

# SHEAVES

MARIE-CONWAY-OEMLER

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**SHEAVES**

*A Comedy of Manners*

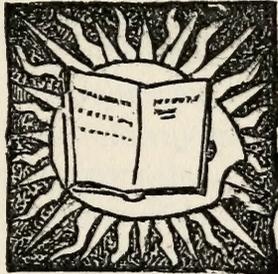
REVISED  
EIGHTH EDITION

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SHEAVES  
*A Comedy of Manners*

BY  
Marie Conway Oemler

*Slippy McGee • A Woman Named Smith  
His Wife-in-Law : Shepherds*



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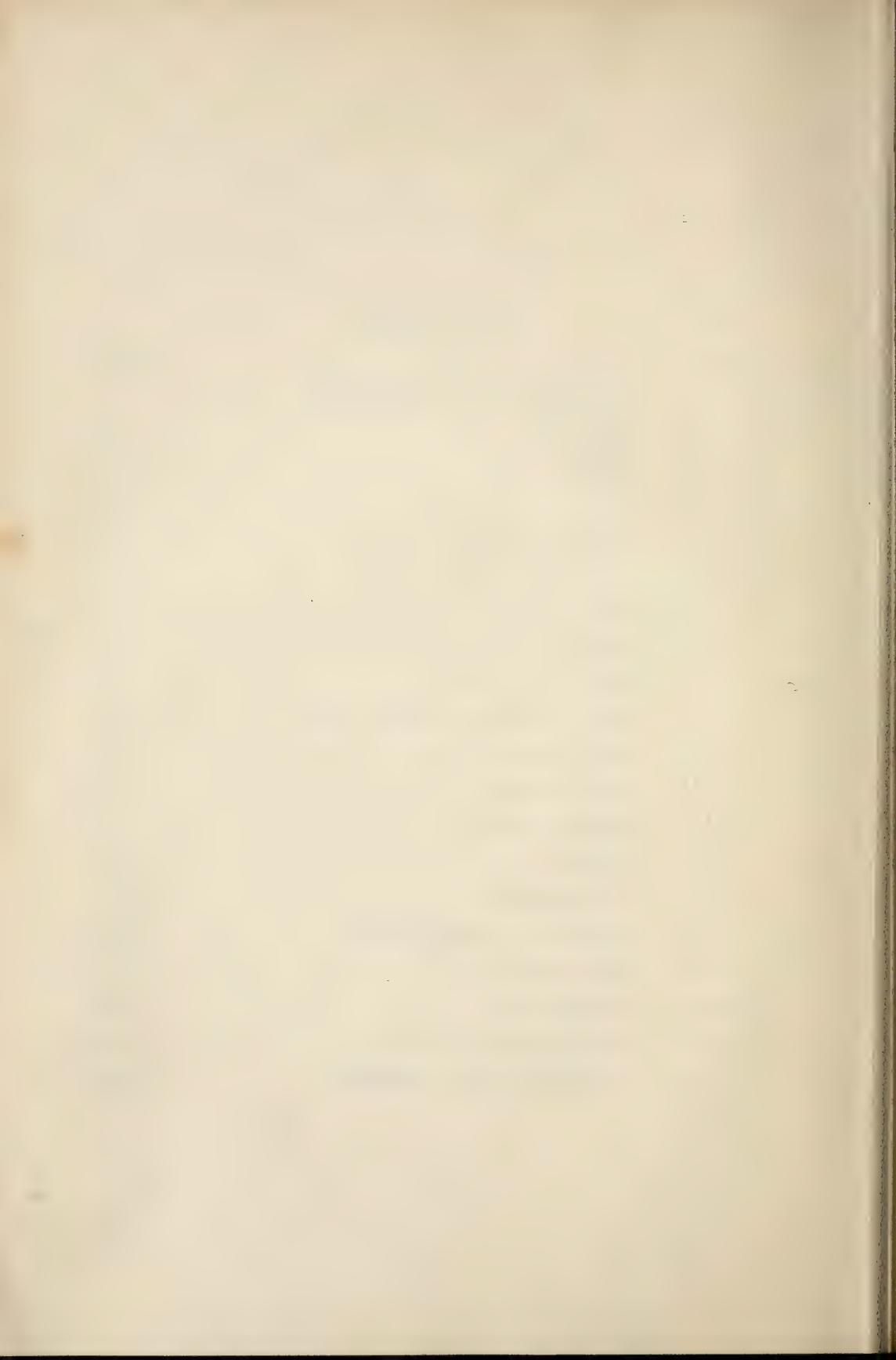
TO  
ALL MY BLACK CATS

Beautiful, serene, and wise,  
Velvet fur and topaz eyes.  
Dainty, proud, patrician things,  
Occult as Egyptian kings!  
Subtle, tameless, wilful, wild,  
Graceful, amiable, mild.  
Lithe, lascivious, ever free,  
Fierce and fickle as the sea.  
Blink and purr, mysterious minxes,  
Bijou tigers, satin sphinxes!  
Mice and milk and downy mats,  
Ever be your lot, my cats!  
Here, or There where Bast the Wise  
Fronts the sun with sleepless eyes,  
All that's pleasant may you know:  
Panch, who went where all things go,  
Tony, Moses, Old Jim Crow,  
Peter, Blinky, Winky Wu,  
Solomon and Sheba Shu.



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# SHEAVES

## CHARACTERS

FRANCIS COURTENAY: *A he-butterfly: Brother Francis*

MR. JORDAN COURTENAY: *His uncle. Philanthropy*

AURORA JANEWAY: *The Goddess in the Machine; a  
Bringer of Sheaves*

DOLLY TREDEGAR: *A beautiful dancer; also a Gatherer  
of Sheaves*

MARY MCKINSTRY: *A Vestal*

HENRY HARKNESS: *An Apostle*

COLIN MURRAY: *An Architect*

MRS. COLIN MURRAY: *A Very Lucky Lady*

WINNY DAVIS CULPEPPER: *An Art Student from the  
South*

SIMMONS: *A Perfect Servant*

A BISHOP

A DOCTOR

OTHER PEOPLE

SWEET PERCIVAL: *A Dog*

# SHEAVES

## CHAPTER I

### THE DECORATIVE GENTLEMAN

“**S**IMMONS,” said the tall young man in the purple dressing-gown with gold buttons, “reach me that green satin cushion and put it under my feet. Carefully, please. I have a wish to resemble Petrarch’s Laura in my color scheme: she was in purple and green, like a bunch of violets, when the old chap first cut an eye at her. Result: immortality, in what is known to the intelligentsia as the Sonnet. How do I know there mayn’t be a sonnet or two tucked away somewhere in your cosmos, Simmons, to immortalize *me?*”

The divan on which the tall young man reclined, sultan-like, was so exotic to the prim little room Simmons called his office, that only the young sybarite himself could explain or justify its presence. But he had had it placed there to gratify some whim of his own, and Simmons had never objected. Simmons never objected to anything

Mr. Francis wanted. He liked Mr. Francis around. His office had offered no comfortable lounging-place, and Mr. Francis had to be comfortable, hadn't he?

"I'm trying to bring some color into your life, Simmons," he had explained. "I want to study your reactions to it. It ought to light up your complexes, if you've got any. It should add sex attraction to your list of beatitudes. You seem to be suffering from a sex perplex: I notice you're horribly afraid of the housemaid, and you're haughty to the cook."

Simmons, who resembled the room without the divan, rose from his straight-backed chair, carefully tucked the largest and handsomest of green satin sofa cushions under the young gentleman's purple-and-gold slippers, and went back to his occupation of measuring out drops and assorting pills and tablets. The odor of drugs spread through the room. Young Mr. Francis Courtenay sniffed, frowned, turned his head with languid grace, and watched Simmons, mild interest in his large dark eyes. He was not only a beautiful but a very healthy young man, and Simmons's occupation and preoccupation seemed to him exceedingly useless.

