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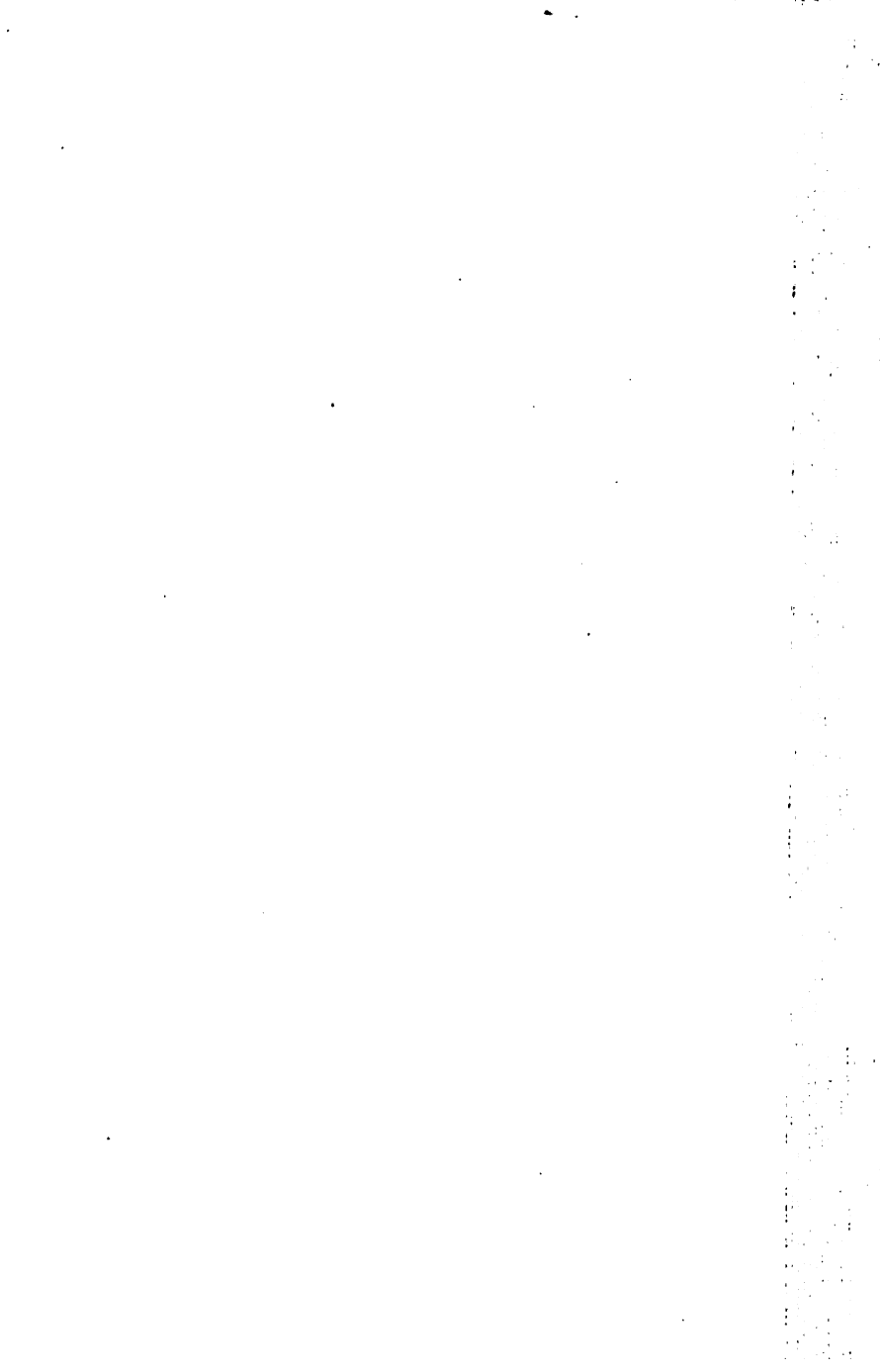
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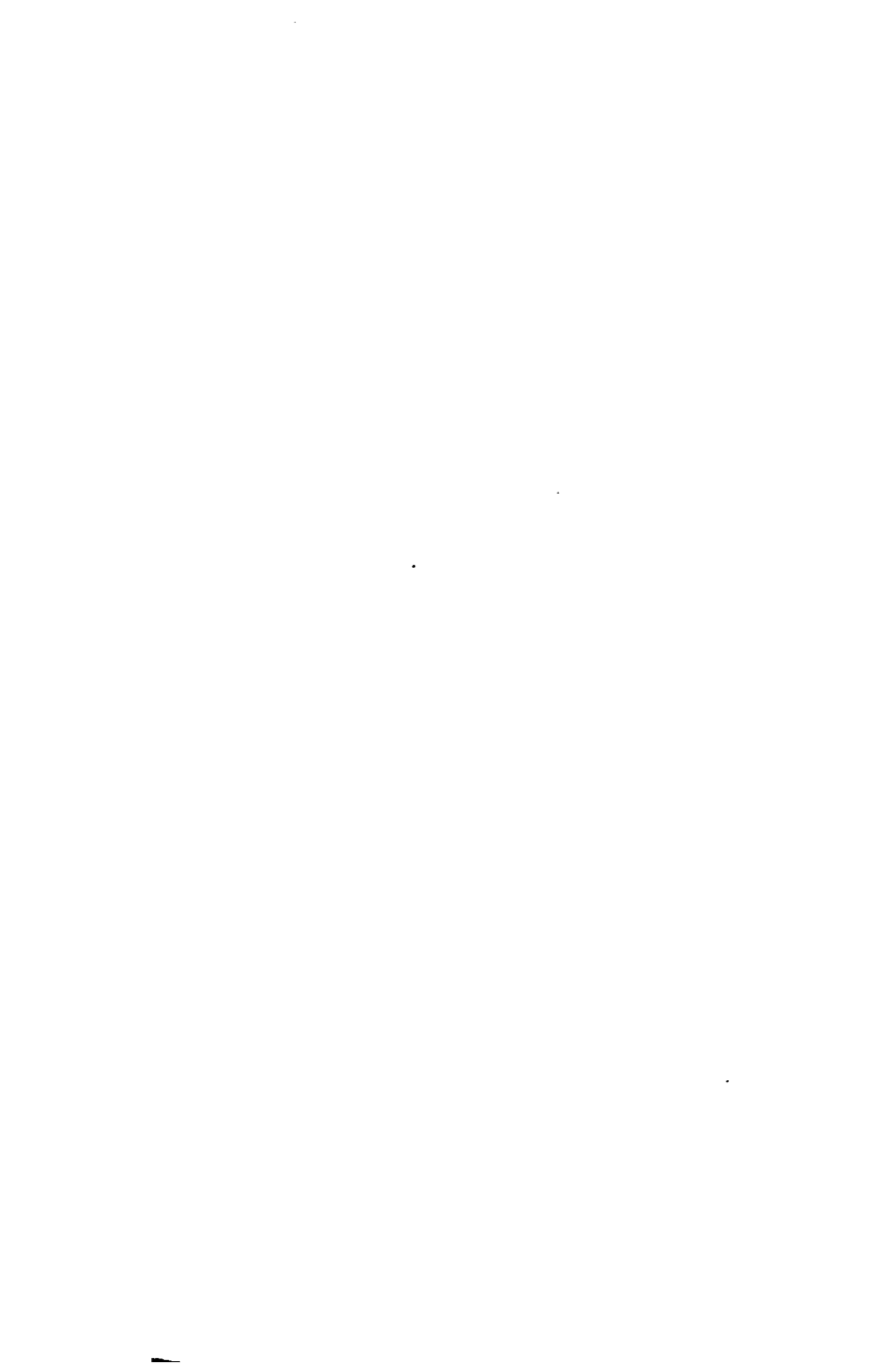


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**THE LAW OF LIFE**





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HE SEATED THE LADY SO THAT SHE MUST LOOK DIRECTLY  
TOWARD THE GREAT SILVERY ORB *(Page 33)*

# THE LAW OF LIFE

*A NOVEL*

By

**CARL WERNER**

I

Illustrations by

**ROBERT W. AMICK**



New York  
Dodd, Mead and Company

1914

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TO MY  
FATHER AND MOTHER

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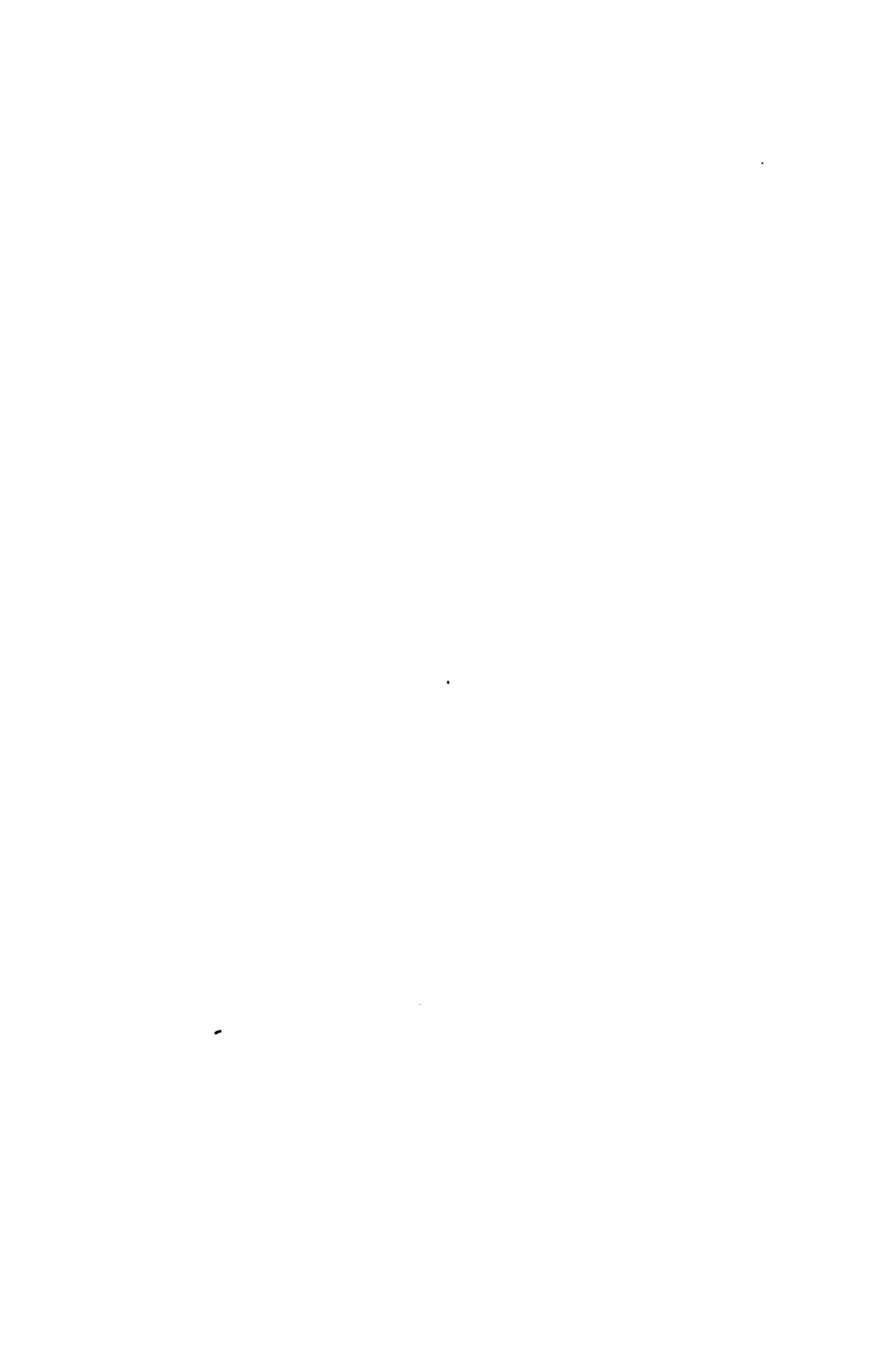
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He seated the lady so that she must look directly toward the great silvery orb .	
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**THE LAW OF LIFE**



## CHAPTER I

### AN AFTERNOON WITH THE LADIES

THE time is an afternoon in June, ten years ago; a day of sunshine—the warm and welcome sunshine that bathes a green and flowered country in the ripened spring.

The place is Wellington, an up-state town, ten hours from Broadway, large enough to be called a city and to be regularly chartered as such; to have a fine Public Square, which is not a square—I have yet to see a Public Square anywhere that is—but a great rectangle of ten acres or so, immaculately paved, and studded with two oval parks, in one of which is the Soldiers' Monument, in the other a round pavilion wherefrom the Wellington City Band discourses music of a summer evening; and between the two parks a large fountain, at which horse and man may refresh themselves in sultry weather; large enough to have flanking this rectangle on its four sides well-kept stores with clean and polished windows, and two good hotels, and at the lower end of it a stone church with a clock in its tower; and to have leading out of the square a half-dozen streets, clean and wide, that constitute the main arteries of the town; large enough to have good sanitation, good public buildings, a good public library, thriving manufactories, good govern-

ment, good business, and good times; to have social pets and social outcasts, old and respected families, new and suspected families, a lower class, a middle class, and an upper class.

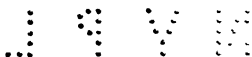
Wellington is large enough to have all of these.

But Wellington is small enough to consider money less, in the social reckoning, and manners, morals, and family more; to have a garden for every home; to have every street a bower of elms and maples; to have squirrels scampering along its fences and flowers blooming in every dooryard; to have its farm wagons and buggies standing beside the public "hacks" in the Public Square; to have its long winter nights and drowsy summer noons; to have its politics discussed across the counters of the stores, its groups of idlers on the corners, its appetite keen for scandal; and to have its Sewing Circle, at which the ladies of Wellington do noble service with their nimble thimbles and, alas! make sad havoc sometimes with their lively tongues.

Not that the Sewing Circle of Wellington is different from the sewing circles of other towns, for they are pretty much the same the world over, I fancy.

And not that all who grace the gatherings of this particular organisation indulge in the pleasant pastime of rending the reputations of absent members whilst they rip discarded sheets and petticoats into bandages for the suffering sick and handkerchiefs for the improvident poor.

But here, as elsewhere,—to paraphrase lamely,—





there are many who come to sew and remain to gossip.

As we shall presently see.

For Mrs. President Browne, in the drawing-room of whose pretty home on Linden Avenue the Circle has been in session this afternoon in June, has just rapped sharply upon the polished oak card table at which she presides, and has announced that the Circle stands adjourned.

Mrs. President Browne must have spoken parliamentarily, of course—not literally; for the Circle thereupon neither stood nor adjourned, but continued to sit without a break in its circumference, until its members had partaken of tea and cakes served by a maid-in-waiting and by Mrs. Browne herself, who accomplished the transition from chairman to hostess in a single step and now passed the loaf-sugar and sliced lemon with consummate ease and charm.

The enjoyment of this refreshment was accompanied by a subdued chatter and a buzz of small-talk, growing steadily crescendo, until some one discovered Miss Geranium Browne lurking timidly in an alcove, from which retreat she was led, resisting politely, to the piano. Miss Geranium, a plump young person, played "Kammenoi Ostrow" with dash. There were other things with which she played it, but mostly dash.

After which achievement there was a spatter of applause, during which each member of the Circle turned to the member nearest her and made a flattering comment, ostensibly intended for the ears of

the nearest member, but distinctly audible to Miss Geranium and Mrs. Browne.

There were a few compliments genuinely *sotto voce*. For example, a Mrs. Greene remarked to a Miss Graye, behind her teacup, that it was truly wonderful what could be done with such stubby fingers.

Then appeared Miss Chrysanthemum Browne, who, having returned from a canter most opportunely, blundered into the drawing-room attired in a riding habit that was exceedingly becoming; and she was much astonished to find the Circle in session there, you may be sure, else why should she appear to be in great confusion and beg a thousand pardons?

However, she eventually yielded to the unanimous appeal for a song—an appeal that was quite convincing in its enthusiasm. Miss Chrysanthemum was a tall, willowy person with a top note. She sang “The Palms” with feeling, after which she departed, outwardly not hearing, but inwardly keenly relishing the same kind of ostensibly whispered but plainly distinguishable compliments that echoed the performance of Miss Geranium.

What she really did not hear was the remark Mrs. Blacke whispered sweetly behind her glove to Miss Whyte, to the effect that, having had so much money spent on her voice, it would be truly a pity if the flattering of those tones in the upper register could not be overcome.

The chatter of the ladies was then resumed and crescendoed, whilst Mrs. Browne, who had accom-

panied Miss Chrysanthemum at the piano, sat easily on the bench, her back to the instrument and her elbow on the keys.

A tall, good-looking girl of about twenty approached her.

"You're not going, Helen?" said the hostess, rising and taking the hand extended toward her.

"Thank you; yes," replied the young lady. This was Miss Willoughby, of Willoughby Street, chairman of the Relief Committee. One of the oldest streets is Willoughby Street, and one of the richest. One of the oldest families is the Willoughby family, but not one of the richest. Time was when the Willoughbys—but that's another chapter.

The chairman of the Relief Committee was good to look upon as she stood, tall and erect, smiling her adieu. She was clad in white, from the tips of her canvas oxfords to the cloud of filmy stuff around her hat. Light-brown hair has Miss Willoughby, the kind that waves in cold weather and curls tightly when it is warm; very light brown is her hair, the brown that captures the glint of the summer sun and looks like gold where the highlights shine. A winning mouth she has, not small, but round, like a half-blown rose, yet capable of becoming instantly straight and stern. And fine, serious blue eyes—a real blue, with no grey in it—fringed with dark lashes that intensify the blue. A rare face is this because it is at once fair and thoughtful and firm.

That Miss Willoughby had initiative was in-

stanced by her being the first to arise; that she had prestige was manifest by the cessation of the buzzing and the evident disposition of others to follow her as she took her leave.

"I'll investigate that case of the moulder's family to-morrow morning," she was saying to Mrs. Browne.

"I wouldn't inconvenience myself," answered the hostess, patronisingly. "You're a busy young woman, I know."

"But, if these things are worth doing, they are worth doing promptly; don't you think so?"

"Assuredly, my dear; if one has the time."

"I have it," replied Miss Willoughby, smiling.

A dozen others had now arisen, and with the usual exchange of good-afternoons they took their departures, by ones and twos and threes. Of those remaining there were yet a score.

More tea was served, the sugar and lemon were passed again, chairs were drawn nearer together and, but for the fact that the meeting had been officially declared closed, one would have surmised that some business of especial importance was about to be taken in hand.

Mrs. Greene, who carried the responsibilities of the Circle's secretaryship, toyed with a black-covered and businesslike-looking book in which the minutes of the meetings were inscribed, and remarked that the attendance that afternoon had been exceptionally large.

"Yes, indeed," responded Miss Graye; "in fact, it was complete, was it not?"

Now, Miss Graye knew very well that the attendance was not complete and mentally anticipated to a nicety Mrs. Greene's reply.

"One absent," reported Mrs. Greene, making a pretence of looking at the roll in the black-covered book, but not troubling herself to do so actually.

"Really?" drawled Miss Graye, giving an excellent imitation of one indifferently astonished. "Oh, yes; Mrs. Lavendar was missing." Miss Graye knew very well that Mrs. Lavendar was *not* missing, but she went on: "I remember now that I looked for her when I——"

"Why, Cynthia!" interrupted Mrs. Browne. "Mrs. Lavendar sat directly behind you, my dear, and left with Helen Willoughby."

"So she did, so she did! How stupid of me! But she came in quite late, you will remember, and I'd quite forgotten having seen her. Then the absent one was—was—let me think——" She hesitated, looked thoughtful, and finally gave it up with a wave of her hand, intended to signify complete surrender and utter despair.

"Nan Wallabout," supplied Mrs. Greene, after another perfunctory examination of the membership roll.

There followed a pregnant silence, a silence charged with the expectancy of alert ears and the anxiety of itching tongues; a silence like the ominous calm that presages a summer storm. In point of fact, the storm was gathering. Mrs. Browne looked significantly at Miss Graye, Miss Graye looked significantly at Mrs. Blacke, Mrs.

Blacke looked significantly at Miss Whyte, and so on around the circle.

Then the storm began. First, a chorus of "Ahs!" like the moan of the rising wind. Then a nodding of be-feathered and be-flowered hats and bonnets, like the waving of angry tree-tops in a gale. Then a rumble of distant thunder as each mumbled in undertone to another.

Then it broke in all its violence, with a crash from a portly lady on the outer edge of the arc, who declared:

"Nan Wallabout, indeed! No wonder that *she* stayed away!"

This was followed instantly by a flash of forked lightning from a sharp-featured woman in spectacles, who averred in a hard metallic voice that, if people were saying about *her* what they were saying about Nan Wallabout, *she* would want to stay away for good and *all* and never show *her* face again! No, *never!*

Then another peal from the portly lady on the outer edge, who rumbled that, if the story were true, the very least Nan Wallabout could do, in all decency, would be to resign from the Circle entirely. She for one would expect it and she believed the others would expect it, and she believed the others would agree with her that they had a *right* to expect it. After delivering herself of which she settled back in her chair, and nodded her head knowingly, as much as to say, "I guess *that* struck somewhere!"

More lightning, more thunder, more lashing

wind and chilling rain and stinging hail; and the storm of wagging tongues beat down mercilessly upon that ever-fragile flower—a woman's reputation.

Some had heard a part of the story; others had heard other parts of the story; still others had heard only that there was a story. But now all knew all of the story, and on the velvet floor of Mrs. Browne's drawing-room lay the shattered petals of Nan Wallabout's good name.

At two o'clock in the morning Mr. Sidney Powell, once a Wellington boy, scion of the proud but not prosperous Powells of Wellington, now lawyer and alderman of New York City, and who was just concluding a four-weeks' vacation in his native town, had been seen turning out of the drive at Holloway's road-house in an automobile with Nan Wallabout in the seat beside him.

Divested of all the ohs and ahs and ifs and buts supplied by the lively and willing imaginations of the ladies of the Wellington Sewing Circle, this was the story that now threatened to blacken the character of Nan Wallabout; to place upon her the ban of outraged society and cause her for ever to bow her head in shame.

A petty thing is this to crucify a soul upon; is it not? But Wellington society has decreed that decent women may not stop at Holloway's, the little inn five miles out on the Harbour road. Gentlemen may, and be welcomed in Mrs. Browne's drawing-room on the self-same evening. Gentlemen may, and kiss the hand of Mrs. Browne's fair daughter

with lips that sang a ribald song and pressed a painted cheek at Holloway's the night before.

Gentlemen may stop at Holloway's and still be gentlemen. But ladies may not stop at Holloway's, lest they be for ever damned.

This is an immutable law that Wellington has made unto itself, and every man, woman, and child in Wellington knows it. Nan Wallabout knew it and had known it as long as she had known there was a place called Holloway's out on the Harbour road. So, even though ignorance of a law were an excuse for its violation, which, according to our august courts of justice, is not the case, Nan Wallabout could never offer it in mitigation of her offence.

"Do you think it is true?" asked one of the ladies of the circle.

"There seems to be no doubt about it," responded another.

"Then I'm afraid I shall have to ask my dear Rosemary to—ahem—avoid her," ruled a third lady.

"And I shall speak to my dear Camelia," said a fourth lady, decisively.

"One cannot be too careful about one's daughter's environment; can one?" sighed a fifth lady.

In response to which it was unanimously agreed by all of the other ladies that one could not.

Here a thin young woman with pale-blue eyes arose and adjusted her hat before the mantel mirror.

"Well, now, who *saw* her at Holloway's?" she asked, taking advantage of the momentary calm that now ensued. Not that the young woman with the



pale-blue eyes was more loath to condemn than her sister members, or harboured any more compassion or consideration or charity in her heart; but, being not so aggressive as they, she had been unable, up to this time, to get a word in edgewise, and now availed herself of an opportunity to participate in the feast.

A fowl, scratching in the barnyard, once uncovered a pearl.

So it was with the thin young woman with the pale-blue eyes. In this instance the hens—continuing the metaphor—at first turned contemptuously from the gem and there was a sound as of sniffing and poohing. But the pearl lay there, pure and white and gleaming and so totally unlike the common gravel of gossip flying around it that the sniffing and poohing gradually subsided and finally ceased entirely and a casual contemplation of it ensued.

“Yes, indeed,” piped up a sixth lady, after a few moments, “who *saw* her at Holloway’s?”

Then there followed a lively cross-fire of questions, answers, sallies, retorts, thrusts, parries, and insinuations; the whole wretched business was gone over again in exquisite detail; each told the other where she had heard it, when she had heard it, and where the person who had told her had said *she* had heard it. But after all this was done and despite everything that anybody could say and everything that anybody had heard anybody say, the identity of the person who had seen Nan Wallabout coming out of Holloway’s with Sidney Powell remained undisclosed.

The thin young woman with the pale-blue eyes, having thus happily emerged from total obscurity, now regarded herself as one having achieved a distinct triumph, and she promptly followed up the advantage by rising to her full height of five feet and two inches and driving another poser home.

"Then how are we to know if it is true?" she demanded, thrusting a murderous-looking hatpin into place and turning to get a side view of herself in the mirror.

The ladies looked around the circle, craning their necks from side to side, each appearing to expect an answer from one of the others. There was a pathetic silence of several moments' duration. Then there was a stir on the outer edge of the circle. It was the portly lady, who arose majestically and adjusted the skirt of her gown.

"Ladies," she said, after satisfying herself that all eyes were upon her and all ears attuned to hear; "ladies, a week from to-night you will know beyond question. It is the night of the Willoughby garden party!"

Enigmatical as this pronunciamento might have been to the uninitiated, the knowing glances that passed from face to face around Mrs. Browne's drawing-room established that the speaker's meaning was perfectly clear to all present. But the portly lady on the outer edge precluded all possibility of misconstruction by adding, as she resumed her chair:

"If there is any truth in this story about Nan Wallabout, you may rest assured that Helen Willoughby will give her the cut direct!"

## CHAPTER II

### MISS WILLOUGHBY MAKES A DISCOVERY

It happened that Miss Willoughby, who had gone but a little way and had stopped to chat with a young lady of her acquaintance a few doors below Mrs. Browne's, discovered that she had left her parasol behind and now retraced her steps in search of it. Turning in at Mrs. Browne's, she remembered that she had paused on the veranda to greet Miss Geranium and had left the parasol leaning against a porch-chair near the window; so, coming briskly up the gravel walk, she mounted the steps and straightway espied the dainty white sunshade reposing exactly where she was expecting to find it. She crossed the wide veranda and, as she approached the window, which was open, she heard her own name spoken within. The shade had been lowered to keep out the afternoon sun, so that, while every word uttered by the tarrying ladies was audible to her, they were quite unaware of her return.

Miss Willoughby did not linger. She recovered her parasol and took her departure. But the moment which this act occupied was the psychological one, and she walked away with the ultimatum of the portly lady on the outer edge echoing in her ears.

Gaining the public highway, Miss Willoughby opened the parasol with a vigour that made the little catch on the handle fairly ring, and, as she turned into Linden Avenue and down toward the Public Square, there was an upward tilt to her chin. And her mouth could not by any stretch of imagination or poetic license have been likened to a half-blown rose, for her lips were compressed into two straight lines of red. Plainly, Miss Willoughby was displeased, if not indignant. Plainly, also, she was pondering deeply.

The truth is that the few words overheard at Mrs. Browne's window had widened the introspective as well as the outward vision of Miss Willoughby to a considerable extent. It may be said, however, that the contempt inspired by the business in which she found her kind Christian sisters engaged soon gave place to reflection upon the more personal discovery: namely, that she, Miss Willoughby, had come to be regarded as a sort of court of last resort in the moral classification of Wellington's erring youth. And most astonishing of all was the revelation that, unknown by her except through the accident of the parasol, the final adjudication of the Nan Wallabout scandal had been placed unreservedly in her hands.

Helen had known, to be sure, that the name of Willoughby was something of a power in that circle of Wellington society usually described as exclusive. She had known, also, that she, herself, apart from her connection with the old and honourable Will-

oughbys, was regarded as being something of a stickler for the proprieties.

She had never plumed herself on this reputation, nor had she earned it other than by deporting herself according to the best judgment and inclination of a pure-minded and God-fearing young woman; but, having it, she had tried seriously to live up to it, keeping steadily on her course and lending her time and talents to such church activities and such charities and reforms as the town of Wellington stood in need of.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MODEL MAN

So Helen Willoughby walked down Linden Avenue, her eyes on the toes of her snow-white slippers, pondering as she went. She had proceeded a considerable distance when a shadow, elongated by the obliquity of the late afternoon sun, fell across her path.

She lifted her eyes and looked into the laughing face of a tall young man who was standing, with legs astride and hands slung carelessly in his trousers pockets, blocking her way. He was a full inch over six feet, broad of shoulder and deep of chest. His chin was square and cleft; his mouth rather large, but just now, as he stood there smiling, it was both kind and merry. He had clear, hazel eyes, set well apart, with straight brows above them; a skin that might have been fair but for the early coat of tan, and with a sprinkling of freckles across the nose. His hair was trimmed closely about the ears, but was long enough to curl loosely on the crown of his head, and it showed a glint of reddish bronze that bespoke a true Sandy back somewhere among his Scottish forbears.

The young man took his hands from his pockets and yanked off the cap that had been perched a bit rakishly over his right temple.

Miss Willoughby essayed a reproving pucker of her brows, but after a moment she yielded to the contagion of the smile that beamed upon her.

"Robert Mackenzie!" she exclaimed. "You almost startled me!"

"I almost apologize," he laughed back, replacing his cap, and taking care to set it squarely on his head.

"You had almost better," Helen assured him. "And what are you doing here, pray?"

"Waiting for you," answered the young man, screwing his face into an expression of suffering martyrdom. "Do you see that fence?" He pointed to a low granite terrace by which they were standing. "Well, I've been sitting there for one solid hour, whistling and kicking my heels against the stone. Didn't you hear me as you came along?"

"I thought it was a red-headed woodpecker," confessed Helen. She meant it, too, for the busy little grub-hunters abound in the groves of Wellington; but Mackenzie affected an injured look and ostentatiously concealed an auburn lock under the crown of his cap.

"You'll be sorry for that when I'm gone," he promised. "Only seven days more in Wellington and then me for New York—and around the world."

"Seven days? You told me two weeks, did you not?"

"That was yesterday. But you know Sid Powell's going back a week from to-morrow and I've

agreed to go down with him and let him show me the town before I sail."

"I see." She looked at him dubiously for a moment and then at the sky. "But do you think that Sidney's companionship will be entirely"—she paused and felt for a word—"entirely congenial?"

"Congenial?" He laughed heartily. "Why, haven't we been pals together for years?"

Helen looked down and then slowly raised her eyes to Mackenzie.

"Not in New York," she said.

"No, of course not. I've never been there."

"But Sidney Powell has. Something like a year or more, hasn't he?" The inference was vague, but he saw the drift of it.

"I can't see that he's any the worse for it; can you?"

"Not much, perhaps. Sidney Powell in New York may not be different from Sidney Powell in Wellington. But his standard at home is not any too high; certainly it is not and has never been the standard of Robert Mackenzie. You have been friends, yes; because you have lived in the same town, are of about the same age, have played the same games, read the same books, and attended the same schools, all at the same time. But your ideals are as wide apart as the two poles."

They were now walking slowly down the street toward the Square.

"I am not so sure about that," protested the young man; "let us see. Powell is of a fine old



family, a family rich in blue blood but poor in red; and in resources. Sid Powell's purpose is to seek the needed red corpuscles, which, literally, is yellow gold. Now Robert Mackenzie is of a family that is neither fine nor old—from a Wellington standpoint—for he is the grandson of a blacksmith and can boast of only two generations in the town. Powell has the name and has set out to earn the fortune—and I admire him for it. Mackenzie has the fortune—thanks to the frugality of the blacksmith—and is setting out to earn the name."

"And some day," Helen interrupted, laughing her encouragement, "he will perform some marvellous feat of engineering that will make him famous and admired of men!"

Mackenzie smiled acknowledgment.

"Thank you, Helen. But here's the parallel: Sid Powell's mission and mine are identical. Each is corrective."

He laughed, triumphantly.

"And both are selfish," said Helen. But she added, quickly, touching his arm: "Forgive me, Robert; I should not have said that, because it does not necessarily follow. The fame you aspire to and the wealth Sidney Powell has already begun to accumulate may accomplish great good for others as well as for yourselves, both in the getting and in the having. You, for one, are not the man to aim so high for yourself alone, but for others——"

"For another."

It was not like Mackenzie to interrupt her. She was looking ahead through the vista of overhanging

maples; but she knew that his eyes were fastened intently upon her face.

"It is for others," she went on, quickly, "that you hope to do big things. To build a giant bridge across the Hudson, so thousands of toilers may travel the better from dingy city work-rooms to pleasant country homes; to water arid wastes of land, and reclaim swamps and build railroads and—well, to create, to produce! To produce! Oh, the joy of being a producer of great and lasting things—to be a real worker in a real world!" She stopped short, as though to hold herself in check, for her voice had risen and a flush was mounting to her cheeks.

"But we've diverged, Robert," she continued, after a moment; "or, rather, I have. Getting back to you and Sidney Powell, I was not thinking of your companionability in the sense of purpose or achievement."

"What, then?" he asked.

"Well, the moral aspect, rather. It's one thing to be in staid old Wellington with Sidney Powell and others; it's quite another thing to be in New York City with Sidney Powell alone. In New York, being unacquainted and unknown, you will not have that great, sustaining influence for good—an established reputation."

"Oh, Helen!" he exclaimed, throwing up his hands, helplessly. "Don't! Please don't! Honestly, I'm no better than any of the other fellows. Why in the deuce—excuse me, but I can't help it—why in the deuce do the people of this town persist

in holding me up as a bright and shining example?"

"Because you are," she said, benignly. "Why, only last week I advised the boys in my Sabbath School class to take you as a pattern of real manhood. And Hallie Remsen mentioned you to her boys in the same way; and Professor Williams mentioned you the other day to the boys at High School. He was lecturing on profanity——"

"But, Helen! I *use* profanity. Hang it! I swear, myself."

"Oh, Robert!"

"It's a fact; I do. Not frequently, because I'm seldom in the frame of mind for it. I tell you, I'm no different from other young men in this town. I'm as bad as the average."

"I protest. You go to prayer-meeting."

"Because you refused to let me walk home with you when I waited outside with the other fellows."

"You go to church on Sundays."

"To see you in the choir-loft and hear you sing."

"You don't gamble."

"Because it's too confining. If outdoor poker were popular, I might be a fiend."

"You don't drink, either."

"Because the stuff makes me first silly and then sick. Look here, Helen; if the people of this town don't quit pointing me out as the only and original sinless wonder of Wellington, do you know what I'll do? Well, some fine morning I'll get about three sheets in the wind, put on a plug hat and a red necktie, drive my big Charon-Sixty full speed

ahead around Public Square and into the Soldiers' Monument, kick in the plate-glass window of the City National Bank, beat up a couple of policemen, pull the Mayor's whiskers, and then give myself up for trial. And, when they lead me in for sentence, I'll slap the Judge's face and do six months in the county jail!"

He said this with much spirit and desperation. Then he threw back his head and laughed so long and heartily that Helen laughed with him in spite of herself.

"It's no laughing matter," he continued, after a few moments, with an assumption of gravity that his happy face belied. "It's no joke to constantly feel that every blessed mother in Wellington is telling her naughty boy to be like Bob Mackenzie. Most of the fellows who get this handed to them are a good sight better than I am, too. Lucky for me they're not bigger, also. If I wasn't so husky, I'll bet some of these long-suffering young citizens would take a punch at me now and then on the Public Square. And I wouldn't blame them if they did."

"Poor Robert!" she said, smiling her consolation. "I'm afraid I've been preaching to you and I'm sorry, for you neither deserve nor require it."

"You don't preach, Helen."

"I don't mean to. I think to practise is more effective; and I try to live and act the kind of life I believe in. Tell me frankly; do you think I am too—too—proper?"

“Heavens, no! Not one whit more than I’d want my mother to be—if she were living; or my sister; if I had one.” Then he added more gravely: “Or my wife, if I am ever fortunate enough to get one.”

They had now reached the Square and had passed along it to the upper end, and Helen stopped at the corner, where Willoughby Street joined the rectangle.

“Well,” she continued, “if I am, I’ve just found a grain of comfort in it.” And then more seriously: “Robert, there is power in being a prude!”

She put out her hand.

“I had meant to walk home with you,” said Mackenzie.

“I’m not going there—just now. But you’ll be at church to-morrow evening?”

“If I were doing that six months for pulling the Mayor’s whiskers, I’d get there somehow. Iron bars could never hold me!”

He laughed, lifted his cap, and went whistling across the Square.

As for Miss Willoughby, one would almost fear that she had deceived her stalwart admirer; for she walked straight up Willoughby Street, through the arch of centenarian elms and maples, to the home of her sires.

A group of young men, having met by chance in front of the Post-office and lingered for a word of banter, raised their hats as she went by.

One of them, a bank clerk, followed her speculatively with his eyes.

"Which will win her," he asked, whimsically; "Bob Mackenzie or Sidney Powell?"

"Bob was sure of her, I guess, until three weeks ago," opined a law student, lighting a cigarette.

"When Sid arrived on the scene," supplied the bank clerk. "And he's been giving Mackenzie a run for his money ever since."

"He caught Bob with his guard down, all right," said the law student; "for everybody in Wellington had it doped out long ago that Sid would marry Nan Wallabout."

"Not me, Jimmie. I knew he was only stalling with that girl. And now look what he's done for her."

"Got the whole town talking, all right. Do you think the yarn is straight?"

"Search *me*. Now, if Blab Wilson was in town, he could tell you every detail. Blab is an awful gossip, but he certainly does get the news."

"Well, Blab's not here; so my sister says nobody'll know where Nan stands till next Saturday. That's when the Willoughbys give their party on the lawn. If there's anything wrong with Miss Nan Wallabout, that Willoughby girl will drop her like a hot potato. That's what my sister says."

"That's what everybody says."

After which the law student wandered over to the law office and the bank clerk sauntered back to the bank.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POWER OF THE PRUDE

HELEN WILLOUGHBY arrived at the gateway of the Willoughby home, but did not enter it. Instead, she turned squarely to her left, went directly across the street, and proceeded up a narrow, tulip-edged walk to the doorstep of an old-fashioned, well-kept frame dwelling. She ascended the steps to the square porch, trellised with wild-cucumber vines, and pulled the bell.

Presently the door was opened by a young woman of about her own age, rather under the medium height, but of good figure, and attired in a cool, summer dress of figured lawn. Her face was full and round and would have been merry if the smile that constantly flickered around her mouth had been given full play. She had dark eyes, the colour of chestnuts. There was a fulness about the lids that might have been caused by tears.

"Is it you, Helen?" she said, surprised.

"Yes, Nan." Helen smiled—a frank, friendly smile—and offered her hand.

"Won't you come in?" And Nan led her through the hall and into the living-room, adjoining.

"How delightfully cool it is here," said Helen, dropping into a chair. "It's remarkably warm on

the street to-day, for June. Positively unbearable down on the Square."

"So father was saying at luncheon. It was ninety degrees at Rand's drug store when he came by." She looked at Helen and dropped her eyes. "For my part, I refuse to go out in such weather."

"I can't blame you; it's so unseasonable! Tomorrow, perhaps, we'll be wearing our furs again."

"And giving our lawn parties indoors," said Nan, her eyes on the floor.

There was a shade of resentment in Nan's tone, but Helen feigned not to have understood it.

"That brings me to the purpose of my call, Nan," she said. "I'm giving a party out-of-doors a week from to-night and I want you to come. Will you?"

Miss Wallabout looked up quickly, her face brightening:

"Why, Helen! How good of you. I knew you had asked some friends over; Hallie Remsen told me the cards were out yesterday. I didn't expect an invitation, because——" She hesitated.

"Because you didn't have me at your bridge?"

"It was silly of me, Helen, I know. But I've not been myself for a few weeks back and—well, I was piqued." She dropped her eyes again. "Maybe you know why."

"A young man of whom you are quite fond has been calling at our house rather frequently; perhaps you thought I had encouraged him to do so. But I hadn't, Nan."

"I ought to have known better, Helen. Perhaps



I should say I ought to have known *you* better; you're not the girl to seek a man, even—even if you loved him. And I know you don't love Sidney Powell."

"Let us not speak of it," said Helen. "If you were silly in not having me at your bridge, I was equally so in not sending you a card for my dance. I hope I have seen my folly in time. Will you come?" Helen arose and held out her hand, smiling.

Nan went to her and took the proffered hand tightly in her own. She turned away for a moment and, when she again faced Helen, there were tears in the chestnut eyes; and through the tears shone the light of a brave resolve.

"Helen, dear," she said, steadily, "you are too good, too forgiving. I can't take so mean an advantage of one who has been kind to me since we were babies. I can see"—her head was drooping now—"you haven't heard—the story."

"On the contrary," replied Miss Willoughby, pressing the hand she held, "it is because of the story that I am here. I believe in you, Nan, and I want all Wellington to know it." She let the hand fall, and ran to the window.

"Look!" she said, lightly. "There's father coming home to tea. I must be going now. Good-bye!"

She hurried into the hall and was just letting herself out at the door when she heard a low moan in the room behind her, and then her name:

"Helen!"

She ran back. Nan had thrown herself into a great armchair, with her feet under her like a sorrowing child. She was rocking slowly to and fro, her face buried in her fingers, and sobbing piteously. She extended one hand toward Helen, but kept the other across her eyes. Tears were trickling through her fingers and falling into her lap.

Helen knelt beside the chair and drew the protecting hand away.

"Don't hide your face, dear child," she said, gently. "There's nothing to be ashamed of; there's nothing to cry over. Nobody will believe that shameless lie!"

Then Nan looked down at her and in the heavy streaming eyes was the most piteous appeal that Helen had ever seen.

"Helen! Helen!" she cried. "I can't go to your party! It wouldn't be fair to you, it wouldn't be fair!"

"Why, Nan, dear! What are you talking about? What do you mean?"

The sorrowing girl bent lower and looked beseechingly in her friend's eyes:

"I mean—oh, God forgive me!—I mean that *the story is true!*"

Involuntarily Helen loosed the poor trembling hands she held, and her face went white. Slowly she arose from her knees, took a step back, and stood regarding the cringing girl.

Then she bent over, and raised Nan to her feet.

"My dear," she said, "that makes it all the more necessary for you to come."

Nan looked up, still crying, but in wide-eyed amazement:

“You? Helen Willoughby? After what I have told you? You are going to take me in?”

Helen drew Nan toward her and the sorrowing girl's head drooped until her face rested on Helen's shoulder.

“Nan,” she said, “there's no need of my telling you that I am grieved beyond expression. But, if God forgives a woman's wrong-doing, why should not I—and others? There will be some at my party whose sins are greater than yours.”

Then Helen went home to her tea.

## CHAPTER V

### A MAN PROPOSES

A WEEK had gone by and the night of the Willoughby party was sufficiently spent to establish the function as a social achievement of the highest order. The buzz of gossiping tongues had ceased—for the time, at any rate. For Miss Nan Wallabout was there with the same flash in her chestnut eyes and the merry dimples again playing in her cheeks. She was there arm in arm with the very proper Miss Willoughby, dancing with the very exemplary Mr. Mackenzie, chatting in the most friendly manner with the stately Mrs. Willoughby, and going in to supper on the arm of the ultra-aristocratic Judge Willoughby, himself.

It was a perfect June evening. The fine old mansion, square-roofed, with a broad veranda stretching across its front, stood in a forest of old maples like a monument to the former grandeur and present respectability of the Willoughby line. Scores of Oriental lamps swayed among the trees, their soft glow warming the paler light of a full, round moon. On the right of the mansion a fountain purred. On the left was a tennis court upon which prettily-gowned women and well-groomed men went laughing through the figures of a reel. From the end of the veranda nearer the court, through a trellis

of roses, came the music of violins. At the other end, under a hanging light, a rubber of bridge was in progress. In the air was the fresh tonic of the trees, sweetened with the fragrance of June flowers, blooming everywhere.

