mr. Mitchell smiled again, but he was standing before her now and she could not conveniently move on. "You see," he explained, "I thought we'd met, an' I was just goin' to ask you to come on down Second Av'nue to a good

café with me for supper. I feel like a big, red steak this evening, an' I know the best place for one in N' York. But, not knowin' me, you wouldn't want to go, would you?"

Nada's stomach cried within her, but with the cry came a warning. She had heard often enough of men that took girls to supper and then—— She couldn't go, of course, and yet she could not be certain that the polite Mitchell really meant any harm, so she did not speak angrily.

"I'm in a hurry," she said. "I'm much obliged to you, but I must get home."

"Oh, that's all right. You live near here?"

"Two doors below."

"Well, I'm sorry. Good-evenin'. Hope I'll have the pleasure of seein' you again."

Mitchell bowed and left her, and Nada, a few steps farther on, turned into her own house.

She climbed the dark stairway, reeking with the smells of cooking from the many apartments, and ascended to the landing just below the roof. Then, without knocking, she opened a door.

Small and close as the room was, it was swathed in shadow. The only light came from a dim lamp, shadeless, set upon a bare center table. The table was heaped with several piles of small, brightly colored bits of cloth—here a pile of green, there one of white, and beyond a pile of purple. Cups of glue and brushes stood between the piles, and, just beside the dim lamp, was a little mound of something that looked like flowers—a strange note in surroundings so sordid.

A frail woman of what might be almost any age

over forty sat at the table and worked with the paste and the bits of colored cloth—and coughed. Three children, eleven, nine, and six years old, sat about her, also working. They were pasting together imitation violets for hat trimmings. They pasted from five o'clock in the morning until twelve at night. They were Nada's widowed mother and Nada's sisters and brother. They got one cent for every one hundred and forty-four "violets" that they made, and their combined highest daily wage was ninety-six cents.

As the door closed behind Nada, the woman looked up, coughing, She had eyes like her daughter's, but more haggard.

"No luck?" she asked, for she saw Nada's face as the girl drew nearer the table.

The girl shook her head. She had worked in a necktie factory, but the factory had been shut down for a month, and Nada had ever since been tramping the streets in search of a job.

"I think by this time I've been to every place in N' York," she said dully.

She sank into the one remaining chair.

The mother said nothing. They two had long since passed the stage of tears, and there was really nothing to be said. But the youngest of the children set up a thin wail, in which the nine-year-old boy began fretfully to join.

"I don't see why you can't get nothin'," he whimpered. "I'm tired."

Nada achieved a smile.

"Go to bed," she commanded, "you an' Irene. I'll do your work to-night."

"But I want some supper!" protested the smallest child.

The mother got up, coughing, and presently brought a pot of coffee and two bits of bread. Irene and her brother ate and then lay down upon a thin mattress on the floor in a corner. The others ate while they worked, Nada's stiffened fingers resuming the endless task of the sleepers.

"One man," she said, apropos of nothing, "asked me if it was true that people like us kept the coal in the bathtub."

"What did you tell him?" inquired her eleven-year-old sister.

"Told him I didn't know, because we didn't have no bathtub an' we didn't have no coal."

They worked for an hour in silence.

"This is Tuesday, ain't it?" Nada asked at last.

Her mother nodded.

"You seen 'em about the rent?" said Nada.

"Yes."

"What'd they say?"

"They can't wait a day longer'n Sat'day."

There was another long silence, broken only by the mother's coughing.

Nada knew what caused that cough. She bent her head over her violets in order that her face might not be seen and its expression read. Twice it was on her lips to tell about Mr. Mitchell, but each time she forbore to add to her mother's burden of worry.

"Well," she said at last, "I'll try again to-morrow."

She did try on the morrow, but she knew that her quest was hopeless, and hopeless it proved. There

was the same long round of interviews, the same long list of refusals, the same long tramp through the windy streets. The factories were full, the shops were full, there were no vacant places in the kitchens of the restaurants, and the domestic-employment agencies, filled with girls looking for general housework, had need only of trained cooks and experienced children's nurses. Nada turned homeward in the chilly darkness and at the corner of her street met Mr. Mitchell.

"Hello!" said Mr. Mitchell.

He smiled and raised his hat. Nada noticed that it was lined with folded white satin; it reminded her of a child's coffin.

"Good-evenin'," said Nada.

She looked at young Mr. Mitchell. He seemed so well fed and warm and prosperous.

"You look tired out," he ventured, in his most tenderly concerned manner.

"Then I don't look a lie," said Nada.

"You must have a hard job."

"I've got the hardest there is."

"What's that?"

The answer escaped Nada before she could check it.

"Lookin' for one," she said bitterly.

Mr. Mitchell was plainly pained.

"You don't mean you're out o' work?" he gasped.

"You know I am," said Nada.

She looked him steadily in his bloodshot eyes, and his eyes fell.

"Of course I didn't," he lied.

Nada shrugged her thin shoulders. An uncon-

trollable desire came over her to put her case before this stranger.

"My father's been dead two years," she said; "I've been out of a job goin' on to five weeks; my mother an' the three children paste hat flowers at a cent the twelve dozen; they're finishin' the last order; everything's hocked that can be hocked; we'll be turned out if the rent ain't paid Sat'day, an' my mother's got consumption."

Mr. Mitchell gasped again.

"What was your job?" he asked.

"Neckties."

"Fired?"

"No. The shop shut down."

"Won't it start up again soon?"

"It won't never start up. The firm's busted."

"An' you——" He glanced at her narrowly, and then glanced swiftly away. "You need some money?"

"I ain't livin' on my interest."

"A girl as good-lookin' as you," said Mr. Mitchell slowly, "oughtn't to have much trouble in a town like N' York."

She had expected this, but, now that it had come, she had learned all that she thought she wanted to learn. She was certain now what he was, and he filled her with disgust and loathing.

"Well, I do have trouble," she said, pretending to misunderstand. "But," she added, "I'd better be running along now."

"Hold up a minute," said Mitchell. "Don't you want to get that supper with me?"

"Thanks; but I've got to run along."

" But maybe I can find you somethin' to do."

" If you can "—again speech leaped from her without will of her own—" you let me know. I'm by here every night at this time—an' you know it."

She turned away and again went home.

And at home everything was just as it had been the night before—every one of so many nights before. The mother and the children were working in the garret room. The children were hungry and the mother coughed.

That was Wednesday night.

On Thursday the same thing happened. There was the same series of heart-breaking refusals, the same series of closed doors, the same long trudging through the cold streets—and at the home corner the same warm, comfortable, well-fed, ready-to-help Mitchell again.

" Hey, there! Wait a minute! " he commanded.

" I've got to hurry," Nada answered, and she shivered, but not from cold.

" But I want to tell you somethin'."

" To-morrow evening," she said—for she would give convention one more chance.

When she entered the room she found the two younger children already abed.

" What's the trouble? " she inquired, with a tired glance at their huddled forms.

The mother coughed.

" They're sick," she answered. " Irene's got a fever an' pains in her stomach. So's he."

" They're hungry," said Nada.

" Yes," said her mother; " they're hungry."

Nada began to work. Presently she said,

"Mother——" And then she stopped.

"What is it?" asked her mother.

"I heard of a sort of a chance this evenin'," said Nada.

The mother's hand shook so that some of the glue from the brush she was holding dropped upon the table.

"No? Is it—is it true?"

"It's only a chance. I'm—I'm not sure."

"What is it?"

Nada lied.

"It's night work," she said. "It's in an all-night restaurant on the Bowery. Washin' dishes."

"Thank God!" said her mother.

"But it ain't sure. Of course it's hard——"

"I know you'd do it for us, though, Nada. You've always been a good girl."

"An'," continued Nada, looking hard at the white violet she was making, "I'd have to begin about eight o'clock an' work on till the middle of the mornin'. I was so glad to hear of it, I forgot to ask the wages. It ain't sure, neither," she repeated; "but the boss says he's thinkin' o' firin' one of the girls, an', if he does, I'll get her place. It'll help a lot."

"Thank God!" said the mother again; and then suddenly she drooped over the table and began to cough and sob.

So, having prepared an explanation to cloak the worst, if the worst should happen, Nada went out upon her quest once more the next morning. She was seeking her last chance.

But the chance was not apparent. Nada strained every nerve to find work—and she found none.

Then she started back.

Once or twice she hesitated. Once or twice she stopped short. There was a half hour when she turned westward, out of her course, fighting. There was a time when she thought of entering the street by the far end, where Mitchell would not see her; and there was another time when she thought of the river. But then she would hear her mother's cough; she would hear the whimper of the hungry children. So she went on.

When she met Mitchell, she startled him by her outspokenness.

"See here," she said, "if I go into business for you, what'll I earn?"

He drew back, flushing.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"Oh, you know! What'll I earn?"

"Well—it depends on you."

"Enough to bring some money home?"

"Lots of it."

"How much?"

"I tell you, it depends on you, kid."

She winced at the epithet. From such a mouth, she knew what it implied. But she went on:

"I'm thinkin' about my mother an' the children. How much'll there be for them?"

"She'll be on Easy Street."

"Eight a week?"

"Maybe ten."

"I can get home afternoons?"

"Sure you can."

"Then wait here a minute."

"But, kid——"

"Wait!" she called over her shoulder, and ran upstairs and into the room that had been her home.

She did not look at her mother, but she flung her arms about the woman and burst into hysterical weeping.

"It's all right!" she laughed wildly. "You'll have some money in advance on my wages to-morrow, mother. It's all right!"

"You got the dish-washin' job?" asked the mother.

"Yes—yes, I got the dish-washin' job."

"Thank God, thank God!" sobbed the mother, and they wept together.

Then Nada stood up. She was very white and calm.

"I must start right away," she said.

The children were dancing because she had a job.

"You shall have a drum," she said to the boy; "and you, Irene and Meta—you shall have new dresses."

And she kissed them. And went out.

When she approached the smiling Mitchell, it was with the face like the face of a virgin led to the Minotaur.

"Well?" he said.

She glanced past him, down the street. She saw Tessie Connor, a girl from the same tenement house, approaching—a girl that was a clerk in a large department store—and she did not want Tessie to observe Mitchell.

"I'm ready," she said. "Hurry."

But Tessie had already seen. She came running up to them.

"Nada," she gasped, breathless from her run, "I've got news for you. The store's takin' on extra help for over the holidays—they need 'em for the two-week rush—an' I've spoken to the basement boss an' he can give you a job till Christmas."

So Nada was reprieved.

But Christmas was only two weeks away, and afterward——

XI

THE WOMEN THAT SERVE

THE Statistician, the Philanthropist, and the Man That Only Writes were talking things over.

"Let us take again," said the Statistician, "those figures from Waverley House. Waverley House is a place—it wouldn't want the forbidding name of 'institution'—in New York City where certain kind and experienced persons are permitted by the lower courts to take and care for girls for whom, being young in wrong, there seems to be a chance of reformation."

The other two nodded.

"Well," continued the Statistician, "in one year Waverley House had three hundred of these girls. Out of that three hundred the largest number—ninety-five, to be exact—had previously been domestic servants."

The Philanthropist looked up, stroking his gray mustache.

"And what," he asked, "would you figure as the general percentage of former domestic servants in this class at large?"

"I should say about sixty per cent.," answered the Statistician.

"Exactly," chimed the Philanthropist, "and yet here is our young friend that does nothing but write,

laying the blame for the vast bulk of the Social Evil upon Poverty."

The writing-man made a timid suggestion.

"Don't you think," he inquired, "that poverty forces the girl to become a servant in a household where the work is far in excess of the wages, and that then hard work and poor quarters force her to seek recreation among conditions where her 'fall' is easily accomplished?"

"I do not," replied the Philanthropist. "If sixty per cent. of these women come from the servant-girl class, your poverty theory falls to the ground, for there has never been so great a demand for servants as there is now, and the servants' wages have never been so high."

"You don't believe that servants are inherently vicious merely because they are servants?"

"Certainly not!"

"Yet you admit the truth of these statistics?"

"I do, and I say that is where your poverty theory goes to pieces. We need servants in our homes and we pay them well."

"Do you?" asked the Mere Writer, who is a very mild man. "But if the statistics are true, if servants aren't inherently vicious, and if poverty isn't to blame, what *is* to blame? Do servants 'go wrong' as an inevitable result of your home influences?"

The Philanthropist grew angry. His gray mustache bristled.

"You are an impudent puppy!" he said.

"If I answered my last question in the affirmative I might seem so," the Writer answered; "but may I have a moment to make myself clear?"

" You may have all night."

" I sha'n't want an hour. I shall merely tell you a couple of stories—true stories, too."

" All right," assented the Philanthropist, who is a good man and wants to do good in the world; " fire away."

" In the first place," began the Mere Writer, " there was Tillie—Tillie was not a lady's-maid or an expert cook or anything of that sort. They may or may not get high wages. I know very little about them, but I do know that they are in the minority of their class; that their condition isn't typical. Now, Tillie was typical; she was just a strong, healthy girl that set out to be a maid-of-all-work; she came of poor people; her parents were dead; it was necessary that she earn her own living. So she got a job as chambermaid in a big Detroit hotel.

" There's a good deal to be said against the treatment of the servants in some of our large hotels—where they're sometimes herded like cattle and often treated as worse—but that hasn't anything to do with the present case. Besides, as she came to look back on it in after days, Tillie didn't think this hotel half bad. At any rate, she had regular hours and regular duties. Both were carefully defined, and she was not expected to exceed either. She wasn't asked to do work outside of her prescribed line, and when her ' day ' was over she was definitely through her tasks. Besides, the people that stopped at the hotel, though there was now and then one that complained, treated her, on the whole, with consideration. Take it by

and large, I should say that she was pretty well satisfied.

"But a rather well-to-do Rochester woman came to the hotel with her husband, who was in Detroit on business, and this woman—we'll call her Mrs. Sandys—took rather a shine to Tillie. That is to say, she gave Tillie so to understand. Afterward, Tillie heard that Mrs. Sandys was accustomed to taking shines to other people's servants, thus taking the servants (after she'd had a chance to observe their fitness upon practical test) and also saving the money that would otherwise go in the form of intelligence-office commissions.

"At any rate, the trick worked with Tillie. Mrs. Sandys managed things so that she saw Tillie handle a few plates and cups and saucers.

"'What wages do you get here?' asked Mrs. Sandys.

"Tillie told her.

"'But don't you sometimes think,' asked the woman from Rochester, 'that it would be nicer for you if you had a place as a housemaid in a good family?'

"Tillie said that this had not, as a matter of fact, occurred to her.

"'Oh, but I am quite sure it would be nicer,' said Mrs. Sandys. 'You would then have the advantage of a good home among refined surroundings and all that sort of thing, you know.'

"She spoke in her most elegant manner, and her phrases were large in implication. She talked on and on, and Tillie brightened. Was Tillie living in the hotel? No, Tillie was 'living out.' Was it a long

walk to and from work? It was. Hum! Well, the woman from Rochester thought it might just be possible to make a place for Tillie in the Rochester home. And about the wages? Oh, yes, to be sure; about the wages. Well, Mrs. Sandys would offer—did offer—what sounded like very good wages to Mrs. Sandys.

"'But, counting tips, I'm getting a good deal more than that in this place, ma'am,' said the puzzled Tillie.

"'Of course you are, my dear; but you say you're living out—I think you said you were living out?'

"'Yes, ma'am.'

"'Well, with me you will save your lodging and board, and, of course, they will be far superior to what you are getting now. You mustn't forget that, you know, and you mustn't forget the advantages of service in a refined home.'

"So Tillie took the job.

"And what did she find? The Rochester people had a handsome house, but their servants slept in low garrets, badly ventilated. The family ate good food, but its domestics would have to give first-rate reasons why the family's Sunday roast wasn't large enough for the family's cold lunch on Monday and the family's hash at Tuesday's breakfast. Mrs. Sandys knew about as much of administration as she knew of the true economy of labor—which was precisely nothing at all. The 'refinement' of the employers was pretty much limited to occasions when company was present; it certainly had not expended itself in the planning of the servants' quarters; and Tillie's bene-

fits from the ' home life ' were largely gathered while she was making the beds and emptying the slops.