"Simmons," he wondered, "do you resemble your father or your mother? I inquire because of a grave doubt in my mind concerning you."

"Yes, Mr. Francis?" Simmons's eyes, of the

color of a dead mullet, expressed no emotion of any sort. He might at times, under great stress, wrinkle his eyebrows, but that was the only concession he ever made. In his discreet and immovable countenance one recognized the perfect serving-man raised to the *nth* power. Mr. Francis had frequently assured him that on the Day of Judgment his soul would rise, glorious and immortal, in a pair of pepper-and-salt trousers, a black coat, a white string-tie, and an air of impenetrable reserve, of determination to keep the whole affair secret and confidential—all in the family, so to say.

Having finished his task of measuring drops, he set pills and glasses upon a tray, covered it with a stiffly starched white cloth, and turned to the young man respectfully.

“You were about to observe, Mr. Francis . . . ?”

“I was about to ask,” said the young man, seriously, “if you were ever born, Simmons? There is a gentleman mentioned in the Bible who wasn’t, you know. Quite a respectable person, too, yet he was ‘without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.’ Rather reminds one of you, Simmons. Are you sure you were ever born?”

“I was born in quite the usual and proper manner. I think I am safe in asserting that such was the case, Mr. Francis,” said Simmons, dryly.

“But you can’t be sure, you know,” protested the young man. “Isn’t it barely possible that your estimable mother may have picked you off a bush and, remarking, ‘Here is an eminently conservative and respectable child, an astonishingly safe and sane child, my dear,’ presented you to your admiring and grateful father?”

“My mother,” said Simmons, “was quite incapable of such a piece of folly. She was an eminently respectable and conservative person herself.”

“That’s just what puzzles me,” said the young man. “I know she was. She had to be, in dealing with *you*. And yet, as I’ve told you before, I’m perfectly convinced that you arrived on the scene in pepper-and-salt breeches, a starched shirt, and a turn-down collar. And you knew everything about everything and everybody from the beginning of days.”

Simmons was spared the necessity of replying to this idle persiflage, by a bell, violently and viciously jerked, jangling at his elbow.

“Your uncle!” said he succinctly, and a faint wrinkle came to his eyebrows.

The young man returned his look with a lifting of arched black brows that lent a slightly supercilious and impertinent touch to his dark and handsome countenance. It was a manly face, for all its good looks, the face of a spoiled, whimsical, but clean-playing, clean-thinking youngster. The

nose was finely cut, perhaps a bit too large, the lips delicate and laughter-loving. As he reclined on the divan, one saw that he was tall and well built. When the bell jangled again, his black eyes began to sparkle.

“Regularly on the champ, Simmy? Stamping with his fore feet and grinding on the bit?”

“He is furious. This is the second car, and the fourth plate-glass window, Mr. Francis. Cohen Brothers’ lawyers ’phoned about instituting suit. This is going to cost your uncle quite a tidy sum, sir.”

“But he’d spend it on charity and never give so much as a snort! And I’ve told you that this time it was either a window or a widow,” said Francis, a trifle impatiently. “What should one do when a rusty-black widow steps right in front of one’s car and proceeds to caper and screech? I took the pavement at a gallop, naturally, and all the reward I get for risking my neck is that Cohen Brothers make a row because their idiotic show-window got in my way and busted itself on my car . . . and my uncle goes up in the air about being asked to sign his name to a piece of paper!”

“It isn’t the first car nor the first check nor the first window . . . nor yet the first widow,” Simmons reminded him.

“What a murderous brute you are, Simmons!” said the young man, purposely misrepresenting him. “For a few paltry dollars you’d want me to

smash the widow and save the window! Of course I *could* have run over the widow. It would have meant only a trifling charge of manslaughter, and the devil, the lawyers, and the undertaker to pay. You're mercenary, and my uncle is unreasonable, I'm afraid. You might remind him, too, that I deliberately took my life in my hands—not to mention the life of that ornamental and delightful person, Miss Dolly Tredegar, who happened to be with me. Why, I might have broken one of her million-dollar legs!" He spoke with an air of conscious virtue that brought a twist to Simmons's thin lips.

"You know very well it wasn't this particular widow I had in mind when I spoke, Mr. Francis. I am neither murderous nor mercenary, nor is your uncle so unreasonable. And . . . I hardly think I'd remind him of Miss Dolly Tredegar just at this moment, sir."

"It would be a very, very kind deed to remind him of anything so pretty and pleasant."

"He disapproves of Miss Dolly Tredegar, Mr. Francis. I might even say he disapproves of her violently. I . . . ah . . . have heard him express his opinion. In mentioning this to you I do not violate any confidences, I trust."

"You don't, you priceless prune!" said Francis, laughing. "Of course he disapproves of Dolly! He disapproves of everything and everybody that even remotely suggests anything pleasant. I sup-

pose," he arched his black brows, "that I'm regularly in for it again, Simmy?"

"Well, Mr. Francis, three o'clock in the morning is no time to come home . . . let me say, vociferously . . . right on the heels of car-smashing and window-wrecking, and when he was so irritated about a threatened suit for damages. And you yourself heard the racket your dog made when he heard you at the door. It woke your uncle up, just after he'd been able to get to sleep; it was enough to wake the dead. You were singing, too, Mr. Francis. Quite loudly. In fact, at the top of your voice. Not a godly air, sir. Anything but. I must say I have never heard even you sing such a song as you gave us this morning. It was an outrageous song. It made the policeman who . . . ah . . . escorted you . . . blush. And when one can make a policeman blush, Mr. Francis . . . !"

"I'd been to poor old Martin's stag. As a friend and sympathizer, I was one of those who sought to enliven his last hours. Perhaps the wake was a trifle frisky, Simmy, but," and Francis shook his head, "when one of your best friends . . . one with whom you have prattled in infancy . . . one with whom you have spent the care-free hours of youth and all the rest of it . . . is about to leave you forever . . . to get himself married to a strange girl, who you fear is, at the end of a few years, going to be even stranger . . . you will

strain a point. You will feign a fictitious mirth, to gild his last free hours with a sickly sunshine. Just as *I* did. I sang to keep from weeping. I bade him a last sad farewell at some rather early hour this morning, still warbling . . . to keep up my spirits."

Simmons said nothing. He stared at Mr. Francis reflectively.

"You speak of policemen?" the young man went on. "Simmons, even the policemen I passed on corners were interested and sympathetic. They'd seen a chap's friends married, you understand. They told me so. The policeman on the next corner put his arms around me and came home with me out of pure feeling. *He* had the understanding heart! Yet in my own household I find no sympathy. Even when my poor dog barks a loving welcome, there is blame. Nothing but cold, hard, heartless blame!" His beautiful dark eyes reproached the staring Simmons, and he fetched a cold sigh as if from the depths of a stricken bosom. And at that Simmons showed by the twitching of his eyebrows that his feelings, too, were moved.

"There's nothing left for me to do but go to bed and try to sleep off my injured feelings," said the young man, presently, with dignity. And he sat up and yawned like a cat.

"Your uncle stays awake to nurse his," said Simmons. He added hesitantly: "You know, Mr.

Francis, how he feels about . . . well, about certain things, sir. And . . . and . . . you *will* provoke him. You irritate him. You disappoint him. If . . . if . . . oh, Mr. Francis, pardon the liberty I am taking in expressing my own feelings . . . but I've known you since you were a very small child, and my mother was perfectly devoted to you, sir . . . but if you would only take even a mild interest in anything that pleases him . . . and you won't, you don't! You almost make it appear that you take pleasure only in such things . . . and persons . . . as displease him very much."

"When I'm middle-aged, with a grouch, a soul like a boil, a liver on strike, and the disposition of a hyena with the toothache, I'll be just as hellishly good as he is, Simmons; I swear I will! I'll admire ladies with a mission and without a shape, just as I now admire them with a shape and without a mission. I'll be as disagreeably virtuous as the sourest saint could demand; even the bish will know I'm going to be saved! And I hope to Heaven you'll have to live with me, Simmons, and see how you like it, confound you!"