The music ceased and the symmetrical figures of the dance were dissolved into a maze of happy faces, waving fans, and changing colours. Young men and young women moved about the grounds in all directions. Some sauntered up the steps and joined the card-players on the veranda. Some went trooping toward a bowl of punch that peeped alluringly from the hollow of an iron urn. Others promenaded across the lawn to seats near the fountain on the other side; and still others stood about in knots, waiting for the next number to begin.

For reasons best known to himself, Mr. Robert Mackenzie affiliated with none of these detachments, but instead he conducted his partner down a gravel path to an old-fashioned garden behind the mansion and handed her into a seat from which there was a view of the moon. Whether Mr. Mackenzie had taken into calculation the psychological relation of the moon to the business in hand is open to conjecture. This much is established—that he seated the lady so that she must look directly toward the great silvery orb, while his own face remained in the shadow.

She was wearing a gown of pale blue and the soft white light of the watching moon threw a silver sheen upon it. And she was wearing three pink roses, one on either cheek and one in her hair. Her

eyes were as blue out there under the stars as they had been under the azure skies of noon. Helen's was a beauty that neither borrowed of the day nor owed to the night.

"You see," said Robert, as he sat down a little awkwardly beside her, "I have stolen you away and taken you out here into the back-yard——" He stopped for a moment and then said, smiling: "Gee! 'back-yard' sounds horribly unromantic, doesn't it? But it *is* the back-yard, isn't it?"

Helen laughed.

"You could say 'garden,' perhaps; but we never called it that when we used to play in it."

"Well," said Robert, more confidently, "whatever it is, I like it. Perhaps it's because our own lot backs up against it, with only that old fence and the rambler rose between—and the gate we used to swing on. I always counted on this back-yard relationship to give me the inside track with you. The other boys had to wait until afternoon and then come to the front door, all clean-faced and combed and dressed up. And they had to ring the bell and ask if Helen could come out and play. But I had you out here on the gate any time after sun-up and in any old clothes at all. Why! I just naturally grew up with the idea that there was no other girl in the world for me but you and that you couldn't possibly ever care seriously for any man but me. It was only a month ago, Helen, when the light began to dawn—when I began to realize that others were in the race and that I had no claim on you at all. And for a week past I've been kind of

feeling around—sparring for an opening, I was going to say, but that's not romantic, either—and my heart was so full and my head so befuddled that it just seemed as though the time and the place and the courage would never be ready at the same moment. So I've brought you out here, and at last here's the time, for it's my last chance before going; and here's the place, for no one would think of the back-yard but me; and as for the courage—why, I'm as steady as a stone wall. And yet with everything just as I wanted it, and that wonderful moon, and you looking more beautiful than ever, and the old fence with the rambler on it within reach of my hand, I—I—well, all I can say is that I love you and that I want you to go away with me—as my wife. Of course, it doesn't have to be tomorrow; the trip can wait. But next week or next month or whenever you say. Will you, Helen?"

Poor Robert! Now that he had said it, the courage of which he had boasted seemed to be fast oozing; for his hand trembled a little as he took Helen's fingers between his own.

But there was an answering pressure that steadied him instantly and made his heart leap. The speech that had seemed so halting and insufficient to his own ears was in fact most eloquent, for it was frank, unstudied, and sincere. So thought Miss Willoughby as she yielded him her other hand and smiled her answer into his earnest eyes.

"A moment ago, dear Robert, your hand was shaking; now it is mine that trembles. Frankly, I have been expecting this; frankly, I had begun to

allow myself to hope that the comradeship of our childhood had grown into something more lasting and more sacred. And yet the words you have just spoken, though they give me indescribable pleasure, are almost startling, and I find myself quite unprepared to hear them. I can't understand it. I only know that I feel a heart full of joy and that something within me is reaching out to you and crying: 'Take me, take me; I am yours!'

In a flash Robert's arm was around her and his face was pressing toward hers. But Helen was quicker; before he could reach her lips, she had raised her arm and she caught the kiss on the back of her hand.

"Not yet, Robert," she said, gently.

Quite crestfallen, the young man withdrew his arm.

"But we're about to be married," he pleaded.

"Robert, dear, we are not even engaged. I only meant to say that I love you. There is no pledge between us, nor shall there be until you return."

"Helen, Helen! Why do you say this?"

"Why, Robert? I will tell you. Because I would rather die here, to-night, than live to see the day when you would find, too late, that I was not as much to you as you thought, that your love was not all that you now believe it to be."

"That could never come to pass, Helen, for true love is changeless, unalterable, everlasting!"

"But what *is* true love?" she asked. "Who can describe it, who can define it, how is its presence proven? How do you *know* that the thing you



sense is what we mean by 'love'? How can one distinguish it from admiration, or a caprice, or the pride of possession, or mere sex instinct, or the desire for conquest, or a dozen other impulses in which true affection plays no part?"

"Men have died for love," said Robert, a little moodily.

"Presumably, yes. But do we know it? Scratch the veneer of romance and will love be found beneath—always? Was it really for love or may it not have been just selfish bravado or chivalry or the sheer spirit of adventure or perhaps a sullen bid for sympathy? Was it unselfish love for which men have died, or love of self? Who can tell and how can we know it?"

"No, Robert," she went on, "there is but one test of true love—the test of time. Every passing hour, every succeeding day that sees the bond of affection unbroken, untampered with, adds to the evidence of its genuineness. Suppose, then, that we apply that test to this bond of ours. Suppose that we make no pledges—now. You are going away. When you return you may come to me, here"—and smiling up at him she raised her hand toward the flower-topped fence behind them—"when the roses are in bloom. If it be one year or two years or many, and you are still unchanged, then you may claim me; and I will be the happiest girl in all the world!"

"I had thought—I had hoped—that you might go with me," he faltered.

"Your first plan is the better, Robert—to go

alone; and the year of waiting will add to the certainty that I am what you now think I am to you. You will now travel far and meet many people. With a broader vision may come new ideals of womanhood. If this is to be, let it be while there is yet no pledge, no obligation; while you are yet free."

"But you will promise——"

"Nothing, Robert, for that would be equivalent to a promise from you."

"You see" — stammered Mackenzie — "I — I brought this. I had no right to but"—he laughed, an embarrassed, boyish laugh—"I took a chance."

Awkwardly from his pocket he drew a ring and held it toward her—a clear, limpid diamond.

Helen took it from him with a little cry of pleasure and surprise.

The gem sparkled in the moonlight.

Floating through the shrubbery came the melody of a dreamy waltz.

She felt the subtle poetry of her surroundings; she felt the tense yearning of the man beside her as he leaned closer and asked:

"Won't you wear it?"

Their hands touched and her cheeks burned. She carried the ring to her lips and kissed it. Then she pressed it into his hands. "When the rambler blooms again," she said, smiling into his eyes.

"If you think it best, it is best," he agreed.

"Am I worth waiting a year for?" she asked.

"An eternity, if need be."

"Then we will go," she said, rising. "I should not have stayed so long."

They stood for a moment and he could see that she was going to speak again.

"Robert," she said, "one word more, for I may not see you again alone. I rejoice beyond measure that the man I love is to be a worker, not an idler. If you succeed, I will share in the joy of your success; if you achieve, I will rejoice in your achievements. But ever and always remember this: I love you for what you do *not*, rather than for what you *do*. If my love lives, it will be because you are good, not because you are great. Though everything in your life work were to fail utterly, my love would be unshaken; but under the breath of sin my love would shrivel and die. Infidelity would freeze it to the core. We have grown up together, Robert, and I have seen you mature into splendid manhood. In this little city, where every escapade is a scandal, I have watched you picking your way through a maze of pitfalls, and I have secretly gloried in your clear record and your clean life. If, even in the slightest measure, I have been an inspiration to your mode of living, I thank God for it. Now, as you go out into the world, take this as my parting word: I love you, Robert Mackenzie, because I believe you to be good."

Then she took his arm and they returned to the tennis court.

## CHAPTER VI

### ANOTHER MAN PROPOSES

MR. SIDNEY POWELL begged the pleasure of a waltz with Miss Willoughby. Granted. Mr. Powell was tall, like his friend Mackenzie, and had the same good breadth of shoulders. Unlike his friend Mackenzie, he had a slight tendency toward rotundity at the waist-line, suggesting a neglect of exercise. He had a well-shaped head, with brown hair, brushed flat and glossy; brown eyes, a little too baggy in the under lids, but good to look at, for all that. Altogether, not a bad-looking chap was Mr. Powell.

"You still dance well, Sidney," said Miss Willoughby, making conversation, as the music ceased and they promenaded. "And enjoy it as keenly as ever, I would say."

"I came three hundred miles for this one," he answered, smiling. "Shall we look at the goldfish?" and he led her from the court and across the lawn to the far side of the grounds, where the fountain was playing.

The music began again.

"An encore," she said, turning back. "Shall we not dance it?"

"It is so warm!" he pleaded; "let us talk."

They sat on a stone bench, facing the fountain.

Mr. Powell asked if he might smoke, and lighted a cigarette. They watched the flashes of gold-red as the fishes played in the mossy basin. In the centre of the fountain were three bronze cupids frolicking with a jug, from the neck of which the water rose in a column of silver spray.

Mr. Powell blew a whiff of smoke toward the stars.

"Three hundred miles," he said, reflectively, "for a waltz with you—and a word."

"The waltz was delightful," said Miss Willoughby.

"And the word is this: I love you."

Thus abruptly declaring himself, Mr. Powell threw away his cigarette and faced her. She drew away a little, but he did not observe it.

"Sidney!" she exclaimed. "What are you saying?"

"That is the word, Helen: Love. It was my plan to wait a little until I could offer you something more than my heart—until I had made my fortune; for things are coming my way and the fortune is only a question of time. But in the past week or two I've concluded that delays are dangerous; I've discovered that the hunt is getting warm."

Again she shrank from him, and this time he saw it.

"Helen," he asked, anxiously, "I am not too late?"

"I don't understand," she answered, simply.

"I saw you coming from the garden just now with Bob Mackenzie," he went on, quickly; "did

you—did he——” He stumbled, for he could see something forbidding in her eyes. “I mean, are you still free? You are not engaged?”

“I am not engaged, Sidney, but——”

“Thank God, I am in time!” he exclaimed, huskily. “Now let me go on. I am not rich, like Bob Mackenzie, but I love you, Helen, as a man never loved a woman. I love you madly, desperately. I have loved you since I first saw you budding into lovely womanhood. It was for you that I left this town, left my friends and my people, and started among strangers, in a big city, to carve my career. It was for you that I opened my first little law office in New York and plunged into politics. It was for you that I made the fight for the Aldermanship last fall, and for you I won it. I hated to go away from here and leave the field clear for others, but somehow it seemed to be the only way to do it. I had noticed that the fellows who stuck around home never seemed to make much of a hit. The town is too small, and the vision too circumscribed. The monotonous routine of living, the same figures standing in the same doorways, the same faces passing before your window, day after day and year after year, all tend to make the stay-at-home appear commonplace. Errors are emphasised; achievements are taken as a matter of course. So I resolved to strike out. Having figured it this way, I knew that others might, also, and I wanted no one to get ahead of me. I knew you had other admirers and would have more. There was one particularly whom I knew would bear watching,

and, when I saw you just now coming from the garden, leaning on his arm, I feared that I had delayed too long."

Helen touched his arm and would have stopped him, but he went on rapidly:

"I made the plunge and for two years my every impelling thought has been toward the one end—success; for behind this I saw the supreme goal of my ambition—you. Helen, I have succeeded, I have won the fight! My future, professionally and politically, is assured!"

He had grown hoarse with the anxiety of his pleading, and his eyes devoured her as he bent forward:

"I have come to tell you of my love, to offer you my heart, my future, my all, to do with as you will! Helen, tell me; say that you——"

"Sidney! Please!" She held up her hand appealingly, and he paused.

## CHAPTER VII

### A REJECTION, AND WHY

"IT grieves me to hear you say this, Sidney, because it makes me feel that somehow, unconsciously, I have done you a great wrong."

Helen was visibly distressed, but she composed herself and went on.

"The relation between you and me is friendship. It can be nothing else, nothing more."

Powell drew a sharp breath and turned away his head.

"I am so sorry," she continued, "so sorry. It was splendid of you to make the fight and I am so glad you have succeeded. It is a great credit to you. I hope you will keep on striving, for you are young and capable and there is no rung in the ladder that you may not reach—if you keep on trying. Will you?"

He seemed not to have heard this, for he turned to her again and repeated her words, a bit harshly:

"Nothing else; nothing more!"

The musicians struck up a rollicking two-step; and a chorus of gay chatter mingled with the strains of the violins, as partners were being taken for the dance.

"Then you will not marry me?" he asked, presently.



"No, Sidney. Please do not ask it."

"May I ask why?"

"Because I do not feel towards you as I must feel toward the man that I would marry."

"Do you feel as a friend toward a friend?"

"Yes."

"Sincerely?"

"Sincerely."

"Then is it not possible that such a friendship as that may become, in time, something warmer, something more—more like love?"

"It is not possible."

"How can you say that, Helen? How can you know? I am only at the threshold of my maturity, of my career. How can you appraise the man of to-morrow by the man of to-day? In two years I have done much; in still another two years I will have done more. Who can foretell the heights to which I may climb, the position, the prospects——"

"Sidney," she interrupted, "it is neither your position nor your prospects that should concern the woman you are to marry; *it is your past.*"

She spoke softly, even gently, but there was a directness in her manner which he could not misunderstand.

He threw his cigarette on the gravel and ground it under his heel.

"So that is the barrier, is it?" he said, a little contemptuously. "The chattering tongues of tale-mongers!"

"Not exactly, Sidney," she answered, quietly; "in one case—I happen to know the girl."

He shifted uneasily.

"Do you deny it?"

He made no answer, but sat with his eyes on the ground.

"You believe in your creed, I suppose," he said, presently, and then quoted: "' . . . in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the Forgiveness of Sins——'" He stopped and looked at her.

"I believe in the forgiveness of my sins," she replied, steadfastly; "which is a matter between me and my immortal God. And I believe also in forgiving as between men and women; else you and others, perhaps, would not be among my guests to-night. But I do *not* believe in the sanctioning of sin by the linking of an honestly pure life to one that is notoriously impure.

"Sidney Powell," she went on, rising and facing him, "if my life had been as yours has been, would you want me for a wife?"

He, too, had risen, and at this question he stood before her, silent.

"Well," she went on, speaking rapidly and with increasing earnestness, "as you would then feel toward me, so I now feel toward you. What kind of a code of morals is this that makes a man good and a woman bad? What has sex to do with the degree of sin? Under what rule, in the laws of God or the logic of man, do you come to me and ask for immaculate virtue in exchange for a soul singed in the fires of licentious living?"

She paused and then continued more calmly:

"I do believe in the forgiveness of sins. I do hold out my hand to the man who errs, and my heart also goes out to the woman who falls; God pity her, for the road is hard and the way is narrow. But the kind of love that a woman gives to the man she marries has no place in moral philanthropy. And no more could such a love for you spring within me than a flower could blossom under a sunless sky. There is a *quid pro quo* in moral ethics, Sidney Powell, and I demand it. Success, as the world calls it, is only a circumstance; a name is nothing and position is less. But the man who stirs my love must approach it on an even plane; I would not ask him to stoop to reach my level, nor shall I bend to his!"

The dance had ended. They heard the crunch of feet on the gravel path and gay voices humming the melody of the last two-step as a group of guests came strolling toward them.

Sidney lighted another cigarette and flicked the burning match into the fountain. He watched the bit of flame strike the water and die, and it seemed as if the light of his ambition had gone out, too.

"There are few men like that," he said, bitterly; "mighty few whom *I* have met." He knocked an imaginary ash from his cigarette.

"There is one man like that whom you *know*," said Miss Willoughby, and there was defiance in her tone.

"You mean——"

"Robert Mackenzie!"

The name rang out like a challenge. She stood

with her head held high, wisps of hair blowing about her temples, and frank triumph flashing from her eyes.

"That's me!" came a robust voice above the approaching chatter; and the promenaders were upon them. "And, if that's Sid Powell, it's to settle a political argument I'm wanted," continued Mackenzie, as the group surrounded them.

"Go easy, Bob," said Sidney, trying to smile, "I'm not spouting politics *all* the time."

"Which is equivalent to saying that he doesn't talk in his sleep," laughed Mackenzie, to a dark-eyed little woman on his arm. It was Nan Wallabout.

"It was not politics," said Powell, a little soberly.

"Then it might have been votes for women," said Miss Wallabout.

"Which *is* politics," said Mr. Mackenzie.

"Which is mighty *bad* politics," corrected Powell, emphatically.

"But mighty good policy," added Nan, triumphantly.

This brought a round of applause, after which Sidney said:

"It was not votes for women."

"Astronomy, then," suggested the law student, winking at the bank clerk.

"Or matrimony," ventured the bank clerk, winking at the law student.

"All wrong," ruled Miss Willoughby. "It was—the weather. And Mr. Mackenzie was wanted

not as an arbiter but as a knight-errant; to get me a sherbet."

"Me for the sherbet," piped the ambitious bank clerk, turning on his heel; "may I?"

"Thank you, Jimmie; on one condition, that you take me with you," replied Miss Willoughby, accepting the bank clerk's arm; and they turned toward the veranda.

"May I get one for you—on the same condition?" laughed the law student to the dark-eyed little woman; and they followed.

"Stung!" cried Mr. Mackenzie, looking dejectedly after the triumphant bank clerk. "Summoned and sacked! Now what do you think of that, Sidney?"

"Many are called and few are chosen," Sidney answered, reseating himself. "Be a philosopher."

"I will," said Robert, joining him on the bench. "Like Kipling: 'A woman is only a woman, but a good cigar is a——' Have one of these?"

He proffered a cigar to Powell, lighted one himself, and blew a cloud of smoke heavenward.

Sidney lit up also, stuck his hands into his pockets, pointed his feet ahead of him, and blew a cloud of smoke at his toes.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE VICTOR AND THE VANQUISHED

"BOB MACKENZIE," said Powell, after a few puffs at his Havana, "you are one lucky man."

"I won't argue it," drawled Mackenzie. "If you had said I were two lucky men, we might start something."

"Bob Mackenzie," Powell repeated, slowly, "you are one lucky man."

"So you were saying," Robert responded, "but how do you figure it?"

"Young," Sidney continued, ruminatingly, "strong, rich, good-looking——"

"Have another!" laughed Mackenzie, reaching for his cigar case.

"——and loved by the finest and fairest girl in Wellington!" concluded Powell, unmindful of the interruption.

"If you had said 'in the world,' I would have thought you meant Helen Willoughby," said Robert.

"In the world," amended Sidney.

"That's Helen. But what the deuce ever led you to think that she loves me?" asked Mackenzie.

"She told me."

Robert looked quizzically at Sidney for a moment, then returned his gaze to the stars.

"That's not like her," he said, a little soberly.

"To love you?"

"To tell you."

"Perhaps I forced the issue," said Sidney, quietly; "I asked her to marry me."

Robert managed to check a start of surprise and said, simply:

"Yes?"

"You are not much astonished," observed Powell, rising and throwing away his cigar.

"No," conceded Robert.

"You suspected that I would propose to her, didn't you?" Powell asked.

"I thought you admired her," said Mackenzie; and he added more softly, "I knew that I loved her."

"You knew that *I* loved her, Bob Mackenzie," said Powell, looking at him narrowly, "and you beat me to it."

"I asked her first, it seems," replied Robert; "but the race is not always to the swift, they say."

"No," said Sidney, contemptuously, "the race is more usually to the rich."

In a flash Mackenzie was on his feet, his left hand pinioning the other's wrist as in a vice, his right arm poised for a blow.

"Take it back!" he said, through his teeth, "take it back, Sid Powell, or I'll drive this down your throat!"

Powell measured the depth of the cool hazel eyes, the strength of the determined face, the breadth of the muscular shoulders, and the poise of the hard,

brown fist. He felt the power, the reserve, the grim sincerity of the man before him. But he did not flinch. For a full quarter of a minute the two men stood thus, each looking straight into the other's eyes. Then Sidney said:

"I take it back. Not because I'm afraid of you, Bob Mackenzie, for I'm not. But because it's wrong."

Mackenzie's face relaxed. The angles of his jaw dissolved into curves. The thin, straight lips rounded into a good-natured smile. The fist, unlocked, fell to his side and then sought the other's hand.

"Powell," he said, "you're the man I thought you were, after all. I don't know why you said what you did, but I know you didn't mean it. For, if Helen Willoughby were the kind of a girl to sell herself, she would not be the kind of a girl that you would love. And, if another chap had said what you did, you would have dropped him in two seconds;" and he added, smiling, "I gave you about ten."

"Bob," said Sidney, as they still clasped hands, "I didn't mean it and I don't believe it. It was the spiteful back-fire of an exploding dream. Listen. You and I have been friends since we were kids—but rivals, also. It has been nip and tuck between us for twenty years. In school I beat you to the class honours, and you beat me on the track. In college you beat me to the football team, and I beat you to the crew. There was always friendship and there was always strife. And now comes



into my life the greatest thing that can come to any man, the love for a good and a beautiful woman, the only thing in human existence worth fighting for, the one supreme prize,—and it's your turn to win. My God! I lose her, I lose her, I lose her!"

He passed his hand over his eyes, made an effort to recover himself, and fell limp and broken on the bench.

"I'm sorry for you, Sid, very sorry," said Mackenzie, kindly, "but perhaps I haven't a right to be, for—well, I haven't won yet. Helen and I are not engaged; I'm only on probation, so to speak—for a year. In the meantime, it's an open game; go in and win if you can. All's fair in love, you know."

Sidney got up and took Mackenzie's arm.

"No use," he said, "but I'm game and I'll try to be a good loser. We're going back together tomorrow night to the big town; and—I can learn to forget." He pointed up the gravel walk. "Shall we join them?"

"Come," said Robert. And they walked on together.

As they came under a string of lights dangling from a portico, they encountered a group of young men and women.

Among them was the dark-eyed Miss Wallabout. She slipped from the arm of the law student without his knowing it and drew Robert to her side.

"You and Sidney are great friends," she observed, in a low tone.

"And ever will be, I hope," answered Mackenzie, heartily.

The lady held him fast by his sleeve and looked sharply into his eyes. Then she drew him down and spoke into his ear.

"Beware of him!" she said. She released his arm and turned to go on; but he detained her.

"What do you mean?" he asked, coolly.

When she looked at him again there was a flash of fire in her chestnut eyes.

"A man who betrays a woman will betray a man!" she said.

She linked her hand in the arm of the law student, who had come back looking for her, and they went on.

Mackenzie stood gazing after her thoughtfully as she went tripping along under the trees.

"Poor Nan!" he said, pityingly; "so another scandal has proved true."

A laugh sounded behind him and he turned to see Powell passing, with Helen Willoughby on his arm. The laugh was Sidney's.

"You see, Bob," he said, smiling, "I'm a winner in the skirmishes, anyhow. The last dance is mine." They walked on, following the others toward the tennis ground.

Pondering, Robert watched them. "Is there yet danger?" he asked himself.

As if in response to his silent inquiry, Helen looked back at him over her shoulder. Her lips could not have spoken more eloquently the answer that he read in her fine blue eyes:

"I love you—because I believe you to be good."

## CHAPTER IX

### OUT INTO THE WORLD

By eight o'clock on the following evening Mackenzie had bade good-bye to Wellington and was comfortably stretched out in the smoking compartment of a Pullman sleeper, on his way to the great Metropolis, with Sidney Powell lounging on the seat beside him. The pleasure of anticipation was not unmixed with something like a heart-pull as Robert saw the lights of the town go flitting past the car window and reflected that a year must pass before he would see the place again. There was a good deal of the home instinct in Mackenzie, and the loss of both father and mother in early youth had served the more to endear to him the scenes with which his memory of them was associated.

Up to this time his absences from Wellington had been no longer than the duration of a school term, and his travels had been limited to a few football trips with his college team and periodical shooting excursions in the nearby Adirondacks and summer camps along Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, both of which waters bounded his home county on the northwest. So strong was the love of home within him that, after completing his schooling and securing his engineer's diploma, he would have been content to settle down directly and permanently in Wellington;

but, having acquired simultaneously a mild contempt for the fortune he had inherited and a desire to move upward in the profession he had chosen, he felt that he owed it to himself and to her who he hoped might share his fortunes to gather such first-hand knowledge of the world and its works, as only the well-travelled man may possess. His going away, then, was more a duty than a desire.

Still, now that he was actually under way, the enthusiasm natural to youth gave him a pleasurable sense of expectation, tempered only by the severance of home ties—and by his separation from Helen. For, while he had been fond of old Judge Willoughby's daughter from childhood, it was not until the past few weeks—when he had begun to suspect that Sidney Powell was using Nan Wallabout only as a foil to confuse the real issue—that Mackenzie had wakened to a true conception of his attachment for the girl. The shock of this discovery had aroused him to a full realisation of the depth of his love for her. Indeed, had her answer in the garden the night before been less favourable, he would have abandoned his trip and camped on the trail of the young woman until his suit were won or lost. As it was, he felt quite secure. He knew there was but one thing that could invalidate Helen Willoughby's promise to await his return; and that was—another woman. And he knew that the one sin which she would not condone and had very pointedly warned him against was a sin that would be, for him, impossible of commission with the mental picture of Helen Willoughby before him.

That Sidney Powell had actually and finally given up all hope of winning Helen, Robert was not so sure. Powell had many good traits of character and many qualities to be admired. But Mackenzie not only knew him to be a man strong in purpose and of remarkable persistency, but he knew also that Powell was not over-scrupulous in the selecting of means to gain an end. He knew him to be the kind of man that prefers to play fair, but in the heat of conflict overlooks the finer shadings of honour. "You're a home-run hitter," Robert had once told him, "but you don't always touch the bags." And in the parlance of baseball this described Powell's methods quite accurately. Mackenzie had known him to "crib" in an "exam," to "elbow" a rival runner on the track, to "fake" an illness to get a holiday, and to commit other follies that he, Mackenzie, could not indulge in without a loss of self-respect; but they were all more or less trivial and always done under pressure, and Robert never doubted that in any real crisis, where the question of honour loomed big, Powell would be found standing steadfastly for the right.

Needless to say, the scandal involving Nan Wal-labout had come closer to shaking his confidence in Sidney than any former escapade of that young gentleman. The fact that Powell had noticeably avoided Nan after the story had come out, threw a bad light on it. But Robert reasoned that his friend's purpose might have been to protect the young woman as well as himself, or that there might have been a quarrel between them; and per-

haps Powell had not even heard that such a story was current. In any event, Robert would not condemn his friend on merely the idle gossip of the town, or on the fragmentary warning that Nan Walabout had whispered in his ear. Moreover, heartily tired himself of being exploited as Wellington's perfect young man, he was free to give Powell credit at least for being frankly and openly imperfect.

## CHAPTER X

### A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

MACKENZIE was still musing on these things when the train rumbled over the railroad bridge at the edge of the town and rolled out into the open country.

Powell broke in upon his reverie.

"Bob," he asked, looking dreamily at the blue spiral of smoke rising from the end of his cigar, "did Helen Willoughby tell you why she refused me?"

Mackenzie would have preferred any other subject to this; but he answered readily enough.

"She didn't even tell me you had proposed," he said, drawing contentedly on his pipe. "I saw her only for a moment after you talked with her. You grabbed the last waltz and I had to say good-night and get out with the others. I doubt that she would have told me, anyway."

"Well, guess, then," said Powell, with a half smile.

"Because she loved another, perhaps," ventured Mackenzie, between puffs.

"Don't flatter yourself," said Sidney. "You would have guessed better if you had said *self* love."

"And better still if I had said *self respect*."

Powell twisted in his seat and bit off a piece of his cigar.

"I accept the correction, Bob, although it is equivalent to saying that you are respectable and I am not."

"I don't follow you," returned Mackenzie. "We were discussing Helen's sentiments—not mine."

"Very true. But I can see that you are in sympathy with her hobby."

"I didn't know that she had one," said Robert. "What is it?"

"The single standard," said Powell, swinging a chair into place in front of him and putting his feet upon it, according to the etiquette of smoking compartments.

"Never heard of it," said Mackenzie. "You mean the single tax, don't you?"

"The single standard," reaffirmed Powell. "A single standard of morality for both sexes. Same measure of social disfavour for the erring man as for the erring woman."

"And is that what Helen told you when you asked her to marry you?"

"Yes," answered Powell, gloomily. "And with more enthusiasm than I ever dreamed she was capable of. And, do you know, I couldn't help thinking that perhaps you had put the bee in Helen's bonnet. Of course, with your record, it would be to your advantage to do so."

"My friend," said Robert, "I never discussed the subject with Helen Willoughby in my life. But,



since you have raised the question, I don't mind telling you where I stand on it."

"With Helen, of course," said Powell, with the same half smile.

"You're wrong," said Mackenzie. "I disagree with her."

"What?" Powell took his feet down and turned in his seat, to get a closer look at Mackenzie. He could not believe that he had heard aright.

Robert shook out the bowl of his pipe on his heel and began leisurely to refill it.

"I disagree with her," he repeated distinctly.

"Then you believe in a dual system of judgment?" asked Powell, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

"Exactly," said Robert, coolly. "I believe that the man should be ostracised and the woman given another chance. Don't you?"

Powell looked at him curiously for a moment; then he swung back in his seat and replaced his feet in the chair before him.

"You're joking, of course," he said, with a laugh.

"I'm quite serious," Robert assured him.

"Then you're even more hopeless than Helen Willoughby."

"Because you differ from both of us?" returned Robert.

"I and the world," added Powell.

"Galileo had the same opposition, minus you," said Robert; "and so did Watt, and Franklin and Shakespeare and Jesus Christ and a few others."

"Then you, too, may be immortalised!" laughed Powell.

"No. For in this case the world is on my side."

"Ah! This is good!" chided the young lawyer. "Then the odds are not against you?"

"Overwhelmingly. But the opposition is from society, not from the world."

"The differentiation is too fine, Bob; I haven't my spectacles."

"You shall look through mine," said Mackenzie. "It is this: The world obeys the rules of living and is everybody; society makes the rules of living and is only men. And men are cowards. Have I made a distinction?"

"You have made a confession. You, too, are a man."

"And I, too, am a coward. I am not sure that I would have the courage to marry a woman with a past."

Powell laughed.

"Good repartee," he said; "but now for a reason; give me one single reason that you usually offer when you argue this question. Or haven't you any?"

"I've never argued it, Sid, but I have one. I'll take a parallel in your own profession. You and I are in court charged with trying to kill each other. All things are equal, except that I sought you and you did not seek me. This being established, which of us will the court hold as the offender?"

Powell saw what was coming, but he answered, promptly:

"All other conditions being the same on both sides, you would be regarded as the aggressor and would be held chiefly if not entirely answerable."

"That was my understanding," said Mackenzie, "and I believe it is regarded as a just and commendable principle of law. Why, then, may we not apply it to sin as well as to crime? Of the social sinners, you will admit, of course, that man is the aggressor every time."

"You've never been on Fourteenth Street in the late evening," interrupted Powell.

"I see what you mean," said Mackenzie, "but that has nothing to do with this question, and you know it. Not only is it an abstraction, but it is in the wrong tense; we're dealing with the present, not the past perfect."

"Slowly, slowly; is it a pun? I'm not up in my first-grade grammar."

"You don't have to be, old fellow," returned Robert; "it isn't a pun and I think you get the analogy. The woman of the street is not a cause, but a result of this thing we're discussing. If she had been given another chance, she wouldn't be there. Our problem is her start, not her finish. And that's where I put the onus on the man. Wherever you go, whichever way you turn, in any stratum of the social mass, you will find the man the aggressor and the woman defending. The rich man attacks her with money, jewels, flowers, and automobiles; the poor man with smiles, blandishments, flattery, and false promises; and both with every damnable scheme, trick, and deception that

human ingenuity can devise. This has been so since the beginning of the human race."

"Which started in the Garden of Eden," put in Powell, significantly. "Adam differs from you; and he was there."

"If we are to accept the allegory of the apple," returned Robert. "And, if we do, then I insist that the serpent was the evil thought of an evil man. And, for rank cowardice, the original woman-did-it gentleman had nothing on the Adams of to-day. I repeat, Adam or no Adam, the man has been pursuing and the woman pursued ever since the human race began. That's all."

Mackenzie knocked the dead ashes out of his briar and put the pipe in his pocket.

"I'll concede it," said Powell; "but I'll go further. It was *before* the human race began. You were wise, Bobbie, to stop at Adam, for, if you had gone any further back, your one best reason would have collapsed like a punctured tire."

"I see. Lawyer-like, you were leading me on to my own undoing."

"I didn't have to. You walked straight to it, of your own accord; right up to the very brink."

"And now you are going to push me off."

"Gently but surely, Robert. Are you ready for a fall?"

"I am ready for Lower Ten," said Robert, stretching himself and looking at his watch. "If you don't act quickly, the operation will be painless. Between the time and the tobacco I'm being slowly anæsthetised."

"Then I'll begin directly, for I wouldn't miss seeing you squirm. The custom that you describe is not a product of civilisation, nor even of barbarism, but of animalism. You must follow it back not to the first man, but to the first protoplasm. The first human was a million years or more after the real beginning. Generically, the question is not sociological at all, but biological; and, if you admit that much, which you are bound to do, you must absolve man."

"Push me harder; I'm not even tottering," put in Robert, to whom the sequence was by no means clear.

"You'll tumble in a moment," Powell assured him. "For a million years before your monkey-faced prototype mastered the gentlemanly art of balancing himself on his hind legs and heaving coconuts at the head of his fleeing lady-love, the male of not only your species but every other species has pursued the female. Observe, if you please, the habits of your contemporary animals, your semi-developed brother-organisms of the field, the forest, the air, and the sea. Do you concede my zoölogy?"

"Yes, but I object to being called the brother of a fish. If you insist upon digging into my family history, kindly stick to the gorillas."

"I'll waive it; and here's your finish: As long as the male has been aggressive, so long has the female been defensive; to the extent that the instinct to attack is found in the male, to that same extent the instinct to repel is found in the female. To

whatever degree the propensity for advancing has been inherited by men, to that same degree the capacity for resisting has been inherited by women. Man is endowed with a ruling instinct designed to insure the propagation of life; woman with the responsibility of keeping it within bounds. It is all a necessary part of the marvellous plan of perpetuation, and I gravely doubt, Mr. Robert Mackenzie, if you can improve upon it. There is no advantage on either side, for either sex or any kind of animal, be it a mollusk, a monkey, or a man. But—and observe the ‘but,’ Robert—the onus rests with the female because biology has accorded her the negative end of the proposition. Virtue is a veto power that Nature has given the woman and denied the man. If she fails to exercise this function, she is a derailed, and she richly deserves whatever penalty society has elected to impose.”

Powell stopped, lighted his cigar anew, and lazily hoisted one leg over the other.

“I rest my case,” he added. “You and your one best reason are now slipping softly over the edge of the aforementioned brink of your undoing, and I pause to hear the crash of your ill-starred ideals upon the rocks below.”

“You will wait in vain,” said Mackenzie, “for I stand unmoved. This is a wonderful fabric that you have woven, Sidney, but you have dropped a stitch.”

“Show me!” demanded Powell, raising his hand in the most approved melodramatic fashion. “Where is the flaw?”

“Between your ape and your Adam,” said Mackenzie.

“I direct you to Darwin,” said Powell.

“For the anatomy only,” returned Mackenzie; “but no scientist that ever lived can supply the soul. And there’s the break in your thread, old fellow. There is your flaw. For when God—or the law of selection, if you prefer Darwin to the Deity—gave you your soul, there was a purpose for it, and the purpose was to make human thought dominant over brute instinct.”

“Wait a moment,” Powell interrupted. “I haven’t conceded the soul. I don’t admit that I have such a thing.”

“Will you admit that you have a conscience?”

“Let me see. Yes, I’ll grant that.”

“Well, soul is conscience; conscience is moral responsibility, and moral responsibility is the difference between you and your dog. Your reasoning is all right so long as you stick to brutes; and that’s why you started your argument back a million years before man. You needed a running start to jump the gap so easily. You jumped it, but you didn’t close it, Sidney, and it yawns behind you. For when you go from the beast to the human being you have another factor to reckon with; to the instinct you must add soul, conscience—the faculty of distinguishing good from evil. That is the great equaliser. It levels all inherited traits and puts the two sexes on a common base. As the balance of knowledge is even, so also is the balance of responsibility. But there is where the male human shows the poorer

stuff of which he's made; for invariably he takes the initiative, and by hurling his aggressiveness into the scale he brings the burden of the sin upon his soul."

As Mackenzie finished Powell got up, stretched his arms above his head, and yawned.

"Well, Bob," he said, throwing away the end of his cigar, "since you're taking the woman's end of it, I'll allow you her usual prerogative—the last word. I'm going to bed."

"Same here," agreed Mackenzie. "And I think I've converted you."

"If you had," said Powell, "there'd be no sleep this night for your Uncle Sidney. And I'll bet you the breakfasts that I'm snoring before you are."

"That's not a bet; it's a burglary," replied Robert, as they walked out and down the aisle of the car. "Because I don't snore. Good-night, old man."

"Good-night."

And the two friends retired, Powell to his sonorous slumber, and Mackenzie to his noiseless sleep.

If in his dreams Robert could have caught a foreglimpse of the fateful turn the current of his life was to take within another day, he would have leaped from the train at the risk of his neck and footed it back to Wellington.



## CHAPTER XI

### OUR HERO COMES TO TOWN

AN early morning train had just arrived. Two stalwart young men edged their way through the crowded concourse of the Grand Central Station, entered a taxicab, and were whisked westward on Forty-second Street. A moment later the cab turned a corner and drew up in front of an hotel which we will call the Windsor Arms, and as the two passengers alighted Robert Mackenzie had his first view of Broadway.

It was only momentary, however, for Powell led the way briskly into the corridor of the hotel and up to the desk.

"Any letters, Preston?" he asked.

"Yes, indeed, Alderman," replied the clerk, pushing a pile of mail toward Powell. "And a telegram; just came."

Powell opened the telegram, read it, gave a grunt of displeasure, and handed it to Mackenzie.

It was from San Francisco and read:

"Important you should be here. Leave tomorrow without fail."

As Robert handed back the message Sidney said: "You know what it means? It means that, in-

stead of spending this week showing you the town and finally seeing you safe on board your steamer, as we had planned, I've got to hike for the coast to-morrow. How provoking!"

"Business is business," said Bob, consolingly.

"Yes, and in this case it's mighty profitable business," said Sidney; "but, hang it, why couldn't it have been a week later!" Then to the clerk, who had been a casual listener to this dialogue: "Which is the best train, Preston?"

"The Golden Gate Limited."

"What time does it leave?"

"Eight-forty in the morning."

"Have one of the boys get a lower for me, will you?"

"I'll attend to it, Alderman."

"And, Preston——"

"Yes, sir."

"Put me down for a call at seven. Come on, Bob."

In the wake of a porter, lugging their suitcases, the two friends went to the elevator and were whisked upwards, and were taken to an apartment on the third floor.

"This," said Sidney, "is my home."

It was a comfortable suite—a bedroom, a bath, and a living-room looking out over Times Square. There was a door leading from the living-room, which Sidney opened, disclosing a snug little dining-room, with a beam ceiling, a table and chairs of weathered oak, and a large brick fireplace at one end. Powell explained that beyond the dining-room

and connected with it by a door, to which he pointed, was an apartment, a twin to his own, and the little dining-room was designed to answer for either or both. He had intended to secure this other suite for Robert during the week of his stay. "Now that I'm leaving in the morning, you could occupy mine," he said. "However, two or three of my political henchmen have access to the place and perhaps it wouldn't be pleasant for you."

So it was agreed that Robert would take the adjoining rooms, and they went down to the desk again, where Robert registered and they arranged it.

Just as Mackenzie laid down the hotel pen, he felt a sharp slap on his shoulder and turned to look into the round, rosy, smiling face of Blab Wilson.

"And what's new in the old town?" asked Wilson, as the three Wellingtonites shook hands.

"Nothing at all," said Robert; "it hasn't changed a bit since you left there two long weeks ago."

"Is that so?" said Mr. Wilson, winking mysteriously. "You don't tell me!" He rubbed his hands smugly and smacked his lips, as one who is about to partake of a delicate morsel. "Then you hadn't heard that Jim Downs, the lawyer, is goin' to marry his stenographer?"

"No."

"And that Buck Harrison, in the Express office, was found short in his cash?"

"No."

"And that old man Barrow, the druggist, is gettin' a divorce from his wife?"

"Can you beat it?" exclaimed Sidney, slapping

his thigh. "He gets the home gossip of Wellington three hundred miles away. It's as natural for Blab Wilson to gather news as it is for a duck to swim. He breathes in gossip with the air!"

"There's only one thing he's better at than hearing scandals," said Robert.

"Telling 'em," said Powell, promptly. "That's easy."

"Can't help it, fellows," said Blab, who had taken all this in the best of humour. "I just gotta tell what I hear. I couldn't no more keep a secret than I could stop eatin'." Blab was long on the double negative and short on the final 'g.' "I thrive and grow fat on gossip and it simply ain't in me to hold my tongue. But you gotta give me credit for one thing—I don't put no fancy touches to what I hear. I give it as I get it."

"That's right, Blab," said Powell. "You're the only honest tattle-tale I ever met. We must give the devil his due, Bob," he added.

"The deuce you say!" exclaimed Wilson, doubtful of the compliment.

"The devil, I said," Powell corrected.

And they all laughed together.

It was then agreed that they would repair to the grill-room for breakfast and discuss the day's programme over their coffee and rolls. During the meal it developed that Wilson was to spend the day with a relative somewhere out on Long Island—a duty visit that he had put off until the last day of his sojourn; and that Powell would be occupied at his office downtown until late in the afternoon.

This left Robert to shift for himself until evening, and he was delighted at the prospect of prowling through the great city with no definite object other than that of general observation and discovery. So it was arranged that the three friends would meet at the hotel at six, when Sidney would assume the direction of affairs for the balance of the evening.

"And there ain't many of the high spots along this little lane that he don't know about," commented Wilson, as they saw Powell swing himself into a seat on a Broadway car. "Looks to me like Sidney had settled into a pretty good graft. Mebbe you don't know it, but to be an Alderman in a district like this here one is some job. You know I've been knockin' 'aroun' with Sid quite a bit since I been comin' down here on vacations and it didn't take me long to see that he was some large bug in local politics. He knows every gambler and kid-glove crook in the Tenderloin, and you ought to see 'em take their hats off when Sid goes by! Him and his heelers get together in them rooms of his and they come pretty near makin' the rules for this here ward. And mebbe somebody don't have to come across with the coin! Ouh, ouh!" Mr. Wilson puckered his lips and whistled.

"Look here, Blab, you don't mean that Sid is subsidised?"

"Subsidised?" echoed Mr. Wilson, throwing up his hands deprecatingly and looking very sanctimonious. "Subsidised! Why, Bobbie, how could you? Oh, bless your heart, Bobbie, please don't

ever say that word again!" The pious pucker disappeared and his smile beamed. "It's too long, Robert. Say 'graft.'"

After which he turned and melted away in the passing crowd.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE MORALS OF MR. MACKENZIE

ROBERT sensed a half-formed desire to aim a kick at Wilson's chubby form as it vanished from his view. There was something exasperating at times in Blab's infernal chattering about other people's affairs; and he was more than a little disturbed at the thought that Sidney might not be taking the most immaculate route to political prominence. "However," he soliloquised, "New York is not Wellington and Sidney Powell is not a Puritan and never claimed to be. I'll probably have a few sharp corners rubbed off my own catechism before I see the home town again."