" The family consisted of the father and mother—the former that easy-going type of American husband who considers any interference with household matters as below the dignity of masculinity—a homely daughter, who had her own ideas of what servants should be, and who was far enough beyond the usual marrying age to be generally critical; one son in his middle teens, who wanted to be a deal older, and a small boy and girl of ten and five years, respectively. Each one of these persons, excepting the father, gave orders that perpetually clashed with the orders given by all the others; each individual in the family seemed to consider all the servants as his peculiar and especial property.

" As for the servants, there was a nurse for the children, a cook, a man that combined the duties of gardener and coachman—and Tillie. Because one of these was always being called upon to perform tasks that properly belonged to another, they were in a continuous condition of confusion.

" Tillie, who straightway found that she was expected to wait on table as well as do the regular work of a chambermaid—not to mention helping to wash the dishes—slept in a small room with the cook. The room had one bed, one pitcher and basin, the two trunks of its occupants, and a narrow window. Tillie rose at dawn and was at the call of duty until half an hour after the family went to sleep. She was not permitted to receive visitors on the premises—indeed, there was no room in which she could receive them—and her holidays were a mere farce. She had the

Thursday afternoon and evening ' off ' in one week and the Sunday afternoon and evening ' off ' in the next; she should have had both Thursdays, but she and the cook alternated then so that there would be someone on hand to prepare the Thursday supper. When she did get out she had always to be back by ten o'clock.

" There were other trials, too. The youngest child developed a malignant contagious disease—I think it was scarlet fever—and Tillie was forced to share in the nursing, on peril of losing her job. Then the ten-year-old boy one afternoon flew into a temper and spat in Tillie's face, and, as Tillie seized him by the arm to drag him before the bar of parental justice, parental justice sailed down the hall in the persons of Mrs. Sandys and her spinster daughter.

" ' Good heavens, Tillie! ' shrieked Mrs. Sandys. ' What on earth are you doing to Master James? '

" ' He spat in my face, ma'am,' said Tillie.

" ' I didn't! ' howled Master James.

" ' Yes, he did, ma'am,' persisted Tillie.

" ' She's a liar! ' James cried.

" ' James,' said the spinster sister mildly, ' you shouldn't use such language—really.' Then she turned blazing eyes on Tillie. ' Of course,' she concluded, ' we accept my brother's word.'

" ' And in any event,' supplemented Mrs. Sandys, ' I never permit my servants to correct my children.'

" I could tell you more. There are not a few cases where the ' fall ' of the serving-maid has been brought about by the husband of her employer or by his eldest son, but nothing of that sort occurred in the Sandys house. There Tillie's relations with the lad in his

middle teens consisted of cleaning him and smuggling him upstairs when he came home drunk at night, and of pressing his clothes three times a week.

"The point, however, that I'm making is that Tillie was reduced to a state of poverty. I don't mean financial poverty alone, but other sorts of poverty as well: as poverty of surroundings, poverty of lodgings, poverty of recreation and joy—against which there finally came a perfectly natural reaction that itself was misdirected into evil channels by the conditions that her employers imposed upon her."

The Mere Writer stopped. He leaned back in his chair in the attitude that the lawyer assumes when he has rested his case.

"That's all," he said.

"There's no more?" asked the Statistician.

"Why should there be?" responded the Mere Writer. "The only place that Tillie could meet friends was on the street. She went to the street, and in the end she stayed there. I met her the other night. What do you think of the case?"

"Not typical," said the gray Philanthropist.

"Why not?"

"Because most people don't treat their servants in that way."

"There are many that treat them worse, I grant, but, though the details differ, the large majority of householders don't treat their servants any better."

"I don't agree with you," said the Philanthropist. "Many families have servants' parlors. My servants

have a parlor and friends may see them there—I am quite certain that they may, quite certain."

The Mere Writer smiled.

"Have you any idea," he asked, "how many families employing servants there are in the United States? I'm not asking the Statistician," he hurriedly explained as the Statistician's face lighted to reply; "I'm asking you."

"No," answered the Philanthropist, now wary of traps; "I'm sure I don't know."

"Still, a good many?"

"Yes, of course."

"Many thousands in fact?"

"I suppose so."

"Well, how many of them do you honestly suppose treat their servants as well as you treat yours?"

The Philanthropist fidgeted.

"The Sandys family isn't in the majority," he insisted.

"I'll tell you what sort *is* in the majority," said the Mere Writer, "the sort that, once in a while, runs a bit short and makes its servant wait overtime for her pay."

"I don't believe it," said the Philanthropist.

"Ask the Statistician," suggested the Writer; and, as the Statistician nodded assent, the Writer went on: "Also, barring the native negroes, the majority of domestic servants in our cities and large towns are foreign-born. They are poor, in all the senses that Tillie was poor; they are desperately lonely; they don't know where to look for company and they drift into the wrong sort of places in search of it.

"This brings me to my second story, the story of Lena. I think you'll admit that *it's* typical, anyhow."

The Writer filled his pipe.

"Lena," he began, "worked for a thoroughly respectable and thoroughly well-meaning family in Brooklyn. She began by trying to do the right thing by that family, according to her lights, and the family tried all through to do the right thing by Lena, according to *its* lights. The only trouble was that the family's lights weren't any brighter than the average.

"There were five persons in the family,—let's say their name was Randall,—the father, who earned a fair salary as head of a small department in a big concern; the mother, who thought he ought to earn more and pretty consistently tried to convince her neighbors that he did; one boy, who went to the high school, and two small girls. Lena was the only servant.

"Lena had to get up first and put the fires in order. Then she had to get breakfast for Mr. Randall, whose job roused him pretty early. The theory was that the family should all breakfast together, but, as usual, that theory rarely worked out. The boy had next to be wakened (Lena making several trips from the kitchen range to hammer on his bedroom door), because the high school was a considerable distance from the Randall house. Then came the girls, whose school was closer by. As a rule, Mrs. Randall lay abed and breakfasted after the others had gone. So, though no one breakfast amounted to much, Lena generally had to get a bunch of them every morning,

and, because she had so much to do, she did it on one cup of tea by way of breakfast for herself.

"Then, while Mrs. Randall lingered over her bacon and eggs, there was the daily conference about the marketing.

"'Whatever shall we get for to-day, Lena?' Mrs. Randall would yawn.

"And Lena would suggest something and be told that she was extravagant, and Mrs. Randall would suggest something else and be told that they had had that yesterday.

"It was a difficult problem. Randall made his wife one regular weekly allowance for spending money and another for the marketing, and Mrs. Randall liked to augment the former by economies with the latter. She wasn't a spender, but she liked clothes that were a little better than her husband's salary justified. It seemed to her, too, that money spent on food brought very small return—you could always tell whether a person was well dressed, but who ever knows what a person eats, anyhow? Mrs. Randall's sole difficulty was Mr. Randall; he was what she called 'a hearty eater,' and one of the problems of Lena's life was to establish a working synthesis between Mrs. Randall's economies and Mr. Randall's appetite.

"Still, the mistress was sure that she did not shoulder too much upon the maid. Mrs. Randall herself made the beds and 'did the dusting.'

"Meanwhile, Lena wasn't what you'd call idle. Every weekday she cooked luncheon and dinner as well as the breakfasts. On Monday she did the heavy family washing, Mrs. Randall helping out

by taking care, on that day only, of the dirty dishes. On Tuesdays Lena got through as much of the ironing as her other duties would permit, and that job she finished on Wednesdays. Thursdays were her easiest days; she had Thursday afternoons and evenings free—after she'd got the supper ready in advance, and, of course, with the understanding that she'd wash the dishes on her return at 10 P.M. On Friday she would have to sweep practically the whole house, and on Saturdays she'd bake and scrub. Lastly, there was Sunday, when the family dined at one-thirty on a dinner that required all the earlier part of the day to prepare, and every other Sunday Lena could go out as soon as she had 'cleaned up' the débris of that dinner and 'laid out' a cold supper —much as they lay out a corpse—which, by straining every nerve, sometimes got her clear of the house as early as half-past four, and left her with more dishes to wash when she came back.

"There were always, in fact, dishes to wash before she went to bed, and there was always extra sweeping to do. The little girls would make candy—and leave the dishes. Mr. Randall, en route for sleep, would 'potter around' (it was his own phrase) getting himself a late bite—and leave the dishes. All the children would come into the house with a fine forgetfulness of the doormat, and then, anyhow, there were the front steps and the pavement to be cleaned.

"In short, Lena generally ended her day exhausted.

"There was also a system of fines. When Lena broke a dish, the price of the dish was deducted from

her wages. Wrongly, but not unnaturally, Lena suspected Mrs. Randall of raising the price of all china as fast as it fell to the floor, and so Lena did not always report every smash-up. Moreover, the mistress kept all pies and cakes under her own lock and key—'to keep them from the children,' she explained with a glance toward Lena that Lena didn't miss; once or twice, though the servant always needed her money on pay-day, Mrs. Randall would be a week late in payment, having herself run short; and regularly, before the meat left the table, the head of the house sliced from it as much as he thought Lena ought to consume, while his wife doled out vegetables to the same extent. Many of the cakes that Lena made she never so much as tasted.

"There's no use describing Lena's room. It was just what Tillie's had been, only not half the size. It was cold in winter and hot in summer and close all the year 'round. But you can see by all this about how much of real living fell to Lena's share of existence.

"Besides which, Lena had troubles of her own that Mrs. Randall never dreamed about. Over in a Boston asylum there was the orphan son of the maid's sister, and the maid liked to pinch her pennies to send him trifles. Across the ocean there was Lena's old mother, and, come what might, a regular sum of money had to go into a foreign money-order every month.

"'When you get through the supper dishes,' Mrs. Randall had, at the outset, said to her, 'I suppose you'd like to have a chance to see some friends?'

"'Yes, ma'am,' said Lena.

" 'Very well, I don't object to some of your women friends calling on you in the kitchen then.'

" But Lena had only a few women friends, and these friends being in similar positions, had no more chance to call on Lena than Lena had to call on them, so, when the postman began to smile on her and the milkman evinced signs of an awakening interest, she inquired:

" 'What about gentlemen friends, ma'am?'

" Mrs. Randall hesitated and answered at last according to her conscience.

" 'It wouldn't do,' she said, 'for you to have a lot of men coming here in the evenings, but I suppose there'd be no objection to one if he was really nice.'

" She stopped there, because she suddenly realized that, whereas numbers were not to be thought of, one might spell marriage and rob her of a good servant. Yet she wanted to be just, and she therefore concluded:

" 'But he mustn't come before you are through your work and he must leave before ten o'clock.'

" Lena chose the milkman, and the milkman called regularly once a week for the half-hour permitted. He had a good job and, as Lena was fair-haired and blue-eyed and pretty, he fell in love with her. He meant to marry her, and Lena knew it, only, in the kitchen, even honorable love-making reverses the process of the parlor: it begins with the kisses and approaches the declaration and proposal gradually.

" Of this reversal Mrs. Randall was unaware. One night, the lovers' ardor having driven from their minds all thought of time—quite as if they were

parlor lovers, you see—Mrs. Randall overheard the sound of the milkman's voice from the kitchen at the forbidden hour of half-past ten, and flung open the door to find Lena and her young man kissing.

"Now, Mrs. Randall, I insist, hadn't an unclean mind. She simply, as I've said, didn't understand the etiquette of kitchen love-making, and she was secretly inclined toward the belief that true love does not extend downward to the grade of milkmen. Consequently, she lost her temper. She made charges that sent Lena crying to the garret room, and she so frightened the milkman by the apparent difficulties of his wooing that he never renewed it. Anyhow, after that Mrs. Randall got milk from another wagon, and the milkman never came back."

Again the Mere Writer paused.

"And then?" asked the Philanthropist.

"Oh," said the writer, "the rest of Lena's story is simply the end of Tillie's over again. Lena was a faithful servant and stayed a long time, but at last the whole combination of circumstances forced her into meeting men friends in the streets on her Thursday and Sunday nights out, and one of these friends, assisted by the circumstances of the acquaintanceship, finally deceived her. I call her case typical."

"I don't," said the Philanthropist.

"Seventy-five per cent. of these unfortunate women," began the Statistician, "have records that forbid us to believe them open to forcing either into or out of wickedness. Their records are such as show that the gentler feelings——"

"I saw Lena in the Night-Court a week or so ago," interrupted the Mere Writer reflectively. "She had occasion to hand me a couple of letters addressed to her. Those letters showed that she'd never yet failed either the little orphan in Boston or the old mother across the sea."

XII

THE WOMAN THAT IS BOHEMIAN

AMONG the letters that reached me while these sketches were appearing in serial form was one from a woman in Atlanta, Ga. In it she tells me the story of a girl with whom she was once intimately connected, and she concludes:

"You see how it was with Alice. She is not a 'White Slave,' but it seems to me that she is just as much a danger to society as if she were—perhaps more of a danger than if she were; for, though the White Slave suffers more and is a menace to others, Alice and girls like her, suffering less directly, walk among their fellows and sow seeds of evil when none suspects them. The White Slave is at least known, but the Alices take their victims unaware.

"And yet you must note from what I have written that Alice wasn't altogether to blame. She came to that city clean and unsuspecting. The woman she fell in with was married to a professional man and had a respectable appearance and some friends who were even Society people, or said she had. She took Alice to that bohemian club and taught her to drink.

"Then slowly she taught her other things, and at last turned her over to a young West Virginian who was one of her (I mean the married woman's) lovers whenever he happened to go North on what he called 'business' and left his wife at home.

"I think that whoever is dealing with this whole problem can't afford to leave out of consideration such women as the one I am telling you about and the one that Alice has become. From what I have heard, this sort are increasing in our cities and are spreading harm among a class of girls that would otherwise lead good lives."

Now, with all that my correspondent writes, I do not entirely agree; but in the main she is right. The situation that she describes is a commonplace and an

increasing commonplace. The type is growing and it is at least more insidious than the "White Slave" type. Its passion is to spread evil.

Moreover, my correspondent mentioned the name of the woman that corrupted Alice. Oddly enough, I know that woman.

Should her picture be included in the present gallery? For some time I have thought so; now this letter confirms my opinion. Because her methods are at once so disastrous and so insidious—because they threaten a grade of society usually supposed to be exempt—they should be revealed. So, changing names and places—even substituting one or two minor incidents for other incidents similar, but not precisely the same—I shall tell you something of this woman's history. It may be that some day I shall have to tell it all; but that would mean a novel—and one which I am loath to undertake.

Only a few months since I met her again, this woman that I had last seen as a young wife, in Mansfield, O. I had been a small boy on the previous occasion; seventeen or eighteen years had passed, and time had done much with her; but she had done more with herself.

I remembered, in a flash, her wedding day. I remembered her as she came up the aisle on her proud father's arm. She was tall, then, slim, and erect, with a perfectly proportioned, willowy figure, her fine dark hair waving under the filmy bridal veil, her brown eyes large and clear and true. In Mansfield they used always to say that she had "style"; but here in Pittsburgh——

Her father had made what was considered almost

a fortune in the War of the Rebellion; he sold mules to the government, and he was the sort of patriot that does not mind cheating his country. The old stock-farmer evolved a scheme whereby he could sell the same mule twice. Perhaps it was because he repented that old Lozier took to drink. Anyhow, he did take to it, and some of her friends said that Martha boasted of forcing the whisky upon him until he was sufficiently mellow to surrender some extra money.

I heard that Martha's marriage was not happy. Somebody told me that she returned to Mansfield with her daughter and gave it out that Conroy, her husband, was dead. Once she went away to live in Paris and came back with stories of her life there that rather shocked her old friends. She developed, at any rate, a liking for companions a great deal younger than herself, and, until he married a placid nonentity from a local boarding-school, there was a good deal of gossip concerning her affair with young Billy Eward, whose people, though they lived in Piedmont, had always been friends of the Loziers.

Yet it was with the still married Eward that I met her just as she was coming out of the Duquesne café.

She was not the girl that I had seen married that day in Mansfield. She was a little stooped now and what had once been slimness was become scrawny angularity. Under the ridiculous hat that was designed for a woman fifteen years her junior, her hair, dry and brittle, was touched with gray, and one loose strand wandered vaguely over eyes that were dull, bloodshot, and shifty. She had been drinking, and her cheeks were flushed, but the rest of her face was

the color of putty and the outer skin seemed separated from the under.

"Mrs. Conroy?" I ventured, half in doubt of her identity.

She laughed, displaying the faintly yellowing teeth of the woman that has been cultivating cigarettes.

"Not that for ever so long," she said. "I'm Mrs. Dominic now."