"Your uncle—" began Simmons.

"Don't you realize, you conscientious old coot, that if my uncle were a worse man he'd be a very much better one?" asked Mr. Francis. "He should give way to his unconscious every now and then, and not always be sitting on the lid; then he

wouldn't have the sex perplex, the dollar duplex, and a bilious complexion. He should allow pleasant people to amuse him, instead of trying to make unpleasant ones edify him. The poor man has the notion he's saving his soul, when he is merely losing his temper." He kicked the green cushion aside and sauntered off, his gorgeous dressing-gown floating after him.

Again the bell jangled.

"Mr. Francis!" Mr. Francis, his hand on the door-knob, turned, to meet the old man's eyes. They were visibly anxious and distressed, and this was so unusual that he stared. "Mr. Francis, I've been with him for many years . . . and I know him better than most. I beg you to believe that he really means things this time. I—"

"You," said Mr. Francis, "are an old duck. One of these days," he smiled down on the smaller man with whimsical affection, "when I'm turned out o' doors, I'll ask you to adopt me." He opened the door, waved his hand, and vanished.

Simmons sighed, shook his head, and picked up his tray.

"O Lord, make the boy see the truth!" he prayed. "And forgive me if my old heart turns too fondly to a young sinner!"

The gentleman to whom he tendered the tray's unsavory contents accepted them with ominous fortitude. Life itself was as it were a medicine to Jordan Courtenay, and he thought it showed

morality of a high order to take it without sugar.

Jordan Courtenay was bothered by an ingrowing soul and an outrageous liver, and was in process of becoming that most pestilent of nuisances, a wealthy, virulently moral semi-invalid. He had notions about philanthropy, which he wished to put into practice. He disapproved of his nephew and heir, but, if there was one being he loved, it was this same Francis, whose beauty, joyousness, and charm gave him a secret pride and pleasure. This he deemed sinful. He himself disliked women, because he was afraid of them, and the temerity displayed by Francis, who adored women and was in turn adored by them, filled his uncle with terror. Francis played in the sunlight; his uncle prayed in the shade.

Jordan didn't mind the boy's spending money; let him spend it lavishly—but let him spend it virtuously. And Frank didn't and wouldn't. He roved with a herd of wild asses as unbitted and unsaddled as himself, he shied and snorted and showed the whites of his eyes at the obvious restraining check-rein; he was careless—being used to too much—and he lacked, his uncle thought, the proper respect for established conventions and moral issues as viewed by the elect.

“My Uncle Jordan,” Frank had once said, “can and generally does point a moral: he couldn't adorn a tale to save his life . . . and I can.” And he did. Several.

The tales worried his uncle. They were adorned with too many women. He might have reflected that they were in every case amusing, gay, light, the follies of a charming young man. But they were never godly: how could they be godly when there was always some female around whom they centered?

Frank was a sinner. Jordan Courtenay, whose God was made in his own image and likeness, made up his mind, grimly, to save the sinner.

How shall one most quickly and surely bring a gay young man to mend his ways and learn a proper respect for proper courses? By chaining him to a life-partner, a wife, of course . . . and picking out the wife yourself. That's what Mr. Jordan Courtenay tried to do.

He himself had married, when he was twenty-two, a wife in every way suited to his notions. She had been an estimable woman, a woman with a sense of her duty. She had run his house perfectly.

He was even then a wealthy man, but as she was of Dutch-Scotch ancestry, and congenitally opposed to spending money, there had been no display. The Courtenays lived in the red-brick house Jordan's father and grandfather had dwelt in—solid, handsome, well furnished, very comfortable, very valuable, very conservative . . . and very dull.

Mr. and Mrs. Courtenay were Episcopalians,

who went to church twice every Sunday and liked it. They got along beautifully, each coolly but sincerely fond of the other. They had never quarreled, and only occasionally disagreed. If there were no raptures, there were no despairs, no disillusionings; and other people bored them more than they ever bored each other. Hence matrimony was not disagreeable to either, but a safe, sane, and equitable arrangement which added to the comfort of both; and when the estimable lady unexpectedly died—the only unexpected thing she had ever done—it was a severe upsetting to her husband's ordered and regular life. She had been such a one as he might not hope to replace, the exception that proved the rule where women were concerned.

For some years he lived quietly in his quiet house, attended by a staff of trained servants, under Simmons, of whom the late Mrs. Courtenay had so approved that she as it were deferred to his opinion when she was doubtful of her own. Mr. Courtenay was so well looked after, in fact, that he acquired a sluggish liver. He was too fond of his perfect little dinner, his excellent wines, his easy-chair, his comfortable house. He had nothing to worry him. His business, which he had inherited firmly established, had done so well in his hands that his income, upon which he never made severe inroads, had first doubled, then tripled. His wife had left him a comfortable fortune be-

sides, which by reason of good investments had also more than doubled. Jordan Courtenay, careful and conservative, had become a very rich man.

Three years after his wife's death had come Francis Courtenay, the orphaned son of his only brother. Mr. Courtenay had liked his brother, but he couldn't but look upon it as an act of Providential mercy that poor Jim had been called hence, for a more incorrigible spendthrift had never lived. He had wasted his patrimony, and more than once his brother Jordan had paid his debts. His wife had died in despair of ever doing anything with him, but she had loved him passionately; and when he himself was dying he had given his one child to his brother Jordan.

"The kid's really much more like his poor mother than me, Jord," the luckless spendthrift told Mr. Courtenay. "But there's more *me* on the surface. I'm glad he'll have you behind him, instead of me. You'll make a better father for him than I ever could. He's a dear kid—truthful and brave, like his mother. Be good to him, Jordan! For God's sake handle him gently!"

"I will," said Jordan Courtenay, and meant it.

He was good to the child. The pretty boy appealed to his natural instincts, and then to his family pride. His own marriage had been childless—its one failure, his one regret. He had wanted a child, a son, to carry on the name and to inherit his possessions. And now, almost miracu-

lously, there had come to his hands this handsome, aristocratic boy-child, of Courtenay name and blood—his heir, his nephew. No pope given over to nepotism ever regarded his nephew with more pride and passion than did Jordan Courtenay.

As the years passed and the boy grew, this affection grew with him, becoming a jealous and exacting passion. Jordan adored Francis—a bright, gay, clever child, a loving child, but a child given to unaccountable spells of obstinacy which it was difficult to deal with and quite impossible to control. As when, for instance, he refused point-blank to apologize to the lady next door, after trouncing her small son. And the other child was his playmate, too, and he was very fond of the lady.

“But what did you beat him for?” Francis was asked, punishment looming over him.

“I saw him step on an ant when he didn’t need to—and he laughed when he did it. I whacked him to teach him better. He won’t do it again.”

“Good Heavens! Go at once and apologize to his mother. Tell little John you are sorry you beat him.”

“No, I won’t. I am not at all sorry I beat him. I am glad. But,” he added wistfully, “I wish that ant knew it!”

And there he stood, immovable. He resumed his pleasant relations with his playmate, but he didn’t apologize. He wasn’t sorry. He was like

that, as Simmons and his uncle discovered. They punished him, as a matter of duty, and he took his punishment as a matter of duty, both sides realizing that it was merely a form. Otherwise they hadn't much trouble with him. He was, as his father had said, truthful and brave.

Jordan Courtenay meant to do the best he could for Francis: the boy was his heir, he should have everything. He adored Francis. But he himself had grown more self-centered and tyrannous. He had an imperious will: he couldn't endure to be crossed. His sense of possession was very strong. Francis was his; Francis must obey him in all things.