The truth was that Robert Mackenzie was neither prudish nor pious. He was taught in childhood to worship God, but he worshipped his mother more constantly; and after her death, which occurred while he was yet in knickerbockers, he was content to worship her memory. And through worshipping her memory his attitude to all women was chivalrous and polite to the point of reverence. But it may not have been the memory of his mother that shaped his moral understanding so much as the comradeship of his father, who survived her by ten years only. Robert was fortunate in having for a fa-

ther a man who remembered that he himself was once a boy, and who had the good sense and the affectionate interest to commune with his son, not as man to child, but as boy to boy or man to man, according to the matter in hand. He was fortunate in having a father who was not too cowardly to talk of the cesspools of society for his boy's sake, and to show the way to the crystal streams; who was not so cruelly modest or criminally negligent as to fail of pointing out the pitfalls that edge the road to maturity.

It was from his father Robert learned that sex transgression is not an essential to masculinity, but a blot upon manhood; that it takes the strong man to be good; that clean morals do not make a molly-coddle; that for every fallen woman there is a fallen man. It was through his father's close confidence that Robert learned to regard the despoiler of virtue as a coward and the boaster of conquests as a cad.

No one had ever applied that misnomer of "goodie-goodie" to Robert Mackenzie. As a youngster he had broken his quota of windows, participated in and often personally conducted the raids upon unguarded orchards, had his difficulties with the local constabulary on Hallowe'en, and fought his battles, barefisted, with the butcher's boy. In later youth he had been called up for minor infractions of college discipline, had been sent from the football field for slugging a man who kicked him during a "down," and nearly missed graduation for breaking a sophomore's jaw in a bloody fight on the



college campus—a battle royal over a disputed baseball decision.

But among all the escapades, common to robust youth, in which he had figured, there was not one of which his own father would have been ashamed. He had never failed to draw the line between the mischievous and the malicious; between bravery and bravado; between the honourable and the dishonourable.

If Robert were exceptionally good, perhaps it was due in part to the fact that he was strong and he gloried in his strength. He shunned sin because he regarded sin as a sign of weakness; and weakness, as he saw it, was cowardice, which he despised. He was healthy, human, and intensely masculine; nor was he insensible to the swish of silken petticoats and the silent call of women's eyes. But he resisted evil because resisting it taxed his power, and to fight seemed worthier than to surrender. He was religious, too, in the sense that he humbled himself before God, revered the cloth of every creed, and believed, though vaguely, in a divine law of compensation.

Such were Mackenzie's morals.

## CHAPTER XIII

### ROBERT HAS AN ADVENTURE

HE stood for a time in the hotel entrance, content to study the kaleidoscopic flow of humanity passing the door. It fascinated him. The extremes of fashion; the faces of women, comely, painted and plain; the poor down-and-out shuffling along with an advertising placard on his back; chorus men in high collars and hand-me-down suits; business men; actors, near-actors, and were-actors; shop girls and show girls; the panhandler with one eye a-watch for a benign face and the other for a hostile policeman; messenger boys and news venders; white men, black men, yellow men, and even a red man, garbed in the full regalia of an Indian chief—probably from a nearby theatre; rich people and poor people; the high, the low, and the middle class; the rag-tag and the bob-tail in all sizes and both sexes, all going somewhere and each seemingly on a mission of more or less importance.

For an hour Robert watched the throng, idly classifying the figures that attracted him and speculating upon their places and their purposes in life's procession.

Then he plunged into the stream and drifted with the downward flow. Arriving at Herald Square, he spent another hour rambling through a large department store; watching the great newspaper

presses as they whipped out an extra edition, and waiting to see the bronze sledgemen on the Herald Building strike the hour of noon.

Then he returned to the hotel for luncheon; after which he lit a cigar and strolled down the main corridor of the hostelry, meditating on a programme for the afternoon.

A page, in a skin-tight uniform and a skull cap cocked on the side of his head, passed near and Robert hailed him.

"Boy," he asked, "what is the best way to get to Central Park?"

The lad stopped short and looked up at him with a pair of shrewd, bright eyes.

"It depends on how strong you are, sir," said the boy.

"I'm very strong," Robert assured him.

"Then you'd better go in a taxi," said the boy.

Robert smiled at the paradox.

"If I were weak, I'd walk there?" he suggested.

"You'd have to," replied the boy, promptly, "or take a street car. O' course, I'm speakin' financially."

"I get you," laughed Robert, slipping him a coin. "Now you get the taxi."

"Yessir." The boy slipped away and in a few minutes reported that the cab was waiting.

As he reached the door Robert felt the boy at his elbow.

"By the hour!" the little chap advised, in a stage whisper. "Make a deal by the hour or else he'll wing you." He jerked his thumb toward the metre

and winked comically. "Hully Gee! But don't them clocks go 'round!"

So Robert made "a deal by the hour," and the car went spinning up Broadway with Mr. Mackenzie lolling in the tonneau, enjoying himself to the utmost.

There was no reason for his electing to see Central Park, among all other show places in the city, save that the weather was fine and the name was first to come to his mind when he had asked himself, "Where shall I go?" He entered the beautiful playground at Fifty-ninth Street and instructed the chauffeur to drive slowly and stop at all points of special interest.

He spent an hour at the Art Museum and departed with a sense of having committed a desecration in having tried to see its treasures in so short a time.

He skirted the lake and followed the many drives, drinking in great draughts of the fresh spring air and revelling in the panoramic beauties of the place, revealed as they rolled along. The afternoon was nearly gone before he realised it, and when he gave the order to return it was with the mental reservation, "but I'll see the rest to-morrow." He had decided to leave the Park at Engineer's Gate, perhaps because the name appealed to him, and to ride on Fifth Avenue from Ninety-sixth down. The driver was making for the exit and Robert was looking speculatively at his watch when something happened that made him push the timepiece into his pocket and stand up in the open cab.

It was the scream of a woman.

At the first glance around Robert picked up the source of the sound and, without a word to the chauffeur, sprang out. There was a gravel walk leading up an incline from the drive, at right angles to it. A hundred feet up from the drive the walk was spanned by a low stone culvert and in the shadow of the arch a woman was struggling with two men. Robert, as he sped up the path, observed only this: that the woman was attired in a costume of vivid green, modishly cut, and fitting superbly a splendid figure; and that the men were ill-looking fellows; and, what concerned him most, that the attack had but just started, the woman, so far, having evaded the grasp of her assailants with a dexterity that impressed Mackenzie as being extraordinary.

Robert swerved from the path and ran on the grass beside it, that his approach might not be heard. The woman continued to scream, and there was a musical quality in her voice, manifest despite its note of terror.

Just as Mackenzie reached the spot, one of the men succeeded in catching both hands of their victim and he pinioned them behind her.

The other was reaching for her throat when Mackenzie's fist landed on the hinge of his jaw. The man shot straight up till his toes left the ground and then fell as though dead. Neither of the men had observed Robert until the blow was struck. Then the fellow in the rear released his prisoner and took a step to the side, drawing a black-jack

from his pocket. He held this in the air, menacingly, and began backing away; but Mackenzie sprang toward him, and the fellow brought down the club with a vicious swing. It landed with a loud crack, squarely in the palm of Mackenzie's left hand. At the same moment Robert's right fist went over like a catapult. The fellow clapped his hand to his eye, staggered, and went down.

While this was taking place a shrill whistle sounded; then another. Two policemen came running down the walk and another was hurrying up from the drive below. And Robert witnessed that marvel of the Metropolis—a crowd gathering instantly from nowhere. The two ruffians were just struggling to their feet when the blue-coated officers pounced upon them. Robert looked toward the lady in green. She was weeping hysterically and her face was buried in her hands, so that he did not see it. Two sympathisers of her own sex were soothing her.

In the confusion Robert managed to back away and edge through the crowd, unobserved.

"Father used to say that the Mackenzies had rather fight than eat," he mused, "but the tradition doesn't fit this generation. Me for dinner."

Half-way down the hill he met the chauffeur, a husky fellow, coming cautiously up, armed with a monkey-wrench and much excited. The chauffeur had witnessed the affair from a secure position a-top his cab.

"Was you a-fightin' them guys?" he asked, open-mouthed.

"No, Archibald," said Mackenzie, regarding him with what was intended to be a sweet smile, "I was carving a sonnet to courageous cab drivers with a blade of grass."

Then, thrusting his left hand under the chauffeur's nose, and extending the middle finger, he said, gruffly:

"Pull it!"

The man was perplexed and hesitated.

"Pull it!" commanded Mackenzie. "Are you deaf, or only paralysed?"

The chauffeur grasped the finger and pulled.

There was a sharp snap, and Mackenzie paled a little as the dislocated joint slipped into its socket.

He stepped into the cab and closed the door with a bang.

"Now drive, you big boob," he said, "or we'll all be pinched."

The engine was still chugging. The driver scrambled to his seat, threw in the clutch, and the car started. A policeman emerged from the crowd at the bridge and hailed them. The cab driver faltered.

"Go on!" growled Mackenzie, fiercely.

The chauffeur put on full speed. The car shot around a bend in the drive and in a few moments was lost in the traffic of Fifth Avenue.

Robert tore a strip from his handkerchief and wrapped it tightly around his finger.

"That pesky club was loaded," he said to himself, reflectively. "If it had landed on my skull—good-night!"

## CHAPTER XIV

### A DINNER AT RECTOR'S

AT six-thirty in the evening the Messrs. Powell, Wilson, and Mackenzie, swallowtail-coated and high-hatted, filed into Rector's. The famous restaurant appeared to be filled to its capacity, but Sidney's leadership blazed the way directly to a vacant table. Powell was certainly known and deferred to. The manager welcomed him with a handshake. The waiter greeted him with a smiling "Good-evening, Alderman," and the table-boy saluted as he drew out the young politician's chair. A half dozen guests nodded or spoke to him as he passed their tables. Mackenzie mentally remarked the grace with which Powell received these attentions. He had an ease of manner, an air of the blasé that, in the eyes of a raw up-stater, were enviable. He gave the dinner order with no effort, no hesitancy; yet when the repast was brought on it proved neither lavish nor frugal; and of excellent selection. Powell, from his patent-leather shoes to his polished finger-tips, was the typical man about town. He was like one to Broadway born.

When the cocktails were brought Sidney raised his glass.

"To us three, Cornell, and a merry evening!" he said, and tossed off the Martini with a swing.



Mackenzie touched his lips to his glass and set it down.

With the entrée came a bottle of wine. The glasses were filled.

Wilson lifted his goblet, and contemplated the column of tiny bubbles that arose from its depths.

"Here's to us three, Wellington,—and a h—l of a time. Bottoms up!" he said, and drained his glass.

"Bully!" cried Robert; but he merely touched the wine to his lips and put it aside.

"Hey, Bob," challenged Wilson, with his usual good-natured inelegance, "ain't you drinkin'?"

"Not any more," said Robert. "I'll take a bottle of ginger if I can have it." The order was despatched forthwith.

"Why not, Bob?" pursued Wilson. "You ain't got no scruples against it, have you?"

"No scruples, Blab!" laughed Mackenzie. "But the stuff doesn't agree with me; does it, Sid?" He smiled sheepishly across the table.

"And thereby hangs a tale, it seems like," said Wilson, following the glance at Powell.

"It was the night of Bud Farley's stag," Powell explained. "You know how the Farleys did things. The sky was the limit when Bud wanted anything. Well, Bud's mother had their best Irish linen on the table, the cut glass and family plate and all that sort of thing, and wine—oh, oh, you'd think it came in hogsheads! Well, Bob there took a couple glasses of the stuff—you had never drunk anything before then, had you, Bob?"

"Only a glass of ale once in a while," said Mackenzie.

"Anyway, he drank a glass or two of the wine. Well, he didn't show the usual effects of drinking at all. Didn't get hilarious or unsteady or sleepy or anything like that. But he did things that were not at all like—like Bob Mackenzie. Let's see—oh, yes! the boys were boasting about feats of strength and somebody challenged Bob's reputation for having a strong arm. There was a heavy silver cruet on the table, a rare old thing that had been in Mrs. Farley's family since the days of the Irish kings, I guess. Well, sir, Bob took that cruet and with one hand crushed it like an eggshell. Then he broke it in two with the tips of his fingers, as you would snap a pipe-stem, and tossed the pieces into the plate of the chap who had challenged him."

Powell stopped and looked reminiscently into his glass.

"You haven't come to the point, Sid," said Robert. "As a feat of strength it was nothing, and I could have done it just as easily without the wine. It was an awful offence, and, although I later apologised to Bud's mother a thousand times and she just patted me on the head and said it was nothing, still I never forgave myself. But the point of the story is that the next morning I knew nothing about what I had done, until I was told of it; and even then I could not recall it. From the moment I took that wine my mind seemed to have become a blank. I've tried to fathom the thing through psychology, but I can't quite clear it up. It seems as though alco-

holics benumb my conscious self and my subconscious brain goes on working without the other to guide and direct it. You see, there must be some sort of affinitive correlation between the subjective and the——”

“For the love of cats, fill up my glass!” cried Blab, as the subject began to get beyond his vocabulary; “I don’t know what you’re talkin’ about, Bob, but if I had all them things that you’ve got I wouldn’t drink, neither.”

This brought a laugh from both of the others, and Powell helped Blab to the wine and helped himself, also.

“Well, Blab,” concluded Mackenzie, “that’s why I don’t like it. It’s the devilish irresponsibility that goes with it. I believe that, above all things, a man should be master of himself—at all times and all the time. I’m not afraid of anything that I can see, or feel, or sense, or reason with. So long as my head is clear I’ll take a chance on anything that comes along. But a thing that steals the command of my body from my brain—deliver me from it!” and Robert pushed his wine further away. “I’m sorry I can’t take a drink like most fellows,” he added, indifferently.

“You needn’t be,” put in Sidney; “on the contrary, your case is a fortunate one. I haven’t looked into the psychology of the thing——”

“From which, good Lord deliver us!” chanted Wilson.

“——but the truth of the matter is that you get the evil effect without the habit, while most men

get the habit first and the evil effect afterwards. The results of wine upon the average beginner are a pleasant exhilaration at the moment and a slight headache the next morning; nothing more. It is not until they have become confirmed drinkers that the stage of moral irresponsibility develops. Then we have what Broadway terms a 'booze-fighter.' It's the slow, subtle potency of this stuff that fills our sanitariums, our poorhouses, and our prisons. If wine dealt with most young men as it deals with you, there would be few drinkers and no drunkards."

"And now," struck in Wilson, who had been inexpressibly bored by this discussion, "if you fellows are through with philosophy and psychology and booze-ology, I'll tell a story."

Which he did, forthwith, and a good one. And Blab's story reminded Sid of one, and Sid's story reminded Bob of another, and the dinner proceeded with much merriment and that good-fellowship which always prevails when young men from the same home town happily meet on Broadway.

"And now where?" asked Wilson, as they sipped and puffed, respectively, their coffee and cigars.

"To the Follies," said Sidney; "I have taken a box."

"And what's at the Follies?" asked Mackenzie, pleasantly anticipative.

"Why, La Carmona!" replied Sidney.

Wilson and Mackenzie looked at each other blankly.

"Sounds like an opera," said Robert.

"Sounds like a cigar," said Wilson.

"What is it?" they asked, in unison.

"It is a girl," said Sidney; "Rosa Carmona. Your European dignifies his artiste by using her last name and putting a 'the' before it. Hence, La Carmona."

"Well, what does she do?" asked Wilson.

"I don't know exactly, because I haven't seen her," said Powell; "but she's the most talked-of woman in New York and the idol of Broadway. From all accounts, she is as beautiful as a dream, sings like another Patti, and does a dance that will make you fairly grind your teeth in an ecstasy of despair."

"Oh, I think I read about her in the papers," chimed in Wilson. "Ain't she the girl that put the Shah of Persia on the bum?"

"Something like that is told of her," said Sidney. "It is said that she had the crowned heads of Europe by the heels and, as the newspapers put it, that she kicked the Sultan of Turkey from his throne. Of course, that's metaphorical. The story goes that the old Sultan spent so much of his time hanging around Carmona's dressing-room in Madrid that he lost his grip on the King business and the uprising followed, as you know. They say that the string of pearls she wears was a gift from the Sultan and cost the old boy a hundred thousand dollars; which was a corking good present—if true."

"And a corking good story, if not true," added Mackenzie. "Here's to the press agent!" lifting his cup.

"More power to his elbow," added Wilson, and they finished their coffee.

Powell called for the check and paid it.

"I might add also," he said, as they arose from the table, "that the lady is said to be young, impulsive, of romantic temperament, and positively irresistible."

"Lead me to her," laughed Wilson, with his hand on his heart.

So they went to the Follies.

## CHAPTER XV

### LA CARMONA

ON the west side of Broadway, at the upper edge of that section of it which is referred to in the Gotham vernacular as the Tenderloin, stands the establishment which we will call the Follies. The Follies is a place which, according to the management, as per announcement on the programme, is "devoted to novel, international, spectacular, and musical entertainment." This sounds superficial and showmanlike and is suspiciously suggestive of the circus bill; but a more precise definition of the character of the entertainment supplied at the Follies is not so easy of accomplishment as one might imagine. That the performance is opera, either grand or comic, would never be contended, even by the management—and theatrical managements are not conspicuous for the scrupulous accuracy of their claims. Certainly the production at the Follies is not of the order of plays called tragedy; nor is it even of a dramatic character in any sense of the word. Vaudeville? No, for the vaudeville houses offer a new programme weekly, while at the Follies the bill runs through the season without change.

Briefly, and with exactitude enough for the purposes of our story, the entertainment at the Follies

might be described as a little of everything. There is much of scenery and scenic effects. There is a chorus of shapely girls—and others. There is a perfect avalanche of music and lights and paper flowers. There is a mere pretence at a play upon which are strung, like glass beads upon a slender thread, a number of “specialties”; and always among these beads there is one of extra prominence and singular brilliancy. This bead is displayed in photographic facsimile in front of the theatre and its name is given much publicity in the newspapers and appears in extra large capital letters on the programme—the acquisition of which last-named essential, by the way, sets you back in your savings account to the amount of one dime, ten cents, as you linger in the lobby.

At the time in which this action was taking place, La Carmona was the bright and particular prismatic pendant in the Follies’ chain of attractions.

As the three Wellingtonites walked up Broadway, arm in arm, like Du Maurier’s “three musketeers of the brush,” Mackenzie, Taffy-like, towering in the centre, Powell explained that, owing to the approach of summer, most of the theatres had closed and his field of selection had been circumscribed. But he reassured them that the bill at the Follies was undoubtedly the most promising entertainment available. “Besides,” he added, “we can smoke, which usually helps some.”

Arriving at the theatre, which is a large building and on front of which the name of the Spanish dancer blazed forth in countless electric bulbs, they



entered and were shown to a proscenium box at the right of the stage.

Robert, who had never attended a theatre in the Metropolis, was impressed with the great size of the auditorium and with the brilliancy of its furnishings and illuminations. The aisles were wide, the seats capacious. There was a promenoir in the rear extending the entire width of a city block. There were smoking-rooms and lounging spaces and a café and restaurant with white-topped tables, where a string orchestra dispensed music before the show and between the acts. There were cigar stands, and lemonade counters and a buffet where light lunches were served, and confectionery stands, and pretty uniformed girls in attendance everywhere.

The scintillating chandeliers from which the light streamed through thousands of prisms, the gold-painted furniture, the extravagantly gowned women, exuding a hundred varieties of perfume as they swept by, the men in every conventional costume from sea-shore flannels to gloves and claw-hammers, the usher-girls in red sashes and chic caps flitting up and down the aisles, the music, the animated faces of the gay seekers after diversion, as the great theatre rapidly filled—all made a picture and created an atmosphere that were novel and stimulating to the young up-stater, and served to whet his anticipation of the evening's entertainment.

The overture ended, the lights went down, the curtain lifted, and the show began.

Whether the performance was good or bad or just ordinary does not figure here. It is sufficient

that our three friends enjoyed the entertainment to the utmost, and when the curtain fell for the intermission Powell suggested a stroll along the promenoir. Later Wilson amended this by an invitation to the café. They sat at a table and had ordered refreshments, and Mackenzie was just sticking a straw in his lemonade, when he heard some one accosting Sidney with a familiar "Hello, Powell!"

He looked up to see his friend shaking hands with a man who was introduced to them as Mr. Mollensteen.

"A former client of mine," Powell added, and then to Mollensteen: "Sit down and order something."

Mollensteen took a chair, but declined the other invitation on the ground that he'd "just had one."

He was dark-skinned, and had a closely-cropped black moustache with black curly hair, whitened above the ears. He was a little under-sized, but vigorous, keen-eyed, clean-cut, and well groomed. He was in evening clothes and immaculate.

"How is Mrs. Mollensteen?" asked Powell. "Haven't seen her since the Captain's party—or you, either, for that matter," he added.

"She is well; thanks," said Mollensteen. "She's in back," he went on. "Where are you sitting?"

"Lower box on the right, next to the stage."

"I'll bring her in for a chat, if you like," said Mollensteen, easily.

"Please do; we'll be delighted. And how's the show business?"

"Never better," replied the newcomer. "Have-n't you heard what I'm doing?"

"Not since you were handling that Egyptian wig-gler," answered Powell. "What's your latest?"

"Why," said Mollensteen, smiling unctuously, "I've got La Carmona."

Powell evinced surprise, and Wilson and Mac-kenzie began to get the drift of the talk and take interest.

"You don't tell me," said Powell.

"I sure do. Another of my discoveries. I dug her up in Spain last August; dancing in a concert hall at Madrid. Have you seen her?"

"No, but from what I hear she's the biggest noise on the Rialto."

Mollensteen shrugged his shoulders and smiled knowingly with his eyes. Then he leaned over across the table confidentially and said to Powell, in an undertone:

"We're getting a thousand dollars a week and fifty weeks guaranteed!" He leaned back in his chair and looked at Powell with much self-satisfaction. "Pretty bad, what?"

"It's splendid," said Powell, heartily. "I congratulate you."

"I'd like to have had you draw the contract," went on Mollensteen; "I always feel safer when you take care of 'em. But it was done on the other side. I tried her out in Paris, you know."

"I see. Well, you've got them all talking, all right."

"Have I? Well, rather. And it's just begin-

ning. Say, maybe you would like to meet her? Doesn't speak English, you know; but a fine little lady, believe me."

"I'll be delighted. What do you say, fellows?"

Wilson and Mackenzie readily assented.

"Tell you what you do," suggested Mollensteen. "We generally have a bite at the Crescent after the show—the two ladies and I. Will you join us?" he nodded, inclusively, around the table.

"That's mighty good of you, Mollensteen, but we couldn't think of it," said Powell. "It's too much, you know. Or too many, rather," he added, smiling at the others.

"Nonsense!" began Mollensteen, protesting, but Powell interrupted.

"I've got a proposition," said Sidney, "and I won't take no for an answer. I've arranged to give these chaps a little spread to-night in my rooms at the Windsor Arms. If the ladies will be good enough to honour us, you and they shall join us there. We'll be cosy and comfortable and can do as we please. You owe it to me, Mollensteen, for you were the host the last time we dined together. Come, now, what do you say?"

"I surrender," laughed the showman. "What time?"

"Will eleven be too early?"

"No, La Carmona's act is next on the bill and runs only twelve minutes. We'll jump in a taxi and be there in no time. There's the bell for the second part, gentlemen," he added, rising. "Don't miss Carmona!" And he hurried away.

The others returned to their box.

The orchestra struck up a lively air and the curtain rose. The stage was set for a brilliant night scene in a Paris café. Women in gowns of extreme cut and gay colours were seated with their escorts at the tables. Corks were popping, glasses were clinking, and revelry was at its height. Suddenly the tempo of the music changed. The popular air gave place to a crash of harmonies which modulated into a melody that was unmistakably Spanish. There was a commotion among the gay celebrants, a shout of welcoming approval, and all turned their faces toward the back of the stage. Here at the top of a broad staircase stood a beautiful young woman, about to descend, but pausing to acknowledge the salute. The audience proper joined the mimic one on the stage in a reception of astonishing enthusiasm. It was easily seen that La Carmona was a favourite.

She was really a small woman, but her proportions were so nearly perfect, even to the detail of her features, that she appeared quite tall. She was typically Spanish—Spanish from her thick, black, silken hair and her brilliant black eyes to the tips of her white and tapering fingers. Her teeth were small and as even as though made by a skilled human hand and they gleamed in the spot-light like milky diamonds. Her face was almost classic in its regularity of outline, but afire with animation and temperament. She wore a wonderful gown, warm with colour, rich with silken net that threw off a silver sheen. Her arms and neck were as

white as snow and jewels flashed from her ears, her throat, and her fingers.

As the applause subsided she tripped down the stairs and came to the footlights. A hush of expectant attentiveness fell upon the house as she raised her hand in a wave of grateful acknowledgment and began her song. It was in Spanish; but her voice was so sweetly compelling that the great audience hung upon every note and drank in the melody to the very end. She responded to the crash of approbation that followed and sang again.

Then she retired and the applause had not yet abated when she returned in a change of costume and with castanets between her fingers, and executed a dance; and with such rare grace and dainty beauty that it fairly set her audience by the ears. Again she was forced to respond to several encores, her dancing creating even more of a furore than her songs. And when, at last, she would only kiss her fingers and retire, and the orchestra leader had "brought on" the next number, Mackenzie could hear her name echoed in undertone from every part of the theatre.

"Shall we stay for another number; it's a juggler next?" asked Sidney.

"The sleeping-powder of vaudeville," said Robert, deprecatingly.

"I've had enough," agreed Wilson.

"Then we'll go."

## CHAPTER XVI

### SUPPER FOR SIX

THEY walked to the hotel. Sidney gave some orders about the supper and they went upstairs. The table arrangements were changed to meet the requirements of the enlarged party. Robert threw open the door connecting his own apartments, making the quarters quite sumptuous. The little dining-room was most inviting. It happened to be a cool evening, so a wood-fire had been made in the grate and its warmth and glow gave an air of comfort and welcome. The table itself was a pleasing picture. The decorations were carnations and roses and ferns. The flowers, the snowy linen, the bright silver, and cut glass sparkling in the soft light diffused from a dozen candelabra were very effective.

Sidney surveyed the scene with satisfaction and looked at his watch.

"They'll be here presently," he said.

Just then Robert discovered an alarming coffee stain on his shirt bosom and ducked into his room to change.

While he was out the guests arrived. Mr. Mollesteen presented the ladies, introducing Mr. Wilson, who was entirely overcome, and Mr. Powell, who was gracious and cordial. Sidney knew a smattering of Spanish, so he took the Señorita in charge

and they got along nicely. Mrs. Mollensteen chatted easily with Mr. Wilson and rendered first aid in covering his confusion. Sidney remarked that Mackenzie would be in directly and that they would begin without ceremony. He handed the Señorita to a seat at the head of the table, reserving a place for Robert opposite her at the end near the door. Mrs. Mollensteen was given a place at the right of Robert's, opposite her husband, and Wilson was placed at the right of La Carmona, opposite Powell.

They were barely seated when Robert returned and stood hesitating on the threshold, his stalwart figure framed in the doorway.

Sidney got up.

"*Señorita Carmona,*" he said, addressing the young woman, in careful Spanish, "*tengo el gusto de presentarle al Señor Mackenzie.*" And then to Mackenzie: "Bob, this lady is Miss Carmona."

The Señorita half arose. She wore an evening gown cut sparsely enough to show a neck and arms as white as marble, throwing into striking contrast her raven hair. There was a sparkle in her coal-black eyes that rivalled the gleam of the splendid jewels she wore and her teeth shone like bits of glazed china. Across her shoulders was a silvered mantilla. She was the consummation of animate loveliness.

For a brief moment she smiled; then, with a scream of surprise, she cried:

"*Mi salvador!*"

In another instant she had sprung to where Mackenzie stood and, with her arms about him, was





**KISSING HIM, FIRST ON ONE CHEEK AND THEN ON THE OTHER; THEN SHE TURNED TO THE ASTONISHED PARTY**

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kissing him, first on one cheek and then on the other. Then she turned to the astonished party and gave vent to a peal of laughter that rang through Powell's quarters like the sound of a silver bell.

Still holding Robert tightly by his coat-lapel, she cried to Mollensteen:

*" Mi salvador! Mi hermoso gigante con pelo de azafran! "*

" You don't say! " exclaimed Mollensteen.

" She certainly did say," piped Wilson, who was almost in a state of collapse, from curiosity; " but for the love of cats *what* did she say? "

This appeal stirred Mollensteen to an explanation.

" She said: ' My rescuer, ' " he translated; " ' my handsome giant with the saffron hair. ' Don't you understand? Didn't you read about it? Haven't you seen the evening papers? " he asked them, joyously excited. He drew a copy of *The Times* from his pocket and pointed to a heading of the size that press agents dote upon. Tossing the paper to Wilson, he joined Robert, who still stood in the doorway, blushing like a Baldwin apple.

" So you're the unknown hero, are you? " he said, heartily. " Well, you're certainly the simon-pure article and here's my hand on it! "

Mrs. Mollensteen and Sidney joined the group also and with the shower of congratulations and compliments that deluged him, and La Carmona pouring out her thanks in a stream of incomprehensible Spanish, Robert felt alternately hot and cold and continuously miserable.

This, in brief, was what Blab Wilson read in the newspaper:

That La Carmona, the beautiful Spanish dancer, who had danced on the hearts of royalty, had been attacked by highwaymen in Central Park that afternoon; that she was riding in her automobile and left the car to enjoy a stroll through a favoured section of the park, as was her custom; that it was her practice to wear the famous "Sultan's necklace" of pearls on these drives, probably under instructions from an enterprising press agent who appreciated their advertising value; that this had become generally known and a plot was laid to rob her of the jewels; that she was held up, while passing under the bridge, by two "strong-arm men," known respectively as George White, alias "Whitey," alias "George, the Yank," and Daniel Coon, alias "Cohen," alias "Sheeny Dan"; that the remarkable dexterity and nimbleness of foot which amazed crowds nightly at the Follies enabled her to elude the grasp of her assailants for a time, but that "George, the Yank" finally pinioned her hands and "Sheeny Dan" made a clutch at the coveted necklace which she wore.

The remainder of the story described the unexpected rescue, the capture of the highwaymen by the police, and the mysterious disappearance of the hero in a taxicab.

Happily for Robert, one of the table attendants regarded the service of supper as of more immediate importance than a frustrated robbery, and he came to Mackenzie's rescue by announcing with due

apologies that the ice was melting under the clams. So all took their places about the table, Robert taking his position opposite La Carmona, and the repast was begun.

Soon some one observed the strip of linen around Mackenzie's finger and commented upon it.

"A mark of the combat!" declared Mr. Mollensteen; "so you didn't come off unscratched, after all!"

Then Robert was made to describe how he had to catch the highwayman's club in his hand to save his head, making as light of the incident as he could. But Mollensteen repeated it volubly in Spanish to the Señorita, and, clapping her hands, she ran to Mackenzie's end of the table, and caught up his protesting hand, and kissed the tip of the suffering finger. There was a laugh at this and a "Bravo!" from Sidney; and Robert, to divert attention from himself, sought to engage Mollensteen in conversation.

He asked what it was that the Señorita had sung for her first number. Mollensteen replied that it was from *Marina*, a Spanish opera, and, turning to La Carmona, asked her, in Spanish, the name of the composer, which he had forgotten.

"Arrietta," she answered, and seemed much pleased that Robert was interested.

Speaking through her manager, she asked Mackenzie if he liked the song, and he answered that he had been quite charmed by it and would be interested to learn the story of the opera. This pleased her mightily and she said she would be most

happy to sing the song again for him before they dispersed. She seemed to have the faculty highly cultivated of talking through an interpreter. She spoke quickly in short sentences, stopping sharply for the translation and going on instantly at its conclusion, leaving no awkward waits between. She looked at Robert as she talked, not at Mollensteen, and watched his face alertly, noting every change of expression that her words produced. The animation of her face and directness of her expression made it seem almost that they were conversing first-hand.

“In Spanish,” she explained, “Marina is of the sea. . . . But it is also the name of a girl. . . . The scene is at Lloret, a fishing village in the province of Valencia by the Mediterranean. . . . Jorge is a sailor and the captain of a ship. . . . Jorge is in love with Marina. . . . Marina is in love with Jorge. . . . Pascual is a friend of Jorge’s and a builder of boats. . . . Pascual, also, is in love with Marina. . . . Marina does not love Pascual. . . . Jorge has to make a voyage to Cuba. . . . He hopes to plight his troth to Marina upon his return. . . . He sails away and is a long time gone. . . . Then a story is started by Pascual that Jorge has betrothed himself to another girl. . . . So Marina is very sad. . . . Then Pascual urges his suit and impetuously she tells him yes. . . .”

Here La Carmona looked mischievously around the table and raised her finger warningly.

“So you see what gossip will do. La, la!” she said, naïvely.

"That's one on you, Blab!" laughed Sidney, as it was translated.

"The day of the wedding approaches," continued La Carmona. "But Jorge returns in time. . . . After difficulties he succeeds in showing that he has been true. . . . And he marries the girl, after all. *Bravo!*" concluded the Señorita, clapping her hands.

"And that's one on Pascual!" added Wilson, much gratified at the happy termination of the narrative.

"What a pretty story," said Mrs. Mollensteen, who had as strong a bent for the romantic as her husband had for business.

"But a most contemptible fellow, that Pascual," opined Mr. Mollensteen.

"However, all is fair in love. Wasn't it you who said that recently, Bob?" asked Sidney.

"I stand by it!" laughed Robert.

"Serve the wine," said Sidney, to an attendant behind his chair.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE GLASS OF MANZANILLA

THE wine was brought and all, barring Mackenzie, partook of it freely, though not excessively.

The occasion became quite festive. Blab Wilson developed a dry humour that at times was convulsing. Mollensteen told some good stories in German dialect. Mrs. Mollensteen recited a clever little poem describing the love affair of a tin soldier and a French doll. Robert was called upon for a speech and responded, as the *Wellington Times* would have put it, "in a few well-chosen words."

"What do you think of her?" Powell whispered, in Robert's ear.

"She is fascinatingly beautiful."

"And beautifully smitten," added Powell. He gave Robert a significant look and turned away.

Mackenzie begged for the promised song from *Marina*.

La Carmona sang it not only for him, but to him, and with rare expression, moderating her voice to suit the acoustics of the small room. By this repression her wonderful voice lost none of its colour, but there was added a plaintive sweetness, a sympathetic appeal that held her hearers as though under a spell:



“Pensar en él, esa es mi vida,  
 Mi solo bien pensar en él;  
 Amarle fiel, si soy querida,  
 Y aun sin su amor amarle fiel.

Dejar deshojada  
 La flor delicada,  
 Y si ella á ni anhelo  
 Respuesta no da,  
 Del aura en el giro  
 Mandarle un suspiro,  
 Que si él no lo acoge,  
 Al cielo se va.”

At the end of the song there was a moment of silence. She shattered it by a rollicking laugh and sat down gaily amidst an enthusiastic clapping of hands, and exclamations of delight.

Robert took a rose from the table and tossed it into her lap. She kissed it and threw it back across the table, saying something to him in Spanish. He put the flower in his button-hole.

Sidney arose, glass in hand, and cried:

“*Viva La Señorita!*”

They all stood and drank to her, but Robert was content to go through the motion only, and set his wine down untouched. La Carmona observed this and puckered her eyebrows.

“*Usted no bebe a mi salud,*” she protested.

“She says you don’t drink to her,” Mollensteen translated. It was an awkward minute for Mackenzie.

“But I am going to *sing* to her,” he answered.

This suggestion diverted her, and she enthused over it and said “*Gracias!*” a number of times.

So he had Sidney sit on his left and Wilson on

his right—to do the “barber-shop minors,” he explained to Mollensteen—and he stood between them with his hand on Powell’s shoulder. Wilson had a pleasing tenor voice, and Powell had a good bass. Robert, whose voice was untrained, but rich and melodious, sang the air. It was “Drink to Me Only with Thine Eyes”—most happily appropriate, a song which the young men had sung together many times in their college days. Mollensteen, sitting beside the Señorita, translated in an undertone, line by line. As La Carmona had sung to him, so now Robert sang to her, holding in his hand a wine-glass—empty:

“Drink to me only with thine eyes  
 And I will pledge with mine,  
 Or leave a kiss within the cup  
 And I’ll not ask for wine.  
 The thirst that from the soul doth rise  
 Doth ask a drink divine;  
 But might I of Jove’s nectar sip  
 I would not change for wine.”

As they caught the naïve application of the lines, a laugh ran around the table, and La Carmona, frankly delighted, cried: “*Otro! Otro!*”

“Another!” translated Mollensteen.

“Encore!” cried the others.

Robert put down the glass and took from his button-hole the rose that she had kissed and returned to him. Smiling, he held it toward her and went on:

“I sent thee late a rosy wreath;  
 Not so much hon’ring thee  
 As giving it a hope that there  
 It could not withered be.

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But thou thereon didst only breathe  
And send'st it back to me,  
Since when it grows and smells, I swear,  
Not of itself, but thee!"

As the song ended the revellers pounded a clatter of applause on the table, and La Carmona, leaning far over, took the rose from Robert's hand and placed it in her hair.

In the merry chatter that followed Sidney said something to the attendant, who stepped to the buffet and returned, placing before him a bottle of purple wine, the label of which bore an inscription in Spanish. After a glance at the markings, he nodded approval and directed the attendant to open the bottle and fill all glasses, which was done. Then he arose and held his glass aloft.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, slowly, in his measured Spanish; "down under the azure skies of Southern Spain grows a grape whose juices rival in sweetness the nectar of the Gods. Enriched by the gentle showers of a Spanish spring, breathed upon by the soft zephyrs of Malaga, and kissed by the sun of Arcadian summers, this grape buds and grows and ripens till in purity, in sweetness, and in fragrance it matches the cheeks and lips of the daughters of that fair country from whence it comes. It gives me great pleasure to propose the health and happiness of Carmona, the Beautiful, in her native Manzanilla!"

There was a chorus of "*Bravos!*" and "Hear, hear!" and a delighted "*Gracias!*" from the Señorita. They all arose, putting their glasses to-

gether and holding them, like a ruby wreath, above the table.

"*Salud!*" laughed La Carmona, and the glasses moved toward their lips. But suddenly, as they were about to drink, her manner changed.

"*Esperen!*" she cried.

The word, ringing out in her clear soprano, was unmistakably a command, even to those who did not know her language; and the goblets, brimming with the rosy Manzanilla, halted in mid-air. All turned to her, wonderingly.

She held her glass lightly by the stem and with the other hand made a sweeping gesture of appeal around the table. Tears were gathering in her eyes, her pretty mouth quivered at the corners, and her white, round chest rose and fell as from a suppressed sob.

"*Mi corazon se despedezal!*" she cried. "*El señor es tan cruel; que no brinda a mi salud con el vino de mi tierra!*"

Irrespective of its meaning, there was a kind of appealing sorrow in the speech that caused a hush.

Mollensteen, who stood beside her, was visibly embarrassed. He looked at her sympathisingly and, after a moment, turned to Robert:

"La Señorita says her heart is breaking; you are so cruel. You will not drink to her in her native wine."

There was an awkward silence, but scarcely of a second's duration. All eyes were now upon Mackenzie, and he saw that delay was hopeless. Not that he was influenced by Carmona's charms; but

on the one hand was a distressed woman and an embarrassed company, while on the other only a more or less selfish resolution. He knew, of course, that the differences of language, of race customs, and race temperament made an explanation such as he had given Blab Wilson impossible. In a flash he scrutinised the situation from every angle and made his choice. Had he turned quickly and caught the sinister look in Sidney Powell's eyes, tense, anxious, hopeful,—a desperate hope arising out of despair,—he would have seen that a game had started, spontaneously, unknown to any but the player; and he would have put his chivalry in his pocket, backed his square shoulders against the wall, and stalled the play. But he did not look at Powell. He looked, instead, at La Carmona, held his wine aloft, and cried:

“Your health!”

Then he drained his glass.

All joined in this, of course, and the spirits of the beautiful Carmona were not only quickly revived, but arose to the point of riotous merriment.

“*Otro! Otro!*” the pretty dancer carolled, and the glasses were filled again. Then she arose and blew him a kiss from the tips of her fingers.

“*Señor Mac-ken-zie,*” she said, quaintly, in detached syllables, “*mi salvador! Mi hermoso gigante con pelo de azafran! Salud!*”

“Bottoms up!” chorused the others and the six glasses of Manzanilla were emptied and then turned, rims down, upon the table, tracing ruby rings on the snowy linen.

Then some one started "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow," in which all joined lustily, even La Carmona, who mastered the words, after a fashion; and while this was going on Sidney called to the attendant:

"More of that Manzanilla!"

And the glasses were set up and filled and the refrain was taken up again, more heartily than before:

For he's a jolly good fellow,  
For he's a jolly good fellow,  
For he's a jolly good fellow,  
Which nobody can deny!"

After which Robert remembered no more.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### A DREAM AND A DISCOVERY

ROBERT MACKENZIE had a dream, and in the dream he was a boy, an orphan boy, such as he had been, in fact. And "Uncle Joe" Bender, who was nobody's uncle at all but just a hale, little old man with red cheeks and a white beard, was mowing a patch of lawn in the back-yard, just as he had mowed it for Robert's father, and Robert's grandfather, and Heaven only knows how many generations before—so it seemed to Robert. And Bender, who in the full dignity of her official title was Mrs. Joseph Bender, housekeeper, was in a low rocker on the back porch, clad in a spick-and-span blue and white gingham frock, preparing apples for a pie. And Robert was watching the spiral parings curl under the shining knife-blade and drop into the pan which she held upon her knees—an operation which had never before failed to hold his interest. But now it ceased to fascinate and he wandered back through the garden and started in hot pursuit of a butterfly with black and yellow wings. The butterfly escaped, but the chase brought Robert to the back-line fence, whose pickets were scarcely visible through the flowers and foliage of the rambler rose that trailed and twined along it, seeking the morning sun.

And in the fence there was a gate, and on the gate there was a girl with blue eyes, and from the girl there came a voice, calling him by name. And he answered, for he was lonely, saying, "Oh, little girl, come and play with me!" But she said only, "Well, then come and find me," and disappeared from view. So he ran to the gate and passed through and saw only a rugged hillside which he had never seen before.

But at the foot of the hill there was a great, grey horse, upon which he sprang; a horse with silver tassels dangling from its ears, and with splendid trappings. Then he saw the little girl far away, above him, smiling down, so he dug his heels into the horse's sides and they plunged forward. On they flew, charging up the pathway toward the spot where she had stood. But as they neared the place he saw that she was gone.

Then he heard her voice calling again, "Higher, higher!" and he saw her standing farther up the hillside. Spurring his charger on, they dashed forward and upward, crashing through thickets and leaping high rocks and yawning crevices that appeared before them in endless repetition; but the little girl continued to vanish and to reappear farther above him and again her cry, "Higher, higher!" rang in his ears. Finally it seemed that they were nearing the top and he could see her standing on the very pinnacle of the mountain, and, as the great horse bore him onward and upward with the speed of the wind, he arose in his saddle with a shout of triumph, saying: "I've come! I've come!"



But suddenly, as he reached out his hand to catch her, she seemed to be dissolved in a glaring light which caused his steed to halt and settle upon its haunches, snorting with dismay. And the light shone with such brilliancy that he was dazzled, blinded, and held his hands before his eyes.

And Robert awoke to find a broad ray of sunshine streaming into his bedroom window, flooding his pillow with a yellow glow; and to discover that he was not a boy of Wellington, but a man of the world.

A man, grown and matured, with a vocation. And the little girl with the blue eyes was a woman whom he loved and whom he had won; and he had come to a great city and was soon to start upon a world tour that would round him out for a useful life. He had come down with a friend and they had found another. And they had dined and had gone to the Follies and had supped in the rooms next door to this one in which he now lay. Here Robert yawned. They had supped—oh, yes! and he had drunk wine, ruby wine, with a Spanish dancer—what was her name? A Spanish name—like a cigar, Blab had said. A prosy fellow, that Wilson; utterly devoid of the poetic sense, was Blab.