I did not press the point; I could feel her mentally retreat from it.

"And are you living in Pittsburgh?" I asked of Eward.

"I am," said Mrs. Dominic.

But Eward also answered.

"Oh, no!" he said. "*I'm* only stopping off here on my way to New York on business."

I reflected that Pittsburgh was a strange stopping place for a Piedmont man en route for New York, and then I noticed that Eward was winking at me over his companion's shoulder. He had a face with skin like sandpaper, wide nostrils, and eyes that blinked like a satyr's.

"Billy always stops to see his old friends when he's going to New York on business," laughed the woman.

We chatted for a moment more on the curb, and then Eward plucked furtively at my coat-tail.

"Mrs. Dominic has to get away to a tea," he said. "We mustn't keep her any longer. Walk along to the Fort Pitt with me and have a drink."

The woman bowed.

"At six o'clock, then," she said to Eward, and turned away.

The West Virginian gave a great sigh of relief.

"I thought I'd never shake her," he said. "She can drink more than any man I know, but, once she gets her claws on you, she'll never let go."

"Then, of course," I suggested, "you'll not get into touch with her this evening?"

"Of course I will. I've got to. I'm afraid of her. She'd make trouble for me with my wife. I've been trying to break this thing off for three years and I haven't managed it yet."

"What about her own husband?"

"Who? Dominic? Oh, he's a good fellow, but he's afraid of her, too. Besides, he has an affair of his own; everybody but his wife knows that."

"What's his business?"

"His business is being Mrs. Dominic's husband, and that's trouble enough for one man. He would have made a good lawyer once, but Mrs. D. taught him to drink. Now his practice is a joke. He comes of good people, but they couldn't stand for his marriage, so Martha deals him out a share of the allowance that her father sends her, and, of course, poor Eddie can't quarrel with his meal ticket."

Eward told me more. Some of it I could not at the time believe, but much of it I afterward found to be true not only of Mrs. Dominic in this city, but of other women like her in other cities. Martha's passions had devoured her, but still continued to flame. While she maintained upon one hand the fiction of an acquaintance with the extreme and ragged fringes of "Society," on the other she indulged without stint a craving for making younger women into what she had herself become.

"She has three divorces now to her credit," said Eward, "and I know of two girls on the streets that would never have been there if they hadn't fallen in with Martha."

"Why does she do it?"

"I don't know; but I've met several like her. All people that are bad like to think all other people are bad. Well, Martha doesn't stop at thinking it; she shows 'em the way and provides the men."

"In cold blood?"

"No; that wouldn't work, and she likes to play the long game. That's her interest in life. She's the chief figure in a little club she got up—a club that calls itself bohemian—and it's there that she generally operates. Then she'll take up young girls, mostly from out of town—girls that are studying at the Institute, or working and living by themselves, and lonesome girls and dissatisfied girls—and she'll be a real friend to them for just so long, and, before they know it, they're on their way."

"Hasn't she any regrets?"

Eward laughed—a short, ugly laugh.

"You don't know Martha," he answered: "she says they're free agents."

"But surely——"

"Oh, sometimes something happens to upset her a bit. Something happened this afternoon. That's why she's early lighting up to-day. She generally doesn't light up very much before five-thirty."

We were seated at a café table now. He leaned back and put a match to his cigar.

"I'll tell you how it was," he said. "I got it straight from her."

"Do you think you ought to tell me?"

Eward flushed quickly.

"I think," he said, "that the whole world ought to know. Just you listen for five minutes and see if you don't agree with me. Mind you, Martha's only one of a type."

He blew a long ring of blue smoke.

"Out in Cleveland," he began, "there was a little girl named Mervin—Dolly Mervin. She was good to look at and pleasant to talk to, but she wasn't a howling beauty and she wasn't a genius—just a nice, good sort of girl.

"As I see it, the fault of the thing was Martha and nobody else. Nothing would have gone wrong if it hadn't been for Martha. Still, Dolly's parents, as I happen to know, didn't altogether understand their daughter, and I dare say they made home anything but lively. They'd married late in life and they'd forgotten their own childhood. Then, too, they hadn't any children but Dolly, so she didn't get the benefit of their experience with an elder brother or sister and she didn't have any brother or sister for company.

"Fact is, she didn't have any company at all. Her parents couldn't see why she needed any. They were home every night; they considered each other good company, and, of course, they thought that Dolly ought to concur in their opinion. You know the sort of a household it was; the land's full of 'em.

"I don't mean that Dolly didn't have friends at the public school, or that she didn't once in a while go out to a friend's house. She did; but she didn't go

anything like as much as she should have gone, and she hated to be under social obligations, because her own home was kept so quiet that she wasn't allowed to repay 'em. So most of the time she just stopped indoors and practiced on the piano.

"That sort of thing went on till she had graduated from the high school. She hadn't been a brilliant student, so she was nineteen years old at that time, and I give you my word that she was absolutely ignorant of at least half of the fundamental facts of her own make-up. What she did have in place of any such knowledge was a tremendous desire to get out of the life she had been leading, to see real life, to go about, to be like other people and to be among them.

"That and her piano. She showed a real talent for music. She loved music and wanted to make it her profession. I don't know enough about such things to say for sure whether she'd have made a concert soloist of herself or only a piano teacher; but I remember that one of the big guns in the Pittsburgh Orchestra told me that she'd have a fine chance if she could only get proper instruction. Anyhow, music was her chance, and she worked it until her father agreed to send her here to study and told her that if she did well he'd try to raise enough cash to give her a course in Europe.

"Well, Dolly came to Pittsburgh and worked hard, and because she'd never had an opportunity to learn how to make friends, the first part of her stay here was even more lonely than those nineteen years in Cleveland had been. She just ate her heart out until she met a fellow-student that had recently been

taken up by Mrs. Dominic—by Martha—and so Martha took up Dolly.

"It was Martha's old game. Martha had Dolly to tea at her little home—eminently respectable, you know, with a few casual references to some swells that Martha always pretends are intimate acquaintances of hers, and with a light word or two about one young man or another—myself, most likely, among them—and theater-parties and excursions and gay dinners. Precisely enough to make Dolly's eyes sparkle and to whet her appetite.

"That sort of thing was kept up for a while, and then the Dominics had Dolly to their 'bohemian' club. Of course it wasn't bohemian. The essence of bohemianism is unconsciousness; the minute you try to become a bohemian, you cease to be one—you become something else that I won't name—and the Dominics always tried hard. But Dolly didn't know this. She didn't know that the soup was poor, the lobster a cold-storage crustacean, the lamb aged mutton, and the claret vinegar. All she knew was that there were lots of lights and lots of people and that the lights were bright and that all the people seemed happy and kindly.

"'Let's have a cocktail,' said Martha, as they sat down. 'I'm nearly dead for one.'

"'I don't think I care for any,' said Dolly.

"'Why not?'

"'Well, you see, father never approved of drinking.'

Martha raised her eyebrows in that way she has of showing incredible scorn.

"'So you've never tasted a cocktail?'

" 'No.'

" 'Te-he!' laughed Martha. 'What do you think of that, Eddie?'

"And poor, dough-faced Eddie said, 'Ho-ho!'—as he was expected to do.

" 'It's nonsense!' said Martha. 'It might be all right while you're a little girl at home; but here we're all grown up and bohemian. Don't you think you're old enough to take care of yourself?'

"So Dolly took the cocktail. She took some of the red vinegar, too, and pretty soon her shyness fell from her, and she was as gay as any of the others, and some of Martha's tired-eyed young boy friends were attentive, and Dolly had a splendid time.

"On her next visit to the club, Martha offered her a cigarette, but Dolly hesitated.

" 'Now, don't be a goose, dear,' said Martha. 'The cocktail and the claret didn't hurt you, did they?'

" 'No-o-o,' admitted Dolly.

" 'Well, then, a cigarette certainly won't. Why shouldn't you smoke? Where's the harm in it? We all smoke. Women all smoke nowadays.'

"You see the process. The trouble with Dolly was that she didn't see it. Martha just shoved her gently along, week by week, enjoying the game, while Dolly was always thinking that she was seeing life at last and that Mrs. Dominic was 'simply lovely' to her.

"When Martha judged that the time was ripe, she got Eddie to propose a trip. It was a great idea! They would organize a little party, run across the

state to Philadelphia on Friday night and go down to Atlantic City for Saturday and Sunday.

"'Won't it cost a great deal?' faltered Dolly.

"'Yes, it would cost a little bit of money.'

"'Then I'm afraid I can't go,' said Dolly, who had always wanted to see the ocean.

"Martha considered.

"'Have you enough for carfare?' she asked.

"'I've saved a little of my allowance. I think I have enough for that.'

"'Well, then, we'll attend to the hotel expenses. I tell you what we'll do, Eddie. We'll get Willis Sadler to be the host. He gave us a party down there last year. He's got lots of money and he always wants a good time. Besides, he's in Harrisburg now.'

"They arranged it that way. Sadler, whom Dolly had never seen before, but who seemed to be very intimate with Martha, met them on the way. He wired to a big hotel for rooms, and they all had a long dinner in Atlantic City along the ocean front, with cocktails and champagne—and highballs to follow. Then, somehow, Sadler and Dolly lost the Dominics in the crowd on the board-walk, and, when they got to the hotel, the girl, in a placid haze, found that Martha and Eddie had been given rooms on the other side of the house and that Sadler's room communicated with hers.

"That started things. The girl considered herself lost; her whole training of silence was of the kind that implicitly teaches that, once the great step is taken, there is no means of turning back. She went ahead. At last the music conservatory got on to it and fired her. Meantime, Martha had had

enough of her company. Dolly was afraid to go home—so she went to the dogs."

Eward stopped in his story. He threw away the butt of his cigar.

"Is that all?" I asked.

"Not quite," he said. "You saw how Martha was tanking up this afternoon? Well, she's afraid that Eddie's cousin's political pull may not be strong enough."

"I don't follow you."

"Eddie has a cousin in politics here."

"Yes?"

"Well, this afternoon a house was pinched, and Dolly was among the inmates."

"She's locked up?"

"Sure she is."

"And Martha's depending on Eddie's cousin to get her out?"

"Not much! Martha'd like her to stay there forever. You see, there was a preliminary hearing, and Dolly opened up and told the whole story of how she started wrong—and the names of the people that started her. What's making Martha sick is the danger of publicity. She's got Eddie's cousin on the job of using his political pull to keep the papers quiet."

"Can he do it?"

Eward looked at his watch.

"I don't know," he said. "' Of course that talk about Martha having a tea-engagement was bluff. She's at her home, and she made me promise to call her up at six, so's she could tell me if there was any

news. It's a quarter after now. She'll raise Cain because I'm late—she always does."

He went to a telephone-booth. In a few minutes he returned, smiling bitterly.

"It's all right," he said.

"The papers will keep quiet?"

"Yes, more's the pity."

"So Martha's had another escape?"

"She has; and she's as happy as a lark."

"And what about Dolly "

"Oh—Dolly hanged herself in her cell a half-hour ago."

XIII

THE GIRL THAT KILLED

THE warden looked up from his desk.

"What prisoner do you want to see?" he asked.

"Bertha Dixon," I answered.

"Why?"

"She sent for me."

"You'll need an order."

I produced my order.

The warden read it with puckered brows. He appeared for the moment to suspect me of forgery.

"This *seems* correct," he said.

"I have every reason to believe the district attorney was quite sane when he gave it me."

"All right. Only it's very unusual—very unusual, indeed." He pressed a button. A turnkey entered. "Take this man up to see J 709," said the warden.

We climbed the iron stairs. We turned down one corridor and up another—a maze, as it seemed to me, of straight, long corridors—our feet ringing on the iron flags. Except for that noise, the place was as quiet as a tomb. It was as white as a tomb, too. But it was oppressive with the sense of crowded dumb life.

We went along more corridors—more stairs—more corridors. We passed cell after cell—row upon row of cells. The prison, from the outside, had appeared so small; now I thought there was no limit to it.

At last one corridor ended abruptly in a studded portal. This the turnkey unlocked and opened. He thrust in his head.

"It's all right, Charley," he said. "Gentleman with an order to see J 709."

He pushed me ahead of him and clanged the door behind me. The bolts shot into place with a great, metallic clash. I was in another corridor, with cells on one side only. Two more turnkeys were seated at a table, playing cards, just in front of one of the cells. Ahead of me was another door—a small, rather inoffensive-looking door. I knew now where I was. That other door led to the electric chair; the two turnkeys were the death watch; I was in the condemned cells.

J 709 was under sentence of death. She sat on the iron bed in her narrow, whitewashed cell. Her hands were clasped in the folds of her black dress, on her lap. She had beautiful hands. I have never seen hands more beautiful. They were narrow, long, and very white. The nails were pink and naturally almond-shaped. From the wrist to the end of the middle finger the lines were perfect. There was the faint tracery of blue veins on the backs of the hands. They had an appearance of extreme delicacy, and yet —I can think of no other way to put it—they gave you, also, the impression of great strength.

Bertha Dixon's figure was straight and slim and supple. She had, even in her frequent gestures, a grace of movement that was like music: it was spontaneous mathematics. Her face was oval and, with the prison pallor on it, spiritual. She had a calm, broad forehead, and level, steady, understanding, and

forgiving gray eyes. She had always strangely reminded me of Leonardo's Mona Lisa. She reminded me more than ever of it now. This was the woman that, on the morrow, was going to die.

* * * * * * *

"You sent for me?" I said awkwardly. I did not know what to say. "It was kind of you to think of me."

I don't know what I meant by that last sentence; but I recall saying it, and then standing there, helpless, before her.

"Yes," she said quite calmly. "I wanted to see you. I wanted to talk to you. Don't call it kind of me to send for you. It was kind of you, rather, to have come. Won't you sit down?"

She motioned toward the single chair in her cell, with the air of a woman that receives a caller in her drawing-room. I sat down.

"Well," she said—it was quite as if she were discussing an abstract problem—"it is nearly finished."

I was possessed of a devil that bade me give her lying comfort.

"Don't say that," I platitudinously faltered. "While there's life there's hope. Perhaps the Governor——"

She smiled.

"Oh, no," she said. "I hope not. I sincerely hope not. Indeed, I'm quite sure there isn't a chance in the world. And I don't want that chance."

"You don't mean that you want——"

I couldn't finish the sentence, but she finished it for me.

"To die?" said she. "Why not? My life was broken at its beginning. Somebody broke it. Then I delivered the final blow myself. Anything more would be anti-climax. I have filled all the space that was assigned me. I have completed things. I don't want to be a patched vase."

"Don't speak so!" I pleaded.

"Why not? It is the truth, and surely if one is ever to tell the truth, this is one of the rare occasions. You wonder why I sent for you, don't you?"

"If there is anything that I can do—anything—I sha'n't wonder for an instant."

"You can listen. Thank you; but you can only listen. After all, that is a good deal. When one reaches the moment that I have reached, a good listener is one's best friend. You asked me, that night at Sharkey's, to tell you my story. I wouldn't. The time wasn't ripe. But now it is. I've waited; I've remembered. Now the time is ripe—and so I have sent for you. You put me in your debt—deeply in your debt—by coming. Listen."

* * * * * * *

This is what she told me—the girl that was going to die:

"I was born into what is called a good family. I believe they all say that—all the women that are what I am; but as I am to go out of the world tomorrow, there is really no reason for me to lie as to the manner of my coming into it. My father had some money and a great deal of family pride. He was a banker in a rather large town in Maryland, and until I was nineteen I was what is called well edu-

cated. I was brought up to everything I wanted. I was expected by my father to be the best dressed girl in the place. When riding was the fashion, I had the finest pony; when motors came in, he bought me my own runabout. I didn't have to ask for things; I had only to say that I liked them, and they were bought for me. It was impressed on me—not by words, perhaps, but certainly by the far more effective method of example—that all this was as it should be; that it was almost a part of the Divine plan that my people had always been *the* people of our town and should always so remain.

"Then, quite without warning—father never talked of business with the family, and even now I have no idea how it all happened—came the smash. So far as ever I could make out, father woke up one morning as well-to-do as ever, and went to bed that night—if he did go to bed, poor dear!—a ruined man. Immediately everything changed. Perhaps I had better say that everything went. The horses went, the carriages, the two motors, the house, joy, contentment—they seemed to me to all go together. Everything but pride. Somehow, father, who hated farming, retained a little farm—it was probably mortgaged—on the outskirts of the town. We went there to live. At any rate, we went there to remain alive.