When he was still a child Francis hadn't cared very much. But as he grew older the constant pressure of his uncle's overbearing will began to tell. He wasn't always amenable to discipline; he wouldn't always obey. The two, both of them Courtenays, locked horns. The younger man—more resilient, of a gayer, sweeter nature, a more humane spirit—usually came off victorious from these encounters. But it left the older man more fiercely determined to bend him or break him. Damn it! the boy *belonged* to him!

Francis had wanted to go to Massachusetts Tech. Mr. Courtenay sent him to Harvard; but he paid all the boy's bills promptly, and they were not light. He admitted that most young pups were like that, and one couldn't expect any better. It

was only when Francis returned from college that the fundamental differences and likenesses between uncle and nephew became obvious.

Francis was wild, his uncle thought; and he remembered that the boy's father had been wild before him—and had in consequence died a pauper. Francis was too fond of pleasure; he had too many idle, pleasure-loving friends; and he had little or no sense of the value of money.

Other shortcomings had of late become peculiarly annoying. For as Jordan Courtenay indulged his spleen, mental and physical, as he ceased more and more to play an active part in the physical world and indulged in tantrums in the metaphysical one, he saw modern youth with increasingly jaundiced vision. As he saw himself becoming better he saw them becoming worse. They shocked him. Their talk, their ways, their carelessness, their utter disregard—not to say contempt—for all he held most sacred, horrified him.

As for Francis, the boy was hardened in frivolity. He hadn't a serious, religious thought in his head. He was idle. He preferred pups and ponies to desks and ledgers. Prodigal and profligate spender of money, darling of many women—was it not in tune with this infinite folly that he should show the whites of his eyes at the truly good, lay his ears back flat at the mere suggestion of consorting with his uncle's friends . . . maybe a social worker, or a Y. M. C. A. secretary, a

vestryman of his church, or even the rector himself . . . and discover in himself a pure abhorrence of any desire or effort to probe, uplift, investigate, castigate, impeach, standardize, or enlighten anything or anybody? He had even been heard to refer to the bishop, an estimable churchman, his uncle's close friend and counselor, as "that amiable Victorian hang-over in the white nightie"; and Mr. Courtenay still smartingly remembered the occasion when the bishop had, with much pains in the selection of his committee and audience, brought a certain promising political gentleman, very urgent for reform, to address a little meeting at the Courtenay house. It wasn't large, that meeting, but it was very, very select. Casting his shrewd eyes over that gathering of the clan of the elect, the political gentleman, in the course of a speech which enraptured them, had cried dramatically:

"We need reform in every department of our national and our civic life. This country, misgoverned as it is, cries aloud for reform! Ladies and gentlemen, let us *demand* reform! Let us *work* for reform! Let us *have* reform! When we are asked what we would have, let us reply boldly, challengingly: 'We want *reform!* We want legislative reform. We want civic reform. We want police reform. We want school reform. We want housing reform. We want public and private reform. We want—' "

“*Chloroform*,” Francis had murmured audibly, in a voice of utter and complete boredom and barely suppressing a yawn.

Two or three men, from whom one might have expected better sense, had snickered. The bishop looked unutterable things; the speaker lost his composure and his wind, and, inevitably, his time and his audience. The meeting, so carefully brought together, broke up with everything still quite unreformed and likely to remain so. The bishop delicately refrained from mentioning the matter. He spared his friend’s feelings and saved his own face thereby. But Mr. Jordan Courtenay raged, lamenting that he had forced that young reprobate to be present.

Francis hadn’t been at all penitent. He smiled his charming smile and said sincerely:

“Really, it was out before I could catch myself, Uncle Jord. I’m sorry if it worried you, but he’s such an obvious ass!”

He was equally intransigent about other matters. You couldn’t make him see the true value of certain modern methods. You couldn’t make him regard any sort of people as cases with numbers. He squandered money on vagabonds, thereby hindering the proper operations of the incorporated benevolence in which his uncle so firmly believed, and in which he was so actively interested. And when Francis was reproved for this loose-handed charity, he was apt to tell you that he

rather preferred giving to what he called the devil's poor.

“They don't deserve it, probably, and so of course you can't expect the Lord to look after 'em. His hands are full, looking after the deserving poor. I can't say I like the deserving poor.”

But what had really brought Mr. Courtenay's latent displeasure to a head, was his nephew's known and blazoned friendship with that most charming and famed of dancers, Miss Dolly Tredegar. It was in her company that the latest of car-wrecking escapades had occurred. A tattling gossip-sheet had from time to time printed little items, among them one that the nephew and heir of a semi-invalid millionaire meant to lead to the altar a certain beautiful little dancer. The paragraph added that the young pair wouldn't be likely to wish to live in the “rather moldy old brick mansion to which the family has clung for three generations.”

*His* nephew marry a dancing woman, and bring her home to this old house! A public dancer . . . named Dolly Tredegar! . . . to reign as mistress in the house where his sainted wife had dwelt! To choose a Dolly Tredegar, and turn up his nose at the refined and virtuous young women that he, Jordan Courtenay, had selected, approved, and put forward; disposing of them with a flippant rolling of the eyes and a heartfelt “Nothing doing!”

While Mr. Courtenay's jealous mind was darkly filled with the bright figure of Dolly, the companion—he was convinced she was the cause—of his nephew's latest and most expensive escapade, he swallowed his bitter notions of her along with the medicine Simmons brought him, and found both equally nauseating. Abominably so. Threatening to upset his stomach. It angered him to see Simmons standing by with so unmoved, unsympathetic a countenance. Quite as though he didn't give a damn how bitter the medicine was that his employer had to swallow. But you can't quarrel with a perfect man-servant because he doesn't make faces when you take your medicine, can you?

"Simmons," he barked presently, "you've seen that trifling scoundrel this morning, eh? Hey? Damned truffle-stuffed lolly-dollypop!" The occasional letting fly of a healthy "damn" or two was Jordan's one saving vice. It made him endurable. As he spoke he glared at the clock, upon the stroke of one.

"The bishop called, sir," said Simmons, sedately, "but, as you had just fallen into a doze, we thought it wiser not to awaken you."

His voice was as the sucking dove's, his face totally devoid of expression, his manner exquisitely respectful, both to the bishop and to his employer. Yet the latter choked of a sudden, and his gaze was feral.

"You're as big a fool as you look," he gritted.

“Why the devil do you dare mention the bishop now, eh? What in the seven hells makes you blat about the bishop? I was talking about that donkey—”

“Mr. Burleigh-Smith called, sir. Something about Colossal Oil, I gathered. You’re to sign certain papers which he left. I have them in my desk, sir.”

“Burleigh-Smith?” Mr. Courtenay’s voice rose. “Who’s dreaming of Mr. Burleigh-Smith, you ass?”

Burleigh-Smith was Mr. Courtenay’s business partner, a gentleman of tremendous dignity, of great weight both in the physical and the financial worlds. If there was one business man whom Mr. Courtenay admired, respected, and trusted, it was Burleigh-Smith. He looked at Simmons’s Adam’s-apple now and had a wild wish to step on it.

“Dr. Forbes was here, sir. He expressed himself as being slightly uneasy about the condition of your nerves. They do seem somewhat strained, sir, if I may take the liberty of mentioning it.”

“Dr. Forbes!”

“And also Mrs. Van Vreelinghausen. Something about the Workingwomen’s Welfare Association, also plans for a cup of tea, with crackers, every other Wednesday at the Chapter House, sir. With talks by the ladies upon some improving subject, such as the moral effect of

uncensored moving pictures upon the proletariat. Mrs. Van Vreelinghausen asked me to remind you that it would be aiding a very worthy charity if you would contribute liberally to the association."

"Mrs. Van Vreelinghausen!" Mr. Courtenay all but strangled over that august name. "Mrs. Van Vreelinghausen!"

"Yes sir. Just as Dr. Forbes left, sir."