“A primrose by the river’s brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.”

The fellow who wrote that must have known Blab. Goldsmith, wasn’t it? No, it wasn’t; it was Wordsworth. No, it couldn’t have been Words-

worth. Yes—no—oh, the deuce take it! (Another yawn.) It wasn't a poet's name he was trying to recall, anyway! Whose, then? Oh, yes!—the Spanish dancer's. La—La something; he couldn't quite get hold of it, though it seemed to be on the tip of his tongue. Bet he could speak it. Always easier to speak a name than to think it. Let's see, now—La Carmona!

“*Si, Señor.*”

Mr. Mackenzie stared at the ceiling and pinched his thigh beneath the counterpane. That was not a voice, a woman's voice? He pinched himself again. Yes, it was a woman's voice. Surely not her voice? Yes, it was *her* voice—there had never been a voice like it, anywhere, that he had ever heard. Which way did the sound come from? It seemed to come from the right of him, from the sitting-room, beyond. He turned his head a trifle, just enough to give him an unobstructed view through the part in the portières.

The Señorita in a silk kimono, her trim, slippers crossed upon a hassock, reclined in an easy-chair, leisurely smoking a cigarette.

Robert closed his eyes and a hot flush crept over him. He had heard her; he had seen her; and now, a third sense gave evidence that the presence of La Carmona was not a dream; for the delicate fragrance of burning Havana floated into his chamber.

He partly opened his eyes again and, without moving, surveyed the room in which he lay. An evening gown—the same that she had worn the night before—hung across the back of a chair. Beside

it, on the floor, was a pair of little boots, with French heels and jewelled buckles. On the dresser were an ivory-backed brush and comb, a hand mirror, and a powder puff—none of which he had ever seen before.

And beside him, on the pillow, crushed and broken, lay the flower she had worn in her hair.

This much was certain: She was here with him, sharing his rooms. But why? What had happened? How had it come about? His head throbbed and his heart was thumping. He was in a fever of wild imaginings. He strove to be calm, to think systematically, to restore his mind to orderly action; but in vain. Then he slipped from his bed, and rolled the sitting-room doors together with a bang. The bathroom adjoined his chamber and he stepped into it and turned on the shower.

## CHAPTER XIX

### ALL'S FAIR IN LOVE

THE cold water did its work and, when he had dried and dressed himself, he found that he could think. The first thought that arose, distinctly and definitely, out of the subsiding chaos, was that Helen Willoughby was lost to him, irrevocably. This conclusion was clear; depressingly, sickeningly clear. Almost within the hour of his troth he had violated the one condition that she had made. He had surrendered his claim to her without a struggle.

He pictured her as she had stood that night against the background of rambler roses, the moon shining full upon her face, so frankly firm and yet so gracious, and her parting message sounded again in his ears:

“ I love you because you are good ! ”

How had it come about, that he had done this thing? Clinging doggedly to the state of calm that he had forced himself into, he seated himself in a chair by the window, where he could see the sky, and reviewed the incidents of the night before. Every detail was clear, as he followed the sequence of events step by step; up to the second glass of Manzanilla.

After that, nothing.

It was the Manzanilla, then, that had done it,

of course. But why had he taken it and so broken a resolution that he had made unto himself; a resolution that he knew to be peculiarly essential to his plan of living and the proving of which had now changed the channel of his life? It was not like him, Robert Mackenzie, to be turned easily aside from a method of his own making, from a rule of his own creation. He went back to the Manzanilla. He recalled the situation under which he was constrained to take it. He thought upon this for some minutes. Yes, he could understand why he had yielded. Assuredly, according to his conception of gallantry, it was the only thing to do. If the same condition were to arise again, not knowing of the consequences that were to follow and not dreaming of a result so vital as this, he would do exactly as he had done. He had not yielded because he was weak, but because he was unselfish and preferred to err in favour of others rather than in favour of himself. Reviewing the situation as it had confronted him, his action, even in the present period of despair, did not seem faulty. Error there had been, surely. Chance, fortune, the fatefulness of circumstance could not have wrought the fall of a strong, well-meaning man. Where, then, had been the error? If not in the situation, it must lie behind the situation. Chance? No, no; it was conspiracy! Who had caused these circumstances to fit themselves together and rear a structure that barred him from the domination of himself? Where was the motive in this? Who had an end to gain by Robert's fall?

*Sidney Powell!* As the solution unfolded itself before him he sprang to his feet. Tricked! And by a dog whom he had called a friend!

Striding through the little dinner room, the stage of last night's drama, he tried the knob of Powell's door. It was locked. One push with his shoulder and it gave way with a crash. There was an ominous glint in his eye and a tense gripping of the hands that boded ill. But the rooms were unoccupied.

Robert returned to his chamber and stood at the window again. There was something about the sky that helped him to concentrate. He took out his watch. It was ten o'clock. Powell and Wilson had both left town by this time; but he would make sure. He swung back the rolling doors and entered the sitting-room.

La Carmona leaped gaily to her feet and came toward him smiling. Robert waved her aside and walked across the room to the telephone. He called up the office and asked if Mr. Powell were in. No, Mr. Powell had gone to Chicago. Was Mr. Wilson stopping there? Which one—Alderman Powell's friend? Yes. No, he stopped at the Strathmore. Robert got the clerk of the Strathmore on the wire. Was Mr. Wilson of Wellington in? No; Mr. Wilson had surrendered his key and left town. Robert hung up the receiver.

What difference did it make, anyway? The thing was done, and to have seen either Powell or Wilson or both would have availed nothing. By four o'clock Wilson would be back home, and by five

every man, woman, and child in Wellington would hear of his shame. What would she think—Helen? She would be the first to hear, of course; it is always so. And it was right that she should know of it. If there had been no witness, if it were the secret of his own soul, he himself would tell her. There could be no deceit, no perfidy, for he would win fairly or not at all. But, if he could see her, face to face, if he could tell her the truth, the complete truth, might she not see that he had not sinned, in heart? He had been true to himself, so far as he knew how; then, had he not been true to her, also? Before his God, his conscience was clear. If he were square with his conscience, could he not make himself right with her? Was it not possible, even likely, that he could make her understand—and forgive?

Robert caught up his hat, threw a raincoat over his arm, and went out, leaving La Carmona without a word.

## CHAPTER XX

### A NIGHT RIDE TO WELLINGTON

MACKENZIE went to the hotel office and asked the man behind the desk:

"When is the next train that will take me to Wellington, N. Y.?"

The clerk consulted a time-table:

"At eight-forty this evening."

That would arrive, he knew, some time the next morning.

It was too long; a day and a night. In contemplation it seemed an eternity.

There was a way to beat it. He turned to the clerk again.

"Do you know where the Charon automobile place is?"

"At 1999 Broadway."

"Where is that?"

"Opposite the Studebaker Building."

"Where is that?"

"Seven blocks up on the right-hand side."

"Thank you."

Robert walked up seven blocks, found the Studebaker Building, crossed the street, and entered the office of the Charon Car Co. He found a well-dressed, self-satisfied-looking gentleman, with a



close-cropped grey moustache and a diamond-studded necktie sitting behind a roll-top desk.

"Have you a Charon-60?" Robert asked.

"Yes."

"Ready to run?"

"Yes."

"May I hire it?"

"We do not rent cars."

"Do you demonstrate them?"

"Yes."

Robert laid a hundred-dollar bill on the desk.

"If I don't buy it, I forfeit the deposit," he said.

The diamond-studded gentleman became obsequious, gave Robert a receipt for the money, and called some one from the rear of the office.

"Bring around that '60' for a demonstration," he ordered.

In ten minutes the car, a low, wicked-looking monster, was panting at the door.

"How is the gasoline?" asked Robert, of the driver.

"Twenty gallons," replied the chauffeur.

Robert got in beside him.

"Which way?" asked the chauffeur.

"North."

The car started, threading its way cautiously up Broadway.

"Speed her up," ordered Robert, as they neared High Bridge.

"Not yet," replied the driver. "It ain't safe."

Soon they were getting into Westchester, and Robert ordered the man to stop.

"Let me drive," he said.

The man hesitated.

"Can you run a Charon-60?" he asked.

"I own one," said Mackenzie.

They changed places, and Robert took the wheel. The car leaped forward.

It was raining in Wellington. Starting with a cloudburst at five in the afternoon, it had finally settled into a persistent drizzle, which gave promise of continuing through the night.

Shortly before eleven o'clock a low-built racing automobile, throwing two powerful streams of light ahead and a spray of mud behind, turned off the State road, into Willoughby Street, and came to an abrupt stop in front of the Willoughby home.

The man who had been driving the car stood up behind the steering gear, drew off a dripping raincoat, and threw it across the lap of his companion. Then he sprang out of the car, ran up the walk leading to the front porch of the house, rang the bell, and waited in the shelter of the veranda. In a few minutes a maid opened the door:

"Why, Mr. Mackenzie! Is it you?"

"Yes, Delia. Is Miss Willoughby in? May I see her?"

"She has just gone to her room. I'll tell her. Will you come in?"

Robert shook the rain from his hat and entered, standing in the hall while the maid ran up the staircase that led directly from it. As he waited he looked about him, feasting his eyes on the familiar

interior and drinking in the home atmosphere that pervaded it. The grandfather's clock, with its slow-swinging pendulum; the old mahogany hallrack, with the Judge's well-worn but glossy silk hat upon one of its pegs and the Judge's topcoat upon another; the hair-cloth sofa; the marble-top stand with the silver card-tray on it; the steel engraving of the landing of the Mayflower hanging on the wall; everything just as it had been since his first recollection of it; all quiet, restful, homely, and in such pleasing contrast to the glamour of the scene from which he had come.

Helen Willoughby came down and stood on the bottom stair, facing him, one hand hanging by her side, the other resting easily on the balustrade. Her face was a trifle pale, but calm and emotionless.

"Why have you come?" she asked.

At the first glance he knew that the news had reached her; that the blow had fallen.

"You have heard?" he inquired.

"Yes; why have you come?" Her tone and manner were expressionless. He could make nothing of them except that the past had died. He wiped the rain from his face with the back of his hand, looking at her almost stupidly:

"I came because I could not rest until I had seen you. The train had gone; it was ten o'clock. So I got a car—like mine—and I motored up."

"You motored up—from New York? In thirteen hours?" A flicker of something like admiration showed in her eyes, but so slightly that he did not see it in the soft light.

"I knew Wilson would spread the story; I hoped that I might tell you first."

"Is it true?" She was still impassive, but the tone in which she asked it told him that his reply meant much to her.

With a mighty effort he could only whisper it.

"Yes," he said.

"Please go." She pointed appealingly toward the door.

"I wanted to say," he persisted, "that, so far as I know, I have done nothing of which I am ashamed. I thought, if I could see you face to face, I might explain——"

"Robert," she broke in, "of what avail is it? The whole town is ringing with the news. Still, I did not believe it—until I saw you just now from the top of the stairs. Then I was convinced; I knew by your face that—something had happened."

"I should not have gone," Robert moaned. "No, no, I should not have gone! Helen, dear, if only you had said yes that night in the garden; if only you had given me my way!"

"Thank God that I did not!" she exclaimed. "My course has proved itself. Is it not better to be disillusioned now than after? If you are capable of this, is it not better that I know before we had bound ourselves by a tie that we could not break? It is hard to give you up, but I do it with gratitude in my heart—not with the shame and horror that it would have caused in later years."

"Helen, will you hear me?"

She waved him back.

"Have I not heard enough? You have said it is true! Then, why prolong it? If you would say it is false, I'd go anywhere with you, make any sacrifice, suffer any torture, risk my honour itself to prove my belief in you!"

The colour was deepening in her cheeks and her reserve was giving way.

"I can't understand it," she went on. "I am stupefied—stunned. My dream is over, my faith is dead. Robert, Robert! How could you do this thing? There was a ride in the Park, they say—a fight, a rescue—a midnight supper. Were you carried away with the romance of it? How was it? What was it that changed you so?"

"It was the wine," he said.

"Are you sure? Or the woman?"

Her voice had broken and she was making no effort to restrain her tears.

Suddenly she stepped down from the stair, came close to him, and clutched his arm. There was a look in her face that he had never seen there before.

"Tell me! Is she beautiful?" she asked, in a tone and manner that was strange to him.

"I don't know; I don't remember. I have scarcely seen her. I don't want to see her again!"

She went on, almost hysterically:

"What is her witchery? By what trick did she win you? Is she bright, is she clever—is she so much better than I? *Do you love her?*"

"I love no one but you!" he cried, passionately, and threw his arms about her. But she broke from him, stepped upward to the second stair, and held

up her hand. He felt the barrier that she had thrown between them as her face grew instantly passive and her manner calm.

"It is too late," she said. "I cannot conceive how you could have taken this step other than of your own free will and accord; but, whether or no, the result is the same. It is done and it cannot be undone. I ought to feel bitter toward you, but I do not. And I can't help feeling that you are the victim of some strange fatality rather than of your own weakness. I have no censure for you; only sorrow. But it's past mending now, and whoever she is, whatever she is, your place is by her side. Go to her."

"But I know you to be so good, so just, so charitable, I had hoped——"

"Do you know that you may have compromised me by coming here?"

"I had not thought of it; forgive me. No one has seen me."

"It is nothing. Is your car waiting—out there?"

"Yes."

"It might be well, then, if you were to leave as you came. If you are seen in Wellington just at this time, it will only make the cross harder for me to bear."

"I shall do so." He waited a moment and then put out his hand:

"Will you say good-bye?"

She descended one step and placed her palm within his.

"Good-bye; and may God bless you!" She

looked smilingly into his eyes and then burst into tears and ran, sobbing, up the stairs.

Robert stood looking after her until she had reached the upper landing and disappeared.

Then he went out, walked briskly to the car, got in, and swung it around.

“Don't we stop here to-night?” whined the chauffeur.

“Stop, hell!” growled Mackenzie; and the panting monster shot forward through the rain.

## CHAPTER XXI

### THE NEED OF A MOTHER

LATE in the afternoon of the following day, Robert entered his apartments at the Windsor Arms.

La Carmona was sitting at a little table in an alcove window. Opposite sat a maid, polishing the Señorita's nails.

As Robert entered Carmona gave a glad little cry, sprang to her feet, and ran toward him, her arms outstretched. As she drew nearer she noted the pallor in his cheeks and the lines that had formed overnight.

Mackenzie had not slept or rested or changed his clothing since the morning of the day before. With the exception of the half hour at Willoughby's and a few brief stops along the road for gasoline, he had driven the big car steadily for twenty-six hours. His hands were raw with blisters; his eyes red from the wind and dust and the driving rain that he had ridden into. He was weary, weak, travel-worn, sick at heart, and sorrow-stricken. As he crossed the threshold of his room, there came over him a feeling that he had experienced many times in earlier days—the need of a mother. He recalled that sweetest solace of boyhood, the burying of a tear-stained face in the lap of her who had a



comforting word in every trial and a soothing kiss for every wound; and he felt the want of it now.

A pretty big boy is Robert. Too big—you are thinking, madam—for this sort of thing. You have one of your own, perhaps, a strapping fellow with down upon his lip, who comes swaggering in with a heavy tread, and is self-conscious when he kisses you, if company is there; and towers over you and teases you and banters you and pinches your cheek as though you were a little girl; and then swaggers out, filling his pipe as he goes.

Very much of a man is that chap of yours, and big and strong and brave. But some night there is a girl in the case, maybe, and the case is a little mixed; or there is trouble at the bank where he is employed; or there is an aching tooth or an aching head—or an aching heart; and the smile with which he greets you is a little hard at the corners and the face is a little drawn. But he comes swaggering in as usual, blustering even more than common and pinching your cheek a trifle harder; and he swaggers out as before, filling his pipe as he goes.

Taller than father, now, he is; and his shoulders fill the doorway from sill to sill as he passes through.

But before he starts away, just look again, and closely. Perhaps the kiss he playfully printed on your hair lingered a moment longer than common; perhaps the hand that had pinched your cheek then fell to your arm and closed upon it with a pres-

sure that you did not feel the night before; perhaps as he starts to go—if you pay close heed—you will see behind the smiling eyes a forgotten something that once, long years ago, looked out at you through baby tears.

Madam, he is a boy no more. He is large of frame and rough and robust; and he's seen a bit of the world, besides. But if you mark these things this night, as he comes and goes—follow him. He has gone to his room and you will find him there. You will find him there with his coat off and the pipe untouched, unlighted, discarded. You will find him there, on the edge of his bed with his head bowed and his face in his hands, making no sign or sound.

And you will enter and cross the room softly and seat yourself at his side; and you will put your arms around his neck as you used to do, gently, very gently, and draw his head toward you till it rests upon your shoulder, taking care to let his face turn downward so his eyes will not meet yours, for he may be a bit ashamed of being babied—big boys always are. And when you have drawn him close and you feel his cheek against your own and you have twined a lock of his hair around your finger, you will say to him only this:

“Jim, dear; it's mother.”

Ah, madam, then you will see! Then you will see that strong hand groping for yours; you will feel that shaven face snuggling into the bosom that your troubled baby cried himself to sleep upon in years gone by; then you will feel the heavy beat-

ing of a man's heart against your own, and you will feel his hot tears falling upon your hand.

Then, madam, you will know that your boy of yesterday is still your boy—and will be until the end; and you will know that he would shed those tears with no one else but you. The beard may grow and the hand may harden and the silver voice of youth grow hoarse and deep; and he may have married the girl in the case and have become the head of the bank, and he now has a little lad of his own, perhaps, to climb upon his knee. But rest assured there are times in his life when his heart is heavy and the tears are there but do not show, and when he would give worlds to lay his head against the cheek of the only one who would really understand; to feel her dear arm around his neck, drawing him closer, and feel her dear lips upon his hair and hear that comfort whispered in his ear:

“Jim, dear; it's mother.”

It is so with your boy, it is so with mine, it is so with me. For, even as I write, a dear sweet face smiles down upon me from a little oval frame above my table.

I remember how she held me in her lap and kissed the finger where the door had jammed it—and took the pain away. Her hair was glossy brown and her cheeks were like the roses.

I remember later, when I flunked at the June “exams” and how I yielded to the arm that drew me to her side and how I found the comfort that she alone could give. Her hair was not all brown, then, and the roses had begun to pale.

I remember, later still, when she found me in the night, as you may find your Jim, conscience-sore and troubled. Her hair was silvered, and her cheeks had lost their bloom. But the voice was just as kind and the hand was just as warm; and the magic of her touch was just as potent as before. For, as I hid my tears upon her shoulder and let her fold me in her faithful arms, I felt an easing of the heart-ache; and, if there were a sin, it lay less heavy upon my soul.

Oh, dear lady in the oval frame! There are miles between us, and the old home that your sweet presence sanctifies is but a picture in my dreams. But, if you could hear me call to-night, you would come; nor time nor space nor change could silence the prayer you'd make for me, nor dull the love and solace of those sacred hours, when your baby, your boy, and your swaggering son wept out his sorrow in your blessed arms.

If Robert Mackenzie's mother had been living, he would have sought her now and cried his troubles out upon her sleeve; and she would have gone to Helen Willoughby, and she would have found a way of talking it all over with Rosa Carmona and she would have saved her son from a trial that was in store for him; an approaching sorrow of which, even then, he had no intimation.

But Robert was motherless and fatherless and, just now, friendless and alone; and, as La Carmona approached him, he saw something that touched the spring of his repressed emotions. It was in her eyes; true sympathy, with a tear behind it. She

stopped short before him, looked earnestly into his face, and then threw herself into his arms, weeping. He did not repulse her, but his head drooped until his cheek rested against her hair.

## CHAPTER XXII

### A FRIEND FROM CORNELL

ON a short narrow street running west, off lower Broadway, about midway between City Hall Park and Bowling Green, stands a five-story structure that is typical of the New York office building of forty years ago. There are few such now remaining, as close to Broadway as this. Surrounded on all sides by towering sky-scrapers, it stands timidly in the shadow of their proud cornices, and likewise in the shadow of impending destruction; for it is only a matter of days when it must go, as others of its kind have gone, to make way for an edifice of modern design.

In the hallway of this building is a directory-board painted black, upon which the names of the occupants of the five stories are inscribed in dingy gold letters. Beside the directory is the elevator, which is the only suggestion of modernisation visible, and even this is of an early vintage, slow of motion and quite incapable of being stopped within fifteen inches of the level of any floor. Nor could it be regarded as visible, in the common acceptance of the term, for, being made of dark-coloured wood and being operated by a dark-coloured gentleman from Georgia answering to the name of "Rastus,"

it melts quite naturally into the sombre monotone of the general interior.

About noon of the day following his return from Wellington, Robert Mackenzie's broad shoulders momentarily deepened the shadow of the hallway of this building as he swung through the doorway and scanned the directory heretofore described. Running down the list with the end of his walking-stick, he rested it on the name of Thomas Penniman Pierce, opposite which was the figure 52, indicating by the cryptographical system peculiar to office buildings that the aforementioned Pierce occupied Room 52 on the fifth floor.

After ascertaining which, Mr. Mackenzie stepped down the regulation fifteen inches to get into the elevator and stepped up the regulation fifteen inches to get out of it and groped his way along the corridor to Room 52, upon the door of which was repeated the name presented on the directory, with the additional inscription, "Counsellor at Law." Robert opened the door and found himself in a vestibule just large enough for the door to swing in and which served no purpose except to act as a sort of rectangular screen which prevented an immediate view of the room proper. Opening from the vestibule was an ample door, which was closed, and a tiny window, which was open.

The rattle of a typewriting machine and the vigorous shuffling of papers were sounds that denoted the activity of business within.

Robert tapped on the window-shelf with his knuckles. The typewriter ceased its clicking and in

a moment the face of a young woman appeared at the little window. It was a round, rosy, dimpled face, displaying a fine set of teeth, and brown hair, parted in the middle and brushed straight back over the temples with a severity that was quite irreconcilable with the dimples.

Robert inquired if Mr. Pierce was in, to which the face at the little window replied that he was and requested Mr. Mackenzie to state his name and the character of the business regarding which he had called.

“Just say a friend—on a personal matter,” replied Mackenzie.

The face was removed from the window and he was admitted by the young woman whom it served to adorn. The young woman then returned to the typewriting machine, the rattle of which was resumed with increased vociferousness.

The room was such as one might find in the quarters of any lawyer, except that it was rather sparsely furnished. Still, there was a goodly array of sheep-bound volumes, ranged around the walls, a formidable-looking safe, and a filing cabinet of modern design. There was also a roll-top desk, with some legal-looking papers piled upon the top of it; and at this desk sat a clean-shaven, plump, wholesome-looking young man, with blond hair and clear, grey eyes, studying a typewritten document through gold-rimmed glasses.

As Robert came in this young man raised his head with a jerk of impatience, as though resenting the interruption, and looked at the visitor over the top



of his desk. Then, with a yell of joy, he sprang to his feet, jerked off the glasses, and met Robert's rush half-way:

"Bob Mackenzie!"

"Tom Pierce!"

"Well, of all the persons I least expected, you're the person I expected least. Bob Mackenzie! Well, by cracky, Bob, I'm certainly glad to see you!"

"And I, you, Tom; you're the best thing I've looked at since I struck this town," said Mackenzie, heartily, as each gripped the other in a double-hand-shake.

"Sit down, sit down," urged Mr. Pierce, offering him a chair and seating himself at the desk again. "And tell me where you've been since you got your sheep-skin and what you've been doing and how you're——"

"First give me a cigar," interrupted Robert, "and then we'll——"

"Well, well!" exclaimed Mr. Pierce, as he peered into an empty box in the drawer of his desk; and then, turning to the young woman, whose finger gymnastics at the typewriter had gone on unceasingly, he said, in a gently remonstrative tone: "Why, Molly, my cigars are out! My cigars; how about my cigars?"

"No matter, Tom, old man," said Robert; "I'd rather smoke my pipe if it's not objectionable——" with a deferential glance in the direction of the rattle.

"The only thing we smoked in college," said

Pierce, producing a can of tobacco, "and still my favourite, Bob."

"Mine too, Tom; I'd never smoke anything else, but for the looks of the thing."

They fired up and began puffing away like two human furnaces, each beaming on the other in genuine good-fellowship.

"Well, how goes the world with you, Tom," asked Robert; "you look busy," glancing at the pile of papers on his desk, the flying fingers of the young woman, and other evidences of industry within range of his eyes.

Pierce laid down his pipe and clapped his knee.

"Bob," he cried, "I've just got to tell you! I look busy, do I? Well, it's all a big bluff, a colossal four-flush; you understand? And this dear little woman," turning a proud and smiling face toward the fair performer on the writing machine, "is not a typewriter girl at all, but my wife! Molly, this is the chap you've heard me tell about so often; one of my best pals in college and the biggest man in Cornell!"

The dear little woman came forward and gave her hand to Robert, and broke into a merry laugh, to which her dimples danced a lively accompaniment; and Pierce laughed and Mackenzie laughed, and the three stood hand in hand like a trio of jolly conspirators.

Then on Pierce's suggestion they sat down and he proceeded to explain.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### THE TEA PARTY AT TOM PIERCE'S

“ IT'S about a year since I was admitted to the bar,” said Pierce, “ and, if I had been content to stay in my home town up the state, I might have been doing pretty well by this time. Everybody knew me there. They knew me to be fairly straight, bright enough, and of a respectable family. But I had grand aspirations. No town smaller than New York was big enough for me. So I asked Molly if she'd take a chance and she was game; so we were married and came down. I struck New York with a profession, a good education, and one million five hundred dollars. The five hundred was in cash and the million—in Molly.” He laughed and patted the little woman's arm fondly.

“ I had dreams of a swell suite of offices on Broadway, with green velvet carpets, plate-glass partitions and mahogany furniture, and a coloured boy in brass buttons to open the door. Then came the awakening. I found that a man in my circumstances couldn't rent a place on Broadway big enough to stand up an umbrella in! I found that full-fledged lawyers, two years out of the University, were working ten hours a day, for fifteen dollars a week—hundreds of 'em. I could take you right now to a big law office within a block of here and

show you a bright young man with a splendid legal training, whose name is on the door as one of the four members of the firm, and whose only duties in the establishment are to run a typewriter and operate the telephone switch.

“Well, I didn’t get an office on Broadway. But I got as near to it as I could, and here I am, like Dick Swiveller, waiting just around the corner; waiting for the big client who is yet to come.

“You see that door there with the sign on it, ‘Private Office’? Well, that’s no office, Bob. It’s our kitchen. You see that sofa, ostensibly for the comfort of weary clients who wait hours for Mr. Pierce to emerge from his private sanctum? Well, that, when opened up, is our bed, and this room is our boudoir. You saw that cigar box—in my desk? Just bluff, Bob. It’s so long since a cigar was in that box that it doesn’t even smell of tobacco! Observe this mass of papers that I was poring over when you entered. A few piking bad-debt actions and the rest of ’em dummies, that’s all. Did you hear the typewriter going when you came in? My wife’s idea, Bobby. Every time the knob of the outer door turns she jumps over to that machine and begins to write: ‘Now is the time for all good men to come to the aid of their party.’ How many times have you written that sentence, Molly?”

“So many times that I am an expert operator and I resent your telling Mr. Mackenzie, a little while back, that I am not,” averred the little woman, effecting a pout between her smiles.

“I retract it, with due apologies, dearie,” said

Tom, humbly; "but I must insist that your qualities of wifhood far outshine your wizardry of the keys."

"'Wizardry of the keys' is good!" laughed Robert.

"But qualities of wifhood are better," insisted Pierce, declining to be laughed out of his tribute. "And that business-like table out there with the writing materials on it is our festive board, Robert—our dinner table. And this ponderous safe, here against the wall"—Tom walked over to it and swung the door open—"is our larder." There were papers in some of the compartments, but the most conspicuous object within it was a plate of home-made biscuits.

"An excellent bread-box," Molly chimed in; "but not good for perishable things like butter. We have an ice-box in the private office," she added, proudly.

"And that reminds me that it is past noon, and lunch time," said Pierce.

"And it reminds *me* that in the ice-box there is a box of genuine up-state clover honey that came by express from mother only yesterday. Do you like honey, Mr. Mackenzie?" asked Molly.

"I do, indeed," replied Robert, in ecstasy; "the bare mention of the word makes my mouth water!"

"Then you must lunch with us; for it's tea and biscuits and honey—and you will take a chance on my biscuits, won't you?"

"I'll not take a chance, but I'll take a biscuit

—and thank you heartily for so rare a treat,” said Robert, gallantly.

So Molly excused herself and repaired to the private office to make the tea.

“Tom,” said Robert, “I congratulate you. She is charming!”

“She is more than that, Bob. She’s the dearest, noblest, most loyal little woman that ever breathed. To think what she gave up; for me! The companionship of loving parents, of a brother and a sister, and of scores of friends; the environment of a cheerful home; and all for this!” He swept the little office with a wave of his hand, and a troubled look clouded his face. “Just because I was not content to be a big toad in a small puddle.”

“And now you’re hardly a small toad in a big puddle.”

“A small toad? Why, Bob, I’m not even the tip end of a wiggler’s tail!” declared Tom, with a rueful smile.

“Not yet,” put in Mackenzie, encouragingly.

“That’s it, Bob,” said Pierce, his buoyancy restored. “The fattest frog that ever sunned his opulent sides on the banks of old Cayuga Lake—was once a pollywog. I’ve got the stuff in me; and Molly is game, and we’re going to stick. It’s hard sledding just now, but give me time and I’ll arrive with bells on. You watch!”

Here the most loyal little woman came out of the private office, cleared the table of its professional encumbrances, and spread a snowy cloth. After which lunch was served, Molly sitting at the

head, pouring the tea, while the two schoolfellows lived their college days over again, bragging about the meerschaum pipes they coloured, recalling the fights they had, playing over again the games they won, laughing at the old pranks, and re-telling the old stories.

The avidity with which Robert consumed the biscuits and honey evidenced his appreciation more convincingly than the spoken compliment he tendered his hostess; and, when luncheon was over, Molly's face was radiant.

The two men resumed their seats near Tom's desk and Molly removed the last vestige of evidence that the table had loaned its oaken surface to anything so unprofessional as biscuits and honey. After which she absented herself and the men re-filled their pipes.

"And now, Pierce," said Mackenzie, "I have to confess that my real object in looking you up this morning was business. Something has occurred—of which I will tell you later—that has changed the current of my life. As a result of this I have concluded never to return to my native town, and what is more I wish to cut off all communication with it. In a few days I'm going abroad. I may return to America in six months or a year—or never. In any event, I wish to put the town of Wellington and every association with it behind me for ever. I have some business and property interests that require more or less constant attention. Heretofore I have looked after these things myself, with the help of my agent in Wellington, an old lawyer,

who is withdrawing from business. It is now my wish that you may take these matters off my hands and off his. Practically all of the estate is in securities that can be handled in New York as easily as in Wellington. There are some insurance matters and two or three litigations pending, and—well, this will give you an idea of what there is to be done.”

Robert drew a great bundle of papers from the inside pocket of his coat and threw them on the young lawyer's desk.

Just then Molly entered, but at sight of the business-like turn of affairs she tactfully withdrew.

Robert continued in a lower tone. He sketched briefly for Pierce the social life in Wellington, referred to his attachment for Helen, described the plans he had entertained concerning her, the reasons for his intended trip abroad, his arrival in New York, the adventure in Central Park, the supper at the Windsor Arms, its consequence, and the part Sidney Powell had played in the affair. He did not withhold the fact that the Spanish dancer was still sharing his rooms. He purposely omitted the name of Helen Willoughby from the story, referring to her only as “the girl I hoped to marry.”

Pierce was deeply interested, particularly as he had known Powell in college.

“But why this exile?” he asked, when Mackenzie concluded. “Why permit a thing like this to drive you from home and cut you off from family and friends?”



"As to the family, I have none; as to the friends, I have no desire to see them again."

"But you have committed no crime," Pierce persisted. "You have done no worse than the majority of young men. Before this you were the exception; now you are the rule, that's all."

"You don't understand, Pierce. If you had lived in Wellington, you could form some idea of the humiliation I feel. Somehow or other, the town had pinned a medal on me. Not because I was particularly good, but because the place itself is particularly bad—from the standpoint of the moralist. It is notorious for its scandals; there is scarcely a young man in the town who has not a reputation for women, wine, or the card table. Just because I minded my own business and kept my conscience clear, the reformers put me up on a pedestal and persisted in pointing to me as the last word in excellence and virtue; and the others have watched and waited, I fancy, for a chance to pull me down. For years I have been extolled by mothers and fathers and teachers as a pattern of moral perfection, and every boy in Wellington was urged to keep his eye on Robert Mackenzie and be a man like him. And this same shining example of rectitude says good-bye to a host of admiring friends, gets his name in the local papers with a glowing tribute to his high character, and comes to New York. And within twenty-four hours of his arrival here he meets a music-hall singer with an infamous past and falls to the level of the most notorious rake in Wellington! I'm no coward, Pierce, and if the one woman

had not cast me off I'd go back without a qualm and live it down. But with her lost to me, the old associations would be only a mockery. Nothing is left me in Wellington but the embarrassment, if not humiliation, of having fallen from the I-am-holier-than-thou position which I was supposed to occupy. So what's the use? I want to put the town and everything connected with it out of my mind for ever. I want no curious-minded busybodies writing me letters of either sympathy or condemnation. I want no village gossips in the guise of friends looking me up or learning choice bits of news to add to their store of scandal. Powell is on his way to the Pacific, and by the time he returns I will be gone. Wilson is back in Wellington revelling in the story with which he shocked the town. If this man Mollensteen tries to see me, I will not let him in; and within a week La Carmona, too, will have passed out of the picture and I will be on my way across the Sea.

“You, Pierce, will be the only remaining link between the Mackenzie of yesterday and the Mackenzie of to-morrow; and you will not connect me with the past, but you will bar me from it. That is why I am here. In the process of handling my business affairs you will necessarily have some communication with my native town. But you will reduce this to a minimum and you will tell no one where I am because you will not know. It is not likely that any personal letters to me will find their way here; but, if they do, you will open them and

answer them non-committingly or not at all. I do not wish to see them."

"Look here, Mackenzie," said Pierce, laying a hand on Robert's arm and looking at him gravely. "You're not planning anything foolish? Dissipation and that sort of thing?"

"Bless you, no!" said Robert, with a reassuring smile. "Nothing like that. It isn't in me. I suppose it would be more regular; drink or suicide or something on that order. But it doesn't run in the family. No, no, I'm going to try travel first and work afterwards—and total obscurity all the time."

Pierce made a cursory examination of the papers and the two men talked together for a half hour.

Then Robert took his leave, the friends clasping hands cordially and Mrs. Pierce appearing in time for a hearty word of thanks from her guest and to join in the adieux.

And when the door had closed Tom Pierce took the most loyal little woman in his arms and kissed her.

"Molly," he said, "the big client has come. We will move around the corner."

## CHAPTER XXIV

### A WEEK AT THE WINDSOR ARMS

IT was a curious situation that Robert Mackenzie found himself in, both physically and psychologically. The cosmos of his existence had been changed in a day. A few hours ago his sky was cloudless; now his day was as black as night. A few hours ago, in addition to health, wealth, and youth, he had the thrill and inspiration of the rare pleasure of anticipating the love of a pure and beautiful woman. To any man, this would have been much; to Robert it was everything. It was the only thing that he had not been born to; the only thing that had come to him, since the calamity of his orphanhood, approximating the affection he had felt for his father and mother. It was, too, the only great thing for which he had earnestly striven. Wealth had been willed to him; a splendid body had been handed down to him; keenness of intellect and aptness to study had been inherited by him. But his love for Helen Willoughby was a thing conceived within himself, a thing which had first obsessed and then possessed him, and which had been nurtured by him until it dominated his every thought and act. And, now that she had passed out of his life, it seemed that everything that he had planned, small and great, every ambition that he had cher-

ished, had lost its incentive. There was no motive for anything. He was adrift. Dissipation, as a surcease of sorrow, was not open to him. He charged the tragedy of his life to the wine cup, and his distrust of drink now became a bitter antipathy toward it. In point of fact he did not seek to ameliorate his suffering. After the first shock of disappointment he had, by slow stages, brought the responsibility home to himself and he had reasoned himself into a state of stoical resignation. The treachery of Sidney Powell in itself disturbed him but little. He did not believe that Powell had deliberately planned his downfall,—which, in truth, he had not. He was convinced that Powell's hospitality on that fateful evening had been genuine up to the event of the Manzanilla, and he appreciated the opportunity and the temptation with which Sidney had been confronted. It was treachery, and he could not condone or forgive it. But he knew it was an act of impulse, not of forethought, and he was charitable enough to feel that the high stake was an extenuation of Powell's act. He recalled, too, that he had in a way challenged Sidney to win by any means, if he could. It was a betrayal, but, under the circumstances, he had no desire to avenge it and felt only a mild contempt for the man who had betrayed him. He wished only to put the fateful supper party and all who figured in it behind him and out of his memory, as he would dismiss a hideous dream.

With the exception, perhaps, of Rosa Carmona.

In her he saw only a butterfly of the demi-monde, a talented adventuress, who had thrown herself at

his head. The more he studied her the less he censured her, for she seemed the creature of environment, a tinsel toy of the play-world. At first believing that he was the victim of her intriguing, he now saw that he was the victim of her caprice. Her docility when he stormed, her tears when he was troubled, and the fawn-like look in her eyes as she watched his face, trying to fathom his varying moods, told Robert that, whatever she was, her regard for him was genuine. That she was utterly lacking in conventionalised morals was, of course, self-evident. Still at times he could hardly reconcile the present demeanour of the young woman to her notorious past. There was so much sympathy in her nature, and there were flashes of real innocence, the innocence of youth; and there was, with all, a girlish modesty that he believed could not be common among women of her stamp. Of humiliation there was no trace. She seemed curiously unconscious of her position, and, instead of exciting his contempt, there was something about her which compelled a kind of deference. It grieved Robert that a woman, so beautiful, so refined, and of such splendid attainments, had made of herself a social outcast; and in the pink of youth. But, while he pitied her for what she was, he respected her for what she might have been. Perhaps she, like himself, had once meant well.

Robert's position was like that of a young man cast upon a desert island in an unknown sea and meeting there a woman who recognised no social laws. A castaway he was, certainly, cut adrift from

the little world he had known, and here in the isolation of his rooms was Rosa Carmona, the most intimate human thing within his reach. She, it seemed, recognised no man-made rules, and, as for himself, he was unattached, having no kith or kin, and responsible to no one but his Maker. La Carmona had thrown herself into his arms; he would not put her away. The companionship was of her making and, if it pleased her to be with him, she could remain—until his ship would sail.

For Robert was going abroad, as he had originally planned. Alas! not with the same objective; but for the want of any better diversion.

And so these two, strangely met and oddly mated, idled the hours away during the week that followed. Neither could speak or understand the language of the other. But both were quick of perception and keen of intellect, and with signs and gestures, and smiles and frowns and shruggings of shoulders and a few—a very few—words in French of which each knew a mere smattering, they managed to converse, after a fashion, though never with any certainty of having been clearly understood. La Carmona, despite the tales of her chequered past, was only a girl—just over twenty—and Robert but a few years out of his boyhood. So they laughed at the absurdity of their position and at the droll manœuvres called forth by the want of a common tongue. La Carmona was manifestly happy and Robert, except for intermittent periods of depression, was tolerably cheerful. They never went out together; Robert, somehow, could not bring himself to be seen in her

company, publicly. Not that his scruples forbade it, but he felt, vaguely, that he owed it to the memory of Helen Willoughby to avoid a display of this comradeship. It was something like that reluctance to the open pursuit of pleasure felt by one from whom death has removed some one near and dear. Besides, a ride through the Park with Rosa Carmona would suggest a mutual attachment that did not exist. She had come to him, he had not cast her out. Error had sought him and he had surrendered; this much he would admit to himself and to the world. But no more.

Rosa had asked him, once, to drive with her, but he had said "No!" the negative in both languages, very sharply and with a firm movement of his hand that waved the suggestion aside once and for all.

So they breakfasted and dined and supped in their rooms, and each night she went to the Follies in her car. And during the evenings Robert rode out and took the air.

Nor did he receive any one in his suite. Not that many called, for his acquaintances in the city were few. But Tom Pierce stopped at the hotel one evening, only to be informed that Mr. Mackenzie had retired.

One afternoon Mr. Mollensteen sent up his card. A severe look settled on Robert's face as he read the name, and, turning the card, he pencilled across the back:

"I am not at home. Mackenzie."

and had the boy return it to the waiting showman.



Although he had absolved every one of responsibility for his predicament, Robert could not dissociate Mollensteen from the cause of it. Conceding that none of Powell's guests had conspired to effect the *liaison*, still he felt that they had been unfairly, if not inexcusably, acquiescent. He desired to put them out of his life and his memory and he wanted Mollensteen to distinctly understand this.

The cut was effective, and Mollensteen left, smarting under the insult, and made no further overtures.

In a moment the incident had passed from Robert's mind, but there was to come a time when the memory of this summary dismissal would come to him with tragic significance.

## CHAPTER XXV

### GOOD-BYE

So the week passed and the time for Robert's departure was close at hand. The boat was to sail at sunrise on the following morning and the passengers were expected to go on board the night before. Robert's arrangements for sailing were simple and complete. Rosa Carmona knew nothing of his plans. As she had come into his life, unannounced and uninvited, so he was going out of hers. Her artlessness seemed genuine, yet he knew her to be a woman of the world, who at best was but gratifying a passing whim in showing him favour. When not in her presence and under the influence of her frank adoration, he could not be sure that there was not a mercenary incentive behind it all. Not that he had detected a sign of it in her, but because of his hear-say knowledge of her class. He knew that he had wealth, while he was far from the conviction that he had personal charm. The bare suggestion of commercialising a companionship such as theirs had been and was repugnant—sickening. But he was convinced that he owed her nothing sentimentally; whereas, on the other score, he was not so sure. Reasoning thus he planned the order of his going.

That last afternoon, Rosa Carmona was particu-

larly vivacious, and, perforce, particularly beautiful. They dined early, as was their wont, that the evening, or such part of it as they enjoyed together, might be the longer. She was arrayed in a new gown, a splendid creation of a famous Fifth Avenue dressmaker, and they discussed it in their two languages—fingers and bad French—and Rosa laughed gaily at Robert's desperate efforts to fittingly express his admiration of it.

She made the salad dressing with unusual care and poured his coffee and dropped the sugar into his cup, counting the lumps in Spanish, "*uno, dos, tres,*" chiding him the while, and calling him "*niño*" because he liked things so sweet.

Then they lighted their cigarettes and she leaned her elbows on the table, with a ringlet of smoke, like a halo, floating above her head, and looked at him with a sparkle of more than ordinary brilliancy in her black eyes. She could contain herself no longer, so she explained that she had a surprise in store. Then she tossed her cigarette into a finger-bowl and stepped lightly to the piano and struck a chord.

It was the little love song from "*Marina.*"

It seemed that she had got some one at the theatre to make a translation of it, and she had learned the English words—to sing them to him. And proudly happy, as a child with its first "piece," she sang. Robert had liked the song musically from the first and she had sung it frequently for him in Spanish, but he had never known its meaning. Now, realising that he understood, she rendered it with

uncommon sweetness and expression. Her enunciation was clear and her pronunciation quite perfect, with barely a trace of a foreign accent, as though every syllable had been scrupulously studied:

“To love him faithfully, that is my life,  
Though it may be the only good I do;  
To love him faithfully through storm and strife,  
And if he loves me not, to still be true.

To pluck a fragile flower from its stem  
And cast its petals one by one away,  
To seek the answer I may read in them,  
He loves me, or perchance he loves me nay.

And if the flow'r yields not my heart's desire,  
Then upward, as a bird, I send a sigh;  
And if it finds him not, then, soaring higher,  
'Twill find a resting place beyond the sky!”