"But we took our pride along. Our pride appeared to grow in inverse ratio as everything else shrank. We were still the—— Well, Dixon naturally isn't my real name, but we'll call it that. We were still The Dixons. Mother had become a nervous invalid from the shock. Father, since he couldn't

show himself 'properly'—that was his way of putting it—would scarcely ever leave the farm. He soon made it clear that, for a similar reason, he didn't want me, his nineteen-year-old daughter, to leave it either.

"There were dances; but I wasn't allowed to go to them, because I couldn't go 'properly.' There were picnics; but I had to stay at home, because I couldn't go in the clothes that I could once have gone in. Because we could no longer afford to subscribe to the tennis club, I mustn't put myself under obligations to my inferiors by accepting their invitations to play there. I mustn't accept any invitations, indeed, because I was in no position to return hospitality. Visitors weren't welcome at the farm; we did not want our poverty spied upon.

"All this, remember, happened to a girl that had been sent to expensive schools and taught to cultivate expensive tastes. Don't think that I am blaming my father. I am blaming nothing but the state of affairs that made him possible—and me. I always loved my father, even when I couldn't sympathize with his point of view; and as for all other personal animosities, I ended them with the act that brought me—here.

"I had been engaged to be married. I had even been in love with my fiancé. We were both young, but my father had approved, because the man in the case, though poor, came of a family that was almost as good—oh, not quite, of course! that was impossible! but almost as good—as ours. When the crash came, the first thing I thought about was Jack. I thought he would come and console me. But he

didn't. He didn't put in an appearance for two weeks and more—not until we had established ourselves and the new order of things at the farm.

" 'He'll not come at all,' said my father.

" I almost cried.

" 'He will come!' I said. 'Don't be so unjust to him! He doesn't like to trespass on our sorrow.'

" 'He doesn't want to share our poverty,' my father corrected.

" But I was angry now.

" 'You don't know him,' I said. 'I do. Just you wait.'

" So we waited—for two weeks.

" Then Jack appeared.

" The minute I saw him I knew that father had been right.

" Jack talked all around the subject, but he came to it at last. He pointed out that he had nothing but his salary in the other bank—the only remaining bank in the town; that this was not enough to support us both in the manner in which our positions demanded that we should be supported; that we had both gone into our engagement on an hypothesis that had been shattered, and that, in short, we were at the end of it.

" I blamed him then, but I don't now. Now I see that he was only telling a hard truth. If we had married on his prospects, we should both have been wretchedly unhappy. As it was, he married the daughter of a newer but more prosperous family, and only one of us was unhappy. Jack was right. I went through the period of rebellion and sank into the period of solitary despair.

" Then George put in an appearance. He was

the son of one of the town's minor merchants, and so he hadn't moved very much in what we used to call Our Set. Besides, he was nearly thirty years old. But now everything was topsy-turvy with me. When he met me one day in a lane near the farm and was just as respectful as he had ever been—when he treated me as I had begun to forget I could be treated—I came slowly to like him.

"We met often. I didn't tell father about it, because father would have said that George was beneath me; but I came to care more and more for George. I knew that people used to say that George didn't have a very good reputation, but I judged him—if I really could be said to judge him at all—only by what I saw. In the end he made love to me, and I was so utterly desolate and lonely and so hungry for all the happiness I had been used to that I thought I loved him.

"Father found it out. He found it out, through the gossip of some farmhand, on the afternoon of a day on the evening of which I had one of my usual appointments to meet George. There was an awful scene. Father accused me of the lowest sort of things—things that I had hardly known ever existed—and I went to my bedroom and cried myself to sleep. But that night I stole out of the farmhouse and kept my appointment. I told George everything—everything.

"He comforted me. He said he loved me better than anything else in the world. Of course, he said, he had no decent income and marriage looked very dim and distant; but, after all, we were engaged. We had been judged guilty (without a fair trial)

of what hadn't so much as entered our heads—and all the time (so George put it) we were just as good as married.

"I see now that what happened was what, given the circumstances, was simply inevitable. But the result! I needn't tell you what I went through when at last I came to guess it—the doubts and fears and shame. There was a terrible meeting with George—terrible! I had been hanging over the edge of a precipice for weeks and weeks, and the only thing I had to cling to was my faith in George.

"'I don't believe I'm responsible for it,' said George. 'It's some other fellow.'

"I think I nearly fainted. I don't know what I began by saying. I remember all sorts of anger and tears, protestations and accusations. But I know that, at last, I said I should go straight home, write a letter to father telling him about George, and then jump into the pond. I meant it, too.

"I suppose that scared him. I don't know.

"'Look here!' he said. 'You must see that we can't get married; we'd have nothing to live on.'

"I remembered Jack. I said I supposed George was correct.

"'So that what you want,' said George, 'is to be saved from any disgrace.'

"Somehow or other he got me to agree with him. He said he knew a doctor in Baltimore. It may have been a doctor. I never knew for sure. He said the thing was perfectly simple.

"Of course I was crazy. I was mad with mental agony. I honestly have only the most fragmentary recollections of that trip to Baltimore and my return

to the farm. I know now that hundreds of women die every year from such things; I only knew then that the day after I got back to the farm I began to undergo tortures that were beyond anything I had thought the human body could survive and that left me a physical wreck for the rest of my life.

"I wanted to die. I prayed to die. But I didn't die. I got well. And, the day that I left my room, I found out that father knew what had happened.

"I said I was crazy before. If I was, the form of my mania changed now. I called up George on the telephone—he hadn't so much as telephoned to find out how I was getting on the whole time I'd been ill—and I told him I wanted to see him. I could tell by his voice that he had detected in mine something that frightened him.

"'I'm too busy,' he said. 'Wait till to-night. Wait till some other time.'

"'Not a minute,' I said. 'I want to see you now.'

"I went upstairs—tottering—to get my hat. As I came down, my mother was at the door of her room.

"'Where are you going?' she asked.

"'I'm going to see George Livsey,' I told her.

"She flung up her hands. I'll never forget her face.

"'Then it's true!' she said. 'Your father wouldn't tell me—but it's true!'

"She dropped over in a faint. I telephoned for the doctor, and as soon as he came he said it was serious.

"'Heart disease,' he said.

" But when we had made mother comfortable and the nurse had come, I went to see George.

" ' I am nineteen years old,' I said, ' and you are thirty. You have ruined my life. Unless we are married—I know you don't care for me, but you can be honest and stick to your bargain—you can be a man if you try. I know I don't care for you, but you can make me care for you if you'll be straight with me, and you'll never have any cause to complain of me, anyhow.'

" ' And what do you want? ' he asked.

" ' I want you to marry me,' I answered.

" He started to smile.

" ' Don't laugh! ' I warned him. ' I want to save my mother's life and my father's brain and my own reputation.'

" ' You haven't any reputation left,' he said. ' The whole town knows what was the matter with you.'

" ' The whole town,' I said, ' is the sort of a town that believes reputations can be repaired by marriage.'

" ' We'd be too poor.'

" ' I'd be not much poorer than I am now, and I'd help you all I could. We should make out somehow.'

" He begged for a day in which to think it over.

" ' You may have it,' I told him; ' but if you kill my mother and father and don't try to make up for what you have done, I'll—I'll kill you, George.'

" I remember I said it very quietly.

" That night my mother died and the next morning my father shot himself. When it was over and I had a little time to think, I tried to find George. He

had left town. They thought he had gone to New York. At any rate, he had run away.

* * * * * * *

"Well, I came to New York, too. The creditors got the farm; the insurance had all gone in loans and things; there was practically nothing left for me. I was almost penniless; even if I had wanted to stay in our town, it would have been about impossible for me to do so, because the gossips had guessed at the truth about me, and where I wasn't an object of the scorn that is either pitying or horrified, I was the object of that kind of scorn which prompts a common type of male animal to offer an insulting companionship. So, I say, I went to New York with just a few dollars between me and nothing.

"I had found out from some of George's friends about where he was. He had a place as clerk in a Broadway haberdasher's shop. I think I was quite mad. Anyhow, I went to the shop to see him. He was sorting a lot of neckties when I came in, and he nearly dropped them when he saw me. I dare say that by this time I looked like a ghost.

"I said, 'Good-morning, George.'

"He got quite white.

"'Keep your voice down,' he said. 'Somebody'll hear you. Do you want me to lose my job? What do you mean by following me to New York? What do you mean by coming to my place of business?'

"'What did you mean,' I asked, 'by running away?'

"I repeated to him what I had said at our last meeting. He absolutely discarded me. He said I

had been a bad woman before ever he knew me well—he knew that was a lie—and he literally ordered me into the street. I must have spoken loudly. I don't know. Anyhow, the proprietor of the shop came up, and as I went out I heard George telling his employer that I was a low woman that he had met at a Fourteenth Street café and that I had been trying to extort money from him.

"Although this was the last insult, it also gave me an idea. I had nearly tried to kill George in that shop, but I hadn't the courage—or what I then called courage. Now the thing that he had said to his employer suggested how I could keep from starving—if I decided not to starve—and how, in any event, I could hide my identity. I came back to the neighborhood of the shop that afternoon, and when George quit work I followed him—he didn't see me—to find out where he lived. I found that he had rooms in a boarding-house on East Thirty-second Street.

"Oh, yes, I must have been mad. I went down to Fourteenth Street that evening. I took a little room in a house that one of the girls I met told me about. I really tried to be a bad woman—really tried—and I couldn't do it. I just couldn't bring myself to it.

* * * * * * *

"Well, then, I said that there was only the one thing left. Of course I know that almost any killing is wrong—now. Of course I know that it is usually worse than wrong; that it is useless. George is dead now, but what have I gained? Revenge? He was sure to have suffered more if I had let him live out

his own destiny. Did I save other girls from him? Not enough to count while there are so many men like him. I don't regret what is going to happen to me, but the whole thing seems such a waste. Have I brought my father and mother back to life? If I had escaped—and you know I didn't try to escape—would I have been any better off because I had killed George? That's what I see now. But then I saw nothing except what he had done to me.

" That and one thing more. I saw that, after what he had said to his employer about me, and after I had been seen in a couple of the Fourteenth Street cafés, people would believe it was just a low murder by a low woman and my real name would never have to appear. As things turned out, I was right.

" So I waited for George. I waited several days. I waited till my money was all but gone. Then I remembered that I hadn't a weapon. I hadn't enough left for a good revolver, and, anyhow, I wanted no mistakes, so I bought a knife. I am not a good shot. I know so little about revolvers.

" At last, one night, I saw him come out of his boarding-house. I stopped him at the corner.

" ' You again? ' he said. ' If you don't let me alone, I'll have you pinched for soliciting me on the street.'

" ' I'm hungry,' I told him. ' I want you to buy me a dinner.'

" He laughed at that.

" ' You wanted a good deal more the last time I saw you,' he said. ' Now you're getting more sensible.'

" I knew what he thought, but I didn't answer.

We hailed a closed taxicab, and, though there was snow on the ground, I asked him to give me a ride through Central Park before we ate anything. He agreed. By the time we had got to the upper end of the park and turned back, it was dark and the lamps along the roads weren't sufficient to light the inside of the taxi.

"'George,' I said, 'I want to give you one more chance.'

"He swore at me.

"'Are you going to begin that?' he asked.

"I was going to begin it. If necessary, I was going to end it, too. We went all over it. I argued; he stormed. At the end, he told me once and for all that he was done with me. He said he would have me arrested if I ever spoke to him again. He said he was going to stop the taxi and get out. And then he struck me across the face.

"I drew the knife.

"He never knew what I was doing. He never knew what happened to him.

"I struck hard—once, twice—ever so many times. He merely gurgled and slumped back in the seat. The taxi kept whirring on through the park. I struck and kept on striking till I was exhausted. My hand ached with the strain. So did my arm. I stopped. My hand was wet.

"I stopped the taxi.

"'Drive to the nearest police station,' I said. 'I have just killed this man.'"

XIV

THE WOMAN THAT SUCCEEDED

WE had been talking it over, my friend and I, late into the night. As my friend is what is called a "man of the world," it was certain that sooner or later he would say:

"Oh, the trouble with you is that you're neglecting one entire side of the problem! Of course it's terrible that either physical force or material circumstances should drive women into such a business, and that the women so driven should be the prey of hideous illnesses and should spread those illnesses; but I know enough to be sure of one thing, and that is that some women go wrong because they deliberately prefer to go wrong."

When he said that, I answered:

"About one in a thousand."

"So few?"

"Of their own uninfluenced choice—yes. The statistics prove it; but even if the statistics didn't prove it, I have too good an opinion of womanhood to set the figure higher."

"All right, say one in a thousand. Why leave them out of your calculations? Of the sort that go wrong because they want to go wrong, some, so far as money-making is concerned, must make a success of their lives."

"So far as money-making is concerned, there are

some girls, even among those forced into the business by circumstances, that make what you call a success."

"How many?"

"Say one in four thousand five hundred."

"Why not more?"

"Because the overwhelming majority have to turn over their earnings to the man or woman that owns them; because, for the rest, the necessary expenses of the business exceed its income; because the life cultivates habits that drain the purse, that drain the health; because ninety-odd per cent. are mathematically sure to contract one of the maladies of their profession; because the average length of existence in their business is just about five years."

"Still," my friend persisted, "there is your one in four thousand five hundred."

"Yes," I said, "there she is. In fact, I knew a woman that went wrong by what she thought was her free choice, and she made money and saved it."

"I should like to hear about her," said my friend.

"Very well," said I; and I told him the story of somebody that I shall here call Penelope Burgess.

Pen—in those days, six years ago, it was the smart thing to be able to address her by an abbreviation—came, so far as any of us could learn, of an untainted stock. Hers was a New England family—New England of the sort that has settled in Minneapolis and is unfriendly to St. Paul. I suppose that, indirectly, you could find economic influences at work upon her, as you can find them in all cases; but I am regarding, just now, only primary influences. Anyhow, her father was by no means badly off, her home life was pleasant, and Pen was sent to what

everybody considered a good school. Yet, without any reason that appeared on the surface—indeed, for no other reason, she always declared, save that she "felt like it"—the girl ran away and went on the stage.

Like most young girls that run away to go on the stage, Pen had no aptitude for the theater. She did, however, have two attributes that, otherwise employed, would have been admirable. Otherwise employed. They were pluck and beauty; but this girl used them in her own way. Her pluck kept her from communicating with her family, so that if they ever felt inclined to take her back, they never had the chance; and her beauty—she was petite and blonde; rather pretty, in fact, than beautiful, but very pretty—her beauty, since men called it that, got her a wide reputation under her stage-name, guaranteed her engagements, and secured her a little army of male admirers.

So she found that talent was unnecessary. There was no novitiate of barn-storming for Pen, none of the agonies of one-night stands, never the trial of being stranded in Parksburg or Youngstown. Pen began her career as The Great Exception. She went to Broadway, and, save for a few "two-week runs" in Boston, Chicago, and perhaps even Philadelphia, on Broadway she remained. If you were at college in those days, and if I told you her name, you would remember how you bought her photograph and put it on your mantelpiece, and how you forged her signature upon it in order that your classmates might think she gave it you.

Well, Pen became the vogue. Not a star, you

understand—even with a theater-going public such as ours, some vocal quality, some modicum of dramatic ability is required for that—but the vogue, nevertheless. The audiences saw that she was decorative, and the managers saw that the audiences saw it. She appeared upon the programmes of all the successful musical comedies, and, though she was neither musical nor a comédienne, she was distinctly a figure. She also drew one—a somewhat more than comfortable salary.

Now, when the average girl reaches such a position on the stage, the average girl keeps it until she marries somebody with more money than she can earn; but Pen was by no means—and that is the whole point of my friend's contention—an average woman. She had offers of marriage—a lot of them—and several were financially flattering; but Pen said she was her own mistress and preferred to remain so. She had more offers of another sort, still more financially flattering; but to these she also replied that she meant to be her own mistress. And these things directly increased her popularity, and so indirectly increased her salary. Well-known dressmakers contended to give her elaborate gowns, because they knew that the women in her audiences would dress as she did and where she did. One season she set the fashion with a new coiffure. And the next somebody named a cigar for her. This last secured her fame.

But for such a woman the New York restaurants are an important factor—and such a woman is an important factor for the New York restaurants. They are interdependent. It is generally necessary to the woman's special sort of popularity that she

sup at elaborate cafés, and it is always necessary to the popularity of the elaborate cafés that such women appear there.