Mr. Courtenay's eyes took on a glacial glitter. His chafed temper strained at the leash, his heavy dark brows drew together. The taste of the medicine he had just taken was still bitter on his palate, he had a slight headache. He looked his man-servant's neat figure up and down, from impeccable collar to impeccable boots, and after a gulping pause he broke out, in a husky whisper:

"Simmons! If you'll just come near enough to let me hit you in the nose without upsetting my stomach, I'll give you a check for fifty dollars."

"It wouldn't meet with Dr. Forbes's approval, sir. He told me it was imperative that you should be calm. I really think you should take a sedative, sir." He added respectfully, "You get your broth and toast in ten minutes, Mr. Courtenay," and moved toward the door.

"Simmons," said Mr. Courtenay, chokingly, "you have insulted the bishop, the doctor, Mr. Burleigh-Smith, and Mrs. Van Vreelinghausen, and you have irritated me into wishing that I could drown you in the bathtub. You know very

well the person I had in mind, Simmons! Now, then: have you seen that lazy, trifling, scoundrel, my nephew, Mr. Francis Courtenay, this morning? Don't stand there like a dashed bump on a log, Simmons! Have you or haven't you seen him? What did he have to say for himself? Hey?"

Simmons looked pained, reproachful, astonished, astounded, aggrieved—all with his nose and his eyebrows.

"Mr. Francis?" he murmured; "Mr. Francis! Is it possible you meant Mr. Francis, sir?" Reproof, as to one who shames the family, crept into his voice. His perfect manner even became a trifle chilly. "Oh yes, Mr. Courtenay, I have seen Mr. Francis this morning. I generally see him in the morning, sir."

"Heard him, too, haven't you? Soused, wasn't he?—the young whelp! Pickled?"

"Hadn't you better let me send for Dr. Forbes, sir? If I may say so, you do seem nervous and excited. As to Mr. Francis, he is quite sober, sir. He generally is, Mr. Courtenay."

"Oh yes!" said Mr. Courtenay, with a horrible sneer. "He generally is! Sober as a judge when he rode into a plate-glass show-window in a new Rolls-Royce, and backed out with a smashed car and a couple of dozen wax models in imported doodads all mashed up in his wheels! *I* was damned sober when I paid the bills last night, to keep the case out of the police court! You should

have listened to their attorney! *I had to.*" He tugged at his collar.

"Well, Mr. Courtenay, I am very sorry, sir, but it might easily have been worse. He did it to save a widow-woman who got right in his way. As it happened, there was nobody killed." Simmons spoke soothingly, placatingly.

"Widow-women are always getting in his way. All sorts of women get in his way. Women don't have to go out of their way to get in his way," said Mr. Courtenay, sourly.

Simmons's eyebrows twitched deprecatingly.

"And he is sober enough, too, I suppose, Simmons, when he goes rampaging around with that Tredegar hussy . . . the dancing-woman . . . and I footing the bills! There is nothing of the boiled owl about him, is there, when he comes rolling home at three o'clock in the morning, with a lummoX of a policeman helping him up the front steps, and he squalling like a cat with a mashed tail . . . and that accursed dog of his yowling to wake the dead . . . Generally sober!"

Simmons's eloquent eyebrows twitched still more deprecatingly.

"But that's neither here nor there," said Mr. Courtenay, impatiently. "What I want you to do is to send me that fellow right now—this minute, you hear me? If he's in bed, throw a bucket of water on him and turn him out. . . . Lovely hour of the day for a man to be in bed, isn't it? . . .

like an old woman with the fiddle-diddles! When I was his age, I was up at six, winter and summer, and none the worse for it. I'd done a good day's work by this time. Now he can lollop in bed half the day and then get up and squander my money, the trifling pup! . . . You go tell him to come here at once, Simmons! . . . What in Beelzebub's name are you gobbering your mullet-eyes at me for? Didn't you hear what I said? Get out!"

"Yes sir," said Simmons. Quietly, sedately, he picked up his tray and got out.

## CHAPTER II

### REBELLION

**F**RANCIS was splashing in his bath like a singing porpoise when Simmons called him. At intervals his bull-pup, Sweet Percival, howled, when he heard his master's voice.

“And he's in a fearful state of mind, Mr. Francis. I've never seen him in such a state of mind,” Simmons mumbled at the keyhole. “I beg and plead with you to handle him gently.”

“Oh, he always howls when he hears me sing,” said Francis. “Listen:

*“My rosa-ree! My rosa-reee!”*

A wail of anguish came from Sweet Percival—a prolonged, heaven-aspiring howl from the depths of his afflicted bosom.

“It isn't his state of mind, Simmy, it's his defective musical ear. Of course I'll handle him gently! Have you ever known me to be cruel to animals?”

“It isn't the pup! It's your uncle, Mr. Francis!”

“Good Lord! d'you mean to say you think this is Uncle Jord howling? It's Sweet Percival! Uncle

Jord never howls like that. He roars. Like this." There came through the keyhole a snarling shout: "Damn you, Simmons! What d'ye mean by disturbing me like this, *hay?*"

It was so exactly like the irascible Mr. Jordan Courtenay that Simmons jumped. But after a minute he put his mouth back to the keyhole.

"It'll be worse than that when he talks to you this morning," he said grimly. "Mr. Francis, for Heaven's sake listen to me. I tell you he is *raging*. Couldn't you *pretend* to agree with him? Pr-promise him *anything*," implored Simmons, desperately, "until he gets over this fit! For the Lord's sake don't cross him! He's like a stick of dynamite, sir; he is indeed."

There was another prodigious splash in the bathroom; a quick, short, joyous bark from Sweet Percival. Then Francis, blithely:

"Go 'way from that keyhole, you old corrupter and briber, you! Don't you recognize the hideous fact that you're a venal old rascal, Simmons? Where do you expect to go when you die, if you behave like this?"

"I don't know and I don't care!" hissed the goaded Simmons. "It's where you're likely to go *before* you die that's troubling me just now. *Will* you hurry up, Mr. Francis? The longer he waits, the worse he'll be—and he's worse now than I've ever seen him."

Mr. Francis presently emerged in his BVDs,

tall, slender, fresh-faced, his black hair on end, his black eyes sparkling, the riotous bull-pup at his slippered heels. He kicked one foot, tossing the slipper up with a dexterous toe, and the enraptured pup caught it and dashed into his master's bedroom with it. The young man waved to Simmons, dashed after the pup, and presently emerged from his room, sooner than could have been expected, immaculate. Simmons sighed with relief and pride at sight of him.

“The man can't be angry with him, not really angry,” the man-servant thought to himself dotingly. “It's not in human flesh and blood to stay angry with such.” Once again he warned the young man. Mr. Francis was the pride of his heart, the joy of his narrow life. He loved the boy as only a dry old man can love a beautiful and joyous young man. Mr. Francis caught him by the shoulders now, and shook him affectionately and playfully.

“Let us, then, be up and doing,  
With a heart for any fate!”

said he. “Simmons, I go to the arena! The Christians to the lions!”

He greeted his uncle pleasantly, with a friendly deference to the older man's supposed invalidism, though the big figure sitting there suggested bad temper rather than bad health. Scowling,

tight-lipped, Mr. Jordan Courtenay waved his nephew to a chair, which was declined.

"It's a missionary chair, a preliminary training for future possible martyrdom," said Frank, laughing. "How thoughtful of you to provide it for your clerical callers, Uncle Jord! I'll take to the table instead, if you don't mind."

He pushed aside two or three Blue Books, a copy of "Holy Living and Dying," and "The Christian Year" and seated himself, long legs swinging, fine hands dropped idly between his knees. Every movement was graceful. And he looked down at his uncle with the friendliest interest in his gaze; no sign of repentance, no hint of being ashamed of himself, no intimation that he feared the other man's displeasure. Mr. Courtenay grunted. He cleared his throat. Under his heavy dark eyebrows he stared at the boy menacingly.

"I didn't send for you to discuss the merits or demerits of chairs," he said coldly. "I sent for you to discuss *you*." And he paused significantly.