The last sweet note diminuendoed into stillness and she sat for a space, her fingers resting on the keys. Then she turned to receive his approbation. Robert, lolling in his chair, was regarding her with half-closed eyes, through the smoke of a fresh cigar. He put down his Havana and went over and stood beside her and stroked her hair.

“*Bravo!*” he said, smiling down at her. “It is beautiful, *mi Carmona.*”

“*Gracias,*” she thanked him, “*mi hermoso gigante.*”

She liked to address him as “her handsome giant,” and these were among the few Spanish words he had come to understand.

Then a call at the telephone gave notice that her car was waiting, so she threw on her cloak, and

Robert went to the door with her and opened it, as he always did. And they stood there for a moment, and then she raised herself on her tiptoes and kissed him on the chin, and said:

*"Adios!"*

And he responded:

"Good-bye."

And she went laughing down the corridor.

Robert closed the door and stood, thinking, with his hand on the knob. Were there tears in those eyes as she looked up at him? He heard the door of the elevator open and then close with a clang; and the distant echo of her laugh floated up to him as the iron car shot down the shaft. No, he was mistaken. They were not tears.

Robert locked his trunk and summoned a porter, who took it away.

He took from his wallet a banknote of the denomination of a thousand dollars and laid it across a little silk cushion on her dressing table. Then he wrote across one of his cards simply, "I have gone away," and, placing this on the banknote, he stuck his scarfpin through them, into the cushion, and departed.

And so while La Carmona was dancing her third encore at the Follies, with Mr. Mollensteen smiling his satisfaction from the wings, Robert Mackenzie slept in his steamer berth and dreamed of the rambler rose.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### THE JUDGE IS LATE FOR DINNER

THE clock struck seven and Judge Willoughby arose from his chair, adjusted his silk hat with great precision, buttoned his frock coat tightly around him, and walked stiffly out of his office, stick in hand. Judge Willoughby's silk hat was not so glossy as it had once been, and Judge Willoughby's frock coat was glossier than it had once been—particularly about the elbows. How odd that usage makes the dull shiny and the shiny dull! Such, so to speak, is the perversity of adversity.

Any one having had Judge Willoughby under observation that afternoon might have speculated as to why his going had been deferred till now. There had been no clients seeking his counsel, nor wills to be drawn, nor depositions to take, nor allegations to draft, nor even a letter to write since early morning. The hypothetical witness, peering over the transom, for instance, would have seen the Judge reading a magazine from twelve till four, scanning the afternoon paper from four till six, and gazing abstractedly through his office window from six till seven. Had the hypothetical witness known—and, being hypothetical, we have a right to presume that he would have known—that the dinner-time of the Willoughbys was six o'clock, the final hour of the

Judge's detention would have been quite inexplicable.

The truth is that Judge Willoughby, never having any business to detain him, occasionally made it his business to detain himself. Except for a brief term of magistracy in the City Court, in a far-gone day, the Judge had never had any business to speak of; and the more certain it became that he never would have any business, the more determined he was to make it appear that he *did* have business—particularly to the members of his household.

To any one only casually familiar with Judge Willoughby's character, the apathy of his professional life might have been enigmatical. To his friends, his acquaintances, and his fellow-townsmen, however, it was not mysterious. "The trouble with the Judge," they would say, by way of explanation, "is that he's too much of a gentleman."

Of course, this could not be true literally, but in a general way it expressed the only tangible reason for the discrepancy between the supply and demand, of and for Judge Willoughby's professional services.

As far back as history went in a massive volume entitled "The Willoughbys of Wellington" that reposed on the dragon-legged table in the Judge's library—which is to say, many generations—there was no account of any Willoughby having pursued a commercially fruitful career. There were no particularly bad Willoughbys or particularly good Willoughbys or remarkably stupid Willoughbys or conspicuously bright Willoughbys, but all—each and every one of them—were leisurely Willoughbys.

In defiance of the axiom that every other generation goes in its shirt-sleeves, the Willoughbys, from the long-nosed piratical-looking gentleman in a velvet surtout on page 1 of the history, to the Judge's late father in a close-fitting Prince Albert on page 300 of the history, had lived and died, allegorically speaking, with their coats on. There were a few wood-cutted Willoughbys adorning the early pages of the history who had lived and died with their boots on, also; but as the line descended even the gentlemanly and fashionable occupation of being beheaded or shot at seems to have been regarded as bordering too closely on the plebeian. True, it is somewhat paradoxical that any one having followed a career which ended on the point of a sabre could be regarded as having worked for a living; but the records in "The Willoughbys of Wellington" seemed to predicate this conclusion.

And even Judge Willoughby, of the present-day generation, caused it to be understood, when he took up the practice of law, that he was only compromising with twentieth-century conditions—not yielding to them. He never admitted, even to himself, that a remunerative vocation was necessitated by the shrinkage of the family competence. He was a gentleman of leisure first and a lawyer incidentally; he was an attorney, but he was not a toiler, nor did he wish to be regarded as such.

Ordinarily, perhaps, any one corresponding with this description of Judge Willoughby would be acclaimed a snob. Not so, the Judge. His air was



as much an institution in Wellington as the old Courthouse, and as much respected. As long as there had been a Wellington, N. Y., there had been Willoughbys. Without a Willoughby, it almost seemed as though there could be no Wellington.

And the Judge was a real Willoughby. He was no imitation aristocrat. He was not flaunting his gentility with one hand and grabbing plebeian dollars with the other. He was the true patrician; a gentleman by birth, breeding, and bearing, not from his shirt out, but from his skin in. And as such he held the respect, the sympathy, and, indeed, the affection of his fellow-towmen.

Thus the people of Wellington esteemed Judge Willoughby, although they did not patronise him. They sought his society, but they did not seek his counsel. They cultivated him personally, but professionally they passed him by.

So far as he and they were directly concerned, this relationship was quite agreeable, and, so far as popular opinion went, the Judge had not the slightest ambition to be accounted a busy man. But there were conditions arising within the circle of his home that had begun to cause him some uneasiness and which had spurred him to the only hypocrisy of which he had ever been capable.

For the competence that had borne two centuries of idle Willoughbys was now bending under the strain; and family economics were beginning to give the ladies of his household some concern.

The spirit of Commercialism, like a grim spectre,

had begun to hover over his ancestral home, and Judge Willoughby, doggedly opposing it, had resorted to subterfuge—the pretension to an earning capacity that he did not possess. The exact purpose of this artifice will soon transpire.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### PRIDE AGAINST PRIDE

MEANWHILE the Judge, erect of figure, with white moustaches, immaculate linen, and polished boots, walked through the Public Square. Whomsoever he met accosted him with a pleasant good-evening, which he returned, not with condescension, but with a gentle courtliness that became him well.

Turning into the maple arches of Willoughby Street, he soon arrived at the old stone mansion.

In the hall he was met by a maid, who relieved him of his hat and cane. He heard the voices of his wife and daughter in the morning room, but when he entered it a hush fell upon them. It was only for a moment and then Helen ran into his arms and kissed him. Mrs. Willoughby did likewise, admonishing him, however, that good dinners were never made better by waiting.

"Business is a hard task-master, my dears," the Judge protested; "I am so sorry. I feel very guilty." He really did, and his face showed it. Deception did not sit well upon him.

"I promise to do better," vowed the Judge, as he led them to the table.

The evening meal was served and partaken of, the three chatting pleasantly, as was their custom.

If the Judge had been suspicious, he was now disarmed; for Mrs. Willoughby, unlike some housewives I have met, was not the one to prepare a good dinner and then impair the enjoyment of it.

So it was not until the Judge had finished his second cup of coffee and the news of the day had been discussed that Mrs. Willoughby said:

"Oh, by the way, Charles, Helen has something to consult you about."

"Not professionally, father," laughed Helen, a bit nervously.

"Sociologically, rather," said Mrs. Willoughby, smiling to hide her constraint.

A look of suspicion crept into the Judge's eyes and he glanced sharply from one to the other.

"My dear Helen," he said, "no one knows better than you and your dear mother that my counsel is yours for the asking."

"And your consent, also?" Helen leaned across the corner of the table and put her hand on his arm.

"Ah! now I must qualify," replied the Judge. "But you also know, my dear Helen, that anything making for your welfare and your happiness I would gladly grant you, with no other limitation but that which Providence has placed upon my capacity to give."

"I am not asking much, father," said Helen.

"Name it, my dear," urged the Judge, looking at her kindly but steadily.

"It is just that I may take up a branch of study that appeals to me."

“My child, I grant it, without further question——”

“For the purpose of acquiring——” Helen hesitated. It was a crucial moment, and she knew it.

“Acquiring what, my dear?” prompted Judge Willoughby.

“A profession.”

The expected happened. She had fastened her imploring gaze upon him and was clutching his arm appealingly. But instantly she knew it was in vain. The warm blue in his eyes turned to the colour of cold steel. The finely chiselled but resolute chin was lifted proudly, and the arm that she held was withdrawn and folded across his chest.

“That is impossible.” There was a cold finality in his tone that ordinarily would have closed the discussion.

But Helen, recalling her ebbing courage, prepared to fight it out to the end.

“Oh, father,” she pleaded, “don’t answer yet! I haven’t even told you what vocation it is that I wish to follow.”

“That is not necessary, Helen,” said the Judge, less coldly. “There can be none—for you.”

“But why, father?”

The Judge arose and stood stiffly behind his chair.

“The Willoughbys do not allow their women to work for a living!” he said.

Helen also arose.

“Times have changed, father,” she persisted, “and there is no longer room nor reason for idlers. What have the Willoughbys of yesterday to do with

the Willoughbys of to-day? Why should family traditions stand in the way of family progress? The luxurious ego of my grandfather's generation has no place in my own. It is past and dead and gone for ever, and in its stead there is a splendid altruism, a great and growing activity in which all may share, regardless of the mere accidents of sex or family. Is it not my right, my duty to join in this?"

The Judge stood facing her through this outburst, unmoved.

"It is neither," he replied.

"Then it is sheer necessity!" There was no appeal now, either in her tone or her attitude, and the words flew from her lips like a challenge. She was strikingly like her father as the two stood face to face, each firm, proud, and defiant. "Sheer necessity!" she repeated. "For the dwindling heritage that held your proud ancestors so high above the common horde will never see this generation through! Am I to sit here all my life, with folded hands, subsisting on the dead glory of a family name and the fag end of an unearned pittance? You have given me health and education and a father's love and counsel. I have neither right nor need to ask for more, save the privilege to act, and that should be mine without a question. I have two willing hands, and a heart—Heaven knows, a heart for better things than this. Come! What would you have me do?"

"What our family has always done," he answered.

"Nothing?"

There was a curl in her lip as she said it and she saw a look of pain cross her father's face. Suddenly, realising how she had hurt him, remorse swept over her. Tears filled her eyes. But her father went on, calmly:

"There were but two vocations, if you chose to call them such, followed by the members of our family. That of the men was—patrimony." He hesitated.

"And that of the women, Charles?" asked Mrs. Willoughby, anxiously curious.

"Matrimony," he said, quietly. "It would please me greatly, Helen, to see you happily married."

There was a moment of silence. Then Delia, the maid, appeared in the doorway and announced:

"Mr. Powell to see Miss Willoughby."

Helen's brows contracted.

"Ah!" said the Judge, his affability now restored. "A promising young fellow, that Powell. And of excellent family."

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### IN THE STEAMER'S WAKE

IN the long days and nights, following the departure of Robert Mackenzie from his native land, while the ship was ploughing her way across the broad Atlantic, he had ample time for introspection. Again and again he searched himself to the innermost depth for some logical reason for the com-miserable situation into which he had fallen; some reason that would square with the moral laws of play and pay. But in vain. Here, it seemed, was an effect without a cause. Up to now his confidence in the perfect order of things had been implicit. He had always believed that, while error was oftentimes excusable, atonement was inevitable; that every sin entailed its sorrow. And by the same token he had believed that, barring accidents of the material kind, such as death and illness and physical injury, errorless conduct earned immunity to suffering. This law of penalty and recompense he had ever applied to the spiritual side of life and he had believed it to be invariable and immutable. He had regarded the "sins of the father" axiom as purely pathological and had accepted it to that extent only. He disposed of the responsibility of environment by recognising in Conscience the voice of God attuned to the comprehension of each individual. To this



voice, speaking from within, he had always turned an attentive ear, and it was to this unswerving adherence to the commands of his own conscience that he had ascribed the hitherto cloudless sky of his youth and early manhood.

And now suddenly the sun had dimmed, and a shadow had fallen upon him; deep, heavy, depressing, and perpetual; he was summoned to judgment for an unknown offence.

There were times when he was not quite sure that the week at the Windsor Arms had been justifiable. To be sure, never having accepted the Scriptures literally, he had never taken the Ten Commandments as a text-book of morality; and in the matter of Rosa Carmona he had, at the time, to the best of his belief, acted in harmony with his creed of the Conscience dominating the man. The fact that his decision had been arrived at under a strain, he did not regard as considerable, for, if conscience were spiritual, material excitement could not still its voice or becloud its meaning.

Nevertheless, as he lounged in his steamer chair, with only the great dome of the night sky above and the unbroken arc of the trackless sea around him, there were moments when he felt that those days ought not to have been.

However, regardless of the right or wrong of it, the week at the Windsor Arms could not be reckoned in the accounting, for it was the consequence of his trouble, not the cause of it.

The real cause was the glass of Manzanilla, utterly ridiculous as it might appear. In taking it

he had erred, knowing, as he did know by a former experience, that wine acted upon him like a subtle opiate and robbed him of conscious self-direction. It was his true conviction that further than this his culpability did not extend. How absurdly disproportionate, then, was the error to the penalty! What a price to pay for such a paltry sin—if sin it could be called! It baffled his simple philosophy.

The picture of Helen Willoughby was not constantly before him because he willed that it would not be. But the love for her was in his heart and he knew it would be always. It was no sudden passion, but a love that had started from a small thing, a childhood fancy, and had grown slowly, year after year, until its tendrils completely entwined him, and became a part of himself. Between his love of life and his love of her there was no line of demarcation; they were intertwined and inseparable.

It was no easy thing for him to put even the image of her face from his mind's eye; but he did this with tolerable success, recalling it at intervals to indulge in the luxury of self-commiseration.

Once, as he sat on deck and watched the foam-flecked wake of the ship unreeling like a great tape-line astern, measuring endless miles as the steamer forged ahead, Mackenzie uttered an ejaculation and sprang from his chair.

The thought had come to him that every knot the steamer made put hope further behind; and with this the question, *Was* there no hope? Could

there have been no way to change it if he had stayed? Ought not he have made a better fight for vindication—and reclamation?

He, Mackenzie, strong, resolute, unfearing, inflexible, and indiscourageable as he thought himself to be, was running away!

Rarely had there been obstacles in his path that he had not overcome, never one that he had not battled against with all the determination that was in him. His memory ran back to a day when Yale came up with eleven giants, a peerless team; how, finding there was absolutely no chance around the ends, the order came to wear them down by sheer force, and how he had bucked the invincible line only to find it as solid and unshakable as a stone rampart; and how, even after hope was dead, he had hurled himself against that immovable wall of brawn and bone again and again until he was carried, broken, bleeding, and unconscious, from the field. And there had been other battles, tasks of the classroom, problems of youth; temptations of the spirit and of the flesh; a violent temper to overcome; tests of moral courage and endurance. And he had fought every fight the same way, brooking no rebuff, but coming back with more courage, albeit, perhaps with waning power.

And of these issues the very greatest was as a firefly to the sun, compared with his love for Helen Willoughby; yet at the first repulse, at the first reverse in his pursuit of her, he had run away. Why?

For another moment he stood there, staring at the stars. Then he dropped into his chair, crammed

another charge of tobacco into his pipe, and smoked on dreamily.

The answer had come to him over the restless sea:

“Because she is Helen Willoughby.”

That was enough. Had she been any other woman, it seemed there would have been a chance, if ever so slight, of beating the opposition down. But the decisiveness of Helen Willoughby was as adamant, as immovable as the solid rock upon which the foundation of the Willoughby mansion stood. She had announced her ideals and she had lived up to them. She had proved the single standard to be not a mere theory, but a rule. As she had applied it to Nan Wallabout and to Sidney Powell, so had she applied it to him. He recalled her words, “I try to live and act the life that I believe in,” and he thought how little she had dreamed of the test that lay just ahead. But when the crisis had come she had stood firm.

That night, when she had stood on the stairs and heard him say that it was true, her judgment had been passed upon him, and hope had died. He knew it then; and he knew it now. Not in anger, not in pride, not in humiliation, but calmly, in the full understanding of their love, she had put him out of her life. It was the end.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### A CHANCE ACQUAINTANCE

MACKENZIE was not temperamental. He had a fine appreciation of art, of music, of poetry, and of the beautiful, but dominant over the æsthetic was the solid flesh and blood man. He was too ruggedly healthy to be mercurial.

He took his morning shower, his air on deck, and his exercise in the ship's gymnasium with the regularity of a man having a fixed desire to keep his body clean and sound and live as long and happily as the good God would let him.

He made few acquaintances, because this was his first voyage, and, not being familiar with the etiquette of ocean travel, he chose to err on the side of diffidence. But he chatted pleasantly with those fellow-passengers who addressed him. He played an occasional game of cards in the smoking-room, ate his meals with a good relish, took a chance on the pool, attended the concerts, and found interest in the usual diversions of a trip across the sea.

He thought deeply on his life's calamity, but not continually. He was remorseful, but he was also resigned. He mourned as a strong man mourns—but he did not mope.

One day, while inspecting the ship's engines, he was accosted in a gruff but kindly voice, and turned

to find a heavy-set man, a little past middle age, with a sandy moustache and red hair, both sprinkled with grey, at his elbow.

"You like mechanics, I reckon," said the stranger, smiling; "I've seen you here before!"

Robert returned the smile.

"Yes," he said. "But I guess most any one would admire a thing like this. What a triumph of power!"

"Nevertheless," persisted the gentleman with the moustache, "I venture the assertion that your interest is more than idle curiosity. I'll go further. I'll say that mechanics are—well, something in the nature of your business."

Robert laughed.

"A good guess," he answered; "I am an engineer. But how did you know it?"

"You said it was a guess," said the stranger.

"Which is American for 'think,'" said Robert, tactfully.

"Well," said the stranger, "I don't know that I can explain it exactly, but I can tell a trained man every time, by the way he looks at a machine. What branch are you in?"

"Constructional," answered Robert; "or, rather, I hope to be. Are you in the same line?"

"I'm a contractor," answered the stranger. After a pause he added, "I'm helping to dig the Panama Canal."

They went up to the deck together, exchanging cards on the way, and became quite good friends. They talked of railroads and canals and tunnels and

bridges; and the contractor, whose fame was nation-wide, showed considerable interest in Robert's plans.

"Look me up when you get back," he said, on the last day of the voyage; "I may need you."

"Thank you, I shall," replied Mackenzie, cordially; but with the mental reservation, "If I ever return."

## CHAPTER XXX

### TOM PIERCE HAS A NEW INCENTIVE

THE clock in the belfry of old Trinity Church struck five and Mr. Thomas Penniman Pierce drew a fine gold watch from his pocket and, glancing at its face, assured himself that he had counted the strokes correctly. Then, rolling down the top of his mahogany desk, he arose from his comfortable arm-chair, put on his hat and top-coat, and walked out of his private office and through the counting-room to the door. His cheery "Good-night, all!" was acknowledged by a chorus consisting of several clerks, an office boy, and two slender-waisted and high-coiffured young ladies, all genuinely busy, assisting Mr. Pierce in the conduct of his growing law practice and his management of the business affairs of one particular client with whom this narrative has much to do.

The rosy face of Mr. Pierce radiated good nature, good fortune, and good feeling as he rode down the elevator and stepped into Broadway, humming an old-fashioned tune.

Obviously, Mr. Pierce was prosperous. But was Mr. Pierce also proud? Surely Tom Pierce, the blond, buoyant, whole-souled, whole-hearted Tom Pierce, was hardly the man whose head would be turned by an upward tilt of Fortune's toboggan!



Yet as he swaggered up Broadway, and boarded an uptown train, there was an upward lift of the chin and a sideward cock of the head and a backward bend of the shoulders that gave Tom Pierce an outward appearance usually regarded as indicating an abnormal development of self-satisfaction within. Had Mr. Pierce recently come off the victor in a legal battle of vast import? Had he been awarded a Carnegie medal for saving a score of lives at the risk of his own? Had he been elected to some high office of great honour and responsibility? Had he performed some act of valour in his country's name and been acclaimed a hero? Had his picture been printed in the morning papers with an allegorical lady, sketched in the border, placing a wreath of laurel upon his brow? Had he achieved something or performed something or invented something or acquired something that had made his name a household word and his features familiar to every eye?

Nothing short of this, 'twould seem, could account for the mien and manner of Tom Pierce as he left the train at Seventy-second Street, walked up Columbus Avenue a few blocks, and then west to an apartment house a few doors from the Park. It was a brownstone structure, eminently respectable in appearance, with a spacious entrance and a wide hall with a white-tiled floor. In the rear of the hall was an elevator with an iron staircase winding around it. Tom walked briskly to the door of the elevator and pushed the bell, but discovering, as he did so, that the carriage was far up the shaft, he

turned away and ran up the stairs, two at a time, to the second floor.

The most loyal little woman had been sitting by a window in the cosiest of little parlours when she saw the chubby figure and proud face of Tom Pierce breasting the March wind that met him as he turned the corner. And, seeing these, she had blown him an unseen kiss and had hurried to the door, where she waited silently, her dimples playing and her eyes sparkling. And no sooner had Tom Pierce eased himself through the half-open doorway than he felt a soft hand fitted snugly over his mouth, as though to render any outcry impossible; and the mate to this soft hand was held before his eyes, with one finger extended warningly; and a soft voice whispered in his ear:

“Sh!”

Tom acknowledged this mysterious signal by nodding his head vigorously, conveying that he understood and would deport himself accordingly. After which the soft hand was removed—with a kiss clinging to it—and sought his own; and he was then conducted through a narrow passage to the cosy parlour aforementioned, his conductor preceding on her tiptoes, and Tom following on *his* tiptoes.

In the centre of the parlour, on a round table, burned a lamp, with a dark-green shade, and on one side of the shade was pinned a darker green paper butterfly; against the wall, in the shadow of the butterfly, stood a screen with silk panels.

Toward this screen the curious procession of two moved. Arriving there, a halt was made. Again the

warning finger was raised; again the mystic watchword was whispered:

“Sh!”

Again Tom's head bobbed his acknowledgment; and hand in hand they stepped silently into the sacred niche.

Two baby eyes were staring up at them from a tiny pillow; and from a little mouth that looked like the cleft petal of a rose came the one word:

“Og.”

Which, literally translated from the language of the Just-got-heres, means: “Why in the name of common sense are these full-grown and presumably intelligent human beings conducting themselves in this eccentric manner?”

The most loyal little woman thereupon emitted a little scream of joy, and laughed, and pulled her husband's ear:

“I thought he was asleep, the little angel, and here he is as wide-awake as a hawk in a hen house; the precious dear!”

“Why, sure he is,” said Tom, as though he had known it all the time; “he was watching for his daddy to come home, of course. And I'm going to take him out of this dreary old corner this very minute!” And so he did, taking the angel in his arms as easily and gracefully as he could have threaded a needle or made a pie—but with infinitely more tenderness, you may be sure.

So, Mr. Tom Pierce! This is why your chest was so extended and your head so high? This is why dull business ended so abruptly when the clock

struck five? This is why you breasted the cold March wind unconscious of its chill, and this is why you cut every corner on your way, and this is why you found the elevator too slow, and this is why—you are so proud! All for this ten pounds of helpless, hairless, rosy, roly-poly, dimple-dotted humanity!

So be it, Tom Pierce, and rest assured that no one will challenge your right to the pride which swells within you. But if by any chance some crusty old misanthrope dares to question that your attitude is justifiable, or to insinuate that parent-hood is not a thing to glory in and boast upon, answer him not. Don't argue. Waste no words upon him. Transfix him with one withering glance and go upon your way.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### A SURPRISE FOR THE PIERCES

THE most loyal little woman was loath to leave such a precious burden in the charge of so incompetent a person as its own father, but under the pressure of persuasion and pleading she agreed to it, and retired to superintend the final preparations for dinner. And while she was doing this Thomas Peniman Pierce, Counsellor at Law, sought to amuse and entertain his offspring by screwing his face into the most astounding contortions and by uttering strange sounds something after this fashion:

“Off, iggly, oo, oo, gug—gurgle-gurgle! Weggly, wig, gig, ag, owee, ack, cluck-cluck, kee-mousie, goo-goo!”

All of which the infant Pierce endured with rare fortitude for the space of fifteen or twenty minutes; at the expiration of which, however, patience having ceased to be a virtue, he set up a lusty howl of protest. His call for relief came simultaneously with the tinkle of the dinner bell and he was surrendered into the arms of his mother, with the frantic admonition from Tom that there was certainly a naughty pin sticking into the little dear somewhere.

Which drew a smiling reproof from Mrs. Tom,

who resented this reflection upon her proficiency in pin-ology.

Of course, Tom's suspicion was utterly groundless, and when, upon being returned to its little nest in the corner, the child's lamentations ceased instantly, Tom Pierce was filled with astonishment, likewise contrition.

Then Tom and Molly passed into an adjoining room and sat at the table which was attended by a white-aproned Swedish girl answering to the name of Nanna. The dinner which Nanna served, however, was not of Scandinavian cuisine, but strictly a home American dinner, with thick vegetable soup, and pork sausage from up the state and apple dumplings made by Molly herself, and green tea.

And, while they partook of this fare, Tom Pierce kept up a running fire of interrogations. Had Molly weighed the baby to-day? How much had he gained since yesterday? How often had he been fed and how long had he slept and how many times had he cried? Would it not be well to have him vaccinated, as there was a case of smallpox reported at Ellis Island? Did it ever strike her that his legs seemed to be a trifle too short for his body, and had she ever thought there was a slight cast in his eye and wasn't a six-weeks-old baby big enough to sit at table in a high-chair?

To all of which Molly replied seriously, facetiously, indulgently, briefly, elaborately, or indignantly, according to the character of the question asked.

Dinner was scarcely over when a call from the

sacred area behind the screen announced that there was another mouth to feed. So they repaired to the little parlour and the younger Pierce was duly nourished. After which he was transferred to a pink-and-white cradle in another room, whereupon he fell into that sweet and profound slumber which seems to constitute the chief occupation and particular purpose of every healthy baby anybody ever saw.

Tom and Molly returned to the little parlour and seated themselves cosily by the table and the light fell from under the green shade upon something lacey and dainty that was taking the form of a tiny garment under the deft fingers of the most loyal little woman. And while she sewed Tom sat with hands folded over one knee, watching the needle with keen interest. And they talked of the new joy that had come into their lives.

"God has been good to us, Tom," said Molly, smiling at him across the corner of the table.

"Yes, indeed," answered Tom; "God and Bob Mackenzie."

"It was the providence of God that gave us the dear little baby, Tom, and it was the providence of God that sent Robert Mackenzie to our door. Of course, Tom, it was only a question of time when you would have won, anyway. A man who is honest and ambitious and capable, as you are, Tom, must surely win, some time. If it were not Mr. Mackenzie to find you out, it would be some one else, eventually."

Tom gave Molly a kiss in appreciation of the compliment.

"But Bob came just in the nick of time," he went on.

"That he did," assented Molly, gratefully, with a loving look toward the room where the little one lay. "When there were only you and I, adversity had no sting. We could have gone on indefinitely, just as we were, I think—and happily, too. But how our view of life has changed since Baby came! Hardships that we would have laughed at before, would be almost unbearable now. Discomforts that we regard as trivial when they affect ourselves alone, become the severest trials when we have little children who must share them. Since we have had Baby, I can understand that the most exquisite torture is to see our little ones suffer. I am sure no other pain could approach it."

"And, inversely, no happiness is so complete as that we feel through the happiness of our children," added Tom.

"I have learned that, also," agreed Molly. "And I am truly grateful that the turn of our fortune came just when it did. Robert Mackenzie must be a splendid fellow. So many men, of his station and means, would have preferred to entrust their affairs to some one of wider note and longer experience; although I am sure he could not have done better."

"Robert Mackenzie is a splendid fellow," said Tom, emphatically.

"And so unassuming," added Molly. "I never suspected, when he ran in upon us that eventful morning, that he was the mythical wealthy client



upon whose coming we had builded our hopes and dreams."

"Nor I," said Tom; "for in college he was always as you saw him then; plain, practical, and unpretentious, with nothing to mark him as the rich man's son. Of course, Bob and I were never exactly intimate. He went in for athletics and that threw him in with another set. His particular chum was Powell, of the 'Varsity crew, a fellow from his own town. And to think," added Tom, more to himself than to Molly, "that Powell tricked him in the end."

"A false friend?" asked Molly, scenting a story. "You have never told me why Mr. Mackenzie went away so strangely, leaving every one, even yourself, without a word as to where he could be found or when he would return. Is there a mystery in his life, Tom? I love mysteries. Do tell me about it!"

Tom rested his elbows on the arms of his chair and placed the tips of his fingers together with studied precision.

"Molly, dearest," he said, finally, "I haven't been admitted to the bar and to matrimony long enough to be just clear as to how much of his client's affairs a lawyer may reveal to his wife. What do you think about it?" He asked this very seriously.

Molly rested her needle.

"My dear boy," she said, "I think that your client's confidence is vastly more to be considered than your wife's curiosity."

"Words of wisdom," laughed Tom, "and just

the answer one might expect from a rare little woman. As to Bob Mackenzie's story, he told it to me and it is a curious one. I'm sure Bob would not object to having you hear it; but I would rather be too zealous than too lax in my guardianship of his confidence. Suffice it to say, then, that Robert's trouble was an affair of the heart, a tragedy of errors of which, in my opinion, he is the innocent victim. I might say his chief aim in going away was to forget."

"Poor fellow!" said Molly, resting her sewing again. "And to think, Tom, that it was to his sorrow, perhaps, that we owe much of our present comfort. I'm glad you told me this much, my husband, because I feel that we are prone to be a bit selfish in our happiness. I think the lack of sorrow of our own often dulls our sympathy for others. God forbid that you and I must suffer before we may condole."

"Amen!" said Tom. And there was a silence, during which two appeals went Heavenward—two earnest prayers for the safeguarding of the little innocent in whom their hopes were centred.

There was a ring at the outer door of the apartment and they heard Nanna answering the bell.

A moment later Robert Mackenzie stood before them, smiling, hat in hand and a light overcoat swinging from his arm.

## CHAPTER XXXII

### A SURPRISE FOR ROBERT

TOM sprang to his feet.

"It's Bob!" he almost shouted, as he wrung Mackenzie's hand.

"And we were just this minute speaking of you!" added Mrs. Pierce, arising to greet him.

"A case of 'Talk of the devil,'" laughed Mackenzie.

"'Of the angels, and you hear the rustle of their wings,'" corrected Mrs. Pierce.

"Well, you certainly look a long way from an angel," declared Tom, drawing a chair within the radius of the lamplight. "Sit down, so we can see you better. By Jove! You're as brown as a hickory nut and as fit as a fiddle. Bob, old man, honest, I'm not a bit surprised to see you. I've had a kind of a hunch for the past week or two that you'd be back soon. Somehow, I felt it in my bones. And here you are as big as life; you've returned!"

"But have I returned?" smiled Robert. "I'm not so sure about that."

"You see, Tom," said Mrs. Pierce, "I may not have been so far wrong, after all. I said 'angel,' which is a spirit, and a spirit is a ghost——"

"Oh, I'm not that!" Robert protested. "It's me, all right; in the flesh, too, and hard as nails."

But so long as a man keeps going ahead he doesn't return, does he? And I've just kept on going ever since I lost sight of Sandy Hook. I started toward the East and I've just kept travelling on. I never once turned back. I concede that I was here, that I departed from here, and I am again here; but I deny that I have returned."

"A paradox made possible by the famous achievement of one Magellan, now deceased," added Tom. "So you've circumnavigated, have you?"

"Circumambulated, rather. I'm sure I've walked a deal more than I've sailed. I've been a tramp and I liked it. Guess that's why it took me so long to get around. They make it now in something like forty or fifty days, you know; and it took me as many weeks, almost."

"Ought to have had your car with you, Bob," said Tom.

"Yes, you would have seen more," added Mrs. Pierce.

"And I would have weighed more," said Mackenzie, ruefully. "No, I'm too big to ride. I simply must have exercise, Mrs. Pierce, and tramping keeps one in fine trim. I walked down to your office, this afternoon, Tom; from Twenty-third Street."

"Oh, you've been there?"

"Yes, and you had just gone. So they told me where you lived."

"You were anxious to hear how I had got on with the business——"

"Don't speak of it, Tom!" Robert lifted a

deprecating hand. "I haven't thought of it once—and don't want to think of it. To tell you the truth"—he turned to Molly, smiling—"I was lonesome, Mrs. Pierce. Do you know that New York is the lonesomest spot on earth if you have no friends in it? Why, I've been a month at a stretch up in the North woods without seeing a human face—and enjoyed every day of it. But to stand on Broadway for an hour, while thousands of people pass you without a look of recognition and to know that, although you are in the midst of a perfect maelstrom of humanity, you are utterly alone—well, it gives me the willies, that's all!"

"As a recluse you are a failure," said Pierce.

"As an idler in a great city I am a failure, certainly," Robert answered. "I must have either work or nature or——"

"Or friends," smiled Molly.

"And just now," assented Mackenzie, looking from one to the other with genuine appreciation, "it seems that friends are by far the most satisfying of the three essentials. And now let's talk more about them and less about the aimless fellow who has broken in upon the peace and tranquillity of their home. What a cosy place you have here," he went on, more seriously. "But you two would be cosy anywhere, I guess; and happy, also," he added, a little wistfully. "I remember that day when I first ran in on you down there in the little office around the corner. You were like two youngsters on a picnic."

"Yes," said Molly, with a fond glance toward

her fair-haired husband, "we were happy, even then. But," and she looked gratefully into Mackenzie's face, "the real joy of living was yet in store. Two immeasurable blessings followed that memorable tea party, Mr. Mackenzie; the one paving the way for the other. The one was your splendid and generous confidence in Tom, which made this possible;" she described the comfortable quarters with a wave of her hand. "And the other was——"

She stopped and raised her hand, listening, and an inarticulate sound fell upon their ears.

"The Baby!" cried Molly and Tom, in unison.

"A baby?" echoed Robert, gaping his astonishment.

"*The* Baby," repeated Molly, emphasising the article.

"*Our* Baby," said Tom, emphasising the pronoun.

Robert looked at them, and they looked at Robert, their faces beaming in keen relish of his amazement.

"*Your* baby," he said, when he had partially recovered. "Well, well! I do most heartily congratulate you! Why didn't you tell me before?"

"A kid trick," explained Tom; "we were saving the best till the last. And what will you give for a look?"

"A silver spoon," Robert replied, promptly.

"A million spoons all studded with diamonds couldn't buy a single peep," said Molly, "but you,

Mr. Mackenzie, may even hold our precious darling in your arms. Come!"

And she led him to the enchanted chamber. She turned on the light of a shaded incandescent, and the Prince of the Pierces blinked wonderingly as big Robert Mackenzie leaned over him.

"Behold!" said Molly.

Now, to tell the truth, as Robert gazed on the tiny face peeping above the pink coverlet, he was a little disappointed. He knew, of course, as all bachelors know, that every baby looks like every other baby, the world over. But somehow, Tom Pierce being a good-looking chap and an exceptionally fine fellow, and Mrs. Pierce being a remarkably comely and attractive young woman, he had expected to see something a little above the ordinary run of babies.

Alas! this baby was not different. It was quite as hairless, quite as toothless, quite as absurdly fat and quite as ridiculously red as countless other newly-borns he had observed in passing perambulators.

A sorry spectacle he thought himself as he stood there under the expectant eyes of the fond father and mother, racking his brain for something original to say.

Luckily Tom and Molly mistook his perplexity for speechless admiration.

"Well," beamed Tom, finally, "what do you think of that?"

Robert inclined his head to one side and then to the other, as one admiring a picture, and tried to look the part.

"Tom," he began, "she is—he is—it is——"

"A boy," prompted Tom, seeing his discomfiture and beginning to enjoy it.

"It is a boy," went on Mackenzie, feigning not to have heard the interruption, "and a beautiful, beautiful boy, too. And so plump and healthy and—and——"

"And so good," put in Molly, coming to his rescue.

"Why, he *never* cries," declared Tom.

Whereupon the little cherub wrinkled his forehead, closed his eyes, opened his mouth, and emitted a sound that by no stretch of the imagination could have been interpreted as a glad acclaim.

"As I was about to say," went on Pierce, blandly, "he has an insatiable thirst for milk, of course, like all babies; and he never cries unless he is very dry, or *per contra*,——"

"Tom Pierce!" interrupted Molly, alarmed.

"Yes, that's what he was christened, Bob," Tom went on, unperturbed. "Thomas Penniman Pierce, Jr.; and it sounds better to me since he bore it than it ever did before. And how well it looks in print with the 'Jr.' on! Come to my den and we'll have a smoke and I'll show it to you in the *Herald*."

As the thirst signal was still sounding, this suggestion was eminently appropriate and the two men went out and walked down the long hallway to a snuggerly which Tom reserved for his books, his tobacco, and his college flags.



## CHAPTER XXXIII

### IN THE WRONG COLUMN

No sooner were they inside with the door closed than Pierce faced Mackenzie and took firm hold of his friend's arms, above the elbows.

"Mackenzie," he said, seriously, "I wouldn't say it before Molly, because I didn't want to embarrass you, but I want to tell you that the day you gave me your affairs to manage marked the turning point of my career. It was a big thing, in itself, but it has done more for me than what shows on the books. Let me tell you something: New York is a city of bluff. Not that human nature here differs from human nature elsewhere, perhaps, but because in this town they can get away with it. If you beat your groceryman up there in Wellington, everybody knows it and you can't get trusted anywhere else. If you beat your groceryman here, you can move a few blocks further along and beat another one. If you are a bookkeeper in a coal office up in Wellington, every man, woman, and child knows that your wages are eighteen dollars a week, for that's exactly what the coal man has always paid and always will pay. If you're a bookkeeper in a coal office here, you can pass for a banker as soon as you turn the corner—and even before. There is less bluffing in a small town, not necessarily be-

cause they don't want to do it, but because they can't make it stick. Here, nobody knows his neighbour's business and people are measured by how they dress and how they live. Hence, the everlasting temptation to look prosperous and make a front.

"People live in apartment houses with entrances like a palace, and with interiors like a prison. They wear clothes cut in the extreme of fashion and made of shoddy material. They feast in grand style at a swell Broadway restaurant once a week, and dine off delicatessen-store ham and potato salad the other six. They buy furniture, phonographs, diamonds, and player-pianos on the installment plan. They buy wood by the bundle, coal by the pail, potatoes by the basket, apples by the quart, and dill pickles one at a time. They talk big, pay little, and dress much.

"Here, even people of means are under the sway of the magical wash-gold wand. Intrinsic worth counts for nothing without a tinsel setting. They choose their minister by the degrees after his name, their doctor by the price of his automobile, their friend by the size of his splash.

"This is what I was up against when you found me in my little place around the corner. It was your commission that put me on Broadway, that enabled me to get into good quarters; in short, that gave me a chance to make a front. My signature on checks as attorney for a big estate, my name on legal papers as counsellor in the proceedings you left in my charge, my well-furnished office,—these were enough to stamp me as a winner, and instantly my future was made. Clients began to come in; and now, less

than a year after, I have a practice that pays me well."

"I'm mighty glad to hear that, Tom," said Robert, "and you deserve every bit of it—and more."

"I hope so," returned Pierce, "but I certainly would not deserve it if I failed to tell you in plain English here and now that I appreciate what you have done for me and I thank you from the bottom of my——"

"Cut that out, Tom," interrupted Mackenzie. "I didn't give you something to do because I thought you needed me, but because I needed you. If there is a debt of gratitude I'm the debtor; but I'll call the account balanced if you will."

"Shake," agreed Tom, adding as their hands met, "I've said my say and I'm satisfied."

So they lit cigars and seated themselves in two Turkish rockers which looked to be and were comfortable—a combination rarely found in chairs.

"And now for the *Herald*," he said, and he took a newspaper from a rack beside him and gave it to Mackenzie. "You'll find the name there among the births on the first page."

Mackenzie ran his eyes up and down the sheet, and Tom waited.

"Why, Bob," he exclaimed, presently, "you're looking in the 'Personal' column!"

Mackenzie made no response. After a few moments he extended the paper to Pierce with his finger marking a paragraph.

"Read that," he said, wearily.

Pierce took the paper and read:

"Robert Mackenzie—If you see this, come to me at once. The need is urgent. The Renaissance, 626 Fifth Avenue. Rosa."

For a moment Tom was puzzled; but the light of recollection soon dawned upon his face.

"The woman?" he asked.

"Yes; Rosa Carmona. You recall the story?"

"Clearly. You told me the circumstances before you sailed. What does she want, I wonder?"

"I can't imagine," said Robert, soberly.

"A brace, probably," suggested Pierce. "Women of her class regard all men of means as their legitimate prey. What do you intend doing about it?"

"What would you advise?"

"Professionally, I would say pay no attention to it. As a friend, I would leave it to your own discretion. La Carmona is known as a music-hall singer and an adventuress. Of course, if she attracts you——"

"She never more than interested me; nor was it more than casual interest on her part, for that matter. Remember, our acquaintanceship was of only a week's duration. I think of her merely as a single link in the chain of circumstances that chance swung across my path, as a barrier between me and my heart's ideals. I wish to put the entire incident and every one connected with it, behind me."

"That ends it," said Pierce. He made as if to drop the newspaper into the waste basket; but Robert stayed his arm.

"Tom," he said, "do you think that this woman is in want?"

Pierce pondered the question.

"It is quite probable," he answered. "People of her kind are rarely provident."

"I would not have her suffer for lack of friends."

— "For lack of funds, you mean."

Robert smiled faintly.

"It amounts to the same thing, according to your philosophy," he said.

"On Broadway," Tom qualified. "Were you about to suggest something?"

"Yes; that you see Carmona for me and give her aid if she is in need of it."

"You mean funds?"

"If she requires them."

Tom pursed his lips dubiously.

"Are you sure it would be discreet?" he questioned. "Paying money in affairs of this kind is ticklish business. You see, it often constitutes evidence, *prima facie*, of an agreement or contract——"

"Oh, bother the law, Tom!" Robert broke in, impatiently. "I won't listen to it!"

"But I am your attorney, Bob," said Tom, shrugging his shoulders.

"First of all, you are my friend."

Tom's professional frown slowly vanished and was followed by a smile of indulgence.

"Since you put it that way, I withdraw the objection," said Pierce, still a little lawyer-like, in spite of himself.

"You will go, then?"

"Most assuredly—if you wish it."

"Thanks, Tom. Is that to-day's paper?"

"Yesterday's," said Tom, glancing at the date-line.

"I think, then, it should be attended to promptly."

"I'll go to-morrow morning," Pierce agreed, and he cut out the paragraph and put it in his pocket.

"You might look in at the office in the afternoon."

"Very good."

There was a light tap at the door and Robert, being nearer, opened it, to see Molly's dimpled face smiling above a tray of coffee and cakes and thin, white sandwiches.

"Won't you join us?" pleaded Robert, when he had thanked her.

"If you'll tell us about your travels," she said, resting the tray on Tom's smoking-table.

Which Robert did most interestingly, until the evening was spent; and then he departed.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### A REPORT FROM THE RENAISSANCE

LATE the following afternoon, Mackenzie presented himself at the office of Thomas Penniman Pierce, and after being announced in due and proper form by the boy, who performed the function with much dignity, he was ushered into the presence of the young attorney.

Pierce, who was dictating innumerable whereases and in-consequence-thereof's and plaintiffs-further-affirm-and-declares to one of the slender-waisted and highly-coiffured young ladies sitting at his left, paused long enough to shout a compound "Be-with-you-in-a-minute" at Robert, at the same time motioning him into a chair at his right. The minute was pluralised, of course, as such minutes always are, but the young lady was dismissed in due course and the two men were alone.