This is sober truth. Consider the river that is Broadway. Consider its tributaries. Consider these streams, the one great and the many scarcely smaller, as they hiss and bubble, in the white night-lights, through the theater district. Along those few miles of curb, their shores are thicker sprinkled with playhouses than are any two blocks of London's Shaftesbury Avenue—more playhouses, one would almost say, than there are castles to be seen along the whole length of the Rhine. Well, for each theater there are half a dozen expensive restaurants, and on the amount of money that it costs to run one restaurant for one night your neighbor's family could live for three years in its accustomed comfort. In this field of industry the laws of competition still work well-nigh unimpaired. Directed by them, the proprietors' life staggers along the endless verge of bankruptcy. It proceeds by two rules only: each place must have more elaborate decorations, plate, food—if you care to call it food—than the last, and each must secure the patronage of the class that restaurateurs like to look at while they eat.

It happened that, just as Pen's popularity reached its zenith, the popularity of Mr. John Hewett showed signs of an approaching eclipse. To return to our preceding metaphor, his business was half-way over the cliff of bankruptcy and sliding farther.

John Hewett was his real name. On the gilt menus of his gilded restaurant he appeared as "Jean Huette," and to the white-waistcoated young-old

men that signed their bills there (and did not pay them) he was fondly known as "Jennie." He had made a good thing of the dining-room in his wife's boarding-house in West Forty-Something Street. They had opened a "French table d'hôte café" a score of blocks northward and saved money; then, left a widower and residuary legatee, John had, in an evil moment, been lured into borrowing a small fortune and moving his place of business into a newly erected Doge's palace around the corner on Broadway. The race with destruction had begun immediately, and was now, it seemed, about to end.

"If I could only get the crowd!" he wailed to his lawyer.

He was a frail little man, with a weak face and a waxed mustache, and he had no end of confidence in the legal bulldog that growled him occasional advice at ten dollars per interview.

"That's easy," said the lawyer. "That Broadway crowd doesn't know any more about good food than it knows about good wines. Change the label, and they'll believe that St. Marcel is a dry champagne."

"I've tried that," faltered John.

"I know it—I've dined at your place. What I mean is that this crowd doesn't want food or drink; so long as the one is filling and the other alcoholic, it doesn't care. It's just a flock of sheep that will go anywhere its leaders go. What you want to do is to capture a bellwether."

"Who?" asked Hewett.

"Might as well start with the big game. Try Pen Burgess."

Hewett gasped. "Pen Burgess?"

"Why not? She's got to go somewhere, hasn't she?"

"But can I manage it?"

"I'll tell you," said the lawyer—and he did.

The next morning (theatrical time, 1 P.M.), little Hewett found himself, after a forty-five-minute wait, in the presence of Penelope Burgess, who wore a morning-gown that looked like Queen Mary's coronation robe. He poured out his woes to her. He told her that she, and she alone, could save him. Precisely as if his name were really Jean Huette, he shed tears.

Pen was touched. She was nothing, at that time, if not good-natured, and she was touched.

"Only how on earth can I help you?" she inquired.

"You can eat," sobbed Hewett.

"I do," said Pen.

"But at my place, at the Whitelight. You can eat there—the food is not altogether bad, really—and if you were only to make it your custom to come there every night after the theater—and tell your friends—and sit at a table that I shall reserve for you, in the very center—and it should become known, then others—then all the flock of them, I am sure, would be sure——" Hewett lost himself in the web of his sentence and spread wide his wet, appealing palms. "Don't you see?" he ended.

Pen smiled. After all, it was flattering.

"Yes," she said, "I see; but——"

"I will pay you a regular price per meal," said the eager proprietor.

Pen wouldn't hear of that, but she agreed to come regularly to the Whitelight, and she kept her word. Every night, surrounded by a changing court of admirers, she went there, and, as the scheme succeeded and the crowd followed her, she got to like it. She finished by liking it better than she liked the stage. The admiration was more direct, it was more personal, it was closer at hand, and she was the star performer. Besides, she could order, and did order, whatever extravagance teased her fancy, and it cost her nothing. She became extremely fond of palatable extravagances, both solid and liquid.

The time came, of course, when the restaurant interfered with the theater; so she gave up the theater. She did it deliberately. She had become a professional beauty, and she proposed to devote all her attention to that. She would, she clearly saw, have to depart from the ways that society considered virtuous; but it would pay better than the theater, if properly managed, and she was sure that she would prefer it. Therefore, as I have said, just about the time that she had changed Hewett's fortunes for the better, she changed her own.

Why?

I wish I could tell you—"for certain," as the children say. As it is, all that I can tell you is what, just about this time, she told me. I can add only that she was always frank.

"I've done it because I like this life," she said. "I like the admiration. I like the attention. I like to come into a big restaurant, all so full of lights and clatter and hurrying waiters and well-dressed men and women. And then, as I sail up the room,

with a good-looking fellow or two in attendance, I like to see the waiters drop their other work and hurry to clear a way for me. I like to see the head-waiter bowing and scraping to me and ordering half a dozen assistants to rearrange the best table and bring on more expensive flowers. I like to hear all the careless clatter stop, to hear all those laughing, well-dressed men and women become silent, and to see them look at me. I like to hear them whisper: 'There she is! Isn't she splendid?' And I like to pretend not to hear them and not to care."

"But," I recall suggesting, "you know that they know—everything."

"I don't care if they do. What makes me proud is that they have to admire, in spite of all they know of me. I suppose it's got me, this life, just the way that the opium-habit gets some other people."

There, it seems to me, she hit it. The excitement of Broadway's night phase was food to her, and its admiration was strong drink. The fact that she paid for it with her sense of right and wrong, and the fact that it necessitated other rich food and genuine strong drink—these things she refused to reckon.

The price—it is a pity that she did not reckon upon the price. For her slim prettiness, if for nothing else, she was so well worth saving!

I can see her yet as she was in 1905—with the figure of a young girl and the delicate, oval face of a sensitive child. Those were her charms; the best of dressmakers, the highest-priced of milliners could but provide a frame—they could accentuate, but they could not enhance the lithe body, the gracious ease of movement, the almost severely classic lines of chin

and lips and nose and the eyes that were big and round and clear.

Well, she had her ideal and she achieved it, because she was a free agent. Because she was no man's slave, she became her own bondwoman. Because she was deliberate, she could select her way and follow it carefully. She was the Great Exception still. She was the one woman in the thousands—the rare variant that those who belittle all anti-slavery agitation, sane or insane, forever harp upon. She contracted none of the ills peculiar to her business; she made money, and she saved it.

Mark what happened.

This, though Pen and a great many people tnat regard themselves as far better are slow to admit it, remains a world wherein nobody has ever yet evolved a means of getting something for nothing. "It was," says Carlyle, "from of old said, The loser pays." He does pay; but so, be forever sure, does also the gainer. Not always directly; often indirectly; generally a bit at a time, and almost always in secret—but he pays. For the term of our natural life the body moral is bound to the physical body, and between them action and reaction are opposite and equal.

Given all other immunity, in Pen's profession, as in all professions, what you do must leave its mark. The public woman that escapes perils by the wayside goes straight on to the peril that is at the end of the way. Having beauty, her work requires that she sacrifice it before its time; having youth, she gives youth for her daily food. Her supply is limited by the limits of the human constitution.

What she gets is admiration and money; what she gives to get these things is something that must exhaust itself before she has got all that she wants. It is geometrical progression physically applied.

Remember, I repeat, that Pen succeeded. Remember that she put money aside. Remember that she achieved just what she wanted, that she gained a pinnacle gained by but one in many thousands. And, as I say, mark what happened.

What happened to Pen was that she grew fat.

Funny, isn't it?

But wait.

Pen never neglected her mirror. She passed, daily, hours before it. She had to. And though, at last, she began to be a little blind to some of the things she saw there, she one day admitted that the beautiful lines of her throat were growing less distinct; she was getting a double chin.

Pen weighed herself and found to her consternation that she was ominously overweight.

She went each noon to a Turkish bath, where she was steamed among a score of other women, whose appearance was repulsive to her, but who were there on errands similar to her own. Yet her weight increased. She passed her lonely hours with her chin in a compress—to no good end. She sought a doctor.

"You must take exercise," said the doctor.

"I hate it!" cried Pen.

The doctor shrugged, and Pen exercised rigorously. But she gained weight and so reported.

"Well," said the doctor, "we must go further. No late hours. No rich food. Plenty of sleep of a rational sort. And no wine."

Pen puckered her mouth—and her mouth was still pretty.

"Why don't you tell me some easier way?" she inquired.

"That is what everybody wants," answered the doctor—"an easier way. But there is none."

It came, finally, to this: the life she loved had demanded all of her that made the life she loved love her. Pen hesitated; but she had already made her choice. "It's like the opium-habit," she had said. She did not want the thing that she would gain at the price of the doctor's regimen. She wanted to "go ahead"—and go ahead she did.

At first she did not notice the subtle changes, but the changes were there.

There was a gradual shifting in the types of men that courted her favors. These men were once of middle life, rich, prominent, known, smart. Then there came, in the place of the earlier suitors, callow lads from college, who courted not Pen, but a reputation for gilded wickedness by being seen with Pen; who hid their ignorance of Broadway restaurants under a loudness of manner, and who found a false courage for false deeds and false vows in more champagne than was good for them. Several were dismissed from college because of her and one was found in the East River. Yet they, too, fell away and were followed by men with bulging waistcoats and gray hair or no hair at all—men that aped youth while their heavily veined hands trembled, men that did not sugar-coat their talk. One of these, who had a small job in a bank, was sent to Sing Sing.

These changes in her admirers were but the reflections of changes in Pen. Her face was no longer the face of a sensitive child; it was no longer oval: it was round. Her body was no longer that of a young girl: it was what, by a strange twist of the word, we call matronly. Her movements were neither lithe nor gracious; they were always heavy and sometimes clumsy, and the utmost pains of constantly shifted dressmakers availed nothing. The chin was now unmistakably double; the lips were a little valley between the cheeks; the nose was a negative quantity, and the eyes, when one at all noticed them, were not clear.

The Broadway crowd responded—or, rather, failed to respond. There was no stir of attention when Pen entered a café. The women did not raise their eyes from their escorts to study her clothes and her figure. Nobody said: "There she is!" Nobody said anything. And the waiters were less attentive.

Pen had occasionally wavered in her fidelity to the Whitelight, but now she renewed it, and, for a while, Hewett, who possessed a certain small share of the sense of gratitude, received her with a tempered cordiality. You have understood that, when in the first days she preferred to sup alone at the Whitelight—as, by him, she sometimes did—there was no charge; but among these latter evenings there came one when she supped alone by force of circumstances, and when she had finished, the head-waiter amazed her by presenting a bill.

"What's this?" asked Pen, staring at the paper as if she had never seen such a thing before.

"The bill, madam."

Under her rouge, Pen went pale.

"You're new here, aren't you?" she demanded.

"Two years, madam."

"That accounts for it. Tell Mr. Hewett that Miss Penelope Burgess wants to see him."

"Mr. Hewett, ma'am?"

"Well, M. Huette, then. It's the same thing."

Hewett came—still wax-mustached and fresh-cheeked, but grown vastly important.

"See here, Hewett," said Pen; "this fresh guy head-waiter of yours has given me a bill!"

Hewett blushed. He was apologetic. He tore up the bill.

But he did not send for the head-waiter, and the next time that Pen supped alone at the Whitelight she got a bill again.

Then Hewett was outspoken. He was very sorry, but it must be. He could no longer make exceptions; the business had grown——

"Who started it growing for you?" asked Pen.

Oh, he knew that, did Hewett, and he was grateful. But time had passed, and in the past he had given enough suppers to Miss Burgess to repay all her old kindnesses.

Pen laid down a yellow-backed bill.

"Keep the change, Jennie," she said, and swished out of the place.

She was well-to-do; she had no fear of poverty; but her love of the Broadway night-life had grown with experience; the habit was part of her being, and it was with a shock that she realized that the evenings when there were no wooers, when she must

perforce sup alone, were more and more frequent. Still, sup in public she would, and, in order to show Hewett that she could pay his highest prices, she chose often the Whitelight. She was sure that those prices were regularly raised for her especial benefit, but she would not so much as "add up" the bill. Because she was so lonely, she would sometimes, though not often, grow a little drunk, and the other patrons would smile.

Then, one evening, when—as was now a necessary precaution—she had reserved her old table by telephone, she entered in the wake of some much becloaked young woman surrounded by a bevy of men —a woman that Pen did not recognize. She heard the stir that she had so often heard in other days. She saw the women raise their eyes, and the men raise eyes of a different sort. She heard them say: "There she is! Isn't she splendid?" There was the familiar scurry of attendant waiters—and the other woman, a mere chit of a girl, with the face of a child and the slim figure of a graduate, was shown to the place that had been Pen's.

Pen turned and encountered Hewett in the center of the room.

"I reserved that table!" she said.

She pointed, and she spoke loudly. People wheeled in their chairs and grinned at the fun.

"Hush!" pleaded Hewett. "I'm sorry. There was some mix-up. You shall have this excellent table over here."

He indicated a shadowy corner.

"Not much!" cried Pen. "I'll have my own! Who's this that's got it?"

In low breaths Hewett told her. It was Cicely Morton, the new professional beauty. Everybody was wild about her.

Pen bit her lip. What she had long known could no more be denied: other women had come and gone, other women had become the talk of the town —New York, that loves so intensely and so briefly, had forgotten her.

She rebelled in the only way that she understood rebellion. She swore at Hewett. The little proprietor, seeing that a scene could not be avoided, resolved to make this scene final. He told her that she was a nuisance and that she was not again to enter the Whitelight. Penelope seized a water-bottle from the nearest table and hit him with it. She was hustled into the street, disheveled, torn, haggard —not pretty to look at. She was arrested and taken to the Night Court. Hewett refused to press the charge, but the newspapers printed funny stories. It was all very humorous.

That was the end's beginning. Pen had long since ceased to be Broadway's idol; she now became its joke. The Big Street's population changes yearly, and the newcomers knew not Penelope. What had happened at the Whitelight repeated itself, with unessential variations, at many restaurants. Often, as she walked the pavement of an afternoon, she heard the younger women giggle at her; once, when she filed out of a café with a decrepit man whose companionship she had virtually hired, she heard a wife say:

"Who's that awful old harridan?"

And the husband, who had once begged permis-

sion to kiss Pen's hand, adjusted his glasses, scrutinized her, and responded:

"Bless me! I don't know. Fierce, isn't she?"

And Pen was still, in years, what most of us call young.

So Pen, you see, succeeded. She was the Great Exception that my friend had talked about and insisted upon. She contracted none of the illnesses peculiar to her profession. She saved money. She has not paid one fraction more for her sort of life than is, even in the case of the one woman in thousands, absolutely, and by the greatest possible exertion of human precaution, necessary. But the minimum price even the Great Exception has to pay.

Music, mirth, human companionship—she can have them, when at all, in return for nothing but dollars and cents. What her beauty and her youth once paid for she has now to pay for with the money that her youth once earned.

She has rented, has Pen, an expensive apartment in a Broadway hotel, where, when she hasn't the courage to go out with a hired escort and be laughed at in the places that once were shrines in her honor, she can lean from the window and see the lamps and hear the clatter of the cabs and motors, and occasionally catch—or thinks she catches—the sound of music from the Whitelight.

XV

THE GIRL THAT WAS HUNGRY

NAN was out of a job.

It isn't pleasant, being out of a job, as many of us have at one time or another learned. It somehow wears on the tissues, it rasps the nerves; in the end, it dulls those finer perceptions whereby we normally distinguish what the professors of ethics call the moral values.

About that, however, Nan knew nothing, for this was her first experience. Her mother had died in their little Chicago flat three years before, when Nan was fifteen; but her father, who had a good place in one of the glue factories over in Packingtown, had kept his two daughters at school and maintained what was, as such things go, a good home for them. George, the only son, was a private in the army—and the Philippines; they rarely heard from him. Fanny, the older girl, was just about to graduate from her course in stenography; but Nan, who was pretty, had been decided to be too pretty to do anything but marry—and as the duties of marriage are not supposed to require a knowledge of economics, either business or domestic, Nan was not precisely fitted for a commercial career. She had one more year to serve in the high school when her father, from working too long in a badly-aired room, developed tuberculosis. Nan, who nursed him, had

never understood that she had a job, but when her father died she realized that she was out of one.