"That's a pleasanter subject," said Francis. "Even without conceit, I may say I'm pleasanter to talk about than your uncomfortable chairs."

With an impatient hand his uncle waved this persiflage aside.

"I sent for you," said he, explosively, "to make you understand once for all that I disapprove so strongly of your whole course of life, your amuse-

ments, your idleness, your friends, that my patience is exhausted. Something has to be done. You're a he-butterfly . . . ! a dashed tinsel-winged he-butterfly—that's what you are, and all you are, Francis! All right, then, be one. But fly around decent flowers, in decent gardens, not around weeds in slum yards. You shan't fly around the Dolly Tredegar sort—not with my money and consent. That's final."

The young man regarded him with a gentle but very searching scrutiny, under which the elder man's color mounted soaringly. With his color his choler rose.

"So far, Frank," he grated, purple-jowled, "I've paid the piper for your prancing. Now you'll dance to my measure or you'll jig to your own tune and pay your own piper!"

"I didn't know," said Frank, equably, "that you ever approved of dancing under any circumstances." And he regarded his uncle still with that gentle but searching scrutiny.

"Since you see fit to take me literally," said Mr. Courtenay, angrily, "I'll remind you that David, King of Israel, leaped and danced before the ark of the Lord. Michal, Saul's daughter, his wife, choosing to laugh, he punished her by putting her away from him. He put her away from him," he repeated emphatically, "and had nothing more to do with her—"

"Unreasonable old boy—David. Bad sport.

Must have been a rotten bad dancer to be so touchy just because a lady laughed."

"You are not such a fool as to misunderstand my meaning, Francis. When I said I pay the piper, I meant it literally. I will continue to pay the piper. Good, hard American dollars, the soundest value in the world. Thousands of them—if *you please me*. But if you caper any more with that Tredegar girl and such-like hussies, you'll caper to a Beggar's Opera of your own making."

A spark came of a sudden into the young man's fine eyes, a quick red into his cheek. He sat up. The sudden spark made his eyes harder, their regard more piercing.

"Money," said Jordan Courtenay, "is a trust. I have used mine, except where you are concerned, well enough. I have not spent foolishly or wickedly. My tastes are simple, my desires few. My extravagances are non-existent. I hold my fortune, sir, as a trust."

Frank still continuing to regard him searchingly, still saying nothing, Mr. Courtenay's voice rose querulously. It was as if the boy were daring to weigh him in some new balance, in which he might be found wanting. It was as if the boy dared disapprove of him; as if he, Jordan, the judge, were being called to the bar for judgment—not the criminal.

"I said I hold my money as a trust!" he shouted. "I use it as the Lord directs!"

“And so the Lord,” mused Frank, ironically, “is a director for a trust! How very, very up-to-the-minute, and . . . American . . . of Him!”

Ensued a grim pause. The young man’s mouth set firmly, his eyes took on a sword-straight directness. The two stared at each other, eye to eye, uncompromisingly. Then Francis slipped off the table and stood up, very straight, tall, young. Of a sudden the family likeness that existed between the two of them was revealed astonishingly. There was the selfsame underlying obstinacy, the unbendable will, the family pride, in both.

“You are incorrigible!” raged his uncle. “Why,” with biting contempt, “you haven’t even got sense enough to protect your own most obvious interests! And do you imagine that I shall allow you . . . *you* . . . to ruin yourself irremediably with a great fortune, that I shall allow *you* to handle it? A fortune that might be made a great and incalculable blessing to mankind, and that I,” he added deliberately, his head up, “hold in trust from the Lord?”

And Frank admired him with all his heart at that moment, for his obstinacy and his courage.

“No, Francis, I shall never put into your incompetent and extravagant hands such power. You have no convictions, religious, civic, political. You have no purpose in life—except to amuse yourself. You are at heart a pagan. As much a

pagan as they were in ancient Rome. Your friends are pagans like yourself. You are an idler, a trifler, Mr. Francis Bennington Courtenay, my brother's son, my supposed heir. You would do nothing, in the way of business, to please me, to justify your existence. You couldn't even marry to please me! Oh no! All *you* are willing to do is to ride helter-skelter to the devil . . . on my money . . . with your painted-face, play-acting, naked, dancing, prancing hussies of Dollies!"

"Miss Dolly Tredegar," said young Francis, in a curiously clear and distinct voice, "is a good woman. As good as my mother . . . or your mother . . . or your wife ever were, in all their lives. And very much better than your sister, my Aunt Lydia. I dislike to air the family wash, the practice being unpleasant and generally insanitary. You will pardon me for requesting you not to mention Miss Tredegar's name again unless you can remember that you are supposed to be a gentleman? The young lady happens to be rather a good friend of mine."

The two pairs of eyes locked, the older man's blazing, the younger man's slightly contemptuous. The insinuation that he wasn't a gentleman maddened Jordan Courtenay.

"There is no law of lese-majesty in this country . . . for the benefit of . . . dancing-women," he said, breathing quickly.

"Among decent men," said the other, coldly,

“in all countries, Uncle, there is a code which condemns the man who slanders a woman.”

“You . . . you . . . you . . . you . . . you . . .” Jordan Courtenay was bouncing in his chair like one to whom a lash has been applied. “Why . . . why . . . you . . .” Speech failed him.

“As a whole, your arraignment of my personal character is far from unjust,” said Francis, thoughtfully. “I dare say I am,” a glint of laughter came to eyes and lips, “a he-butterfly. Allow me to congratulate you on the aptness of the illustration! Look here, Uncle Jord: I suppose I *have* unduly tested your patience, and, as you remind me, your pocket-book. And, really, you’ve stood it like a sport, so I don’t mind telling you that I’m just a bit bored of fluttering aimlessly, myself. But you mustn’t try to marry me off to suit you instead of me. And you simply shan’t heckle me into heaven. And you mustn’t manhandle the reputation of my friends.”

“I’ll do as I damn please!” shouted his uncle. “You’ll marry whom I want you to marry! I’ll haul you into heaven by the scruff, if I think fit! As for manhandling your friends’ reputations, none of them have any to manhandle!” He balled his fists. “*You* talking mustn’ts to *me*! Mustn’t do this, mustn’t do that! D’you understand I can *beggar* you, you young imbecile?”

“You can cut off my income, of course, Uncle Jordan,” said Frank, composedly. “But there are

things you can't and shan't do. You can't buy my soul alive, for one of them. Do you know what Colin Murray once said to me? He said your fortune was my misfortune; that I was slated for mental spinal curvature because of the position I'd have to assume to keep up with a domineering plutocrat like you. Had us both sized up, didn't he?"

Mr. Courtenay breathed hard and gulped.

"While we're indulging in pleasing personalities, and since you've aired my defects with family frankness and fullness, let me touch upon a few of your own foibles," said Frank, pleasantly. "One of 'em is that you insist upon wearing navy-blue eye-goggles and, naturally, don't allow yourself to see people in their natural colors. You spell 'live' backward, and make it 'evil.' You think all joy is folly; and that's a pretty bad sort of folly in itself. You've got in the habit of domineering, and that's a bad habit, too. The crowd you hunt with is the wrong crowd for you, Uncle. Cut out that uplift bunch of fakers, and allow yourself to discover that the world's a very much more pleasant and decent place than you've been thinking it is."

"Every word you say," cried his uncle, with a heaving breast, his hands gripping the arms of his chair, "confirms my determination to guard and safeguard my interests. I am convinced that you are given over to Satan!"

“Oh, give the devil his due!” said the young man, laughing. “That’s only fair play.”

“I give every one his due, even the Enemy of Souls. I pay for what I get. I propose now to pay you to please me. I consent to renounce my desire to see you the husband of my partner’s daughter.” Here the young man made a horrible grimace, and his uncle added, with sternness: “Emily Burleigh-Smith is in every sense your superior. You are so utterly unworthy of her that I do this because to marry her would give you an excuse to be faithless to her and make her life miserable by your profligacy. But this is my only concession. You must at once enter Burleigh-Smith’s office and learn at least something of the business which supports you in luxury.”