"Where are those glasses you were wearing when I visited you around the corner?" asked Robert, who had a good memory.

"I left them there," answered Pierce.

"Eyes improved?"

"No; circumstances." Tom smiled mischievously. "That was a bluff, too, Bob. They were just rims. If my insight were as good as my eyesight I could read your mind."

"You wouldn't have to be a psychic marvel to accomplish that—since you know the object of my visit. Did you go to The Renaissance?"

"Yes," Tom answered, seriously.

"And you saw La Carmona?" asked Mackenzie, drawing a cigar from his pocket.

"No, Robert."

"She was out?"

"She is dead."

Robert took the cigar from his lips and put it down, unlighted. He was shocked and saddened. Transient and superficial as their friendship had been, the intimacy with which they had lived those few days had linked their lives more closely than he had hitherto realised.

"I am inexpressibly sorry," he said, gravely. "When did this occur?"

"Yesterday morning."

"Was there anything we could have done? Could it have been different if we had known before?" Robert asked, with repressed anxiety.

"I think not. She was amply supplied with means and with every comfort. It seems, from what I have learned from you, Robert, and from common gossip, La Carmona has been a—well, what is known as a bad woman. God forgive her!"

"Poor little Carmona!"

"It appears that soon after you parted from her she fell in with another man, a wealthy sugar planter from Cuba, one Julio Fernandez. At any rate, they were frequently seen together. The association was short-lived, evidently. Fernandez disappeared and



Carmona also vanished from the public eye. It was thought that they had gone away together, but it now appears that the Cuban left for parts unknown, and Carmona—went into retirement.”

Pierce hesitated, for he had discovered that Robert was deeply sympathetic; but after a moment he went on.

“It seems that recently a child was born.”

“Poor little Carmona!” repeated Robert, abstractedly.

“I learned from a servant in the apartment that death came quite unexpectedly. An operation was necessary—a corrective operation, not regarded as dangerous. But there was a blunder in the diagnosis, somehow, and Carmona died under the anæsthetic.”

“Has she parents, relatives?”

“There is no knowledge of her family. Her former manager, Mollensteen, and his wife, knew something about her, but they are not accessible. You see, right at the zenith of her popularity, she broke her contract with Mollensteen and refused to play, giving him no explanation. He was deeply incensed, and after failing to move her by either threats or prayers, he left the country in high dudgeon, in search of another star. He went to France and Spain and is now interested in an operative venture somewhere in South America.”

“I am sorry,” said Mackenzie. “Mollensteen had a good heart. He would have been kind to her.”

Robert could not think of her as one dead. She

had been so active, so aglow with health, so bubbling with animation and the pleasure of living.

"Is she there now—in her rooms?" he asked.

"Yes."

"With friends?"

"There is a Mrs. Fitzgerald, an elderly lady, recently widowed, who is the lessee of the apartment and who shared it with Carmona, for a consideration. There are also a male servant, in the service of the lady, and a Spanish maid who was in the service of Carmona. The old lady is extremely taciturn and extremely hard of hearing and the maid speaks but little English. I found conversation difficult except with the man-servant, a young Irishman; a kindly fellow but not at all loquacious."

Robert was sitting with his elbow on the slide of Pierce's desk, his head bowed on his hand. Presently he looked up and inquired:

"You did not ask about the funeral?"

"Yes," answered the thorough-going young attorney. "Mrs. Fitzgerald, the young man told me, has attended to that. There is to be a Requiem Mass at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament on Monday morning at ten, and interment in Calvary Cemetery."

"She was of the Catholic faith, then?"

"It would appear so. I understand that she repented and received the Sacraments before the birth of her child."

"I would like to attend the service," said Robert.

"I will go with you," Tom volunteered.

"You are very good. I would like very much

to get some flowers. It would please her, I think, if she could know."

"We had better attend to it now," said Pierce, looking at his watch. "To-morrow is Sunday, you know, and the shops will be closed."

So, after Pierce had signed some letters that were urgent, they went out and found a flower store. It was the day before Easter and there were lilies on every hand.

Robert purchased a profusion of these, both cut and potted, ordering some to be sent to The Renaissance immediately and some to be delivered at the church in the morning.

Tom, upon hearing the order given, touched his friend on the arm and asked quietly:

"Do you think lilies are quite appropriate?"

Robert turned upon him quickly.

"Do you believe in God?"

"Certainly," said Tom.

"And that His power is infinite?"

"Yes," Pierce conceded.

"Then what can be purer than that which He has cleansed?"

Pierce was not a prude, but he had made the suggestion in good faith.

"Nothing," he answered; "providing, however, that He wills to clean."

"You believe, then, that the Deity discriminates in His dispensation of mercy?" pursued Robert, as they walked out of the flower shop.

"Well," replied Tom, "I can't quite see how those who have sinned much could expect to be so

easily and completely absolved as those who have sinned little, granting environment and all other conditions are equal."

"Ah, my friend," said Robert, "if you could equalise environment and all other conditions, including, particularly, inherited tendencies and the immediate circumstances of temptation, you would pretty nearly equalise the degrees of sin. But these things are thrust upon us. They are not of our own making nor do I believe we are held accountable for them in the last judgment. I am convinced that the sins of men are nearly levelled in the all-seeing eye of God. Certainly if there are grades in the Divine process of purification, they are not of God's making, but of man's; they are apportioned not in accordance with the quality of the sin, but with the quality of the repentance."

"You may be right," Pierce admitted; "it seems almost hopeless, though, for mere mortals to try to reason from the viewpoint of an immortal mind."

"Ah, that to me is the supreme mystery!" mused Robert, a little bitterly. "Why were we given so great a problem and such puny brains with which to solve it?"

The rumble of the train, as it rolled into the station, cut the discourse short, and they rode up town together, Pierce thoughtful, but happy in anticipation of the warm home welcome awaiting him, and Robert going moodily to his hotel near Madison Square.

## CHAPTER XXXV

### EXIT LA CARMONA

A FEW minutes before the hour, on the following Monday, Mackenzie and Pierce arrived in a closed carriage at the Church of the Blessed Sacrament. Entering, they walked down the centre aisle and took seats a few rows from the altar rail. There were perhaps thirty others in the auditorium. Evidently none of these were mourners, for they were scattered about, in the middle and rear of the church, as though not to infringe upon the reservation usually made for friends of the dead.

There had been no announcement of La Carmona's death in the public press. Either through chance, or because of the seclusion in which she had been living, the thousands who had nightly applauded her sweet voice and pretty dances did not know that her lips were sealed to mortal ears and her flying feet forever stilled. But there was never a church funeral without an audience; and often the greater portion is composed of people who are strangers to the departed and to the bereaved. Some are drawn to the scene by mere curiosity, not a few by a morbid desire to contemplate sorrow at a safe distance. There are more, no doubt, who come with loftier motives—to worship, to sympathise, or to pray.

The two friends had been seated but a few mo-

ments when the cold silence of the church was broken by a peal of harmony from the great organ, and Robert, turning in his seat, looked toward the door. A wave of pity swept over him.

Four men, bearing between them a simple grey casket, were coming slowly down the aisle. Behind walked an elderly woman, whom he knew to be Mrs. Fitzgerald, and after her, side by side, came the Spanish maid and the young man-servant, whom Pierce had described.

"Only these?" he found himself saying. "Only these to mourn her?"

All were garbed in black. A choir began the "Miserere," and as the sobbing minors of the solemn march welled forth, filling the great edifice, the sad procession came slowly on.

As Robert turned his head away he saw approaching from the altar, a priest, in the holy vestments of the service, preceded by altar boys. He saw the two processions meet; he was conscious that the music had ceased; he heard the clergyman chanting a psalm in Latin; he saw the casket, resting on trestles, almost within reach of his hand, and he saw the clergyman return to the altar, and the three mourners make their genuflexions and enter pews across the aisle.

Then he bent forward till his knees touched the floor, and with head bowed low before an altar anathematised by generations of his Scotch Presbyterian ancestry, he made this prayer:

"God and Jesus, if I have sinned against this woman, in thought or deed, forgive me. And if

there is atonement to be made by her or by me, let me make it. And if there is a penalty to suffer, show me the way, that I may pay the price. But, God the Father, grant unto this woman peace and give her thy blessing."

He heard Tom Pierce add:

"In Jesus' name. Amen."

And both looked toward the crucifix and made the sign of the Cross upon their breasts.

The celebration of the Mass began. Robert followed the ritual as best he could, rising and sitting, with the others, and observing closely. He had no prayer book; but a good knowledge of Latin enabled him to catch portions of the service and in a general way to grasp their significance.

The priest was an elderly man with a sadly earnest face. The prayers he chanted, the responses of the choir, the odour of burning incense, the waxen candles, the singing of the *Dies Irae*, the devout faces of the parishioners, the yesterday's Easter lilies edging the casket and filling the air with their fragrance of spring, the sunlight streaming softly through the coloured panes of the Gothic windows, and the silent casket aslant of which the sunbeams fell like the caress of an angel hand; these things gave to the scene an atmosphere of sanctity which filled Robert with an awe that he had never sensed before.

He was suffering, too. And why? For he had always tried to do right. He had never, within his knowledge, wilfully wronged a human thing. Yet he had suffered much, first by the loss of a woman

he truly loved, now through the torture of self-reproach for a sorrow which, so far as he could see, was not of his making. But was he sure about this? Might it be that Carmona had really loved him; that the manner of his leaving had been the cause of her going from bad to worse, had influenced her to take the step that had led to—this? No, in the light of reason, no; for what woman could find surcease of a heart-sorrow in self-debasement? It was unthinkable. Still he was troubled.

Reason released him. In the light of logic he stood acquitted.

But something, some mysterious sense of responsibility, held his peace of mind a prisoner, held his conscience chained to the silent bier beside him.

Poor little Carmona! He thought of her as he had known her; her splendid vitality, the sparkle of her Spanish eyes, the bloom on her cheek, the vivacity of her smile, the warmth of her caresses, the last kiss she had given him, the last good-bye. Then he fancied her as she lay here, her tiny hands, now pallid, crossed upon her breast holding a crucifix,—a cross, alas, that she could not feel; a lily at her throat, perhaps; her eyes closed and her long black lashes lying on her waxen cheek; the ripe-red gone from the lips that would speak and pout and laugh and sing no more.

Throughout these meditations Robert attended subconsciously to the ceremonies of the requiem. There were bits of the chanted Latin that were particularly distinct and which, in consequence perhaps, particularly impressed him.



For instance, the prayer:

“Deliver me, O Lord, from eternal death, and that awful day when the Heavens and the Earth shall be moved and thou shalt come to judge by fire.”

And the invocation, oft repeated:

“Lord, have mercy on us!”

“Christ, have mercy on us!”

He did not realise that the service was concluding until the organist struck into the recessional. He recognised the sombre strains of Chopin's Funeral March and he and Pierce fell in behind the little group of mourners and followed the casket up the aisle and out into the sunshine of a magnificent spring day. As Robert emerged from the building and breathed the cool clear air, and saw the life and traffic of busy Broadway teeming past the corner, it seemed as though he had just awakened from a dream. But the realism returned quickly enough when he glanced through the windows of the black-plumed carriage of the dead and saw the casket there, piled high with flowers.

Mrs. Fitzgerald entered a private conveyance, presumably her own, for she addressed the coachman by name; and the maid and the butler got in after her. Pierce and Mackenzie entered their hired coach, which had waited. And so the little party proceeded to Calvary Cemetery.

Arriving there a little after noon, they entered the great silent city and drove into it some distance. Then they alighted and the casket was borne a little

further on, up an incline, to the side of a new-made grave. Silently the casket was lowered to the bottom. The flowers had been deposited nearby, to await the completion of the mound.

As an attendant stuck his spade into the soft earth, Robert took a single pure-white lily and dropped it tenderly into the grave.

The two women sobbed. The young butler wiped his eyes with his sleeve.

The workman again prodded the ground with his spade. The moist earth rolled softly into the grave and filled it.

"God have mercy and rest her soul," said Robert.

He took Tom's arm and they turned away and walked down the hill.

So fell the great impenetrable curtain upon youth, talent, and beauty; upon the idol of the pleasure lovers of a great city.

The star act is over, gentlemen, and the Señorita is beyond recall. Save your applause, if you please, for the team of acrobats who follow her on the bill and who do a high drop with a catch and swing. They risk their necks nightly to give you men of blasé Broadway a thrill—and they need the money that your approval brings. Give them a "hand."

But call not for La Carmona; she will not hear. The click of the conductor's baton, the vamp of the violins, the volley of spitting palms, the shouts of admiring men, the stamping of feet, the shrill whistle of the gallery gods, the medley of sounds that

oft had called her smiling from the wings, no longer reach her. She has made her final exit. She has gone to that Green-Room wherein the make-up falls away and bares the soul. Her "act" is done.

Carmona has taken her last encore.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

### A LITTLE PRIVATE PHILANTHROPY

"DEAR MACKENZIE:

"Pursuant to your instruction, I called upon Mrs. Fitzgerald this morning and made an investigation of the unfortunate Carmona's affairs. If you will be good enough to break bread with Molly and me this evening I will tell you how things stand. If you can't come, telephone.

"Yours ever,

"PIERCE."

"P. S.—Dinner at six-thirty, Bob. Be on time if you don't want to lose your pull with the most loyal little woman."

In consequence of this note, delivered at his hotel by a messenger a few days after Rosa was buried, the young Wellingtonite presented himself at the Pierce apartment punctually at the time specified.

Robert had succeeded in shaking off all outward indications of the gloom into which the incidents of the week had plunged him. Indeed, he was much brightened by the prospects of an evening with Tom and Molly. The frank affection between these two, the simple contentment in which they lived, the absolute sufficiency of one unto the other, appealed to him strongly. Beside, he felt instinctively that, with-

out spoken word, these people understood his sorrow and sympathised with him.

The three friends dined pleasantly, Robert unconsciously paying a high tribute to his hostess by apologetically accepting a second helping to everything. And afterwards the men repaired to Tom's snuggerly for the enjoyment of their tobacco.

"Well," began Pierce, when they were comfortably seated, "I saw Mrs. Fitzgerald and acquired a good general knowledge of the situation. The fact is that Mrs. Fitzgerald knows little about Carmona's history. Mr. Fitzgerald died about six months ago. He was a lawyer, with a very lucrative practice, and, while he left his widow in comfortable circumstances, she felt that the apartment they occupied was too expensive in view of the reduction of income consequent to her husband's death. The lease had two more years to run and she inserted an advertisement in a newspaper offering to divide the rooms, together with her household service, with any respectable woman who would share the expense. La Carmona, who, I judge, had acquired a better knowledge of English than she possessed when you knew her, responded to this advertisement, giving the name Rosa Carmona, by which the widow recognised the dancer who had been so much in the public prints. She gave a satisfactory reference from the proprietor of a fashionable hotel, where she was then living. Mrs. Fitzgerald was struck with her beauty and her charm of manner and took her in, together with her maid. In a short time Mrs. Fitzgerald became exceedingly fond of the young woman, despite the fact that owing

to the older woman's partial deafness and Carmona's meagre vocabulary they never conversed freely together. The lawyer's widow knew from the beginning that Carmona's heart harboured a secret sorrow. Instinctively, she soon suspected the truth. But, instead of demanding a full explanation of Carmona's past, as many would have done, this good woman only increased her solicitude for the unfortunate girl and went to infinite pains to spare Carmona's feelings and add to her comfort.

"She did ask Carmona what her married name was. And what name do you think she gave?"

"Fernandez, I suppose. That was the name you mentioned, as I recall it."

"No. She gave the name of Mackenzie."

"My name?" echoed Robert, taking his pipe from his mouth and half rising in his astonishment.

"Yes," said Tom, "your name. My sympathy for Carmona suffered a chill when Mrs. Fitzgerald told me that!"

"Did you explain that it was not true?" Robert, recovered from his surprise, had sunk easily into his chair again.

"I was on the point of doing so, in most emphatic fashion. But you see thus far I have not mentioned you in connection with this affair. I have said only that I was acting for a former friend of Carmona's. Upon Mrs. Fitzgerald telling me this, my first impulse was to disclose the identity of my client and put her straight. But lawyers do not act on the impulse of the moment—anyhow, they ought not. So I thought I would let it pass, for the time."

"For *all* time, so far as I am concerned," said Robert, waving the matter aside with his pipe. "What does it matter?"

"Well, first, the reflection upon your family, your relatives——"

"I have no relatives—none near enough to be affected by the gossip you hint at."

"Second, then, the legal aspect of the thing; your large properties——"

"Listen, Tom," Mackenzie interrupted, with another wave of the pipe. "Why should I give a thought to that phase of it? What is my property to me when I have no use for it and don't want it? My tastes are inexpensive. The only costly toy I ever had was a fast automobile and the last time I ran it I missed being a murderer by one inch—and by driving the thing at high speed into a stone wall. My property! If it were not for the consequent damnation of your soul, Tom Pierce, I'd wish you to turn crook and steal it. Some day I'm going to have you help me devise a plan for giving it away."

"You're giving a good share of it away now," said Tom, with a sort of reproving gratitude, "in the form of a ridiculously large salary to your attorney."

The young men refilled their pipes and Pierce resumed his story:

"I doubt if Mrs. Fitzgerald was convinced of the existence of a husband, but observing that the subject distressed Carmona, she pursued it no further. She did concern herself regarding the religious attitude of the young woman, and finding that Car-

mona had been reared in the same faith as herself, she suggested that in view of the expected ordeal it would be well if a priest were consulted. To this the young woman eagerly consented, with the result that she made confession, received the sacraments of the church, and became a devout communicant."

Tom's pipe had gone out and he paused to light it.

"Did you learn anything about that personal in the *Herald*?" asked Robert.

"I learned only that Mrs. Fitzgerald knew nothing about it. It is manifest, however, that La Carmona wrote the advertisement and mailed it to the newspaper only the day before she died, and the same day upon which she was told that she must submit herself to the surgeon's knife. That uncertainty of the outcome, which is invariably entertained by one about to go on the operating table, probably prompted the summons. Carrying the deduction further, it would seem likely that her chief purpose was to make some provision for the future."

"The future of the child perhaps?"

"I was coming to that. Yes, it seems to be the logical conclusion."

"Where is it now?"

"At the Maternity Hospital."

"Has anything been done thus far?"

"No; although I think Mrs. Fitzgerald would interest herself if no one else came forward. Her means are circumscribed but she has a tender heart."

"Did Carmona leave an estate?"

"About a thousand dollars in money, some jewels, and her wardrobe. She earned a good deal of



money, but under her contract with her manager half of this went to him. Her costumes were fabulously costly and she lived expensively."

Mackenzie knocked the ashes from his pipe and sat with his fingers locked together, thinking.

"Tom," he said, after a space, "it would please me to relieve this good woman, this nobly good woman, of further responsibility. Is there an institution where the child would be assured of good care and kind treatment?"

"Several. There is one particularly that I remember having heard about—somewhere in Connecticut; on the Sound, I think."

"I wish you to investigate it with the utmost care and, if it is a suitable place, have the child taken there. I would thank you to have poor Carmona's money and effects held in trust for the infant and to pay all charges that have accrued from her illness and death. I think it would be well to defer to Mrs. Fitzgerald in all details and to invite the coöperation of her legal adviser, so that everything will be straight and regular. I ask you to spare no expense in having the child looked after properly."

Pierce nodded his acceptance of the orders. But a moment later, with the caution characteristic of his profession, he looked at his young client dubiously.

"Of course," he began, "there are certain bounds——"

Mackenzie cut him short.

"There are no bounds to the gratitude I feel for having been permitted to stumble across this poor

girl's path at a time when I could be of some service. Tom, I'm not over-pious, or over-sentimental; but I want you to know that with every dollar you expend to ease this situation there go a prayer and a tear."

"I'll follow your instructions to the letter," said Pierce.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

### OFF FOR PANAMA

DEEPLY as Mackenzie had been impressed by the death of Rosa Carmona, it was only a pin-prick to the melancholy in which his loss of Helen Willoughby engulfed him. At times he could almost throw this off—but never entirely. Even when he was not thinking of her, when he was reading, writing, shaving, playing a game of billiards with Pierce, doing something which required complete concentration, still there was a dull aching at his heart, of which he was always conscious. Naturally, when most busily occupied he sensed it least; and he concluded to go to work as soon as he could get something to do.

So when he had seen as much of the town as interested him—the tunnels and tubes and bridges and high buildings—he consulted an address in his notebook and walked across Madison Square to the Metropolitan Building. He rode up into the tower and strolled along one of the corridors until he found the name of John J. Morley & Co. painted on the door of a large suite of office rooms.

Entering, he asked that his card be taken to Mr. Morley, and after a wait of a few minutes was ushered into the presence of his chance acquaintance of the ocean liner.

The sandy moustache was raised in a welcoming smile as the builder of big things arose to greet his caller.

"Surely, you do not remember me?" said Robert, recalling that it was only during the last three days of the voyage that they had been acquainted.

"Indeed I do," said the contractor, releasing Mackenzie's hand and offering him a seat. "I have a pretty good memory for both names and faces. I must confess, though, that I remember your figure more distinctly than your face. Your build impressed me. I used to follow you with my eyes when you took your exercise on deck and think how well you were equipped for hard work."

"A good man for hoisting girders," laughed Robert.

"Oh, the engines do that part of it," smiled Morley. "But it's a fact there is a scarcity these days of good brains with good bodies beneath them. There were more big, husky young men in my day than there are now. Heaven knows we need keen intellects and trained minds, but we need rugged bodies with them—in our business, anyway. If the technical schools would furnish us men in whom there was a better combination of mind and muscle, of brains and brawn, we could do greater things and do them more easily."

"Well, as you appear to be in the mood for it, Mr. Morley," said Robert, "I'll make haste to tell you that I'm here with the brawn, 190 pounds of it, and it's for sale. As to the brain, I'm not so sanguine."

"That would be my risk, and I'd be quite willing to assume it," replied Morley; "but just now there is nothing in our establishment that I think would interest you. We do need a young man and need him badly; but it's not the kind of a job that would appeal to you, I'm afraid."

"Engineering?"

"Yes; but it amounts to exile."

"What is it?" asked Robert.

"Five years straight, on the canal. And no vacation."

"I'll take it."

Robert said this as mildly as though he were accepting a cigar.

Morley looked at him curiously.

"The pay starts at a hundred a month and is on a sliding scale. The advances are held back till the end of the term of service. You have to sign an agreement to this and if you don't stick the five years you don't get the money."

"I'll get the money—if I get the job," said Mackenzie. "When would you start me?"

"The sooner the better. Let's see—this is Wednesday. There's a boat sailing for Colon on Saturday, but you could hardly make that——"

"I could make it if it sailed to-morrow," said Robert.

"Good," exclaimed Morley, manifestly pleased. "Will you call in the morning at ten o'clock and meet my chief engineer?"

"I'll be here," answered Robert, as he arose to go, "and many thanks for your kindness."

As he walked back through Madison Square his heart was lighter than in many a day.

On Thursday morning he arrived at the office of Morley & Co. precisely on the minute and was in conference with the firm's engineer for upwards of an hour. The character of the work expected of him was explained in detail. The disadvantages of climate, food, and general environment were also frankly described. To these he turned an indifferent ear, but he was much gratified to learn that the position was a progressive one, giving him added responsibilities as he became fitted, by experience, to undertake them. It pleased him also to learn that the work would be hard physically, and that it would keep him much out of doors, and that the hours were such as to give him little time for retrospection.

That night he dined at the Pierces' and filled Molly and Tom with consternation when he calmly announced, over his coffee, that he was about to start for Panama. And when, under Tom's cross-examination, it transpired that his contract called for a five-years stay on the Isthmus, there was a storm of protest. It was quite incomprehensible to Molly that a young man with a competence even now larger than his demands upon it, would seek employment of any kind, not to mention selling himself into exile for a protracted term. She had learned to esteem Mackenzie highly and shared with her husband a keen enjoyment of the chatty evenings these three up-Staters frequently passed in company.

Tom understood the situation more clearly, however, and soon became reconciled to the step Robert had taken.

The next evening, Friday, they were entertained by Mackenzie. The trio attended a theatre and supped afterwards at a fashionable hotel. Later Robert took his friends home in a taxi and they made their adieus on the curb in front of the Pierce apartments.

Tom and Molly had turned toward the door and Mackenzie was climbing back into the cab when Tom stopped and called to him.

"Oh, by the way, Bob," he said, "I met a fellow from up your way to-day who knows—er—what's his name—Powell, Sid Powell."

"Yes?" Robert answered, indifferently.

"And he said Powell's married."

Mackenzie stopped with one foot in the taxi and the other on the curb.

"Did he say to whom?" he asked.

Tom scratched his head, and looked thoughtfully at his boots.

"Pshaw!" he said, "he told me but the name has slipped me for the moment. Let's see. It was—it began with a 'W.'"

There was a silence while Molly waited patiently in the vestibule.

"It—it wasn't Willoughby?" The words came with an effort.

"No—yes—no—why, yes, Bob, I believe it was! That certainly sounds like it. Good-bye again, old fellow, and good luck to you!"

"Good-bye," answered Robert.

He got in and the taxi whisked him around the corner. Twelve hours later he was on his way to Panama.



## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### IN THE MEANTIME

**ALDERMAN SIDNEY POWELL**, pale, potential, and prosperous, packed his small travelling bag with unusual care. It was evident that the journey for which the Alderman was preparing was of more than ordinary moment.

Alderman Powell was rich. Even in New York, where a few thousand dollars are insufficient to raise one from the ranks of the needy, Alderman Powell was regarded as a man of wealth. The rapidity with which the Alderman had amassed his fortune was a matter of occasional comment among taxpaying malcontents and political opponents in the ward whose interests were represented by Mr. Powell at the City Hall.

Mr. Powell's business as attorney and counsellor at law could hardly have netted him so handsome a return. For Mr. Powell's practice was neither extensive nor of a character likely to be exceptionally lucrative, as it consisted chiefly of an occasional appearance in the marital tangles of dramatic people or in behalf of diamond-bedecked persons who had been charged with maintaining palatial quarters where gentlemen were entertained at faro, roulette, stuss, and other fascinating games of chance. Obviously, the revenue from these sources, not forgetting the

two thousand a year with which the City recognised his service as councilman, was far from approximating Alderman Powell's apparent income.

In this connection it was often remarked that Alderman Powell consorted with the police captain of the local precinct, an official who, like the Alderman, had acquired an extensive property in a marvellously brief period of time. The unsophisticated may have regarded the superlative prosperity of the two as coincidental runs of good fortune in stock speculation or uncommon perspicacity in the manipulation of real estate. But, since in New York the unsophisticated abideth not, neither of these explanations was audibly expressed except by the captain and the Alderman themselves—and by these only when the issue was forced, through some envious political adversary arising to propound that most indelicate of questions: "Where did you get it?"

As for the sophisticated, which is about anybody in that perfunctory City of touch-and-go, they carelessly replied to the question in pantomimic fashion. Pantomime is getting to be quite essential to the vocabulary of the New Yorker. He is not Americanising hundreds of thousands of Europeans in that clearing house of immigration without becoming a trifle Latinised himself. A lifting of the shoulders for "I don't know"; a twist of the mouth to the right for "I know but I'm not telling"; the two hands, held palms outturned before the face, for "Don't ask me"; tapping the forehead with the finger for "He's crazy," and a hundred other sign sentences are now stock phrases that seem to answer

the purposes of the seasoned New Yorker better than spoken words.

In the matter of Alderman Powell's increasing affluence the sophisticated disposed of it by extending the thumb and forefinger and rubbing an imaginary substance between them. Which is the equivalent of a word that is eminently respectable horticulturally, but which is not so eminently respectable when applied to politics.

To reiterate, then, Alderman Powell, pale, potential, and prosperous, packed his alligator bag with an attention to detail that foreshadowed an errand of peculiar importance. Having accomplished this to his satisfaction, he walked out of his apartments, which were considerably more elaborate than the quarters in which we last saw him, and going downstairs he got into a taxicab and was carried to the Grand Central Station, where he boarded the morning train for Wellington.

In the evening of this day Miss Willoughby, of Willoughby Street, was in her garden. Not that the gardening season had opened, for it was yet March. The ground was still frost-hardened and there was snow in the low places.

But the month, having come in like the traditional lion, was going out like the traditional lamb. The air had a hollow sound, as up-Staters put it, denoting thaw-time. The wounded trunks of the sugar-maples were dripping with yellow sap. The days were growing longer from dawn to dusk. The habitual first-robin record breakers were beginning to report real or fancied discoveries in the columns of the local

papers. And, while no buds were shooting forth and no fresh green things had peeped from brown bark or rusty stem, still, to those who watch and welcome the seasons' changes, the signs and scents of spring were everywhere.

So Helen, whose love of the beautiful made her a friend of plants and flowers, had come, first to the back veranda to sniff the spring air, and then into the garden to snap the useless tendrils from tree and vine. With her skirts drawn tightly about her she walked slowly along the dry gravel path, looking from side to side, at this bit of shrubbery and that, finally arriving at the old picket fence which marked the line between the Mackenzie property and the Willoughby place. Here she paused and stood contemplating the tangled ramifications of the rambler rose. Poor rambler rose! How desolate it seemed, bloomless, leafless, unbeautiful, clinging to the weatherbeaten fence as though to the one surviving hope of the long and cruel winter. How grey and dry and lifeless it looked in all its turns and windings! Could there be in this dull dead thing one spark of life remaining—a single cell of that microscopic vitality from which come the wealth of colour and the sweet perfumes of early summer?

Helen bent a withered twig beneath her fingers and it snapped like a dry bone. She bent another, but this time she felt the spring of the live pith beneath her fingers; so she spared it. She went on, much encouraged, snipping off the lifeless ends with a dexterity that marked the practised hand.

Helen seemed as fresh as the scent of spring itself.

She wore a trim close-fitting suit of navy blue, with a white stock so high that it accentuated the upward tilt of her chin and exaggerated the constant challenge in the poise of her well-formed head. And so white that it made her hair look almost yellow, floating above her face like a sun-gold crown. Indeed in that grey garden of a summer gone by, Helen was the only thing a-bloom.

So thought Sidney Powell, striding up Willoughby Street, as he caught sight of her; and finding the impulse to cut a corner quite irresistible he struck across the lawn and was by Helen's side almost before she saw him.

"Good-evening," he said, doffing his hat and putting his hand out.

"Why, Sidney!" There was more of surprise than pleasure in the smile with which she greeted him.

"May I play in your back yard?" he laughed. "You'll excuse me, I'm sure; it seemed so ridiculously formal to go to the front door and ring when I had virtually to pass you to get to it."

"Pray don't apologise," returned Helen. "You were considerate not to have me called from my gardening. I was pruning the rambler." She lifted a piece of the vine and tied it to the fence with a bit of old string.

"Are you not trespassing?" asked Powell, contemplating the straggling bush. "'Pears to me that the roots are on the far side of the fence; you're doing a neighbour's work."

"Really," answered Helen, "I had never ob-

served the source of the vine; I know that a Rambler has always grown here and I have always loved it. Anyway, I don't think our deeds should be circumscribed by our duties, do you?"

"No, I don't. But I think duties to self should be considered before duties to others."

"And therefore, as my own garden is in neglect, I've no business pattering with my neighbour's," laughed Helen, looking about her. "An apt rebuke!"

"I didn't mean it as one," he hastened to put in. "The fact is, I am here not to give advice, but to get it."

Helen looked at him keenly.

"You have called with a purpose, then?" she asked.

"Yes. Will you sit down? Or is it too cool?"

He took the light coat that he carried and threw it upon the garden seat, as a protection to her.

She hesitated but finally sat upon it, her elbow on the back of the seat and her chin in her hand.

Powell seated himself beside her, on the edge of the bench, his body well forward, and his eyes looking intently into hers.

"Helen," he said, "two weeks ago, when I came up for my evening with you, you told me it was to be the last. You forbade me to come again."

"I told you, as I had told you before, that I could never be more to you than a friend, and that your frequent visits here, entailing a long railroad journey, were hardly consistent with that relationship."

Powell bowed, and went on:

"You said that you not only did not and could not love me, but you did not respect me."

"Not in those words, Sidney."

"But to that effect."

"I said that you could never gain my love, but there was a way by which you could regain my esteem."

"After which you paused, that I might ask how," said Powell.

"I gave you that opportunity—deliberately."

"But I did not ask the question," added Powell.

"You did not."

"Do you know why?"

"Yes. *Because you were afraid.*" She turned her fine eyes full upon him.

Powell bit his lip; but he did not flinch under her gaze.

"That is true," he said. "I foresaw your answer and—I feared it."

"I was so sorry," said Helen. "I would like to cherish and respect your love, even though I cannot return it."

"And you *shall* respect it," said Powell, earnestly, "if it is in my power to make it so. Helen, when I heard you say for the last time that the struggle was utterly useless, utterly hopeless, that even after Mackenzie had passed out of your life, I could never, never win you, I was crushed. What did it matter, then, how you appraised me; since you could not be mine? So long as there was the faintest shadow of a chance, I would have changed the very

colour of my skin to better myself the merest trifle in your favour; but with the hope of your love as dead as the stick you are crackling between your fingers, I lost heart and interest. Your opinion of me, without your love, was a mere mockery. Whether you went on thinking me a little better or a little worse than I really am, mattered nothing. I had lost you, and that ended it."

Sidney arose and stood squarely in front of the bench, looking down at her.

"That is the view I took of it, or rather it is the view I tried to take of it, as we parted that evening. But, Helen, it was all wrong. I find that my love for you was something far greater than merely the desire for possession. I *do* want your good will, your good opinion, your friendship. I am broken and miserable without you; but now I know that I will be infinitely more miserable if I leave with you the conviction that I am dishonourable. I want to be worthy of your respect. I believe I am worthy of it, and I am here to prove it. What must I do to accomplish this?"

They both knew what was coming; but the issue was grave and Helen hesitated.

"You will be guided by my answer?" she asked slowly.

"Absolutely."

"Then marry Nan Wallabout and repair, so far as you can, the wrong you have done her!"

"For your sake, I will marry her," he said.

"And for her sake, you will be good to her; because she is a splendid girl and true as steel; and



except for the cloud which your disloyalty has hung above her, Nan Wallabout is a good woman. You know this, I know it, and all Wellington knows it. To the extent that you make her life happy, to that extent you will approach, in my estimation, the genuine manhood of which I believe you to be capable."

"I will try to be worthy of her," said Powell.

"In that you will find happiness," said Helen, rising.

"Do you think she is in now?" he asked.

Helen looked across the street at the substantial-looking dwelling in which the evening lights were now twinkling.

"I am sure of it," she answered.

"Then I will go to her," said Powell.

Helen noticed that his eyes were moist. She stepped to him, took his hand, and smiled into his face.

"May God bless both of you," she said, earnestly.

"Good-night."

He stood for a moment with his head bowed over the small white hand.

Then he turned abruptly and walked away.

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### JUDGE WILLOUGHBY SURRENDERS

THE dusk was deepening into night. Stars were twinkling feebly overhead, brightening slowly as the gathering darkness drove the lagging sun-tints below the sky-line. It was one of those still, starlit evenings that come in early spring, with no stir of insects, no call of birds, no leaves a-rustle—none of the nature-sounds that charge the night in summer time; one of those solemnly silent evenings when the earth seems small and flat, the universe soundless and incomprehensible.

Helen stood for a long time, her eyes toward the heavens, and it was a sweetly sad and thoughtful face that the stars looked down upon.

“Could I but mend my own heart as her heart is mended,” she said. Her eyes fell to the Rambler and she took a bit of the straggling vine in her hand. There was a caress in her touch as she held it. “Dear old Rambler rose,” she said, softly, “you heard him. You know that he loved me when he stood here that night in June! I knew it. I knew it long before; and I know it now.” A tear was gathering, but she wiped it away and drew herself together resolutely. “And in a day—a single day—we were parted as completely, as irrevocably as death itself could have done it. In a single day,

with his vow still upon his lips and my words of warning still ringing in his ears he cut the knot that had linked our love and our lives together. How did he suddenly become so unlike himself? What caused Robert Mackenzie to do what he did?"

Should she not have permitted him more fully to explain—that night, when he came driving miles through the rain to do it? She carried the memory of that last view of him as clearly as though it were but yesterday. She could see his honest, white face silhouetted like a cameo against the brown oak door as he stood at the foot of the stairs, beseeching with his troubled eyes and upstretched hand a chance to speak, to tell her more, to plead a cause. What might that have been? By the rarest chance could there have been some palliating circumstance, unknown to her, that might have made the transmutation of Robert Mackenzie comprehensible? Had she been too abrupt, too adamant? Had the decision of character upon which she prided herself played her false?

No, no, no! Why he had come to her—what more he had in mind to say she could not even conjecture; but this much was certain, that the thing had then been done. The gulf had been made and yawned between them whilst she bade him good-bye from the stairs. A real romance, beginning in childhood, had died on the eve of its consummation. It was over. It was the end, the unalterable end.

She released the vine of the rambler and turned her back to the rosebushes, to the old fence, and to the grey gables of the Mackenzie homestead beyond.

So she returned to the resolution which she had made ere this—to put her tragedy of the heart behind her and to enter a field of endeavour worthy of the talents which she frankly believed that she possessed.

Toward the consummation of this plan she had been working along two channels, first by preparing herself for the career she had chosen, and second, by preparing her father to accept the inevitable.

And just now, hearing her mother calling lightly from the shade of the porch, she sensed somehow that the plans she had laid were faring well.

Helen gave an answering call and hurried up the walk; but Mrs. Willoughby came down to meet her.

“Oh, my dear,” said Mrs. Willoughby, her face wreathed in smiles and taking both of Helen’s hands, “I have good news!”

“I know it, mother mine,” replied Helen, gladly; “I knew it when you called. There was something in your tone that made my heart just jump. You have been talking with papa?”

“Yes, Helen, and we have his consent—at last!”

“Splendid, splendid! I’m so glad that I agreed to let you tell him, in your own way. How did you ever bring him around?”

“It was all in the form of presentation, my daughter,” said the mother, frankly proud of her success. “I explained at the very outset that the work you had set your heart upon was, first of all, not a business but a profession, and next that it was not employment but philanthropy; that it was not remunerative.”

"All of which is literally true," said Helen, "even as to the money part, for a year or two, anyway. And he surrendered completely?"

"Yes. But not unconditionally."

"There was a proviso, then?" Helen's mouth dropped dubiously at the corners.

"Of no consequence, my dear girl. Simply that the name of Willoughby shall not be employed."

"He denies me the use of my own name?" A spark of the Willoughby fire flashed in the blue eyes.

"I did not argue the point, Helen dear, because it was not essential."

"But if I cannot bear my father's name——"

"You shall use one of mine. I was thinking that your father is not well, Helen, and it is better to spare him in every way possible. I suggested, therefore, that the name of your maternal grandmother would answer, and he assented quite readily."

Helen brightened.

"Precious mother," she said, kissing her fondly; "I will be proud to bear it. Shall I go to poor papa at once and thank him?"

"It will please him, my daughter."

And together they sought the Judge in his library.

## CHAPTER XL

### FIVE YEARS LATER

ROBERT MACKENZIE had made good. Not that he took any credit to himself on this account, for it could hardly have been different: No inexperienced man could have been better fitted for the work he had been set to do. He had an excellent technical education. He was big and strong and in perfect health and therefore well fortified against the physical hardships which living and working in the Canal Zone entailed in the early stages of the enterprise. He was conscientious, of course, for it was the desire to work, not the need of money, that inspired him. Lastly, the task at which he was employed was of a nature that showed step by step whatever progress was made. At the end of every week he could see exactly what had been accomplished, and his employers, too, were always cognizant of this. The character of the work made it distinctive. While it was part of the gigantic undertaking about which all life on the Isthmus revolved, it was, more properly, an offshoot from it, and retained its own identity. So that Robert escaped the great disadvantage of being an invisible cog in the machinery—a handicap that has kept many a good man down till his heart was worn away.

Mackenzie had been welcomed into the social life

of the American colony in Colon but he had availed himself but little of its pleasures. He had devoted himself almost exclusively to his work and to study, his diversion from these being an active interest in the amateur athletics of the Zone, in which he figured prominently. He met many people and would have been something of a lion had he not studiously evaded all efforts to draw him into the social lime-light. He became affiliated with no particular set or clique, except that his love of hunting, fishing, and sports threw him largely with other devotees of the outdoor life. He became the friend of many but the confidante of none. He managed to maintain a certain reserve without proclaiming himself a recluse.

The last two years of his service he was in sole charge of the work upon which he had been engaged and the contract was completed well within the time specified. The Morley concern had been highly pleased with the manner in which Robert had discharged his duties. Mr. Morley himself was so impressed that he had looked up Tom Pierce, whom Robert had given as a reference while negotiating for the place, and had complimented Mackenzie in the highest terms and asked many questions concerning the young engineer.

The job finished, Robert was ordered to return to New York and report at headquarters, this order being accompanied by an appreciative letter, evidently intended as an official certificate of his proven loyalty and proficiency.

So, with this letter in his pocket and a sense of regret in his heart, he sat on deck and watched the

sky-line of Manhattan lift its jagged edge above the Bay.

The regret was because of a discovery he had made during the long idle days of the return voyage. He had found that after these five years of forced activity and change of scene the wound in his heart had not even begun to heal. No sooner was his mind free of the work and worry and responsibility than he felt the old depression bearing him down. His arduous service in the Canal Zone had acted as a sedative, but not as a cure. And now the ache had returned with all the severity of a fresh wound.

He had written Pierce not to try to meet him, as the time of arrival was uncertain; but had advised Tom that he would call upon Molly and him as soon as he got his land-legs. So when the steamer docked he hurried ashore and was driven to the same hotel, near Madison Square, at which he had lived before.

It was about five o'clock, so Robert refreshed himself with a bath, which served the additional purpose of filling in an odd hour; and afterwards he dined at the hotel. He spent the evening at a nearby theatre and retired early.

A rough sea had broken his rest the night before and so he slept soundly and long. It was ten o'clock before he was astir the next morning and upon going down he found that Tom Pierce had been there and left his card. On the back of the card was a message:

“Welcome home! Would like to see you at my office to-day, if possible.”



So, after breakfasting leisurely, Robert journeyed down town and was duly admitted to Tom's official sanctum.

"Well, well," cried Pierce, his face lighting up as he spied Robert in the doorway. "Bob, my boy, you're good for sore eyes. Bigger, brawnier, and browner than ever. No need asking how you are!"

"Well, then, how are *you*?" smiled Robert, taking the proffered hand. "And the most loyal little woman? And T. P. Jr.? Are you all——"

"Splendid, splendid, Bob! But you shall see for yourself very shortly, for Molly has made me promise to bring you home with me as soon as you can spare an evening. So you're really back, safe and sound!" And Tom leaned back complacently in his chair and beamed on his returned friend.

"Yes," said Mackenzie, "I'm back; and sorry the job is over."

"Why, Bob! You really don't mean that you're not glad to be back in God's country once more—after five years in that hell's hole?"

"It's all God's country, Pierce," returned Mackenzie; "and there's a sight more hell on Broadway than in the Canal Zone, for that matter. However, it's not the geography that interests me—it's the job. It's work I want; hard work; something to do, something that will keep me grinding away like a galley-slave twenty-four hours a day and three hundred and sixty-five days a year."

Pierce laughed.

"I mean it, Tom," Mackenzie went on, seriously.

"A steady grind is the only thing that keeps me going. I'm out for the hardest job I can find and I don't care a cuss whether it's in Kamchatka or Kalamazoo. I got your card this morning and I came right down. Thought it might have something to do with an offer of some kind—employment, you know."

"Sorry, old man; no." Pierce smiled indulgently at this young millionaire out of work. "But I guess after the record you've made down there you'll have chances enough. Your fame has gone before."