The father left just enough money to pay the expenses of that extremely expensive luxury known as Death. He demonstrated again what is being demonstrated every minute everywhere—that, exorbitant as is the cost of living, the cost of dying is beyond all reason.

"Well," said I, when Nan, months later, told me about it, "what did you do?"

I have said that Nan was once pretty. When her father died, she must have been very pretty indeed. I believe that she was slim then, with a lithe figure, pink-cheeked, and the proud possessor of a mass of chestnut hair just touched by gold. Even when I met her there was a genuine charm in her face, and all that she had endured had failed quite to ruin the glory of her great and once spaniel-like eyes. The eyes widened when I asked her my question.

"Do?" she echoed. "What was we to do? It's not what I done; it's how I was done."

Fanny got a place as stenographer in a Cleveland automobile factory and left Chicago. George, being a professional hero, remained unresponsive and irresponsible in the Philippines. Nan sold the furniture and moved into a hall bedroom on the profits.

One follows naturally one's training. Nan, being quite sure that she had been trained for marriage—as she had never been trained for anything else, she must have been trained for marriage—Nan began to look over her boy friends with what the newspaper "personals" call "a view to matrimony."

There were Tom, Dick, and Harry—several of

each—but none of them was really ready or able to support a wife. In fact, Nan speedily discovered that she had unconsciously cultivated only such friends—the others were stupid—as had small chance of being ready for a good many years to come.

Tom had just started as a clerk in a law-office, getting eight dollars a week; Dick was still in the high school, getting nothing, and Harry, who was quite the most fascinating of all, had not of late been observably successful in the pursuit of a somewhat nebulous occupation connected with running-horses that did not run in Chicago.

"Wait till I'm admitted to the bar," said Tom. "Only just wait for me, Nan. Why, it won't be but a few years."

"Wait till I'm out o' school, Nan," pleaded Dick. "I've got a fair job ready for me in a State Street insurance office. If you only knew how much I cared for you, you certainly could wait that little while."

And as for Harry, he said nothing at all.

Now, Nan was willing to wait; but her landlady was not. Nan wanted to marry, but she was in no great hurry about it. The thing that she was in a hurry about was to remain alive. One cannot wait even a few years without food and clothes and lodging; it is somewhat difficult to wait so much as a few weeks without them, and Nan was used to a home, a dress, and three meals a day. When the money that had come from the furniture sale had shrunk to a single yellow-backed bill, Nan decided that, since openings were so rare in the career that had been chosen for her, she must now choose another career for herself.

The month was August, and most employers, far from engaging new workers, were " laying off " old ones. Times had, moreover, been hard; there had been one of our periodic, automatic panics in the stock market, and the slow but certain approach of a presidential election did not serve as an inducement for business firms to enlarge their pay-rolls. Finally, Nan had no " experience."

She began by hating that word " experience," and she ended by fearing it. On the few occasions when a job seemed to be just possible of capture, that job was sure to leap nimbly away in answer to the inevitable question:

" What experience have you had? "

Once, toward the end, Nan lied. A man that wanted a typist put the query, and Nan faltered out the statement that she had had " a little." Then he took her to the machine, and the inanimate mechanism straightway betrayed her.

It was at this period that she again fell in with Dick, to whom much had been happening—and rapidly.

Dick had decided to improve his vacation by going into that insurance office for the summer and learning the business. He had not learned the insurance business, but he had speedily qualified for the position of a barkeeper, and might have ended inside of a white coat if he had not approached the trade from across the counter. As it was, he absentmindedly paid a wine-bill with a premium, and, instead of a white coat, came close to being fitted with a striped one.

His descent was unimpeded. He lost his position

and was cast off by his family. He tramped the streets. Sometimes he begged, and, when begging failed, he stole. When they wouldn't let him sleep in the barrooms where he had spent his money, he slept in the parks where there was none to be spent, and when he was hustled out of the park he tried the barroom again.

It was not a happy life, and he was glad to get out of it. He got out by becoming a " runner " for a place that was neither a saloon nor a young ladies' seminary.

Nan he met just as he was beginning an evening's work. He drew her aside and suggested a drink, which she refused, and reminded her that he had loved her, to which her weary brain listened eagerly.

" You come with me," he said, " an' get out o' all your troubles."

" Why," gasped Nan—and she looked hard, under the lamplight, into his watery eyes—" can you marry me now? "

Richard grinned uneasily.

" If you like," he said; and what hurt her most was that he did not feel the pathos of her impulsive query. " Anyhow, I've got a job for you."

" For me? " Her own eyes were wide. " Aren't you workin' yourself? "

Richard made an answer. It was a long answer, and it was both vague and glowing. But there is this also about privation—that if it dulls the moral insight, it sharpens one's vision of the human heart. Nan had not gone so far as to suffer the former ill, yet she had gone far enough to receive the latter benefit. Beneath the salve she saw the sore.

"I hate you!" she said.

Dick shrugged his shrunken shoulders.

"All right," he replied; "but you'll feel different when you get hungry. Just remember, then, that I'm always around this part o' town at this time o' day, an' that I stand for beefsteak an' coffee—not to mention the wine."

She left him without another word. Forget him she could not, but, reviewing her weary struggle in her weary soul, she decided that she had been misdirecting her efforts. It had seemed incredible to her that, with so much work to be done in the world and with so many persons wanting to do it, there should not be, ready to hand, her share. She had, therefore, hunted blindly and by chance, starting with the morning and walking the streets until the last minute of the business day, entering whatever place of employment appealed to her fancy. Now she began to study the "want advertisements" of the newspapers.

But she fared no better. Early as she might seek an advertiser, there were always many applicants ahead of her, and among these there were always many of long experience in the work offered. Over two-thirds of the advertisers proved, in addition, to want not work, but money. They required what they called "a small deposit" to learn the business or for "the preliminary paraphernalia." A large number wanted canvassers to sell the unsalable on small commissions. And others——

Well, Nan went to see some of the others. This one was typical:

He sat in a little office, a dark room at the back of

a building on Dearborn Street. He had a heavy, clean-shaven face, with a double chin, and little, colorless eyes. He was alone and had advertised for a clerk.

Nan sat down and held out her thumbed copy of a morning paper.

"I've come in answer to your ad.," she said.

It was a well-worn formula; but she had then, for a week, been trying to get along without breakfasts. Her voice trembled.

The heavy man looked at her. His little eyes were sharp—so sharp that she felt herself blushing. He put out for the paper a stubby, dirty hand, and he touched her hand as he took it.

"Yes," he said, but he wasn't looking at the paper: he was looking at Nan. "What experience have you had?"

Nan's red under lip quivered.

"I can learn," she almost whispered.

"D'you think you can?" The heavy man smiled unpleasantly.

In a flash it came over Nan—what was in his mind. He had done no more than touch her hand, but Nan remembered Dick.

"You"—she did want work—"you advertised for a clerk," she insisted.

The heavy man's smile continued.

"Ferget it," said he.

Nan started to rise, but the man put his dirty hand upon her arm. He did not force her, but she remembered that, only a few hours before, her landlady had demanded the past week's rent and that

the past week's rent had not been forthcoming. She sank back in her rickety chair.

"You don't want to be no clerk," said the man.

"I do!" said Nan; but there was small power in her tone.

"Well," said the man, "give me your *ad*-dress an' I'll think it over."

The girl complied, and the man noted the street and number on a pad.

"There's a friend o' mine runs a place over in Indiana," said the man. "It's a swell place, all right, an' if you really didn't want to be no clerk——"

"I do want to be a clerk!"

"Well, if you changed your mind, you could anyhow come round an' say so."

Nan mumbled something—she did not know what—and went away. She spent the remainder of the daylight in a vain repetition of the miserable quest, and on her way back to the unpaid-for hall-bedroom she passed the lighted windows of cafés, where, dining in brilliant gowns, sat other women who, she bitterly reflected, had at some period of their lives not said "No" to their Dick.

Having got along without breakfasts, Nan now got along without lunches—but she did not pay her rent. The landlady threatened, but Nan, with hot tears on her cold cheeks, begged for one week more of grace, and got it.

She had been weary, she had been dispirited; now she was hungry.

Were you ever hungry? I don't mean to ask if you have ever sat so long at luncheon that you had to stay overtime at the office and so were late for

dinner. I don't mean to inquire if you were ever disappointed at finding that your train didn't carry a buffet-car, or if in a strange city you spent all your loose change by night and had next morning to postpone breakfast until you could be identified at the bank. I don't mean to say: Did you ever want a meal? I mean: Did you ever have to have one?

If you were ever in that position, there is no need now to tell you how it feels. If you were never there, description won't serve. Don't try to imagine it. Don't try to think what it must be to walk with a step that totters on a quest that is vain—to look with eyes that see double for something that doesn't exist. Don't bother about that. Just take my word for the bare facts. Nan starved for three days, all the while remembering Dick. On the evening of the third day—— No, she did not meet him by chance. She was done with chance. She quit hunting for work and she hunted for Dick until she found him.

"Here I am," she said. "I'll stay till I get a job."

But Richard smiled wisely. He knew his own world well.

Here, if I were trying in these sketches to be a tragic artist, that ought to be the end of my story. I am not, however, trying to be, here and now, anything of the sort. I am trying to give you a few facts from life, and life has no fear of the anti-climax. Therefore I proceed.

Nan became—not to mince matters—Dick's slave. Dick ceased being a runner, working for precarious commissions, and set up, in a two-room tenement, as a small but full-fledged proprietor. He did not work

at all. Nan did that; she worked—and walked. Dick, if not sufficiently employed by spending the money that she brought home, occupied the remainder of his time by beating her in an effort to stimulate her earning capacity. His friends, who were all in the same line of business, said that they never saw a more devoted woman; the policemen on the beat said that they never saw one more hopelessly depraved. So much had been accomplished by one month of servitude.

Then came the tragedy. High-heeled, rouged, and crayoned, Nan kissed Dick quite as usual one evening, and, with her big leathern pocketbook swinging from her hand, set out for work. This was at eight o'clock. At nine she accosted a man—a man that I happen to have met—and with him she returned home.

Dick, having drunk a little harder than usual that afternoon, had been tardy about returning to his favorite saloon. Consequently he was at the tenement to meet the pair.

"Excuse me," said Dick, and began awkwardly to shuffle toward the door.

But the man—he is a large man, with singularly muscular arms and a singularly keen pair of blue eyes—barred the way.

"You needn't hurry," he answered. "In fact, we want to see you."

Dick's eyes stared.

"Me?" he asked. "What about?"

He had addressed himself, at least in part, to Nan. It was, however, the stranger that replied.

"About this girl," said he.

Instantly Dick's face twisted hideously. He leaped back. His right hand shot to his pocket.

"Don't try that," warned the stranger. "There's a policeman waiting just outside."

Dick's hand fell.

"Are you a fly-cop?" he demanded.

"No; only a man. What are you?"

"None o' your business. What do you want with my girl?"

"I want to tell you that she is not your girl any longer. My wife needs another house-servant, and Nan has agreed to try to hold down the place."

If Dick's face could be more hideous than it was in hot anger, it became more hideous now in an anger that was cold. He laughed.

"A house-servant?" he mocked. "Don't you know what she is?"

"I know only what you have tried to make her," said the stranger.

Dick turned to the girl.

"Do you dare?" he asked.

"Dare to go?" Her eyes were no longer the eyes of a spaniel. "How long did you think I'd stay? Did you think I liked it? Why, I told you I was only waitin' till I got some other work!"

She has the other work now. She has had it for three years.

Thus was evolved Dick's tragedy: Nan once more had a job.

XVI

A CASE OF RETROGRESSION

THROUGHOUT the letters that have come to me concerning the girl that goes under in the struggle for moral existence, and throughout the talks that I have had with people inquiring into this subject, two questions have been many times repeated. They are questions that take various forms, but that always reduce themselves to these plain terms:

" Isn't it true that a heavy percentage of the girls rescued from sex slavery or sex degradation revert, after a greater or lesser time, to their former low estate? "

" And if this is true, what is the reason? "

These questions I think that I should here answer.

And the first answer is, Yes.

A great many girls classed as " rescued " return to their previous condition. The precise percentage it is impossible to give, because, concerning this traffic, figures are everywhere hard to procure, and in the United States, owing to our shocking neglect of such matters, are almost beyond conjecture. Still, it is safe to say that this disease is like most other dangerous diseases, whether physical or social—prevention is hopeful, cure at best uncertain. The average of life in the business is five years; after two of these years, " rescue " is rare and most often but tempo-

rary. And of the others—of those that are "rescued" when they have plied their trade for only a month or six months or a year—a large number revert to their former estate.

Why?

So many men, so many minds. I may give you only the answer that, without predetermined bias, was forced upon me by what I saw with my own eyes. I believe that society has made these girls what they are, and that society, once they have changed, turns them back.

Not in all cases of retrogression. One is dealing with the general law, not with its individual exceptions. There is the congenital case. There are the women whose descent was due to vanity, to drunkenness, to the morphine habit—to some taste to the satisfaction of which the descent was merely a means. Even these cases, to be sure, are indirectly the fault of social conditions that breed vicious proclivities as inevitably as a dung-heap breeds flies. But they are all exceptional. They are so exceptional as to be practically negligible. The fault does not tend in that direction. For the same reason, the failure, in the many cases, of permanent "rescue" is not justly to be laid at the door of the self-sacrificing men and women that are giving their earnest lives to "rescue work." The failure lies at the door of us all as a social group, because, not being content with the wrong that we have already done, we either make it well-nigh impossible for a "rescued girl" to get a decent living at a decent wage or else we are so uncharitable, so irreligious, as always to regard that girl in the light of her past.

I could give you a score of cases in point. Any mission worker can give you as many. All the gossips in all the small towns will be glad to give you more. Here, and only for the sake of illustration, I give you one.

I go back in my memory scarcely a year and recall the second floor over a saloon on East Nineteenth Street, in New York, not far west of Broadway. There were perhaps a dozen tables in the room, and to these came—and probably still come—the street women of that district; not with their prey (or, more properly, their temporary masters), but alone, to rest in the pauses of their walk, to meet each other, and to drug themselves against the instinctive hatred of what they must soon continue to do.

On this night that I remember, the room, at eleven o'clock, was nearly empty and I was talking with a girl at the farthest table in the darkest corner. She sat there in the favorite attitude of her kind—the scarcely touched glass before her, her elbows at either side, her hands clasped under her thin chin. From below the shadow of her broad, cheap hat with corn flowers on it, I saw her tawny hair massed like mined gold. Even in the shadow it was evident that she need not have rouged her sunken cheeks; they were hectic. Under her eyes there were dark spots; her red mouth, once gentle, was bitter—bitterest when she smiled.

She understood me. She had known me long enough to understand my motive for asking her the question that I had just asked her—well enough to know that she could treat me merely as a friend. In

brief, she was satisfied that she could afford to be honest with me.

"So I went to the institution," she was saying, "and stopped there as long as they thought I ought to stop there. I hadn't been in the business because I liked it—who is? I'd been in it because that fellow Joe had taught me to drink at a dance hall. He taught me to drink. One night, of course, I drank too much. When I woke up, I knew I could never go back home."

She took a sip of beer.

"Why not?" I asked.

She regarded me with her steady gray eyes.

"I was afraid," she answered simply; "and ashamed."

"So you didn't go back?"

She shook her head.

"I didn't go back," she said. "I did what he told me to do. I hated it, but I did it. At first I kicked, but he beat me. I couldn't run away. Where'd I 'a' lived if I did? I hadn't no trade. I'd been little, I'd been at school, so I hadn't no trade. I'd 'a' starved to death in no time."

"You could have appealed to the police."

"He said he was friends with the police. I dunno. He lied a good deal, of course, about most things. But from what I saw, I knowed he was sure friends with one or two of 'em."

"One or two aren't all. Besides, there are the missions."

"Well, suppose the police had pinched him. What then? It'd all be in the papers. I tell you, I was ashamed. I didn't want my friends to know no more

about me. Or suppose I'd gone to the mission. He said—Joe did—the first thing they'd do'd be to send for my father. I'd made trouble enough for my father already. I didn't want to disgrace my people any more'n I had done. Life's too short for that sort of thing."