He paused, but his nephew said nothing. He was too astonished to speak.

“In addition: You have referred to my friends as ‘that uplift bunch of fakers.’ My nephew, Francis, mustn’t manhandle *my* friends’ reputations, either! My nephew shall countenance and respect those friends and associates who aid in all upward progress. And I insist that you immediately cut yourself adrift from all those persons who, I am assured, are leading you to your downfall and damnation. Obey me, and I make you. Disobey me, and I break you. This is my last word.”

“But I don’t like Burleigh-Smith! I am not in-

terested in his business! Associated with him, I couldn't do myself justice; I could never amount to a hill of beans. I should always be a round peg in a square hole."

"Couldn't do yourself justice!" sneered his uncle. "Good God!"

"And I am not in the slightest interested in your uplifters and reformers who make a fat living exploiting the great unwashed. As for cutting out certain friends of mine, I take it you mean Dolly Tredegar?"

"Suppose I do? Suppose I do?"

"Dolly's a mighty good little pal, a mighty decent sort, one of the best and nicest friends I've ever had. Paws off Dolly, Uncle Jord!"

"Paws off Dolly, indeed! D'you think I'd *touch* the creature?" shouted Mr. Courtenay, again bouncing in his chair. And he thought, with a jealous pang: "He thinks more of her than he does of me! He would leave me for her at a minute's notice, in spite of all I've done for him!"

"I'm afraid we're never going to agree," said Francis, soberly. "So *I* propose this: you keep your money—all of it. Your money's yours, to do with as you please; and may I say that I'm rather weary of having it brandished over my head, like a club? It makes things . . . well, a bit sordid, don't you think?" There was a touch of disdain in his tone.

Mr. Jordan Courtenay sank back in his chair.

He loved Francis with all his jealous, domineering heart. Francis was *his*. He had raised him, from his babyhood, a spoiled, darling child. He had never denied the boy anything. The most expensive teachers, the most expensive schools, the children of the wealthiest families for playmates. It had never occurred to him that the fact that Francis had grown up gay, gallant, kind, was not owing to his training but rather to the innate sweetness of his nature—and maybe, at times, to old Simmons. And now for Francis to defy him, threaten to leave him? He stared with narrowed eyes at the comely face into which was creeping something deeper than its mere youthful good looks—an awakening spirit, self-reliant and manly. But it was a spirit as proud and obdurate as his own, a spirit which defied him; and he could not, would not, brook defiance. His lips came together in a straight line.

“You are such an utter young ass that I deem it my duty to warn you to consider very carefully what you are saying, what you are talking of doing,” he said, laboring to hold his anger in check. “I will ask you to think, for your sake, not for mine, for I don’t expect you to consider *me* and *my* feelings; you never have. Francis, you have everything to lose and nothing to gain by obduracy. Do you realize that, apart from what I choose to give you, you have absolutely nothing in this world to call your own except your

mother's pitiful bit of money, which will fetch you in a fraction over sixty dollars a month?"

"What!" exclaimed Francis. "Have I got that much of my own—all my own—to start with? What jolly good news! Talk about the wind being tempered to the shorn lamb! Of all the luck!"

His uncle stared at him.

"Of all the idiots!" he exclaimed. "This shows how little you know of the world and its ways. Sixty dollars a month . . . for you! Not to spend in a moment's thoughtless folly,—for a box of roses for one of your light o' loves, say,—but to live on. To buy shelter and food and clothes with. For thirty days, twelve months in the year. *You!*"

"Other people have to do it, don't they? At least I shan't starve!" cried Francis, with snapping eyes. "And I'll be free, Uncle Jord! I'll be free!"

"Free to face ruin. Francis, reflect. This is final. Don't deceive yourself: this is final. Once you make your decision, it stands."

The color had drained out of his face. It had grown grayer, and his hands trembled. Not lightly may one pluck out the light of one's eyes, the core of one's soul. His heart beat thickly. His one thought, all along, had been to bend his nephew to his way, because it was the right way. It never occurred to him that Francis, the gay, the laughter-loving, the frivolous, would show a will

as unbendable as his own. After this, the deluge! But he had no lightest thought of yielding an inch. His jealousy and his pride, as well as his temper, were aroused.

“I’m sorry, Uncle Jord. But I can’t pretend to please you as you wish to be pleased, without becoming a coward and a hypocrite.” He drew a little nearer, with a certain wistfulness upon him. “I’m afraid we’re bad company for each other; if we keep on, I’ll make you a bully, and you’ll make me a shiftless, spineless coward. But, Uncle Jord, try to believe I’m really grateful for all the care you’ve taken of me, and all you have done and meant to do, won’t you? I may come in, sometimes, to have a look at you, mayn’t I? And can’t we shake hands and part as friends?”

But Jordan Courtenay thrust his shaking hands behind him.

“No!” said he, violently. “No! You’re a cinder in my eye. I’ve got to get you out . . . and keep you out! I’ll do but one more thing for you: when you’ve starved to death for your folly, I’ll bury you with your own people, instead of letting you rot in the Potter’s Field. Don’t ever ask me for any help; you can save your wind to cool your porridge . . . if you can get the porridge. My lawyers will see that you receive your mother’s pittance. Now get out!”

“I’m sorry you won’t shake hands, Uncle Jord. If you change your mind about it and want to see

me . . . why, you send for me and I'll put my pride in my pocket and come. After all, you're my folks, all I've got of 'em, you know. . . . Well, good-by, and good luck to us both. Now, forward, march!"

He leaned over, boyishly, and kissed the cold, averted cheek. Then he walked to the door, waved his hand, and was gone.

## CHAPTER III

### AURORA

**W**HEN her adored father, to whose gentle hand Aurora Janeway had clung since her mother's death, in an evil moment fell under the spell of that veteran vampire Lydia Haslett, ci-divant Mrs. Holcomb, ci-divant Mrs. Gresham, ci-divant Mrs. Bondurant, née Courtenay,—a lady whose periodical presentations in the divorce courts of two continents periodically set society by the ears,—and despite portents, prognostications, anonymous letters, and the actual sight of ex-husbands, intrepidly and idiotically married her, Bransome Janeway was a handsome, hale, wealthy, and scholarly gentleman, and his daughter a pigtailed, serious, leggy youngster in a church school.

It is a mistake to suppose that pigtailed, serious, leggy youngsters in boarding-schools, even the most expensive and exclusive church schools, do not learn very much more than their lessons and their prayers. They do. And it is to the eternal credit and glory of youth that, notwithstanding the vast mass of information and misinformation

they gather catch-as-catch-can, notwithstanding the example and conversation of their elders which they are compelled to endure, they still manage to retain a clear-eyed hopefulness, some purity of heart, even a certain amount of respect for elders who really do not, in many cases, deserve any consideration from anybody with a modicum of intelligence. When youth considers its elders, reviews the results, and tries to shape itself to the world they have made, the commandment "Honor thy father and thy mother" does appear to be adding insult to injury; and to have a rather cracked echo.

Aurora Janeway still whole-heartedly loved and respected her father, even though he had married the notorious Mrs. Haslett. The girls in school, daughters of the Best People, knew all about Mrs. Haslett,—quite delightful gossip, more than their mothers knew they knew,—and all they knew and all they imagined they imparted to dear Aurora in whispered confidences, when they were supposed to be lifting their virgin hearts to God, commending themselves to Providence during the hours of darkness, so supposedly dangerous to innocence. The whispered confidences of virgin hearts might sometimes startle older ears, as many disillusioned priests could testify if Mother Church permitted them to be so indiscreet. Aurora gathered that Lydia must never have been a virgin at all; she had probably had an am-

biguous affair with her doctor, a married man at that, before ever she was out of her cradle. For she was the thrice-born, not once-made, scarlet woman, the erring sister, the original cause of trouble. Men had never so much as tried to lead Lydia astray; had merely escorted her down the primrose path, as gallant gentlemen attentive to a lady's wishes.