"Mr. Morley has been joshing you," said Robert, acknowledging the compliment. "Then there was nothing special?"

Pierce reached lazily over to a corner of his desk and picked up a memoranda pad.

"Nothing important," he said, glancing at it to refresh his memory. "It is about that boy."

"That boy?"

Mackenzie abstractedly helped himself to a cigar from a box on the attorney's desk.

"That child, you know; up in Leeford."

"In Leeford?"

"Yes; Connecticut."

"Oh," said Mackenzie. "It was a boy, then. I didn't remember. Well, you've been looking after that matter, I presume." Robert frowned and lit his cigar. It was disconcerting to have an old wound pricked so unexpectedly.

"Oh, yes," said Pierce. "I have made the payments regularly and have received monthly reports and all that sort of thing; everything as you di-

rected. But it seems the child is ill and is at St. John's Hospital."

"In New York?"

"Yes. There was some uncertainty about the diagnosis at Leeford and they thought it best to have the youngster under the observation of a specialist."

"Well; and how does this concern me?" asked Robert, a little petulantly. Not that his sympathy for Carmona had waned; but anything reviving the incident that took Helen Willoughby from him was irritating.

"It doesn't," said Pierce, checking off the memorandum with a scratch of his pencil. "But the house surgeon requested me, as the attorney in the case, to notify any one who might be interested in the matter—and as quickly as possible. I said I would and I've done it." Pierce shrugged his shoulders and turned in his revolving chair as though he had finished with a disagreeable subject. A moment later he wheeled around again to add, as an afterthought:

"The doctor said the case was serious and suggested that somebody call."

"At the hospital?" asked Robert.

"Yes."

"Everything is being done, I suppose, that can be."

"I told the doctor to take all measures necessary to the child's comfort."

Mackenzie arose and put on his hat.

"Quite right, Pierce; thank you." They shook hands. "And now I'll be going. I want to report

at Morley's office to-day and draw my wages. And then I'm going to the Engineers' Club and meet a man who——" he broke off, still holding Tom's hand abstractedly.

"So the child was a boy, Pierce," he went on, after a moment. "I'm not sure you ever told me."

"Fact is you didn't care," smiled Pierce. "Nor was there any reason why you should. You paid your attorney to attend to the details. Sex, you know, is a matter of detail; but so also is law. Hence the lawyer. The more detail we can get into the law the more money we can get out of it."

Pierce laughed heartily at his confession; but Robert had lapsed into meditation.

"And in all this time no one has enquired about him?" he asked, mildly curious. "It would seem as though some one might have turned up—some one upon whom the child has a claim, some one directly interested——"

"Not in a thousand years, Bob. Nobody ever turns up in cases of this kind," replied the lawyer, knowingly. "Relatives never come to the surface. Nobody's ever interested in these—these children of chance."

Robert looked soberly over Pierce's shoulder and out of the window—at nothing.

"No, I suppose not," he ventured; and then, his manner changing, he asked, cheerfully:

"When can you dine with me?"

"To-night, if you say so; but at my house."

"If Molly says so, you mean," laughed Mackenzie.

"Molly *has* said so," Tom reminded him.

"Then I'll be there, and most gratefully. In the meanwhile, good-bye."

"So long, Bob."

And they parted.

## CHAPTER XLI

### CHILDREN OF CHANCE

As the outer door of the law office closed behind Mackenzie he mechanically crossed the corridor, entered the elevator, and dropped to the street. Mechanically, too, he joined the uptown current of travel, mingling with the throng of business people hurrying along Broadway.

“Children of chance, children of chance!” The words were running rhythmically through his head like the haunting melody of a song.

“Children of chance,” he mused, “children of chance? Why, hang it, we’re all children of chance! We are brought into the world by chance and die by chance. We rise and we fall by chance. We fail and we prosper by chance. We meet friends and make enemies and hate and love by chance—but *do* we?” Could he, by mere chance, have met and loved any other girl as he loved Helen Willoughby? Of all the women in the great, wide world could there be one so perfectly a part of his own self, so much to him and of him? And this brought him back to his life-tragedy, the fall and the failure—by chance.

Up there, he thought, looking ahead of him, somewhere beyond the maze of bristling skyscrapers, in a hospital ward, lay the child of an unknown father,

fighting death. Here, shouldering his way through the noisy thoroughfare, walked the child of an unseen fatality, fighting a memory. Children of chance; both children of chance! Brothers, in a sense they were, buffeted on the ceaseless sea of turbulent fortune.

Mackenzie stopped, his huge frame damming the human tide behind him. Edging toward the curb he looked about him. At his elbow stood a stalwart member of the Traffic Squad.

"Where is St. John's Hospital?" Robert asked.

"Two-hundred-and-ten-east-twenty-ninth-street," replied the well-trained officer.

"To get there I must take the——"

"Third-avenue-elevated-get-off-at-twenty-eighth-and-walk-up," chanted the policeman.

Robert crossed City Hall Park, ascended the Elevated stairs, and boarded a north-bound train.

Speeding along, the Bowery beneath him, he looked dreamily down from the car windows upon hundreds of human derelicts, shuffling along the pavements, slinking in obscure alleys, and idling in darkened doorways. Beside him, sometimes within reach of his hand, pale children and sullen-faced women leaned from the windows of sordid lofts.

A blue-faced baby wrapped in a ragged sheet, lay gasping for breath on a fire escape as he flashed by.

The rumble of the wheels took up the words of Tom Pierce, chanting them over and over with a harsh monotony: "Children of chance, children of chance, children of chance!"

It seemed to Robert that he had something in

common with these waifs of a merciless world, for was not he, like them, adrift with the flotsam? If he and they had foreseen their destinies, and had been given the option of being or not being, what one of them would have said the word? Of all the world's unfortunates what one would have elected, of his own volition, to leave oblivion and enter that state of sorrows and struggles called Life?

"Twenty-eighth!" shouted the guard.

Robert left the train. Following the simple directions of his blue-coated friend, in five minutes he stood at the gate of the institution.

The child would be better off if it were to die, he thought; and if the waif rightly knew life's realities, it would not will to live. God would be good to take it back from whence it came. However, while it still breathed, he would be sure that it suffered no avertible discomfort. He would do as much for any other child; for the babe of the fire escape if he could find the place. Poor things! There were ways of doing good of which he had never dreamed. He would talk with Pierce about it.

The hospital was a large, fine building of brick and stone, with quite a bit of ground around it and an open pavilion attached, for convalescents. There was an abundance of windows and porch-room and a general look of cleanliness and airiness. The lawn was fresh and green and well kept and Robert, contrasting it to the squalor through which he had just ridden, thought: "How blessed are the waifs who can die in a place like this."

The iron gate was ajar, so he entered and walked



up the clean stone flagging. At the door he was met by a uniformed orderly to whom he described his errand, asking to see the doctor in charge.

The orderly withdrew, leaving Robert in the hall; and shortly after a door down the corridor opened and a brisk little man of middle age, wearing a close-cropped beard and eyeglasses, approached.

He looked at Robert curiously, but not unpleasantly. Mackenzie felt somehow that he was being measured.

"You came to see the child in seventeen?" asked the physician.

"I came in response to your message to Mr. Pierce, my attorney," said Robert, extending his card.

The doctor glanced at it.

"A relative of the patient, I presume."

"No," said Robert, curtly. And then after a pause: "I knew his mother. Is there anything I can do?"

"Nothing." It was the doctor's turn to be brusque. "The child is ill, perhaps dangerously. The notification was merely a form."

"He has competent nurses?"

"Certainly."

"And a good room?"

"Excellent. Would you like to see it?"

Robert was about to decline, but the doctor had turned and, out of mere politeness, the visitor followed. The physician led the way down the corridor to a door marked "17," opened it, and stood aside with his hand on the knob. Robert stepped across the threshold.

"I wouldn't go in," advised the doctor, "this is a hospital for contagious diseases, you know."

At this Robert stopped, though leisurely, a few steps within the door, and looked approvingly around the room.

Two large windows, through one of which the sunlight streamed. Everything white, spotless white. On the left extending out from the wall, a white cot. At its head a white screen, beyond the edge of which peeped the end of a white medicine stand. Bending over the cot, her back toward them, the white-clad figure of a young woman—the nurse.

At first this figure obscured the head of the bed; but even as Robert looked the young woman stepped to the table behind the screen and the child came into view.

The boy's face was turned towards them; his eyes were closed. Listlessly, but not unsympathetically, Robert looked upon it.

It was a sweet face; pale, except for a round fever spot on either cheek, and framed in a touse of loosely curling hair.

"Poor little chap," said Robert, half aloud. "Curly hair, like mine was," he went on, gently; "and the same colour, too." He observed the high, white forehead, the nose, the chin with a pronounced dimple in it, the mouth and the half smile that played around it.

Suddenly Mackenzie's expression underwent a change. His lips parted; his face flushed red and then went white. He took a quick step forward with one foot and halted, half crouching, his arms

stretched forward toward the bed. For the space of a second he stood thus transfixed. Then, his eyes still riveted on the sleeping child, he straightened up, groping behind him, as if feeling for some support.

"My God!" he said, hoarsely, "*this is my son!*"

His hand touched the doctor's elbow and gripped it as in a vice.

"Doctor," he said, in a husky tone, which grew stronger and louder as he went on, "this child is mine, my own son! Don't you understand? He is my son, I tell you! Look at him, look at him! He's mine, I tell you, he's mine. Can't you see it?"

The physician's eyes narrowed.

"I saw it before," he said, quietly; "when you first came."

Ignoring the doctor's answer, Robert wheeled toward the bed again.

"Mine, mine!" he almost shouted, "I want him! I am his father!"

It seemed as though the child had heard these words, for his eyes opened and looked, with sleepy interest, into Robert's. They were hazel eyes. A small arm was raised from the coverlet and a tiny hand was held out beseechingly. The baby lips parted in a tired smile.

"Father," he echoed, in a whisper.

Then the arm fell; the lids drooped wearily; the eyes closed.

Tears streamed down Robert's cheeks and he leapt toward the bed.

But the doctor's hand was upon his shoulder and a sharp command sounded in his ear:

"Don't do that!"

He stopped and the doctor stepped in front of him.

"He must not be aroused. We will go now!"  
And he backed Robert, half resisting, out of the room.

## CHAPTER XLII

### WAITING

**THERE** followed many anxious days for Robert Mackenzie. Simultaneously with the discovery that he was a father, he felt the tiny hand of the little boy lay hold upon his heart. A new flame burned within him. A new love had sprung into being, a love which, though of sudden origin, flourished beside the love he bore Helen Willoughby and which had been years in growing. And unlike his love for Helen, this new love brought him not pain but pleasure. Instead of something to brood over it was something to rejoice in. For, after all, what is love but desire? And what is desire without gratification and what is gratification but possession?

Here was something, a part of his own self, that had stretched out a feeble hand to him, and that he could take in his arms; something that he could feel, that he could caress, that he could fold to his bosom and fight for and live for—and be loved by.

Almost instantly upon making the strange discovery of his parenthood he had felt a change within himself. He began to have a sense of direction, of purpose. A reason for life and action arose before him. The future, until now a matter of no interest, became pregnant with plans and possibilities. Indeed, it seemed that life, for him, was to begin anew.

But, for the present, he was distressed not to have his boy, and not even to see him, except for that first electrifying glance of recognition.

The child, it developed, was suffering from a malignant attack of scarlet fever. Mackenzie had escaped this in his childhood and now the physician advised him against contact with it.

At first, Mackenzie would not listen to these admonitions and was for remaining constantly at the youngster's bedside. But when it was put to him that self-exposure might end in his own illness with the result of extending needlessly his separation from the boy, he yielded.

"Will he live?" he had asked the house physician.

"Probably, but I do not know. The death rate is about ten per cent. This is the third day of the fever. His temperature is unusually high—107—and the pulse unusually rapid, about 150. The fever should decline after to-morrow, however. The chief danger of this affliction lies in the possibility of complications after the fever has subsided. If we can get him through the second week without any setback, we can be reasonably sure of bringing him around all right. Good care is everything."

"And the nurses attending him? You are sure of them?"

"Absolutely. The day nurse is peculiarly faithful. She does not belong here but was attached to the institution in Connecticut. She was called there through a nurse's agency a few weeks ago and became interested in the boy, it appears, before his sickness developed. When he fell ill and it was de-

cided to send him here she detached herself from the institution and came with him, volunteering her services until the danger period is safely passed. She is most proficient."

"God bless her," Robert had said fervently. "May I see her?"

The doctor had then stopped an attendant who had happened to be passing.

"Call Miss Gray," he had ordered. "Mr. Mackenzie wishes to see her."

The attendant had hurried away only to return a few moments later with the message:

"Miss Gray cannot leave her patient just now."

The doctor had shrugged his shoulders, and said: "To-morrow will do, I suppose."

And Robert had come away, resolved to have a heart-to-heart talk with the young woman at the earliest opportunity. He desired not only to thank her for having befriended the motherless—and then fatherless—boy, but to urge a continuance of her vigil over the child whose life now meant so much to him.

So there were to be two weeks of almost unbearable suspense. And after that, if all went well, there were to be four weeks more of separation before the period of contagion would expire. So obsessed was Robert by fear of the dread possibilities of the first two weeks that he gave little thought to the added term of isolation.

Every morning at nine o'clock, he appeared at the hospital with a box of flowers under his arm to learn from the house physician's own lips the exact condition of the little patient. At four he would

call again and at ten in the evening his third visit would be made. Hours of each day he would spend walking around the block in which the hospital was located. At each turn of the square, his eyes would seek the window of the boy's room and remain fastened upon it until he had passed and swung around the corner of the avenue, out of view. He called at the Pierces' frequently and made much of little Tom, who was a healthy specimen of American boyhood. Assisted by Pierce, he looked up the records of his own son and was overjoyed to learn that he had been christened Robert Mackenzie, Jr. At this time, too, he told Molly the story that Tom already knew and they discussed it freely. The two youngsters, Pierce's and his own, were within a few days of the same age, Tom's boy being only a week older. He frolicked and chatted with the Junior Pierce and at the same time studied him curiously. He plied Tom and Molly with all sorts of questions about the care and nurturing and education of children, seeking their counsel and discussing with them many plans for the future of young Robert. And in these good people he found kindred spirits and sympathetic advisers.

And the nerve-wearing two weeks went by. Then a third and a fourth, and there was only good news from the sick chamber. The boy was doing well.



## CHAPTER XLIII

### THE CONVALESCENT

It was in the half-light between day and dark. The bronze curls were raised from the pillow and the eyes of the little boy called the figure in white to his bedside from the window by which the young woman had been sitting.

He pointed to some roses, in a vase on the white-enamelled table. He had been cautioned against tiring himself by talking too much, and had grown to use signs frequently.

She understood that he wanted a flower from the cluster and so gave him one. He caught the hand with which she extended it and drew her down to him. Then slowly and carefully he threaded the long stem through her white kerchief until the rose rested upon her throat.

"An' now," he said, with a winsome smile, "I shall call you my Rose Lady. May I?"

"Yes, dear," she answered, touching her lips to his forehead.

"An' what shall you call me, then?" he asked, still holding the hand he had captured.

"What would you like, dearie?"

"My; but I can't think at all. Whatever you say, Rose Lady."

"Shall it be 'Sonny Boy'?"

"O-o-h, what a good one!"

"You like it, then?"

"Yes, Rose Lady," he said. And then with a sad little quiver of the lip: "It's so nice and muvver-y."

The nurse turned her face away, looking toward the window.

"I wanted a muvver for sech a long while," he went on, "an' a father, too, like other boys had. Too bad the angels taked her, wasn't it?" The voice trembled a little. "But you's so good to me, I 'on't miss her 's much 's I did onc't. Kiss me, Rose Lady."

The gathering night hid the tear that glistened above him as her face bent to his.

"And your father has found you, Sonny Boy," she said, cheerily, patting his cheek.

"Aren't 'at fine!" His eyes brightened at the thought and the smile was no longer sad. "An' sends me pretty flowers every day. He must love me some, I guess!"

"Be sure of that, Sonny Boy."

"I on'y saw him 'at one time, like in a dream. An' you haven't seen him neither?"

"Not since then."

"You's always so busy."

"Yes, Sonny Boy."

"But we'll both see him soon."

"You will, dearie. I may have to go away—the day before."

The little fellow propped himself up on his elbow and looked at her reproachfully through the gloom.

"Oh, Rose Lady! You wouldn't leave me?"

"It may be necessary, Sonny Boy. Don't forget, dear, there are other sick little children to be made well. You will lend them your Rose Lady—won't you?"

"Do you think I ought-a?"

"Yes, Sonny Boy. For there are many who have no loving fathers to send them flowers and carry them away when they are well—and love them."

He sank back on his pillow.

"Well, if I ought-a I will; but maybe I'll cry some. Where's your han', Rose Lady?"

She folded it over his.

"An' how much longer before he may come for me, Rose Lady?"

"Only two weeks, Sonny Boy."

"'At's how many days?"

"Fourteen days."

His eyes were closed. The Sand Man was hovering near.

"An' to-morrow—how many then?"

"Only thirteen."

"An' nex' day?"

"Twelve."

"An'—nex'—day?"

"Eleven."

"Nex' day?"

"Ten."

"Nex?"

"Nine."

That was all. The Sand Man had arrived.

The nurse ran her fingers lightly over the bronze

curls and sighed. Then she took the flower from her throat, pressed it to her cheek, and put it back with the others, on the table.

The door opened and the doctor entered. The nurse turned on the light in a shaded night lamp.

"Good-evening, Miss Gray; and how is your charge?" asked the physician, approaching the bedside.

"Sleeping," replied the nurse. "Will you look at the chart?"

She handed him a little pad which he scanned with a professional eye.

"Splendid!" he said, laying it on the table; "no need to keep a record any more." Then he snapped on the current in a bulb near the head of the cot and bent over the child.

"We can fumigate in two weeks easily," he added, straightening and turning off the light.

He stood, still looking at the boy, but more whimsically.

"Did you ever see a more striking resemblance between child and parent?" he commented.

"They are remarkably alike," she answered, quietly, regarding the boy also.

"A curious case," added the doctor, after a pause.

She made no answer.

"And a trifle awkward for me at times," the physician continued, turning toward the door, but lingering, as if for a reply.

"Mr. Mackenzie has been asking to see me again, Doctor?" She made a pretence of adjusting the coverlet.

“Yes.”

“I’m so sorry to be the cause of embarrassing you. And you are so good to indulge me in this—this seclusion—without even asking why. If you can bear with me a few days more, I will be so grateful. Sometime, perhaps, I can explain.”

“You may count upon me, Miss Gray,” said the physician, earnestly. He stepped to the door. “I can’t fathom your purpose,” he added, “but it was your untiring watchfulness that pulled this boy out of the shadow. And I mean to have his father know it!”

She drew in a sharp breath and reached toward him, protestingly, but he had gone.

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE RECOVERY

IT was a fine morning toward the end of May when a large brown automobile of the touring type drew up to the curb in front of St. John's Hospital. A uniformed chauffeur was at the wheel and Robert Mackenzie sat anxiously on the edge of a seat in the tonneau, with one hand on the glistening knob of the curb-side door. Scarcely waiting for the car to come to a full stop he sprang out and walked briskly up the steps of the institution. That he was expected was evident, for the door swung open to admit him as he approached. With a brief thank you to the attendant who had performed this service, he hurried straight down the main corridor of the hospital to the door of the office of the superintending physician, which he entered without ceremony.

In a far corner behind a roll-top desk, but turned from it, facing the door, sat the doctor, smiling.

In the centre of the room was a heavy oak table and on this table, also facing the door, his legs dangling, sat a boy of about five and a half years, with loosely curling red-brown hair, and large, serious hazel eyes with a twinkle of mischief lurking in the corners of them. The youngster was square

of shoulder and clear-skinned and his cheeks showed the glow of returning health and strength.

As the door swung inward and revealed this picture to Mackenzie, he stopped short, just inside the threshold. His hand went to his forehead in a gesture that suggested a kind of embarrassment. Then his face broke into an awkward kind of smile, like a boy's smile; indeed, exactly like the smile that was at the moment greeting him from the table.

"Er—hello, Bob," he said. The smile was now a grin, a foolish but honest grin of real joy.

"Hello, father!" The boy grinned back, his legs swinging.

The word "father" seemed to release something within Mackenzie, for at the sound of it he leaped to the table, grasped the boy in his strong hands and smothered him in his arms, kissing the little fellow on his lips, his cheeks, and his hair.

Then, restraining himself, he stood the boy upright on the table, so that the face of the little fellow, who was tall for his age, was almost even with his own. And he took his hands and they both laughed quite uproariously, looking into each other's eyes.

"Do you think you'll like me, Bobby?" asked Mackenzie, a bit anxiously, devouring the boy through moist eyes, but still laughing.

"*Will I?*" answered the little fellow with an emphasis that meant an emphatic affirmative.

"We'll be great pals," declared Robert.

"You bet!" agreed the little fellow. There were quaint flashes of slang in his infant chatter that showed the boy growing out of the baby.

"And you will stick to me always?" pursued Robert.

"If you'll do my buttons?" answered the little fellow, conditionally.

"I've got some one to look after that, old chap; but I'll do 'em if you say so," promised Mackenzie. "Oh, I've got the home all ready for us and a big automobile to take us there, and the quicker we get into it the happier I'll be."

He stopped and walked over to the doctor, who had sat through this scene with his hand shading his eyes, a silent listener.

"Doctor," he said, "I can't begin to thank you for your great kindness to me during the past few weeks, and for what you have done for my boy. Try as you did to save me all useless anxiety, I know that this son of mine was on the danger line. I feel that I owe his life to you."

"And in all fairness, I must tell you that your gratitude is misdirected," replied the doctor, as he arose and took the proffered hand. "I did only what I do every day for every patient in the institution—and for which I am well paid. But it is my honest opinion that the incident would have terminated less happily but for the unusual loyalty and proficiency of the young woman who attended this little boy and cared for him as though he were her own."

"You mean the day nurse?"

"Yes; Miss Gray."

"My Rose Lady!" carolled the boy from the table.





THE WORD "FATHER" SEEMED TO RELEASE SOMETHING  
WITHIN MACKENZIE, FOR AT THE SOUND OF IT HE  
LEAPED TO THE TABLE

THE  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
OF THE  
CITY OF BOSTON  
AND  
THE  
TILDEN FOUNDATION  
B L

Robert looked toward his son, somewhat confused at the little fellow's interruption, but turned again to the doctor.

"I knew that I owed her more than I could ever pay," he said, gravely, "but I didn't realise it was as much as that." He paused and then, putting a hand on the doctor's shoulder, he looked sternly into his eyes.

"Why have I been unable to see her?" he asked, accusingly.

"On my honour," replied the medical man, "I don't know."

"I will find her on my way out—whether she wishes it or no. I had resolved to do this."

"It is too late," said the doctor.

"You don't mean that——"

"She is gone," supplied the physician. "I received a note from her this morning—mailed last night at the Grand Central Station."

He dropped easily into his chair and took a folded note from a pigeonhole of his well-ordered desk.

"This is it." And he read:

"DEAR DOCTOR:

"It is a poor return for your many courtesies and unflinching patience to go thus summarily, even though I am not regularly on the hospital staff. But I am badly in need of rest; and a matter of a personal nature made it necessary for me to leave town this evening.

"I have recently learned that the Children's Home in Connecticut continued my term of employ-

ment there until a few days ago. In justice to myself, therefore, I will ask you to be good enough to return the inclosed which I received in yesterday's mail."

The doctor replaced the note in his desk and from another compartment took a check, which he handed to Mackenzie. Robert looked at it stupidly and extended it to the doctor.

"She must keep it," he said. "Mail it to her."

"I can't," answered the doctor. "I have no more idea where she has gone than you have."

"Back to the Home, possibly?"

"No, I had them on the long distance this morning. She is not there and is not expected. Nor do they know where to address her."

Robert fingered the bit of paper thoughtfully.

"I sent her this two days ago," he said, "and a note of thanks; just after you phoned me that I could take the boy away this morning."

"Did you mention that in your letter?"

"What?"

"That you were to come for the boy to-day."

"Yes," said Robert, after thinking a moment.

A look of comprehension settled over the doctor's face and he arose, looked at his watch, and rolled down the cover of his desk.

"Good luck to you and the youngster, Mr. Mackenzie!" he said, as they clasped hands again.

"Thank you, Doctor. If you happen to hear from this Miss Gray again I hope you'll let me know. I

can never look at my boy without thinking of what a debt I owe her."

Young Robert had remained standing on the table during this conversation, seemingly trying to grasp its purport. But when Mackenzie turned and approached him the intent look gave place to a smile and he clapped his hands gleefully.

"Are you ready, old chap?" cried the stalwart young father.

"Yes, daddy," he answered; "where's 'at auty-mobile?"

"Up with you, Bobby, and we shall see!"

He swung the little chap to his shoulder, and waving their good-byes to the doctor they swept through the corridor, out of the hospital, and into the sunshine of the splendid May day. Young Robert waved his cap triumphantly as he saw the great car, resplendent in shining varnish and gleaming brass. Mackenzie bore his gay-spirited namesake proudly to the curb and into the tonneau. The machine started and father and son rolled, laughing, out into the world together.

Mackenzie had done a good deal of motoring in his time and had been no respecter of speed limits, but now he leaned over the chauffeur's shoulder and for the first time in his life gave this order:

"Drive slowly."

A new responsibility was upon him and the love of a father was in his heart.

## CHAPTER XLV

### FAIR WEATHER

THE home which Robert Mackenzie had prepared for his son and himself consisted of an expensive suite of rooms in a magnificent hotel which we will call the Plato, situated at Fifty-ninth Street and Fifth Avenue, directly opposite the lower entrance to Central Park.

A public hostelry, however complete and luxurious its equipment, was far from Mackenzie's conception of what a home should be. But for the time being it seemed the most feasible place. He realised that the duties of fatherhood, which he had so unexpectedly assumed, required much study, and he believed that the first essential was to thoroughly know the child whose future was now in his hands. Only this much was definite: That henceforth he, Mackenzie, was to devote himself exclusively, if need be, to his son. Whatever would appear best for the boy would be done. The question of environment, of locality, like every other question bearing on the boy's future, must be disposed of only after the most exhaustive study and deliberation.

In the meantime he would be content with the most comfortable quarters that a fashionable hotel in the heart of a great city could offer. Up to this time, Mackenzie had looked upon his riches as an

encumbrance rather than an advantage. But now, in the excitement of his new-found parenthood, he thanked God that he possessed the means of giving his boy every blessing that money could buy.

Not that the younger Mackenzie was ever in danger of being spoiled by over-coddling. Even in the first intoxication of his new love Robert had steeled himself against the inclination to pamper his offspring. Many hours, during the child's convalescence, he had devoted to serious thought on the subject of how to rear a boy. He was determined to deprive his son of nothing that would make for his ultimate good, and by the same token to give him nothing that would retard the development of that self-reliance, that physical and moral strength and courage and that rugged masculinity which he regarded as potential elements in the manly man.

Just at this time, however, he was thankful that he had ample means to celebrate the discovery of his son and the boy's recovery from the fever; and to supply the youngster with good care, good air, and good food, all of which are luxuries in a large city; and to atone as far as possible for his neglect of little Robert through the years that could not be recalled. It grieved him sorely to think of this beautiful child, this boy of his own flesh, living five years of its infancy with never a hand lifted in its behalf except for hire; with never a caress or a kind word from kith or kin. The great joy he felt when holding this loving, trusting bit of innocence to his heart was tempered only by a dull regret that he had not known the truth before. He begrudged every hour

that Fate had kept him and the child apart and, looking backward five years, the span seemed like an eternity.

He indulged himself, therefore, as well as the boy, in these temporary arrangements for the little fellow's comfort and pleasure.

The rooms looked out over the Park. Two capable servants had been installed, a middle-aged Englishman answering to the name of Martin, and his young wife, Nora, who were to act as butler and maid respectively. The young woman had been engaged particularly on account of her competency in caring for children. He had purchased the car that young Robert might take the air freely, even though his strength might not as yet be entirely restored. The chauffeur lived out, being attached to the garage in which the car was stored.

It had been Robert's intention to take his meals with Robert, Jr., in their rooms, having them served by Martin from the hotel cuisine. But so proud was he of the handsome youngster that he soon took to lunching and dining frequently in public places. He was never so happy as when sitting at a table with the boy opposite him, in the fashionable restaurants, where the bright face and fine figure of the youngster never failed to attract attention.

At first the two were together constantly, motor-ing in the Park, attending concerts and matinees, strolling on the boulevards, and making excursions to the seashore and the country—in which the younger Pierce often joined. After a week or two, when young Mackenzie commenced to form acquaint-



ances among the other children of the great hotel and among the little friends of "T. P. Jr.," Robert took care not to intrude too much upon the boy's companionship. The pleasure he took in this association did not blind him to the fact that children appeal to children. While he purposed to be a "pal" to his boy as well as a parent, he realised that no father, however adaptable, can fill all the requirements of a boy's social demands.

So, while Mackenzie continued to act as chum, play-fellow, and even nurse to the little chap, the boy's circle of friends and diversity of pastimes continued to grow. There were children's parties in the hotel, outings in the Park directed by the mothers of little Robert's friends at the Plato, and other gatherings and excursions in which Mackenzie himself had no part. On these occasions, the maids usually accompanied the children, Nanna having young Pierce in charge and Nora looking after little Robert. And while the children frolicked the servants gossiped among themselves.

It pleased Mackenzie much to note how readily his little son made friends; to learn that the boy had those attributes which inspire admiration and also attract sympathy.

Day by day, he could feel this beautiful child growing into his heart. Sometimes, he believed that the love he had borne for Helen Willoughby was now being transferred, manifolded a hundred times, to the boy.

He hoped so; for he believed Helen to be married to Sidney Powell. Ever since that night, the eve of

his departure for Panama, when Pierce, with unconscious cruelty, had reported Powell's marriage and guessed at the name of the girl, Robert had struggled to put Helen Willoughby out of his heart.

He, himself, had suggested "Willoughby" as Pierce had stood there by the cab door, fishing around in the convolutions of his brain for the name which had been told him as that of Powell's bride, but which had escaped him for the moment.

"It wasn't Willoughby?" Robert had asked, falteringly; not that he thought it could be, but more with a view of eliminating the one name that concerned him.

And when Pierce, floundering in doubt for a moment, had finally replied: "I believe it was," the last glimmer of hope in his heart had gone out like the dying flicker of a candle-end.

And yet, at first, he found it quite impossible to reconcile Helen's ideals, as he knew them, to her acceptance of Sidney Powell, as he knew Powell. He had always reckoned Powell as his rival and he knew that Helen entertained more than a passing regard for Sidney; that she found him companionable and admired him for his splendid attainments. But he knew beyond all conjecture that Powell stood before her unalterably condemned for the flexibility of his morals. Unalterably? Was he so sure about that? Might not her standard of judging the morals of men have undergone a change—since that night in June when, like Ulysses, he had gone out to pass the coast of the Sirens? And as he in his error had been unlike the ancient Ithacan, had she in her in-

constancy of purpose, fallen short of the fair Penelope? Had Powell in his frank transgression loomed bigger in her eyes, after all, than Mackenzie in his professed propriety—a profession that he had failed to prove? Had the quick and miserable explosion of his claims to virtue caused a revulsion of her views?

He thought much along this vein, but never could he picture the firm, inflexible, and faultless Helen of his ideals in any attitude except that which she had assumed when she bade him good-bye in the garden.

After many hours of day-dreaming and many nights of sleep-destroying conjecture, he came down to one hypothesis as the most probable: That the marriage had been one of convenience. He had known, as all Wellington knew, that the finances of the Judge were getting low, and that the proud old gentleman was looking forward to the marriage of his daughter as the only visible relief from a situation which was slowly but surely becoming serious. He knew that while there were suitors a-plenty for Miss Willoughby's hand, Powell, next to Mackenzie himself, had been most favoured by the old jurist. The Powell family, like that of the Willoughbys, was one of the earliest institutions of Wellington; and while, like the Willoughby family, it also had become impoverished, Sidney Powell had struck out bravely to restore its fortunes, and from all accounts had succeeded in doing so.

That neither family history nor family finances would have the slightest weight with Helen, Mackenzie knew full well; but he also knew that her

affection for her father was her ruling passion—if she had one. He knew that if there were any emotion that could dominate the ideals of this young woman, it was the love she bore her sire. To what extreme she might go in her desire to spare her father's pride and to ameliorate the anxieties which were gathering in his declining years, no one could say. But by no other process than this could Mackenzie reconcile his measure of Helen to her marriage with Sidney Powell.

At no time, while revolving the problem in his mind, did the real solution present itself, even vaguely. The possibility of a mistake in names never occurred to him. Of course, had Pierce known the importance of the bit of home-news he was bandying at the cab door that evening, he would not have treated it so thoughtlessly. But, while Mackenzie had told Pierce the essential points of his love story, he had purposely avoided mentioning the name of the girl. The story had seemed complete enough for the purposes of his attorney without doing so, and so long as Pierce did not ask for it, Robert kept it to himself. His reverence of Helen Willoughby made him reluctant to speak her name in connection with a series of incidents that had assumed the form of an unsavoury escapade.

However, even if Mackenzie had known the truth about the relations between Helen and Sidney Powell subsequent to the Carmona episode, it is not likely that his course of action since that time would have been materially affected by the knowledge. True, the spark of hope for an ultimate reconciliation

might not have been so dead within him; but his absolute faith in the irrevocability of the young woman's decision ever would have discouraged the reopening of his cause. Besides, he knew that he had violated the sacred condition of their betrothal and had sinned against her by sinning with another woman; and he knew that he could not tell her why because he did not know. In short, his case had been hopeless from the beginning of the episode; the belief that she had married simply made the hopelessness a little more absolute.

While it was not true, as he tried to believe, that his love for little Robert was supplanting his love for Helen, this much was certain: That his heart was lightened by the new attachment and that since the coming of the boy into his life he was happier than he had been in five years. He had not recovered and never would recover from the disappointment of losing the young woman in whom he had centred his hopes, his dreams, and his affections; but his love for the boy and the love which the lad returned to him were most effectually dulling the sting.

## CHAPTER XLVI

### A SHADOW FALLS

ONE rainy evening toward the end of June, Robert and his young son were passing the hour between dinner and the boy's bedtime with an abridged edition of Robinson Crusoe between them. With the rain had come an unusual fall in temperature so marked that Martin had made a coal fire in the grate. Mackenzie and the boy sat between the fire and the window, enjoying the cheer of the one and utilising the light of the other to read by.

Owing to the overcast sky this soon grew dim, and Mackenzie put the book aside and lifted young Robert to his knee. The light of the fire, now stronger than that of the waning day, threw a soft glow over the curly head; and the boy's fine eyes reflected the sparkle of the coals. For a few moments they were silent, young Robert gazing into the embers and Mackenzie feasting his eyes upon the boy.

"Bobby, old chap," Mackenzie began presently, "are you happy?"

"Happy, dad? Why, o' course I's happy!"

"All the time?"

"Yes, father; 'specially when you reads to me 'bout the man on the island."

This was a hint to resume the history of Mr. Crusoe, but Mackenzie failed to take it.

"Are you ever lonesome, son o' mine?" he asked, kissing the curls.

"Not many times, father o' mine," answered the little fellow. He had a knack of paraphrasing that was quite delightful.

"Sometimes, then?" pursued Mackenzie.

"Never when you's with me," he protested, stoutly, patting the hand that held him.

"But sometimes, when I'm not with you, you are lonesome?"

"Yes. For my Rose Lady."

They both looked into the fire for several minutes. Then Mackenzie went on:

"She was kind to you, Bobby?"

"She was dearest to me of any one in all the world—but you."

"She must have been, son o' mine; you speak of her so often. Was she different—from what I am?"

"Nobody could be so much to me as you is, daddy!"

"But she was different?"

"You's both good, daddy; on'y you is father-y an' she was—muvver-y."

"Muvver-y?"

"Yes, daddy. It's tough to have no muvver!" The wee mouth quivered.

"It is tough, old chap."

"You know; 'cause your dear muvver died, she did."

"Ah, so she did." Mackenzie shaded his eyes with his hands.

"When you was a boy like me?"

"When I was a boy like you, old chap."

Again there was a silence.

"But you saw your muvver, daddy?"

"Oh, yes."

"An' you 'members her sweet face?"

"I do remember her sweet face."

"But I didn't see my muvver."

"You were so young, a wee baby just born, when the angels took her. So you don't remember."

Another silence, in which the boy appeared to be thinking deeply. Suddenly he looked up into Mackenzie's face.

"Daddy," he asked, "honest, now, did I ever have a muvver?"

Mackenzie, who had been in a half-reverie, aroused himself.

"Why, Bob; of course you did."

"A reg'lar muvver?" With both hands he turned his father's face so that the light shone full upon it, as though to guard against any evasion.

Mackenzie was much disturbed, but he forced a laugh and returned the boy's look frankly.

"What an odd question!" he exclaimed. "Certainly you had a regular mother."

"An' you're my reg'lar father?"

Mackenzie laughed again, but a little more nervously.

"I am your regular father, you silly boy; as regular as—as any,—as—why, of course, I am, son o' mine. What in heaven's name ever put such absurd questions into your head?"

"Well, at Jackie Linden's party yesterday——"



“The garden party on the roof?”

“Yes. We was talking 'bout muvvers an' a girl was 'ere; a big girl, nine, ten, fourteen years old mebbe, an' when I says 'my muvver's dead,' she says to me, she says, 'Why, *you* never had a regular muvver, you never did'; an' she laughed. An' her maid was 'ere, a freckled woman, an' heard it, an' Pinto was 'ere, 'at's Jackie's nurse, an' the freckled woman put her han' up like this, so I wouldn't hear, but I did hear, an' she says to Pinto, she says, 'Nor a reg'lar father, neither,' an' she laughed; but Pinto, 'at's Jackie's nurse, she looked sorry-like and says, 'Sh!' An' the big girl made a face at me an' ran away. So I was jes' wondering—what did they mean?”

It seemed to Mackenzie that the embers in the grate had lost their glow. An indefinable feeling of impending trouble crept over him. With an effort he partly shook it off and arose, with the boy in his arms.

“What does it mean, my treasure? Why, it means that the girl and the servants who said those things were just trying to make a joke of you. They meant it all in fun, of course, but really nice people would not make fun in that way. They are bad; they are vicious, and if I were you I'd never go near them any more. And now, son o' mine, we're past our bedtime, so here we go!” He rang for Nora, slung the little chap to his shoulder, and carried him away.

Nora followed them and took charge of young Robert, and Mackenzie returned to the fire.

The coals were glowing anew, and as Mackenzie sank into a chair the flare from the grate fell upon his face—a face as white as chalk.

For suddenly he had seen, arising spectre-like out of his new-found peace, a grim cross; and nailed to it for life, writhing under a constant fire of taunts and jibes, he saw the tortured figure of his beautiful boy.

## CHAPTER XLVII

### THE SINS OF THE FATHER

FOR an hour Mackenzie paced up and down the room, followed by the spook-like shadow of his form which stretched across to the far wall. Twice a curly head appeared between the portières of a door opposite and two eyes blinked wonderingly at him, but he was unconscious of it. Slowly the real tragedy of his life was becoming manifest in its full importance and its terrible cruelty. Before his eyes, in fiery letters like a white-hot brand, there glowed one word which was burning its imprint into his soul:

*Illegitimate!*

Across the hall lay the son of his own flesh, the boy that he loved better than any other thing, animate or inanimate, the innocent, unconscious child; across the hall he lay, his beautiful curls framing his face in a wreath of golden bronze, a smile upon his lips perhaps, and visions of flowers and fields and sunshine flitting before his eyes. For Robert had told him of his own home up the state, of the apple trees and the grapevine and the rosebushes and all the things that grew in the garden; and he had told him also of the grotto-like streets of Wellington and the placid river, the cool swimming hole, the woods and hills and a mysterious cave where some day they

would play pirates together; and he had told him of the brooks where they could watch the fish flashing their silver sides in the sun; and the grove where the butternuts ripen in the fall, and which they had planned to gather "one o' these days"; he had told him of the tall trees they would climb, for birds' eggs, taking care to leave a-plenty in the nest, so the mother would not grieve, poor thing; and of the secret paths through the wood that only a few of the boys knew, and of the wild strawberry patches and the thorn apple trees and—sh! a place where pumpkins could be "hooked" for Jack o' Lanterns on Hallowe'en, but they'd have to be careful 'cause if old Uncle George caught 'em at it he'd fix 'em good! Yes, he had told him these things, many times; and little Robert, being all boy, was ever ready to hear more and would always clap his hands and cry: "Gee! But that town of ours must be a dandy place to be a boy in!"

And so, dreaming dreams like these, perhaps, the sweet boy lay in his innocent sleep, unconscious of the awful truth that he was forever branded with another's shame.

This, then, was the awful climax of the error which he had thought was dead. Here at last was the inexorable law of life—that those who play the game shall pay the price a thousandfold; that those who sow the wind shall reap a whirlwind.

The more he dwelt upon it, the more enormous the penalty grew. It was a two-edged punishment. The child of his heart, the child that he loved with all the boundless affection that his big kindly nature

was capable of, was doomed to inevitable and unearned disgrace; and as if that were not enough, he, the father who loved and cherished the child above all things on earth, was singly and directly the cause of the child's shame!

This child in which he had centred his renewed pleasure of living, which had come to him in his helplessness and had given him strength, was to live and mature only to curse the world into which it had been born and to despise its father—the father who had sired it in sin and into a legacy of sorrow and disgrace.

Again he asked himself, as he had once before, ere this blow had fallen: "Where is the law of compensation? Why am I made to pay so high a price for a sin so ordinary, while others around me suffer less?"

Surely this could not be of God's doing. It was too cruelly uncanny to be of ought but a demon's devising.

How could he ever look upon that sweetly innocent face again?

He walked across the floor to the door leading toward the boy's room. Then he stopped, turned, put on his hat, and went out. He had formed no purpose except to get out into the cool air and walk. This he did.

## CHAPTER XLVIII

### FACE TO FACE

THE rain had ceased and the chief thoroughfares of the city were thronged. Frequently people stopped to look at Mackenzie as he went swinging across Fifty-ninth Street and turned south on Broadway. He was a splendid figure of a man, exceptionally tall, extremely broad across the shoulders, and deep through the chest, but narrowing and flattening toward the waist-line. The face, almost too square in outline but strikingly strong, was pale from emotion, but the exercise and the night air had brought the glow of the country-bred boy in a single spot on either cheek; and the easy stride with which he ploughed through the throng of night paraders marked him as the athletic man. He was conspicuous chiefly, perhaps, because he was too vigorous, both in body and in the speed at which he was moving, for eight o'clock on upper Broadway.

If Mackenzie were conspicuous, however, he was unconscious of it. In fact, he was oblivious to everything except that a terrible blow had fallen upon him and an overwhelming trouble was bearing him down.

He proceeded in this wise down the gay artery of New York life for twenty blocks or so. Then, encountering a blockade of carriages, he turned along

the line of least resistance, crossed the thoroughfare, and headed northward again. The baby face and figure of his sleeping boy were constantly before him. Starting from the little chamber in the hotel, his mind travelled backward again and again over the incidents of his career, reviewing every detail from the evening of the Willoughby garden party up to this fateful night.

And one figure began to stand out stronger and stronger as the reason for all of his ill fortune.

At Times Square he came abreast of a bulletin board where more than once of late the lure of the baseball score had made him pause. Mechanically, for a moment, he slowed his pace. Then he shuddered. What was this to him now? And the blatant newsboys crying "Giants Win!" He resented the impertinence with which they blocked his way and shrieked the headlines of trivial happenings of the day.

Subconsciously he was puzzling over his own petulancy, because it was unlike him. He was about to push on when the very name that had been stirring his animosity in retrospect stared at him from the bulletin. He stopped short and looked again. Then he read slowly the brief lines in which it was contained. They were like this:

**"GRAFT COMMISSION PUSHES INVESTIGATION  
CLOSE TO ALDERMAN'S DOOR.**

**SIDNEY POWELL MUST TELL WHERE HE GOT IT."**

Mackenzie's face was as hard as flint. He shoved

his hands deep into his pockets and stood for a space grimly contemplating the bulletin.