"So, rather than bring public shame upon your family, you brought more shame upon yourself?"

"That's about it."

She spoke simply. There was no consciousness of sacrifice in her tone, nothing of the heroic attitude. She was talking of these things as if they were matters of course.

"So then," she took up the thread, "I went to the institution."

"You mean you were sent there?"

"Sure I was sent."

"In other words, you were first arrested?"

"Yes."

"How?"

"The way it always happens. Business was bad; times was hard. There wasn't a thing doing in the part of town where the cops knew me. I had to get the money; I didn't want another beating up by Joe. So I tried to work another part o' town where the cops was strange. A fellow winked at me. He stopped me and spoke to me. He drew me on, and then he pinched me."

"A plain-clothes man?" I asked.

The faded corn flowers in her hat bobbed assent.

"Central Office," she said.

"And he drew you on?"

"Sure he did."

"A lovely business!" I commented.

"Oh, I dunno!" She couldn't see it my way. "Life's too short to fight about them. Those tricks is what they've got to do to earn their living—just like what we do is the way we've got to earn ours."

"Very like," said I.

But she was in no mood for speculative reflection.

"So, as I told you, I went to the institution," she persisted. "It was third offense for me. I didn't give my real name when I was in court and I told the institution people that my father and mother were dead, so I saved any trouble for my folks."

"Why didn't you think of that plan at the start, when Joe first got you and when you considered appealing to the police on your own behalf?"

"I didn't know enough then; I hadn't learnt to lie. Besides, Joe would 'a' told them the truth if I'd got him pinched; he'd 'a' made all the trouble he could for my folks; and, anyhow, they'd 'a' looked into the thing more careful than they do when you're just one of a hundred girls run in front of the magistrate like a lot of sheep at a slaughter house."

"I see. Then, at last, they let you out of the institution?"

"When my time was up—or a little before. I'd been good. I liked it there—I'd 'a' liked anything better than the streets. I learnt to sew a little and to sweep and wash clothes. I even learnt to cook some. There's no end of things you can learn if you've only got time, ain't they? I certainly liked it. Of course the people was some strict, but I guess they had to be that; and you couldn't call the life

a dizzy whirl of excitement. But I'd had about all the excitement I wanted, thank you. For a while I missed my drinks something terrible, but I soon got over that, and then I was real happy. I worked hard and just learned and learned and learned. I was so good they shortened my time; so they come to me and says,

" 'You've been a good girl, Sophie.'

" I says, 'Thank you, ma'am.'

" 'Yes,' they says, 'you've been a good girl. We think you're reformed. You can go. If you won't do no wrong no more, you can go.'

" 'Go?' says I. 'Where to?'

" 'Out,' says they.

" 'Then,' I says, 'I'd rather stay.'

" 'But you can't,' they tells me. 'They ain't room. We're overcrowded, and they's lots of girls that are going to the island now just because we ain't got the room.'

" 'Well,' I says, 'if I've got to go, I've got to; but I can't make no promises not to do wrong.'

" The woman that was talking to me, the matron-like—an awful nice woman, she was—got kind of shocked at that.

" 'Why not?' she says.

" 'Because,' I tells her, 'I'm afraid of starving, and I'm afraid to throw myself in the East River, like so many of us girls do; and I ain't a millionaire, so I can't live on my income—and I ain't got no job.'

" 'Oh, but,' she says, 'we'll get you a job.'

" And she did get me a job, and it was a nice one —a job with a lady that lived all alone in apartments and wasn't very well and needed some one to cook

and do all the work and just all-round take care of her.

"I liked that, too. The work was hard, but I didn't mind. I was kind of glad I didn't have much chance to go out of the house, for I was afraid of running into Joe. Besides, I learnt a lot more while I was working for that lady, and I like to learn things, don't you?

"Of course I was scared about it at first.

"'Look here!' I says to the matron at the institution; 'will this lady that you've got me a job with know all about me?'

"'Oh, yes,' she says, 'she'll know. We couldn't send you to her under false colors,' she says. 'But she's a kind lady; she wants to do you good, and she won't never throw it up to you.'

"Well, she didn't throw it up to me—much, and I was glad of that. It's pretty hard to keep doing right when you know that the people you're working for are all the time thinking how you used to do wrong. I've heard since from other girls that has went through what I went through that the ladies they worked for worked them half to death, and paid them almost nothing at all, and all the time watched them suspicious-like, as bad as if they'd been in jail. They say they've had it throwed up to them all the time, and whenever anything was mislaid they was accused of stealing it, till they was just made so sick and discouraged that they had to go back to the old ways again. But my lady, she wasn't like that.

"Of course sometimes she'd rub it in a bit. If I smashed a plate, she'd say, 'Naturally you are used to doing things carelessly'—just like that, in a way

that showed me what she was thinking about, and that hurt a lot. But, take her all around, she was a real nice lady, and I was happy there.

"It didn't last long, though. By and by we went out to Denver for her health—she took me along—and out there, first thing I knew, she died. I certainly was sorry for her."

Sophie paused. She looked beyond me, into the shadows of the corner in that little room over an East Nineteenth Street saloon. Then she took another drink. She tried to smile, but the smile went crooked; it was as if she were drinking to a safe voyage in Charon's care for the kind lady that had only once in a while rubbed it in a bit.

"Well," she resumed, "there I was in Denver, out of a job. I went to an employment agency, and, just about the time my money'd run out, one lady began to talk to me as if she might really hire me. I remembered that stuff that the matron had said about not being under false colors or something, so I thought perhaps I'd better tell this woman the truth.

"She didn't like it. She didn't like it a little bit.

"'I am very sorry for you, my poor woman,' she says; 'but you did quite right to tell me. Of course I couldn't have anybody in my family that has been what you've been.'

"That was bad enough; but it didn't stop there. This lady seen a friend of hers, another lady, coming in the agency, and she told her, and the other lady was mad and walks right up to the boss and asks him what kind of a place he's running, anyhow—and the boss chucks me out.

"I saw now that it was a case of sailing under false colors or sinking the ship; so I made up my mind to lie, after that. I went round from house to house. Of course that sort of thing means low wages, if you're lucky enough to get any. I got a place at last on almost nothing at all.

"One day the husband of the woman I was working for there began to make eyes at me. He came in the kitchen and asked me questions about New York. He said he used to live in New York before he was married, and he asked me if I knew this place or that—all the sort of places that I did use to know when I was in the town. I happened to say 'Yes,' not thinking what it meant, and then he tried to kiss me.

"'You get out!' I says.

"'Don't be foolish,' he tells me. 'I'm not going to hurt you.'

"'If you don't let up,' I says, 'I'm going to hurt you, and do it quick, too.'

He kind of bristled up at that.

"'Look here,' he says, 'I'm on to you, and if you're not nice to me I'll tell my wife the truth about you.'

"'Seems to me there'd be something to tell her about you, too,' I says.

"He didn't answer nothing. He just laughed and grabbed me."

Sophie paused again.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well," she resumed, "I slapped his face for him, and he told his wife that I'd been a bad girl. I told her what he'd tried on with me, but she just

thought I was a liar, so she got mad and fired me."

"Was that the end?"

"Not quite. I tried a lot of other places, but I couldn't get a job. Near all of them wanted recommendations, and I hadn't none that was any good. The lady that died'd given me one, but it was pretty stale by this time. I pretty near starved.

"One night, on the street (I was tired out and hungry), I seen that man that had tried to kiss me.

"'Hello, dear!' he says. 'Where you going?'

"'Up to Glenwood Springs to spend the summer,' I says. 'Where'd you think?'

"He grinned at me.

"'I can help you get there,' he says.

"'You helped me lose a decent job,' says I. He'd put an idea in my head. 'I'm played out. I'm all in. Can't you fix it up somehow so's I can get work?'

"'You don't want to work,' he says.

"'I do, too,' says I.

"But he just grinned.

"'You're too pretty,' he says. 'Come along with me and I'll give you some money.'

"Well, I was dead beat. I made up my mind that there wasn't any chance for me, that people'd never forgive me. He said he'd give me enough to get me to Chicago on my way to New York. I went with him, but next morning he gave me only enough to get to Lincoln, Neb. When I reminded him of his promise, he told me to go to blazes."

"What did you do?" I inquired.

"I went to blazes," she answered quietly.

"Right away?"

"Not direct. I went there by way of Lincoln, Neb. I earned enough at the old trade in Lincoln to get me to Chicago, and in Chicago I tried hard to get a decent job again."

"But that man in Denver," I interrupted, "the man that virtually ruined you for the second time—how you must hate him!"

She shrugged her thin shoulders.

"Oh, I don't know!" she said. "Where's the good of hating people? I don't like to hate people."

"What was his name?"

"I dunno, and I wouldn't never tell you if I did. I know you; you'd make trouble for him. That's your way. Well, it ain't mine. I don't want to make trouble for nobody. He wasn't no worse than most men."

I gave it up.

"So you went to Chicago?"

"Yep. I got a place there at last in a boarding-house as third servant.

"I stuck to it for a while. I don't pretend I liked it—all the men boarders tried to get fresh, and then, because the men liked me, all the women was suspicious. Still, I kept the men in their places and I held on to the job till a new boarder come to the place. He turned out to be a fellow that had made love to me—made regular love to me—in Lincoln—till he got tired of it. Well, he told the landlady about me, and out I was chucked."

"And then?" said I.

"Then it was the Denver show over again—only worse. When I got down and out, I went wrong. I didn't know the cops; I hadn't no pull; I was run

in and kicked about—and one night I met my old fellow Joe down on Dearborn Street. He was going to New York."

"Did you run away from him?" I asked.

The grave gray eyes looked at me from over the shadows where lurked the tokens of the White Death. Sophie gulped the rest of her beer.

"I must be hustling," she said. "I've got to do better in the next three hours than I've been doing loafing here."

"Then you didn't run away from him?"

"Run away? Who? Me? What to? Starvation? Not much! I'd given things a fair chance. I was done, I was. There was Joe. Take it from me, I was never so glad to see anyone in all my life."

XVII

"THOSE THINGS WHICH WE OUGHT TO HAVE DONE"

THE Church of St. Chrysostom was crowded by its usual congregation. The massive doors—a gift from the rector's warden and a replica of the doors in the Church of St. Anastasio in Verona—shut out all the noises of Fifth Avenue. Inside the only sound was the voice of the priest among the candles, pronouncing the Admonition. His was a clear voice, steady with earnestness, and it reached the hearts of his well-to-do auditors:

" . . . confess them with an humble, lowly, penitent, and obedient heart; to the end that we may obtain forgiveness of the same . . . "

The congregation knelt and with one voice repeated the General Confession:

"Almighty and most merciful Father; we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done; and we have done those things which we ought not to have done; and there is no health in us . . ."

The service went its usual course. The Sunday was the Fourth Sunday in Advent, and the rector read the collect for that day:

"O Lord, raise up (we pray thee) thy power, and come among us; that whereas, through our sins and wickedness, we are sore let and hindered in running the race that is set before us, thy bountiful grace and mercy may speedily help and deliver us; through the satisfaction of thy Son our Lord . . ."

* * * * * * *

As the crowd came out into the winter sunshine of the Avenue, Mrs. Norton—she was the wife of that W. Barnabas Norton who, as rector's warden, had presented the studded doorway to St. Chrysostom's for a memorial to their little girl that had died—found herself in the midst of an anecdote. She was talking to Mrs. Rutherford Hemmingway, her dearest friend.

"It was quite dreadful," she was saying; "but, really, Alicia, what else on earth was there for me to do? How the girl ever got into my service—how the housekeeper ever failed to investigate her character and recommendations—I can't for the life of me imagine. I was frankly angry with the housekeeper about it."

"Of course you were, my dear," said Mrs. Hemmingway.

"And I don't deny," pursued Mrs. Norton, "that Maud—I think her name was Maud—was a satisfactory maid, so far, of course, as I ever had a chance to observe her. But when the policeman on the beat came to Mr. Norton and told him that when he had been on the Broadway squad a year before—the policeman, I mean—he had arrested this girl for street-walking (only fancy how horrible, Alicia!), what choice did I have?"

"None," replied Mrs. Hemmingway; "none at all.—Here is your brougham, Patricia.—You could remember only that you had to perform a duty to society."

"That is precisely what I remembered," said Mrs. Norton. "Barnabas spoke about the girl's devotion to our little Stephen (it was eight months ago, and Stephen had just had his fifth birthday, I recollect); but I said to him: 'My dear, there is nothing unusual in her fondness for Stephen: who can help being fond of the darling? We must not forget that James is our son, too; that he is nineteen years old and at an impressionable age; and, above all, we must not forget that if respectable people are to overlook such things as this girl Maud has done, there is no telling what will happen to the world.'"

They were in the carriage now and were rolling, softly and swiftly, up the Avenue.

"If you had said any less," declared Mrs. Hemmingway, "you would have failed in your duty."

Mrs. Norton's plumed hat nodded agreement.

"Exactly," said she. "It is all very well for the rector to talk of reformation; but what time have I to reform my own servants? There are plenty of institutions and missions and so on to attend to such things. I am sure they are always asking for money, and, for my part, I make a point of contributing almost regularly. One Lent I went twice to St. Cecilia's Home and read to the girls: I read them 'The Visits of Elizabeth.'"

Mrs. Hemmingway murmured consolatory commendation.

"Of course," said Mrs. Norton, "I didn't want

this Maud to be treated too badly; but I was angry at the housekeeper for allowing such an awkward thing to occur, and so I neglected to give her any instructions beyond telling her the facts and ordering her to dismiss the girl immediately."

"And she did it?"

"Naturally."

"So that you didn't see the girl again until last night?"

"Not until last night. We were leaving the Herald Square—the Billy Merton's theater-party, you know—and, just as I was stepping into the motor, there, walking into the light, came Maud. Alicia, you never saw such a change in any woman in your life—not even in Mrs. Vanderdecken Brown after she got her new hair. Maud's cheeks were rouged the color of red ink; her eyes were full of belladonna, and she was dressed up in the cheapest and vulgarest of finery. There was no mistaking her vocation—and, what was worse, no mistaking her intention that nobody should mistake it. It was *too* disgusting."

"How awful, Patricia!"

"That is what I thought. All in a flash I remembered that this painted woman used actually to live under my roof and fondle—think of it, Alicia: *fondle!*—my baby boy. She'd been bad and she had gone right back to her old ways. It showed plainly that there was no good in her. I was suddenly afraid that she might have the impudence to speak to me. There we were, face to face. I happened to have a twenty-dollar bill in my opera-bag. It was sticking out of the top. I just took it and put it into

her hand before anybody of our party had an opportunity to see what I was doing."

* * * * * * *

In a disordered bedroom on the third-floor back of a dingy West Twenty-ninth Street boarding-house (its landlady called it a boarding-house) a few nights—or, rather, a few mornings—later, a girl sat alone, evidently waiting for the coming of some-one whose coming she feared.

She was still a pretty girl. Her cheeks, sufficiently colored to hide their pallor, had not yet lost all their roundness; the line of her full lips had not yet become hard. Her hair, which had always been too black for tinting, was so thick as to be almost luxuriant; what privation had stolen from the contours of her figure, artifice, beneath the poor, showy dress that covered it, supplied; and if her eyes had lost a zest that drugs could no longer simulate, they had gained an animal appeal that had an attraction of its own.

The room was not a pleasant one. The crooked shade that was drawn across the single window hid an ugly court, beyond which was a church-tower with a clock that struck the half-hours. The wall-paper was so faded that its original design was lost, and the only decorations were one or two unframed, highly-colored prints from the Sunday supplement of a sensational newspaper and a garish calendar issued in the interests of the nearest wholesale liquor-shop. On a rickety wash-stand was a cracked pitcher in a cracked basin; across the door that led into a neighboring room there had been drawn a ramshackle

bureau, with a clouded mirror and with drawers that would not wholly shut. The bed—the girl was sitting on the bed—was unmade.

A shambling step sounded on the stairs and a heavy hand fell, as lightly as it could, upon the door.

"Maud," said a thick, low voice.

The girl on the bed started. She looked about her as if seeking for a corner in which to hide.

"Maud," repeated the voice, "are you in there?"

"Yes," said the girl. "That you, Mart?"

"Sure it's me. Is it all right? Can I come in?"

"Come ahead, Mart."