“So,” he said, presently, between his set jaws, “that’s what you’ve come to, you treacherous hound!”

Then he turned and went on as before. He had been slow to involve Sidney Powell in his undoing, but this night he had brought the whole business to the door of his old rival and for the first time in his life he had learned to hate. It was the animal within him; the enemy had struck at his young. Too big and brave and kind to feel that evil emotion on his own account, this blow at his boy had touched the primeval spring.

The latent savagery in the man had come to life and the lights of the town glowed red.

Onward he strode, thinking, thinking, but only the one thought, and that—*to kill*.

A few blocks ahead a crowd had gathered. He plunged into it, not giving a thought to the cause, but because it was in his way and he would not be turned aside. He heard cries of “Stand back!” “Give him air!” He heard the clang of an ambulance bell and saw two or three police caps above the heads of the jostling throng. His course took him straight to the centre of the mass, and his size and appearance caused men to give way as he pushed through. Without intending it, he suddenly found himself inside the circle and beside the form of a man who lay prostrate on the stone flagging. The man was in evening dress and his opera hat lay near him, on the curb. An ambulance surgeon, in a suit



of white duck, knelt beside him and was pushing a support of some kind under his head. Overhead blazed the name of a famous café in a thousand electric bulbs that threw a brilliant light on the scene.

As Mackenzie stepped within the circle and stood at the feet of the figure, the fallen man turned his face upward and their eyes met.

The man was Sidney Powell. His hair had whitened, deep lines furrowed his face, and his colour was that of the dead.

The recognition, on both sides, was instantaneous. But it was no quicker than the action of Robert Mackenzie.

Stooping over, that there could be no mistaking either his face or his words, his eyes boring into Powell's like red-hot coals, he said:

"I'm Mackenzie! Do you know me? Mackenzie, with a son that has a curse upon him because of you! Here you are, dying in the gutter when I'd set out to kill you! But you can't get away from me, for I'll follow you to hell! Do you hear me? *I'll follow you to hell and hunt you down!*"

A shiver shook the form of the prostrate man. His lips moved, as though to speak, and he raised a feeble arm toward his accuser, supplicatingly.

Mackenzie's heel ground into the pavement as he swung around. He shouldered a passage through the crowd and walked back to the hotel.

"Too bad!" he muttered between his teeth. "If he had only been strong and well I could have crushed his skull!"

## CHAPTER XLIX

### THE DALE OF DREAMS

THE night was even colder than the day had been and Martin had replenished the fire against his master's return. It was nine o'clock. Robert sank into his favourite chair in front of the grate and lit a cigar. The flavour of the thing was intolerable and he threw it into the coals and lit another. After a few puffs at the second it followed the first. This was a sorrow in which the solace of tobacco utterly failed.

He arose and struck into his imaginary path across the floor.

For three hours thereafter he tramped unceasingly.

As a small clock on the table tinkled twelve, he threw himself wearily into his chair. Once more he tried to smoke, but with no better result than before.

"I'm sick," he said, aloud. "I never knew tobacco to taste like that except when I've been ill."

The portières parted and a tiny figure in sky-blue pajamas trotted lightly toward the fire. So silently his bare feet fell on the carpeted floor that he reached Mackenzie's side unheard; and Robert, feeling a soft little hand creeping into his, looked down to see the little fellow at his elbow, peering up into his face.

"I must send for the Rose Lady," said the boy.

"Bobby! What are you doing? What gets you up at this hour?" Mackenzie would have hidden his brooding with a veil of severity.

"I heard you walking, walking, walking, ever so long, daddy."

"And I disturbed you," said Mackenzie, apologetically, as he stroked the tousled head. "I'll hire a hall the next time I start one of these endurance contests. But why send for the Rose Lady, son o' mine?"

"I heard you say you was sick. She makes sick people well, does my Rose Lady."

"True, Bobby, my boy; only, you see, I'm *not* ill."

"I heard you say so," repeated the little fellow, doggedly; "an' somefin 'bout tubacca 'at I didn't quite get."

Mackenzie laughed indulgently.

"Oh, yes, so I did, old chap, so I did. Something about tobacco making me feel ill; yes, that's true. Too much tobacco is not good for any one, Bobby. I have told you that before, haven't I, son o' mine?"

"Yes, daddy."

"And what else about it have I told you, little boy? Now, come on. Let's see if your thinker is any good after midnight."

"You told me 'at boys should never smoke till 'ey was over twenty-one."

"Yes."

"An' 'at 'ey would be better and stronger if 'ey never smoked at all."

“ Correct.”

“ An’ ’en I asked you why you didn’t stop smoking, so’s *you’d* be better an’ stronger. An’ do you ’member what you said? ”

“ Why, no, old chap. What? ”

Little Robert made a funny little grimace and held up his finger reprovingly, like a schoolmaster.

“ You didn’t say noffin’,” he answered; “ but jes’ went on smokin’! ”

Mackenzie’s head went back and he indulged in a genuine laugh.

“ And just for that,” he said, “ like a cruel old monster of a genie, I’m going to carry you back to bed.”

“ Not unless you go you’self,” insisted young Robert.

“ I will.”

“ Not until you’ve told me about the ‘ Dale of Dreams,’ ” he further conditioned.

“ Then here goes,” agreed Mackenzie. So, gathering the little fellow snugly in his arms, and rocking to and fro with the rhythm of the jingle, he began:

“ Climb up with daddy, my own little man,  
 For a ride in my rock-a-by chair;  
 Snuggle beside me as close as you can—  
 I’ll promise a journey most fair,  
 Over the rivers and over the rills  
 And over the silver streams,  
 Over the mountains and over the hills  
 To the beautiful Dale of Dreams.

Lay your head easily here on my arm,  
 Give me a wee little hand,  
 And now, if you’re cosy and comfy and warm,  
 We’re ready for Rock-a-by land.

Lower the light a bit, close your eyes—so!  
Bless me, how pleasant it seems!  
A sigh and a yawn and away we go  
Into our valley of dreams.

Into our valley of dreams, my dear,  
And what are we going to find?  
Never a sorrow or trouble or tear,  
For *those* we are leaving behind.  
What do we see in this wonderful place?  
Why! candies and cookies and toys,  
With nobody constantly washing your face  
And telling you not to make noise.

Here is a hammock that hangs from a star  
And swings you 'way up in the sky,  
And carries you ever and ever so far,  
And ever and ever so high.  
Yonder an island of chocolate cake  
Floats in a sea of ice cream,  
Further along is a soda-pop lake,  
Here is a lemonade stream.

Over our head is a caramel tree,  
Eat of its fruit all you can;  
Here comes a dolly who walks just like me,  
There goes a gingerbread man.  
Slowly, my dearie! Beware of that ledge  
Of rock candy right at your feet!  
And how can we ever get over this hedge  
Of raisins all ready to eat?

Here come the animals out of the ark,  
Friendly and happy and free;  
See how they're chatting together and—hark!  
Now they are talking to me!  
The lion says: 'How are you feeling, my dears?'  
The tiger: 'How long can you stay?'  
While the elephant cheerfully waggles his ears  
And remarks: 'It's a very fine day.'

So this is our valley, my own little man,  
Go revel in frolic and play.  
I warn you, just have all the fun that you can  
'Twixt now and the peep o' the day;

## THE LAW OF LIFE

For the Sun's a fine fellow and friendly and fair,  
But he's frightfully jealous, it seems,  
And soon as he rises he'll turn to thin air  
Our beautiful Dale of Dreams!"

Before Mackenzie reached the end of his song, little Robert had arrived in the Dream Valley, bag and baggage, and had closed tight the gate against this world of grim realities and tears.

So, pressing the rosy cheek to his own, he carried the sleeping boy to bed. Faithful to his promise, he, also, retired.

## CHAPTER L

### BREAKFAST FOR ONE

ONE sat at a table laid for two in the dining room of the Mackenzie suite. The one was Bobby. He sat in a tea chair gazing at the vacant place opposite and awaiting the arrival of his breakfast.

Entered Martin, with a bowl of oatmeal which he deposited before the young gentleman with the quiet grace which good servants cultivate.

Martin, by the way, was unmistakably English. He was round of face, with a bit of whisker in front of either ear, ruddy of cheek and plump of form. He had blue English eyes, a broad "English accent," and a brown English livery which he persisted in wearing despite the unspoken but very evident disapproval of his up-state American employer.

Martin was fearfully proper, but, as young Robert had divined, was inherently kind.

After tucking a napkin under Bobby's chin and helping him to the cream and sugar, Martin took his stand at the opposite side of the table, like a sentry at attention.

"Then I'm not to wait for father, Martin?" asked Bobby, poising his spoon.

"No, Master Robert."

"You said he is ill?"

"Well, not exactly, Master Robert, but 'e 'as a

'eadache and asked me to say 'e would arise presently."

Bobby ate his oatmeal, after which Martin removed the dish and returned with eggs, toast, and a pitcher of milk.

"Oh, Martin," said Bobby.

"Yes, Master Robert."

"Be a good fellow, will you?"

"I 'ope I am always, Master Robert."

"An' give me some shadow coffee."

"Oh, Master Robert! Don't ask me. Your father mightn't like it, you know."

"But you've done it before, Martin."

"Sh! Not so loud, Master Robert."

"A little in the glass, won't you? You needn't get a cup for me."

Martin yielded and brought a pot of coffee from which he poured a teaspoonful into the glass of milk. After doing this he removed the pot and returned to his post with a guilty conscience.

Bobby went on with his breakfast.

"Martin," he said, presently.

"Yes, Master Robert."

"Do you know, I like you."

"That's very 'andsome of you, Master Robert."

"An' I think you like me."

Martin was visibly affected.

"More than a servant 'as the privilege of, Master Robert." Martin was much attached to the boy and Bobby knew it.

The little fellow pushed his plate from him and



turned in his chair, crossing one leg over the other quite man-like.

"Can you keep a secret?" he asked, mysteriously.

"That's an essential part of our business, sir," said Martin, a little proudly.

"Then listen!" began Bobby, wiping his mouth with a corner of his napkin. "You know who I mean by my Rose Lady?"

"She was kind to you in the 'ospital," Martin responded.

"She was a angel, Martin; just on'y a angel. The doctor said it was her that made me better, see? Well, the day before she went away, I knew she was a-going, on'y not 'actly when. An' I loved her, Martin, more 'an any one else on earth, 'cause I didn't know father then. So I says to her, I says, 'Won't you never come back?' An' she says to me, she says, 'I'm afraid I can't, Sonny Boy.' 'At's what she used to call me—'Sonny Boy.' I liked her to call me 'at 'cause it was kind o' nice an'—muvvery. You got a muvver, Martin?"

"Yes, please God, Master Robert; I have a good mother, thank you."

"Well, then, you know how it is, Martin. 'Cause I didn't have any muvver. I didn't usen't to mind it so much till when the sun went down. 'At's when you wisht you had a muvver, Martin; when the dark comes creeping on an' you go to bed an' the corners get all filled up with shadows an' it keeps getting darker 'n' darker 'n' darker an' you lie there and hear footprints going by the door this way an' going by that way but never coming *your* way, Martin; an'

people talking 'way off like, but nobody paying any 'tention to *you*. 'At's it, Martin, plenty people, everywhere, but nobody 'at's really *yours*. Plenty footprints and faraway voices going up an' down the hall, but nobody to tuck in the blankets and hold your hand when you's skeered and sit close an' sing soft to you till the Sand Man gets aroun'. Nothing like that, Martin, if you's got no muvver."

Bobby raised a corner of his napkin and wiped something from one of his eyes.

"Well, Martin, the Rose Lady was muvvery to me, and so, when she says 'Good-bye, Sonny Boy,' I jes' cried. Didn't mean to, but couldn't help jes' a little. An' I says, 'Rose Lady, s'pos'n I was sick again, would you come to me then?' an' she says, 'Yes, Sonny Boy,' an' 'en I says, 'S'pos'n daddy's sick, would you come to me then?' an' she says: 'Yes, Sonny Boy.' An' I says, 'But I won't know where you are, Rose Lady.' An' she took a flower from her Bible 'at was on the table, which she used to read to me about David the Gi'nt Killer, an' she put it in a envellup with writing on the outside an' she says to me, she says, 'Jes' mail this to me an' I'll know what it means; but promise 'at you won't show it to anybody ever;' an' I promised an' she give it to me and kissed me an' nex' day she didn't come back any more. A finger bowl, Martin; I got a piece o' egg on my nose."

The kind-hearted butler had been so affected by this recital that he was a little slow in grasping the order at the end of it. Arousing himself, he went stiffly to the sideboard.

No sooner was his back turned than young Robert, casting a sly glance about him, produced a small wallet. He opened it, turned back a rip in the lining, and from this place of concealment extracted an envelope that had been folded two ways, making it small enough to be conveniently hidden.

When Martin returned with the finger bowl, Bobby had replaced the wallet and was calmly flattening the envelope on the table. He dipped his napkin in the water and rubbed the end of his nose vigorously. Then to the butler, who had resumed his position at the opposite end of the table:

"Sit down, Martin."

"Excuse me, Master Robert, I couldn't do it."

"Why not, Martin?"

"It wouldn't be proper, sir."

"Well, then, here's what the Rose Lady gave me. Look inside of it."

Martin took the envelope gingerly, turned up the flap, and peered within.

"A flower," he said, "a pressed flower, just as you said."

"'Xactly," commented Bobby. "An' the writing, there, what do you make o' that, Martin?"

"It says: 'Miss Gray, care of the Manhattan Nurses Home, 115 West 23rd Street, New York,'" Martin read.

"'Xactly," agreed Bobby. "An' now, Martin, the secret is 'at father is sick, an' I'm going to send for the Rose Lady."

Martin lifted his hands deprecatingly.

"I don't think Mr. Mackenzie is ill enough for that, Master Robert," he protested, uneasily.

"I'm not asking you to think, Martin," responded the little fellow, with a quaintly authoritative air. "I'm asking you, Martin, what I's got to do to send my message to the Rose Lady."

Martin was quite subjected.

"First it would 'ave to 'ave a stamp on it, Master Robert."

"'At's what I thought," said Bobby. "Have you got one, Martin?"

Martin produced one, reluctantly, from his waistcoat pocket and young Robert affixed it with great precision.

"An' what else, Martin?"

"Well, it ought to 'ave the name of this 'otel on it, sir, else the lady wouldn't know where it came from."

"'At's what I thought," agreed Robert again; "an' jes' where would you put it, now?" cocking his head on one side and looking at the envelope.

"Just 'ere, sir," said the butler, indicating with his finger.

"'At's what I thought. An' how would you write it, now?" asked Bobby, slipping a stub of a pencil into Martin's faltering hand.

"Well, I should say something like this, sir," said Martin, and he scratched "Hotel Plato" across the corner.

"'At's what I thought. An' how would you mail it, now?" pursued the young schemer, thrusting the envelope into the butler's hand.

But Martin let the message fall to the floor and then, stooping, picked it up and returned it to Robert.

"Beg your pardon, Master Robert," he said, with much dignity. "I can 'ave nothing to do with the matter whatever, sir. You 'ave got me into your confidence against my will, and if you were to do me the honour of asking my opinion, sir, I would say that if your father does not approve of this you ought not go into it, sir. Asking your pardon, sir."

Bobby seemed a little surprised at this outburst, but not in the smallest degree disconcerted.

"Don't scold, Martin," he said, calmly. "I'm jes' asking you, how would you mail it?"

"Oh, well, sir," said Martin, taken aback by the suave manner of the child, "if it's only that, I should say if the envelope were dropped in the red box on the clerk's desk it would be delivered safely, sir."

"Thanks, Martin. You may take away the breakfast now. I've finished," and the little boy slipped from his chair and sauntered away.

## CHAPTER LI

### THE TRUTH IN TIME

THAT afternoon Robert Mackenzie, Jr., gave a party. Two weeks before, while it was being planned, the senior Mackenzie was quite as enthusiastic as his boy. But now, as the young people gathered, he had no heart for the occasion. Since the previous night, when his eyes were opened, he had observed things that served only to accentuate the pathos of his boy's position. He now submitted to the party as an ordeal which he must undergo for the child's sake. But as he looked at the smiling faces of the little ones, not knowing which of these might be concealing a taunt, a jest, a sneer, a bitter fling at his innocent boy, they filled him with distrust and remorse. The little guests, representing only about half of the cards issued, arrived at five. And from that hour until they were gone Robert lingered near his boy, believing that his presence would serve to stifle the slurs and slings with which, oddly enough, little children sometimes take pleasure in goading the unfortunate.

At seven they departed, and shortly thereafter little Robert was put to bed.

"Did you have a good time, son o' mine?" asked Mackenzie, as he kissed the boy good-night.

"Yes, daddy," he said, gaily; and then sobering a little, he added: "On'y they didn't very many come."

Tom Pierce dropped in to take "T. P. Jr." home and found Mackenzie in a room which he used as his library.

"By the way, Bob," he said, sitting on the corner of the table, "I heard to-day from the Landsley; the private school, you know, that our Tom has been entered in. You remember I put your application in for little Robert. Well, I'm sorry, old man, but they can't take him."

"They can't take him?" Robert spoke listlessly.

"Unfortunately, no. I believe there's a limit to the enrollment and they have a full quota for the next term—or something like that."

Mackenzie got up and put his hand on Pierce's shoulder.

"It doesn't matter, Tom, old friend. It's just like you to try and make it easy for me; but the blow had fallen before you told me this, and nothing can make the cross heavier than it already is. The wonder is that I did not see the thing before. I was blinded, Tom, blinded by the joy of discovery of what I believed to be a gift from God—my beautiful boy. I never stopped to figure the thing out to its conclusion. Look!"

He pointed to a pile of little envelopes on the table.

"Regrets," he said, bitterly. "The boy's party was a fiasco. Thank God, he doesn't realise it—yet. Yet—ah, Pierce, not yet! But when he does, what

then! My God! What then!" His chin sank upon his chest and a sob broke from him.

Pierce slapped him on the back with one hand and shook him with the other.

"Come, come," he said, lightly. "Why, man, you're in the doldrums! You're making a mountain out of a molehill. This all comes of living in a high-toned hotel where everybody from the grand old dame with the diamond stomacher down to the second assistant nurse girl has nothing to do but to pry into other people's affairs and traduce their neighbours. There's no disgrace about it, anyhow. Why, Bob Mackenzie, there isn't a human being in all the world that wouldn't honour and respect you for the way you've acted in this matter from start to finish!"

"It's not I, Tom; it's the boy," put in Mackenzie.

"D——n their wagging tongues," stormed Pierce, more to conceal his solicitousness than through loss of temper. "Old maids and idle servants with time on their hands and libel in their hearts!"

"But it's all true, Tom; and the pity is that, in this case, until the resurrection of the dead there is no righting of the wrong. As sure as Rosa Carmona lies in her grave on the hillside where we laid her, this boy, this son of mine, must carry the stigma to the very end!"

"Nonsense, Robert! It's nothing, anyhow; but such as it is you needn't fear it. It can be lived down, old fellow; and if that doesn't appeal to you, it can be run away from——"

"I wish to God I could believe you; but I know



better, Tom. I have turned it over in my mind a thousand times. I thought of taking the lad to China—to some little hamlet where a white face is never seen. But I couldn't keep him there forever. He would not stay. He will not always be a child. I could not bring him up in exile without his knowing it; without his demanding to know why. For a time I might deceive him, but every hour will bring nearer the day of reckoning; and sooner or later he will understand. The longer it is deferred, the older he will be and the greater the shock of discovery. There is no spot in the world where the story will not seek him out; there is no hope this side of the grave."

Mackenzie got up wearily and walked to the fireplace. He stood with his elbow on the mantle, looking into the cold, grey ashes of the morning fire.

"Look here, Bob," said Pierce, from the table, "are you going to be a quitter? Isn't there a fight left in you? How about those lines of Henley's you used to like so well:

"Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

"In the fell clutch of circumstance  
I have not winced nor cried aloud.  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed!"

"Brace up, Robert, brace up! Take a good night's sleep and get your nerve back. We'll find a way out of it yet, you'll see if we don't!"

Just then "T. P. Jr." called from the doorway, and as the boy himself followed the summons, Pierce took the little fellow's hand and started out.

"Will you be in later?" Robert called after him, casually.

"We're going to the theatre, Molly and I, just around the corner from here. We might drop in for a few minutes, after the show." They had done this not infrequently, of late.

"Do," said Robert; "I'll have the kettle boiling."

Mackenzie seated himself in an easy chair near the table. It was the table at which he did his writing and studying. Amidst the litter of papers and books there was a picture of the boy. The room was only softly lighted by the shaded bulbs of a chandelier, but a good light from a desk-lamp fell on the youngster's photograph, throwing the beautiful face in fine relief against the shadow behind it.

Robert's spirits had utterly failed to respond to Tom's cheering words and buoyant manner. He lapsed into moody meditation, his eyes on the features of his son and his heart weighted with despair. The boy's parting words were haunting him:

"They didn't very many come."

That would be the way of it his whole life through. The shame of his birth would follow him to the ends of the earth and find him out. He would cry out for companionship, but nobody would come. He would appeal for sympathy, friends, position, honour, the fellowship of men; and everything he might seek to

be or have would only wreak from him the plaintive cry of his babyhood: "They didn't very many come!" Blacker and blacker the situation grew as Mackenzie brooded; darker and more hopeless seemed the future and heavier grew the appalling depression that bore him down. The fine eyes looked out at him from the photograph and seemed to be calling him to judgment.

He flinched before their steady gaze, and unlocking a drawer in the desk, he placed the picture within it.

As he did so his hand touched something cold.

His fingers closed upon it, and when his hand again rested on the desk there was the gleam of blued steel beneath it.

For a full half hour he sat as motionless as a figure carved in stone. Not a nerve twitched, not a muscle moved. But behind the marble face a tragedy was in rehearsal. He was balancing the wrong and the right of a desperate plan that had slowly taken form in his tired brain.

Which would be better for this little child of chance?

On the one hand, a quick and painless end—and eternal peace in a little grave beside its mother's.

On the other hand, a life of social exile and shame.

On the one hand, he, of course, would go with the boy, who would love him to the last, and together they would find, at the very worst, oblivion.

On the other hand, there must come a time when the love the boy bore him would turn to hate—or

worse; when the lips that now caressed him would frame a curse.

The boy's room adjoined the one in which he sat. He could hear his breath as it came and went with the regularity that marks a profound and healthful sleep, and, curiously, he noted how it seemed to alternate with the muffled ticking of the tall clock in the hall beyond. And every breath and every swing of the pendulum marked the nearer approach of that inevitable hour when his son would come into his heritage of ignominy.

What would be best for the boy?

The clock in the hall struck nine. He had made up his mind now. But it should not be hurried. There must be no error.

Then ten. He had gone over the thing again from beginning to end, and with the same result. There was but one way. But the step was short—to eternity; and he must take it slowly.

Eleven. Still he sat, grim and immobile, but dangerously strong, the polished metal flashing a sullen blue sheen through the sinewy white fingers that held it on the table.

There was a soft tap at the library door.

"What is it?" asked Mackenzie.

"Some one to see you, sir," answered the voice of Martin.

"Well? The name?" impatiently.

"It is declined, sir," came the voice from behind the door.

Mackenzie swept the weapon from the desk to the

open drawer, yawned, turned his back squarely upon the waiting Martin, and looked absently through the window at the night sky.

"Well, sir?" asked Martin, after a long wait.

"What is it, Martin?" drawled Mackenzie.

"The caller, sir."

"Oh, yes; I'll see him, of course." Still he looked listlessly through the opposite window, seeing nothing, but thinking on from the point of interruption, despondency enshrouding him like a fog.

"Mr. Mackenzie."

Robert started at the sound of his name. It seemed to have been spoken in his very ear; the more distinct, perhaps, because in fancy he was so far away. But it was the voice, rather than the name it spoke, that caused him to straighten in his chair.

"Mr. Mackenzie."

He sprang to his feet and turned about, looking sharply across the table.

"*Helen!* It can't be you?"

Without a word she stepped across the floor, stood squarely in front of him, and peered into his face. There was something professional in the manner of her scrutiny.

"It is you who are ill!" she said.

"I? Ill? No, no."

"The boy, then?" she asked, anxiously.

"Perfectly well and sleeping soundly, Helen! I don't understand——"

"Nor did I; but I am beginning to, now, I think. You are in trouble, Robert?"

"Awful trouble!" He passed his hand over his forehead, drawing the fingers slowly down his cheek, a gesture of helplessness that was new to Robert Mackenzie as she had known him. "Awful trouble, Helen!" Oh, the harrowing helplessness in that tone! It touched the woman who knew what the suffering must have been to wrench from this giant of strength so forlorn a cry.

"Listen, Robert; I know your sorrow and I come to tell you that your trouble is no more," she said.

The colourless face, the nerveless hand that now held hers, the appealing look in the eyes, urged her to go straight to the heart of the wound.

"Robert, I bring to you a message from a broken man. Rosa Carmona was your legal wife and that beautiful boy is your legitimate son!"

For a brief moment a film seemed to curtain his eyes; he stared vacantly.

"Carmona—my wife?" He droned the words as one in a daze.

"Yes," she went on quickly, "your wife! You were married by Sidney Powell in his capacity of Alderman on the night of the supper party at the Windsor Arms; the certificate was recorded a few weeks after the marriage and you can see it tomorrow, properly signed, witnessed, and filed!"

Such was his unflinching confidence in the sterling qualities of this girl, that as word by word this story fell from Helen Willoughby's lips, Robert Mackenzie knew it to be incontrovertibly true!

He sank into his chair and covered his face with his hands, crying:



AS WORD BY WORD THIS STORY FELL FROM HELEN WIL-  
LOUGHBY'S LIPS, ROBERT MACKENZIE KNEW IT TO BE  
INCONTROVERTIBLY TRUE

THE NEW YORK  
PROPERTY  
DEPARTMENT  
NEW YORK  
SOCIETY LIBRARY  
AT THE  
TILDEN FOUNDATION  
R L



"Thank God for this! Thank God! Thank God!"

The great joy that swelled in his breast was like a quick and potent tonic and made him strong. Soon he looked up at her and took her hands in his and kissed them.

"Helen," he asked, "if I am not dreaming, tell me more! Who sends this message?"

"Sidney Powell," she answered; adding quickly: "And I saw the papers that prove it, every word—and you shall see them."

"Oh, mysterious Fate!" exclaimed Robert. "That this man, of all others, sends such tidings—and that you, his wife, should bear them!"

She stepped back a pace and looked at him wondering.

"Robert!" she cried, "what are you saying? I haven't seen Sidney Powell for five years until last night; and then only by the merest accident—or by the will of God! I am no man's wife."

In a flash, Mackenzie was on his feet, the colour restored to his cheek and the lustre to his eyes.

"Then, by the will of God," he said, fervently, "you shall be mine!"

She flushed to the temples and put up her hand deprecatingly.

He reached out as though to take her, but stopped.

There was the patter of soft footfalls on the floor and a flash of bronze curls between them.

"My Rose Lady!" cried a glad little voice.

"My Sonny Boy!" came the answer.

And little Robert, laughing and crowing in an ecstasy of delight, was folded in Helen's arms.

## CHAPTER LII

### THE RAMBLER ROSE

ROBERT MACKENZIE, JR., had retired, this time to stay the night through in the Dale of Dreams. His father had sat silent, but fairly beaming the pleasure that the scene gave him, while little Robert had clung to the one woman in all the world in whose arms the father would have most desired to see his boy. Surprise upon surprise had been paraded before him in the brief space of a few moments. The air was charged with the unexpected. Wonders were transpiring by the minute, every one of which emphasised an abrupt turn-about in his fortune and in the fortune and future of his boy. And he knew that Helen Willoughby, calm, confident, and smiling, held the key to every mystery.

Still, with never a sign of impatience, contentment dominant over curiosity, he had sat serenely contemplating the picture before him.

Eventually, however, Helen had noticed that the lids were dropping wearily over Bobby's eyes.

"Tired, Sonny Boy?" she had asked, softly.

"Yes, Rose Lady."

"Shall we rock a little?"

"Yes, Rose Lady."

"And you'll go to sleep?"

"If you'll promise to tuck me in."

"I promise."

So she had rocked him, humming a melody. Robert Mackenzie, his elbow on the table, shading his face with his hand, had looked on with misty eyes. For it was the lullaby that his mother used to sing.

When the rebellious lids had given up the struggle, Helen had borne Bobby back to the bed which he had deserted at the sound of her voice.

"Now," said Mackenzie, leading her to the most comfortable chair, "the first real live fairy I have ever seen will explain the workings of her magic wand. By all that's stupid!" he added, "I haven't even asked you to lay aside your wrap."

Helen threw off the long coat that had covered her from throat to heels—and she stood revealed in the white regalia of a graduate nurse.

"I was anxious, Robert," she said, in a tone of apology, "I couldn't take time enough to change."

"By jove!" he exclaimed, "I'm glad you didn't; for it's certainly most becoming!" And so it was.

She seated herself and Robert drew up a chair, facing her.

"It is late," she began, "and I must be brief. But chiefly, I want you to know that it was your own little son who got the message through—the message that brought me here to-night."

She then related the story of the compact she had made at the hospital with little Robert, adding, however, that she quite believed that he would forget the incident amidst his new surroundings and in the change and novelty of the new life upon which he was about to enter.

"See," she said, taking the packet from her blouse and fingering it tenderly. "See how it is creased and soiled and wept upon. I know that these are tears."

Mackenzie took it from her and gazed at the tiny finger marks that smudged its edges. Then he drew forth the flower that lay within.

"A rose," he said.

"Yes," she answered, casting down her eyes; "from the old fence up home. It is the flower I wore in my hair—that night."

Mackenzie knew that the time for him to speak again had come. Without rising, he reached out his hand and took something from the drawer of his table.

"That night!" he repeated. "I remember it, Helen, and I remember the flower. And I remember that I gave you a ring which you kissed with your dear, sweet lips and returned to me. And I remember that when I begged you to wear it your answer was—'when the rambler blooms again!' Do you remember?"

"Yes," she said. The colour in her cheeks came and went and she arose from her chair. Six years had worked changes in Helen Willoughby; still, now that she divined what was coming, the innate modesty of the girl rebuked her. She had sought him out and was here—in his rooms.

But Mackenzie stood also, confronting her.

"Well, Helen," he went on, "this is June. It is rose time up there in Wellington; the rambler is blooming along the old fence, and the garden and

the flowers and the trees and the fields are calling us home. It's time to redeem the pledge you made me."

He took her hand and put the ring upon her finger.

"Robert, dear," she said, "we will be very happy; you and I—and the boy."

She looked steadily at him with her true-blue eyes.

"At last!" he said, hoarse-throated with the love that had been smouldering for years like an unquenchable fire. And he wrapped her in his arms.

## CHAPTER LIII

### HOW IT HAPPENED

"MR. and Mrs. Pierce," said Martin, mechanically, from the doorway.

If what Martin saw astonished him, no one would have guessed it either from his tone or his facial expression. However, it is a matter of record that the tableau disclosed to him as he entered the room revealed his master in an unexpected rôle.

Helen, being released, dropped into a high-backed chair, which, being faced toward the opposite wall, served effectually as a screen to her confusion.

Robert, blushing a bit himself, though whether from pleasure or embarrassment is problematical, turned a good-humoured face toward the butler.

"Show them in, of course, Martin," he ordered. As the man retreated he called after him:

"And, Martin!"

"Yes, sir."

"Serve the supper. We'll be there directly."

Tom and Molly, who habitually disregarded Martin's punctilious method of receiving, now came pell-mell into the library.

"Who's ill?" anxiously inquired Molly. She had seen Helen's white figure reflected in the mirror over the mantel.

"I *was*," said Robert,— "sick unto death, but, thank God, a good physician came in time."

He took Helen's hand, drew her to her feet, and led her around the table, toward the new arrivals.

"Helen," he said, "let me present Mr. and Mrs. Pierce, my rock and my salvation during the years that you were lost to me. Tom and Molly, this is my healer of to-day and my wife of to-morrow— Miss Willoughby."

There was great rejoicing on the part of Robert's two friends and an abbreviated explanation from Robert, who promised that details would follow later on.

"Well, Bob, judging from the change in the look of you between seven o'clock and eleven, Miss Willoughby has effected a marvellous cure," averred Pierce, finally.

"Miss Willoughby is a marvellous woman," said Robert, "and if you will be good enough to show her to the dining room we'll celebrate the recovery over a wondrous salad of Martin's own devising."

And giving an arm to Molly, he led the way to the table.

Over the supper, Helen, at the request of Mackenzie, supplied the missing links in the chain of occurrences that had entangled Robert in its coils, and from which he had been released, after six years, as if by the touch of a magic wand.

While Mackenzie was under the spell of the Manzanilla that night at the Windsor Arms, Powell, ostensibly in a spirit of mischief, but actually to rid himself of a rival, whispered in his ear a challenge

purporting to have come from Carmona to marry her on the spot. Then, turning to Carmona, and speaking in her own tongue, he conveyed a proposal from Robert to the same effect. Robert was in the trance-like condition peculiar to him when under the influence of wine—physically alert but mentally stupefied. He accepted the challenge; and Carmona, who had really fallen in love with the young American, and who took the proposal in good faith, gave her consent.

Powell performed the ceremony in his capacity of Alderman. Having a supply of the blank forms in his rooms, the certificate was made out, regularly signed by the contracting parties, and attested by Blab Wilson and Mollensteen. Early the next morning, while Mackenzie slept, Mollensteen had despatched La Carmona's maid to the singer's new quarters with a part of her wardrobe and left orders for her trunks to follow. Weeks later Powell had the marriage certificate regularly filed.

Wilson carried the news back to Wellington and it spread quickly through the town. Mackenzie, who had recalled nothing of the wedding the morning after, promptly cut himself off from all communication with his home town and with the witnesses to the marriage, and thus was kept in ignorance of his true relationship to Carmona. Owing to the fact that neither spoke the language of the other, he failed to learn the truth from the young dancer, who presumed, of course, that he knew she was his wife.

The retirement of Carmona from public life six months later was made necessary by her delicate con-



dition, but she kept her secret, even from her manager Mollensteen, and went into seclusion without a word of warning or explanation to any one. The story connecting her name with that of Fernández, the Cuban, was based on the mere fact that he had courted her persistently; but she had repulsed his advances and her decision to seclude herself was hastened by a desire to escape his attentions.

When Robert presented himself at the Willoughby homestead the night after the marriage to seek forgiveness, Helen supposed, of course, that he was aware of the ceremony. She knew that she was receiving in her home at nearly midnight a man who had just been married and who had abandoned his wife to come to her, and whose visit, under such circumstances was not only distinctly improper and un-circumspect, but utterly useless and hopeless. She knew also that his trip to Wellington, if it became known, would involve them both in a scandal for which there would be some justification; although she would have braved this had there been anything to gain by the colloquy. It so happened that during the brief talk on the stairs nothing was said on either side that might have led to an understanding.

"Do you remember, Robert," asked Helen, "that I said your place was by her side; that it was your duty to return to her?"

"Yes, but it suggested nothing."

"Did you not think I was unduly severe?"

"I thought you were characteristically consistent," replied Mackenzie.

"Consistent with what?"

"With your ideals—the single standard. I believed that you were measuring me by the same rule with which you had measured Sidney Powell. Would you have done so, if, as I supposed, there had been no marriage, I wonder?"

Half smiling, her eyes downward, she abstractedly traced a fleur-de-lis in the table-cloth with the point of her finger. And when finally she made answer it was but an echo of his question:

"I wonder."

Here Martin came with the coffee, and at Mackenzie's suggestion it was placed before Helen to be poured. It pleased him to see her presiding at his table.

"Is it not remarkable," commented Pierce, "that a man could be married six years and never know it!"

"It is unusual, certainly," agreed Helen, "but so were the circumstances that contributed to it. First Robert himself was unconscious that a ceremony had been performed; then, he and poor Rosa Carmona could not converse because they had no common language and during the few days they were together they had neither the occasion nor the means for referring specifically to the marriage ceremony; and lastly, Robert, since the night of the marriage, has studiously avoided every one who could have enlightened him, and, in fact, has been out of the country virtually all of the time."

Shifting to her own part of the drama, she told how Powell had renewed his suit without success, how she had come to New York and had become a trained nurse, first abandoning the name of Wil-

loughby to indulge her father's pride; how she had been engaged by the Children's Home in Connecticut to take charge of its hospital ward and how she had been so struck with the resemblance of the little auburn-haired inmate that she had suspected his parentage instantly, a suspicion that was verified when she learned his name.

She told of the attachment which had sprung up between them, of the child falling ill, of the transfer of both nurse and patient to New York; of how, out of a sense of the delicacy of her position, she had avoided a meeting with Robert in the hospital. She touched briefly on her sorrow at parting from little Robert and his own grief, and mentioned the incident of the signal of distress which they had arranged between them. She had taken care to keep her future address from the doctor when she was leaving, but risked it on the envelope which she gave, with admonitions of secrecy, to the little boy.

After a week's rest, she accepted an offer to take charge of a ward in the Flower Hospital. The night that Sidney Powell, racked by political worries and harassed by the fear of exposure, collapsed while walking on Broadway, he was taken to the Flower Hospital and Helen saw him and recognised him as they brought him in. He had lapsed into a coma on the way, but responded to restoratives and soon became quite strong. Upon seeing Helen, he showed much agitation.

Powell, it transpired, had always suspected that Robert Mackenzie might have been ignorant of the existence of the marriage contract. But having

learned that Mackenzie had deserted Carmona after the first week, he had regarded the incident as closed. Later, through mysterious channels of information which were open to him through his intimacy with the police, he had heard of the child's birth, of Carmona's death, and just recently, of the boy's discovery and reclamation by Mackenzie. Since the removal of the boy from the hospital, however, he had lost track of both father and son. The matter had weighed heavily on his conscience, but for a few days back the critical situation in his own affairs had driven all else from his mind. Beset with political intrigues, his health failing, and hounded by the vice investigators at every turn, he fell under a stroke of apoplexy; but he was still conscious when Mackenzie bent over him, and from the brief but burning denunciation that Robert poured into his ear, he realised for the first time the tragic possibilities of his treachery. Fearing that he was near death, he hurriedly related these circumstances to Helen and implored her to aid him in undoing so far as possible the havoc he had wrought. He despatched one of his henchmen for the packet of papers and produced the certificate of marriage. Among the papers there was also a letter to him from Mollensteen, written by the manager when he first learned of Carmona's death, and urging Powell to see Mackenzie and tell him that the mother of his child was not as bad as she had been represented. The tales of her conquests, he confessed, were largely fabrications which he had circulated for advertising purposes, and which he had exploited with the skill and resourcefulness

for which he was noted in the stage world. The Sultan's pearl necklace was a rank imitation and the story a creature of his own imagination. While he was bending every effort to proclaim Carmona as an international adventuress, for professional purposes, he had inwardly admired and respected the young woman, observing in her a degree of modesty and propriety not usually accredited to people of her class and calling. In his letter, Mollensteen added that the beautiful and impulsive young woman, being unable to read English and having no friends of her own race in America, was utterly ignorant of the real lengths to which her manager had gone in making her the most talked of woman on the stage. A day or two after the marriage, he had called to make all this clear to Robert, but met with a rebuff which chilled his kindly interest, for a time.

"From all I can gather," said Helen, "this Mollensteen meant well by La Carmona and both he and Mrs. Mollensteen were genuinely fond of the young woman. But his professional ambition and the business success of the venture blinded him to the evil consequences of a blasted character. The exact moral standing of Rosa Carmona is not established, but certainly to a large extent she was the victim of her press agent's zeal."

All were much affected by this portion of Helen's narrative.

"Poor little Carmona!" said Robert. And then he added gravely: "If there are angels in Heaven she knows now that I meant to do her no wrong."

A silence fell around the table, a silence in which

at least one among them offered an unspoken prayer.

After a little, however, other points of the story were touched upon, and in due course they turned to happier phases of the romance.

Among other things, Helen explained how little Robert had put his message through and saved the day. When Powell had told her everything and begged her to seek Mackenzie without a moment's delay, she was at a loss how to proceed, not having the slightest knowledge of where he and the boy were to be found. Powell, weakened by the effort and excitement of his confession, could suggest no feasible plan for locating them, and began to show signs of another sinking spell. While hurrying to her room to change her clothing for street attire and to ponder the problem, she was handed a letter that had been forwarded from the Nurses' Home. It was Bobby's message, and the name of the hotel across the corner of the envelope supplied the needed information. Stopping only long enough to put on her hat and throw a coat over her service uniform, she had hurried to the scene.

"By the way," asked Robert, as they sipped their coffee, "is Powell's illness really serious?"

"He will recover," she answered, "but improvement will be slow and the doctors say that he must leave New York and lead a quiet life henceforth, preferably in his home town. It is likely, I was told, that if he retires from politics and leaves the city the charges against him will never be renewed. He asked me to bespeak for him such leniency as you could extend, Robert, and to say that his mean be-

trayal of you, his staunchest friend, was the mad impulse of a desperate man."

"I forgive him freely," said Mackenzie, "and in the great happiness which you have brought me, dear heart, I can also afford to forget. And, by the way, Helen, who *did* Sidney Powell marry?"

"The girl who, because of his faithlessness, had begun to feel the lash of scandal—Nan Wallabout."

"By crackey!" exclaimed Tom Pierce, "that's the name I've been trying to think of for five years!"

"Ever since the night I sailed for Panama," remarked Robert.

"Precisely so," agreed Tom, "you remember, Bob? I told you just as you were leaving that I'd met a fellow from up your way who told me Powell had married a girl in Wellington, but the name of the girl had slipped me; and you asked if it wasn't something-or-other and I said I guessed it was?"

"I remember very distinctly, Tom," said Robert, a little sadly.

"But Wallabout wasn't the name you mentioned."

"No, Tom."

"What was it, then?"

"Really, Tom," said Robert, smiling across at Helen, "I've quite forgotten. Martin, bring the chocolates, and help Mr. Pierce to the cigars."

## CHAPTER LIV.

### THE GARDEN GATE

THE time is now; an afternoon in June,—a day of sunshine—the warm and welcome sunshine that bathes a green and flowered country in the early spring.

The place is Wellington, an up-state town, ten hours from Broadway, just large enough to be called a city, just small enough to have a garden for every home, to have every street a bower of elms and maples, to have squirrels scampering along its fences and flowers blooming in every dooryard. The scene, two gardens, back to back, with a vine-covered fence between, and a gate upon which two children, a lad of nine, tall and sturdy, and a girl of four, with eyes like the June sky and hair like the June sunshine, swing and sing and laugh away the golden hours of childhood. On a garden seat, his back against a tree, reclines a courtly, white-haired old gentleman in a suit of spotless flannel, who watches their frolic with fond and admiring eyes, vouchsafing, however, an occasional word of warning against the danger of getting one's fingers pinched when the gate swings shut.

Out in the street an open carriage rolls up to the curb and stops under the trees. A stalwart, rugged man of thirty-five, and a sweet-faced woman who



looks years younger—but is not so many—get into the carriage, their arms filled with fresh-cut flowers. The carriage moves through an arch of ancient trees to the edge of the town; and still on until, arriving at a cross-crowned gate, it turns in and winds among the grassy mounds and solemn monuments of the City of Eternal Sleep.

The carriage stops. The man and the woman wend their way to a pure white stone upon the face of which is cut this simple inscription:

“ Rosa Carmona Mackenzie, died March 21, 19—”

The man removes his hat and they both kneel beside the mound. They arrange the flowers upon it and attend to some plants at the base of the stone. Then, last of all, the sweet-faced woman takes a single flower which she has carried in her hand, and gives it to the man, who lays it tenderly upon the grave.

This flower is a rambler rose.

THE END

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