The door opened, and there entered a man that had to stoop to do so. He was a raw-boned man, thin except for a swelling abdomen, and he wore a suit of some light checkered material. He carried a warm overcoat over his arm, and in the purple tie at the base of his thick neck was thrust a constellation of paste diamonds in the form of a horseshoe.

He sat on the only chair—a creaking chair placed directly under the flaring gas-jet beside the window—and, with a loud grunt, crossed his legs.

"Well?" he said interrogatively.

He had a thick, coarse face, with an obtruding chin and a bulging forehead from which the low-growing hair—oily hair—was parted in a ridiculous wave. His shaggy eyebrows hung far over the dull coals that were his eyes. His nose showed that it had been at least once broken and never properly set, and his lips, from which a much-chewed cigar hung limply, were divided between a natural tendency to loll and an habitual sneer.

The girl looked at him and away quickly—like a dog.

"Well?" he repeated. "Can't you talk? Where's the coin? Dig up. Come on, now: dig up!" He seemed to realize the canine quality of her movement: he spoke to her as some human beings speak to dogs.

Maud raised her skirt, took a handful of money from her stocking, handed him the money and drew sharply away.

"It—it ain't much," she faltered.

The man looked at it, holding it in his extended, dirty palm. Some of it fell through his thick fingers and dropped to the floor. His brow darkened.

"Where's the rest?" he asked.

"That's all I got, Mart."

"I said: where's the rest?"

"That's all, Mart. Honest——" The girl shrank from his glowering eyes, with an arm drawn up to shield her face. "Honest, that's every cent of it."

The man grunted. He heaved one shoulder high, while he thrust the money into his pocket.

"You're a liar," he said quietly.

"Mart——"

"You're a liar. Why, the other night some fool give you a twenty-dollar bill! Here it is Christmas-time, and the streets just naturally full of drunks, and you ask me to believe that you've only taken in seven dollars for a night's work. Seven dollars! How d'you think I'm goin' t' live, huh?"

He walked over to the bed and calmly slapped the girl in the face with his heavy, open hand.

She fell backward, sobbing.

"Come on, come on!" he commanded. "Cough!"

"That's all there is," sobbed the girl. "Honest, *honest,* I didn't get another cent."

Martin stepped away with a litheness that you would not have suspected in a man of his size. He took off his coat, folded it neatly, and laid it on a chair.

"Now then," he said, "you lie still. I'm goin' to search you. If I find you're holdin' out on me, I'll drive every tooth you've got down your throat. If I find you're tellin' the truth, I'll know you've been lazy and I'll give you a beatin'-up worth rememberin'."

He proceeded to keep his word.

Maud, you will observe, was a wicked woman. She was one of those shameless persons that you hear whispered about—rarely honestly and openly described. This miserable, unhealthy room was what is called a gilded palace of vice. Those bedraggled, insufficient clothes were the purple silks and fine linen of evil. That hard, tumbled bed was the downy couch of her slothful ease. The brass ring on the third finger of her left hand was the elaborate jewelry of the wrongdoer. Her emaciated, death-sentenced body was the pampered piece of silken-skinned flesh that you hear so frequently anathematized. That seven dollars, her entire earnings, which she had handed over to her owner, represented the enormous wages of sin, and, when they went into Mart's pocket, they went where nearly all such wages

go. Her life was the easy, care-free, well-fed, well-housed, well-clothed, happy life of the street-woman —including the blows.

You have heard a good deal about the easy, merry time that these bad women have. Oddly enough, Maud didn't enjoy it.

Oddly enough, too, she hadn't wanted to begin it; hadn't wanted to continue in it; hadn't wanted to go back to it from the service of Mrs. W. Barnabas Norton's housekeeper.

Maud had worked in a shirtwaist factory, and when the factory—owing to improper building-laws —had burned, Maud was unlucky enough not to be among the sixty young girls that were killed. She had gone a long time without employment. Then she had got a job, at five dollars a week, in another factory. On five dollars a week she had managed somehow to keep alive until there was a lock-out. Then, one evening when she was faint from starvation, Mart, whose business it was to watch young women that were hungry, had "picked her up"—this is the plain phrase for it—and offered her a supper. Whisky on an empty stomach had done the rest.

Yet, one day, Maud, with her strength partially renewed, had run away. She got a job as a servant. She even, at last, got into the eminently respectable household of Mrs. W. Barnabas Norton—and she left that household in the form and manner hereinbefore described.

What happened? This happened—the third-floor back in Twenty-ninth Street; the repetition of the old life happened, the blows: Mart. She had been

dismissed without a recommendation; she could get no other place as a servant; she could get no other place as a factory-hand. The idea of a mission or a "rescue home" never occurred to her. She was too discouraged. In the language of the street, she went back.

Mrs. Norton had done nothing—really. She had—really—only refrained from doing something. Why not? Mrs. W. Barnabas Norton is a busy woman, and Maud was a bad girl.

"Now then," said Mart.

He was perspiring profusely, but, as he resumed his seat on the creaking chair, he tilted himself against the wall with the relieved sigh of duty done. He looked at the convulsive bundle of clothes on the bed: Martin also had performed an obligation to society.

"Now then," he resumed, "I want you to listen here. Are you on?"

The bundle of clothes sobbed assent.

"Me an' Shorty 've got a little game, an' you've got to help out. See?"

Again the bundle sobbed in a manner that assured him of its attention.

"Shorty's got hold of a rich guy from up the Avenue—a kid he is—that wants to see the town. Shorty says the kid always has a wad in his clothes. Shorty says he'll like as not have extra on Christmas Eve, an' if the thing's worked right we can easy get his check for more. Well, the kid ain't ever seen me—ner won't till I'm good an' ready—but Shorty'll tell him he's got somethin' worth while on tap.

Shorty'll say it's a married woman with a husband on the L night-service, an' 'll say he's fixed it up—Shorty has—fer the kid, with the wife. Shorty'll direct the kid up here. The kid'll come. You be mighty sweet to him. I'll hammer on the door. The door'll be locked. Then me for a star-entrance by this here door back o' the bureau. Me, the outraged husband with a gun.—All the money the kid's got an' all he can write checks for. It's all bein' fixed fer to-morrow night at eleven-thirty: Christmas Eve. Understand?"

Apparently the girl did understand. At any rate, she sobbed herself to sleep at last. She slept in her clothes and did not wake till the gray light of the December morning was peeping around the edges of the crooked window-shade. Then, when she had listened for a while to the irregular snoring of Mart, she stole, with infinite timidity, from bed and undressed and rubbed her bruises and lay down in her chemise to get what rest was left her. Mart, however, had wrapped the blanket about his sturdy form, so she shivered a good deal. She did not dare to shiver much, for fear that she should wake him.

She lay there, staring at the seamed ceiling, and wondering, very vaguely, what was the matter with the world. She did not regret what she had done in it—she was past that sort of thing; she was a bad girl—she regretted only the consequences to herself. She did not look forward with especial shrinking to the badger-game that Mart had planned for Christmas Eve; she shrank only from the thought of what Mart would do to her if she should somehow bungle her part in it—she thought that he would likely

enough beat her to the brink of extermination. And she wondered why these things should be so.

Would there ever be a time when they were not so? She doubted it. Would there ever be a time when the Martins would not make their livings by exploiting those Mauds who could not find a chance to be exploited in another way? It seemed so unnecessary. It seemed such a waste of human energies, of human lives that the world had other need of—that the world demanded and could not get.

She had glimpses of this—fragmentary, distorted glimpses, always through the clouded glasses of her own wants. The world was doing much; but it was leaving, of all that it could do and ought to do, so much—so very much—undone. The world resembled Mart. Like Mart it was asleep, and moaning as it slept.

* * * * * * *

Long before half-past eleven on Christmas Eve the room had been made ready. The crooked window-shade had been straightened; the cracked water-jug and basin had been replaced by new ones; a couple of framed prints had been hung where the grotesques from the Sunday supplements were formerly tacked, and the bureau, its drawers all jammed into place, was dragged a few inches farther from the door that it was supposed to hide.

Maud sat on the single chair—they had decided not to have two chairs—and, apathetically, waited. They had bought her a new frock—a loose, pale-blue wrapper—and the color suited her. Her black hair flowed over her shoulders and the light, turned

rather low, was not sufficiently strong to betray her.

Mart tapped on the hidden door.

"All right?" he asked. He did not have to raise his voice much: the door was thin.

"All right," Maud answered.

"I'll stay here till he comes," said Mart. "Then I'll wait twenty minutes and then rattle at the other door. Be sure he pipes you lockin' that one an' be sure you're half scared to death when I call. Then I'll run back here an' come in by this way, gun an' all."

She reflected that she would not have to sham fear of Mart in any circumstances.

"It ain't loaded, that gun?" she quavered.

She heard Mart laugh.

"Sure it's loaded. I don't want my bluff called. Maybe I'll have to let him have one—just a little high one, you know, to jolt him up some."

"But, Mart——"

"None o' that now." He had been in high spiritous humor, but his tone grew ugly, more ugly even than common, at any hint of protest; it was like the warning growl of a feeding beast whose prey is threatened. "None o' your lip. If you don't put this thing through without side-steppin', I'll let you have some o' the gun, an' I won't shoot high, neither. It's—— Hshsh! Here they come!"

His voice stopped, and Maud, alone in the narrow bedroom, heard the front door close at the other end of the house. She heard feet ascend the stairs and traverse the hall—a heavy, familiar pair that knew their way in the darkness, and another pair, lighter, uncertain, that followed.

Someone knocked at the door.

"Come in," said Maud.

An ugly, dark face—a face marked by a yellow scar from lip to eye—was thrust through the barely opened door.

"Hello, Shorty," said Maud.

"Good-evenin', Mrs. Smith," said Shorty. He did not come in. "Everythin' clear?"

"Yes," said Maud.

Shorty winked wickedly.

"Husband gone?" he asked.

"Yes, he's gone this half-hour an' more," said Maud, repeating a lesson.

"Well, we thought we'd be on the safe side," said Shorty: "he's got such a temper that there husband o' yourn. Here's the young gentleman I told you about."

"Bring him in."

"I'll let him come in alone; I gotta meet Hoskins over to the corner. So long!"

Shorty flung wide the door; shoved a lad through the opening, and closed the door behind him. They could hear Shorty's footsteps rumbling down the hall.

The visitor was a delicately built, anæmic boy of nearly twenty. He had a narrow forehead, topped by tow-colored hair. His pale eyes were shifty and watery, and he had a nervous twitch to his thin lips. He was like a thousand lads of his environment in every large city: precocious, perverted, neurotic.

Maud gasped. The trade smile that she had prepared for him stiffened on her lips. She was alone with James, the eldest son of Mrs. W. Barnabas Norton.

"You!" she whispered. "You!"

But James, though he was surprised, was by no means disconcerted. He tossed his silk hat on the bed and, producing a cigarette from a gold case, proceeded to smoke.

"Well, well, well!" he laughed. "Who'd a-thought it? Didn't know you were married, Maud."

"I—I'm——" stuttered the woman.

James reached out a gloved hand and patted her cheek. The rouge hid a deeper pallor than usual.

"This *is* luck!" said James. "Little stand-off, prim, touch-me-not Maudie. Well, well! Welcome to our city!"

He sat down on the bed and, suddenly encircling her waist, dragged her beside him.

Her heart hammered in her breast. She remembered the Norton home; the Norton baby that she had loved—the one living creature that she had loved without receiving a wound in return—and she remembered Mart in the next room, with the revolver.

"Don't!" she whispered. "Listen a minute——"

"Not a second!" laughed Norton loudly. He thrust out his legs and knocked his heels together in his huge enjoyment of his joke. "I've got on to your curves at last," he said. "I've found you out, Maudie. I always tried to give you the glad eye at home; but you'd pretend not to notice; and then you went away, nobody seemed to know why, and here—well, here we are, aren't we?"

He tried to kiss her, but she pushed his face away. She glanced over her shoulder at the other door.

"Stop!" she whispered. She was trying to gain time; trying to think. "Of course I wouldn't look at you there," she added in a louder voice to win a moment more and to satisfy the listener at the door. Why hadn't Mart told her the name of his victim? Why had she come to think nothing of names? Why had she permitted her sentimental respect for her former employers to keep her from mentioning their name to Mart? "Of course I wouldn't look at you *there*," she found herself, with significant emphasis, repeating.

"But now—eh, Maudie?" laughed Norton. "How about now? Things are different now, aren't they?"

She looked again at the door. She shivered. She couldn't think, yet she must gain time.

"Kiss me!" commanded Norton.

"No, no!"

"Come on. What you afraid of?"

"Nothing. Of course, I ain't afraid of anything."

"Then, come on."

She raised her cold face to him and, trembling, allowed him to kiss her on the mouth. She was to have twenty minutes; it seemed as if thirty had already passed.

"What you shaking about?" demanded Norton.

"Hush!" she whispered, and then said, in a more normal tone: "I'm just thinkin' what if my husband'd come in."

"Well, I'm not," said Norton. "I'm thinking

this is a pretty raw deal. Do you think I'm going to do all the kissing and you not——"

"Hush!" she pleaded.

"I won't hush. I tell you——"

"Then, here!" cried Maud. "And here!"

She flung her arms about him and kissed him, with calculated vigor, upon either cheek. And then, with her mouth against his ear, she began to whisper:

"Listen. Don't answer. Don't talk. Listen. You must get out. You must go now and go quick. Don't ask why. Go. And once you've started, you must run—run!"

He drew back from her, his mouth twitching, his eyes large.

"Why?" he asked.

She scarcely understood the question.

"Go!" she whispered. "I told you not to ask why."

"But why?" he demanded loudly.

"Because—because your people were so kind to me——"

"Oh, rot!"

"Because, I loved that little baby-brother of yours so that I—that I——"

"Get out, Maudie. Don't talk that sort of gush; it don't go with all this stage-setting, you know."

"Then—then because your mother——"

"Don't talk about her, please."

She tried to quiet him by a lying reason.

"Because your mother met me on the street the other night and gave me twenty dollars," she whispered.

Norton laughed again.

"I'm going to give you twenty-five," said he. "See here"—he grew angry now and his voice rose higher—"why aren't you nice to me? Out with it, now! Why?"

It seemed to her that he nearly shouted. She glanced again, involuntarily, toward the door—the door behind which, revolver in hand, stood Mart, who had told her to be mighty sweet to her visitor and had threatened her life.

"Go!" she pleaded.

"I won't go!" yelled Norton. "What you looking behind that bureau for? Yah!——" His mouth twitched; his jaw dropped. "It's—it's a trap!" he shrieked. "It's a badger-game! It's——"

"Yes; yes; yes!" she cried. She didn't care now. He was the son of her benefactress; the baby's brother. With a quick access of nervous strength, she caught him by the shoulders, whirled him about, and hurled him through the door by which he had entered.

He must have understood her then, for she heard him crash down the hall and down the stairs. She was conscious that Mart, out of the darkness, hurdled by her with an oath; but she heard Norton reach the front door first and bang it after him.

Then she heard Mart slowly reascend the stairs.

He came into the little room, and she shrank to the farthest corner at the sight of him. He had been drinking all day against the prospective activities of this evening. Now he was not hot with anger; he was cold with it. He held the revolver in his huge hand. He was smiling, and when she saw the smile on his thick lips, she cried out.

"Get up," said Mart.

She got up.

"I heard you," said Mart.

The clock in the church steeple began to strike, the chimes to ring. It was Christmas morning.

She stretched out her thin arms to him.

"Mart! Oh, Mart——"

Mart slowly raised the revolver.

"Say your prayers," he commanded—"fer the last time."

The chimes rang forth their message of peace on earth and good will to men. They rang so loudly that the policeman on the corner heard nothing else.

* * * * * * *

They never caught Mart. It was only a back-alley crime, so the police were not greatly worried, and the papers that are read by the congregation of St. Chrysostom's did not so much as mention it.

St. Chrysostom's had, nevertheless, a most successful Christmas service. Mrs. Rutherford Hemmingway said she had never heard a better *Te Deum* better sung not even at St. George's Grosvenor Square.

Mrs. Norton agreed with her. Mrs. Norton knew nothing of the murder, either then or later. She was not concerned in it. She had done nothing—really. She had—really—only refrained from doing something.

She joined devoutly in the General Confession:

"Almighty and most merciful Father; we have erred, and strayed from thy ways like lost sheep.

We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done . . ."

Mrs. W. Barnabas Norton is a busy woman, and Maud had been a bad girl.

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