Lydia was weighed thus in the school-girl balance, and found ensnaringly wanting in everything but delectable damnations. When those sweet young things got through explaining her character to her stepdaughter, Lydia hadn't a leg to stand on, so to say. Aurora, stripped of all illusions, was given to understand that her father's second wife had the greed of a pig, the morals of a monkey, the methods of a pirate, and the gentleman-wrecking manners of those great light ladies who graced the courts of kings when royalty could afford to do as it pleased—and generally pleased to emulate quite successfully the bull, the ram, the goat, and the rooster: all very domestic beasts, and of an ardent nature.

To the school-girl's respect for her father was added pity and terror, a sort of sad astonishment, and a quiet determination to give him her best, foreknowing that presently Lydia would do her worst. It was not in Aurora to feel contempt, though she might well have experienced it when she saw the once-proud, stately, honest Bran-

some Janeway groveling, self-blinded, before the fashionable prostitute he had placed at the head of his house and given his honorable name. And when she saw how his name was soiled, his fortune poured out like water, his goodness and affection made a jest, it seemed to her that her father was a spectacle for men and angels; and her young fierce pride was crucified.

But she could not but marvel at the skill with which Lydia maintained her footing among quite respectable people; and how safely she was tucked into the Social Register. And she wondered when Lydia, discovering that the first parlor maid had had an affair with the second chauffeur, dismissed her with a recommendation.

“It would be perfectly ruinous if I didn’t dismiss her at once. What would become of the common people if one encouraged them to be anything but rigidly respectable? They can’t afford to be anything else, and we can’t afford to allow them for a moment to forget it,” she said casually. “I can’t have that sort of thing going on in my house, can I? The housekeeper threatened to leave, as it was.”

So Lydia preserved the respectabilities; and all her servants were notably efficient. Nor did she pay them above the average wages. One sees she was not without genius.

That Aurora’s girlhood was, in a measure, not

unhappy, was due to the fact that after two baleful summers spent with her stepmother, two bewilderingly gay and splendid summers, Aurora refused to come home. Young as she was, she couldn't be blind to the obvious. Innocent enough, she could hardly fail to understand the meaning of the sleek, rich, indolent men—men who yet had a touch of the tiger or the tusker somnolently lurking in their aspect—who gathered around her stepmother, always appearing in her train. Such men as had never before been guests under Bransome Janeway's roof, and who were not, one saw, fond of his company now, since they either ignored or were indifferent to his presence.

And she saw her father wear a bewildered and baffled look, an air of suffering which she was powerless to comfort. She saw, too, that her presence only made things worse for him, added to his pain. At times his eyes would seek hers as if he wished her to forgive him, as if he had somehow done her injury. She could not endure it.

She could not endure, either, the insolence of the men or the quality of the women who were Lydia's friends; she loathed, without exactly knowing why, the cool appraising stares of such of the men as noticed her—though most of them, to her relief, never seemed to see her at all, or if they did ignored her as utterly as they ignored her father. Horrid beasts! . . . what anybody could

want them around the place for! . . . how anybody could endure them . . . ! Aurora cherished a healthy hate for Lydia's men friends.

One day when she had had to render some slight service to Lydia, the women had paused in their idle chatter to look the young girl over with a sort of interest different from the men's, but in its way quite as irritating. She wanted to get away from it, and as quickly as she could she escaped. She was barely outside the door when one of them said, not in the least attempting to lower a high, piercing voice, that Lydia's Janeway girl had only to keep on growing up just as she was, and though the pattern was pretty good, no other woman would ever have cause for uneasiness. She would probably never appeal to men.

Aurora, just outside the door, heard and paused involuntarily.

"I'm afraid so . . . poor child," said Lydia, lazily. "Terrible fate! But I fear Aurora was born to tread the stately measure of immitigable virtue, *solus*. . . . Fancy calling any human being Aurora!"

"Keep her by you for the contrast she affords, Lydia," said somebody else. It sounded like a cat purring.

"And she's got a skin you love to touch; too. That school-girl complexion! My Heavens, think of it!" said the piercing voice.

"It is better than mine ever was," conceded

Lydia, equably. "I take it you're insinuating that, aren't you, Carolyn? I also admit I never in my life blushed as that girl blushes. But I will say for myself that I always manage to make the most of what I have. And my skin is almost natural, Carolyn." She laughed, and the others laughed with her.

"Ain't nature grand, though?" Carolyn came back. "Stop patting yourself, Lydia. We all know you're a beautiful skin game: nothin' else but." She laughed again, almost too gaily. Aurora couldn't know that Lydia had expertly tapped the pocket of the lady's latest husband and that his wife suspected it.

"Say what you want to Lydia: she's used to the worst and doesn't mind. But all of you stop talking about that Janeway child," cut in another voice, which Aurora recognized. It was the voice of the youngest of the lot, a girl with beautiful, feverish eyes. The pace that kills had already left its trace upon her face of a tired child. "It may surprise everybody here to know that her mother and mine were friends all their lives; they even died within a year of each other. The worse for Aurora Janeway and me!" she added.

Aurora had stood, startled and astonished, at the door. She hadn't meant to listen, but she couldn't help hearing every word. Now, without thinking, she opened the door again, and walked straight across the room to the last speaker.

“I heard what you said,” she exclaimed breathlessly. “That your mother was my mother’s friend. Oh, please, do you think you ever saw my mother? I know you must have been very little when she died, but do you think you ever saw her?”

“Maybe I was taken to see her when I was a child,” said the other, kindly. “I have a vague memory of a big house, something like this, and of a golden-haired lady, dressed in blue. Maybe that was your mother. Mine had dark hair.”

“It must have been! She had bright gold hair, and we have a little picture of her in a blue dress. My father has often told me how bright and golden her hair was, and how lovely she was in blue. She had blue eyes, you see—not gray like mine. She was very gentle and very lovely,” said Aurora, as if to herself. And suddenly the spell of that dead mother who had been very gentle and very lovely seemed to come like a stray breath from an invisible garden over the place that had once been hers, and one saw that these bright predatory parrots were intruders in the dove’s nest.

“And are you like your mother, who was my mother’s friend?” asked Aurora. She looked eagerly into the ravaged young face.

The beautiful feverish eyes grew brighter, more glittering.

“Not in the least!” she cried sharply. You’d think she had had a sudden twist of pain to make her exclaim like that. “But,” she added, “I hope to Heaven you will be like yours, Aurora.” The butler appearing then with cocktails, she took one and drank it as if she might be very thirsty, and the sudden queer quiet which had come to them all was changed to noisy laughter. The young girl went away quickly, at a sign from Lydia.

Aurora went back to the church school gratefully, home having become unendurable. She hoped it wasn’t too wicked to hate her stepmother and her friends, for that didn’t quite fit in with “forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.” But the Lord knew Lydia and what she was doing to Bransome Jane-way! And the Lord understood how one felt about being glad and relieved to get away and stay away from home, which was not home any more, but a dreadful place full of sinister beings, in which she and her dear father had become, as it were, aliens. Why, she and her father didn’t even talk freely together any more; there was no more of the old loving companionship, but each avoided the other, unwilling to look into eyes that were so full of bewilderment and pain. When vacation time came—a time which one used to welcome wildly, and to which Father had looked forward quite as eagerly—one went somewhere else now, with girls who had their own mothers.

The Sisterhood prepared Aurora for college. College was, on the whole, a very happy experience. She was a good scholar. She was not brilliant, but she was beautifully balanced, she had healthy appetites and simple tastes, she was sound to the core, refuting, in her proper person, all the alarmist talk and writings about the college girl. There are always, everywhere, girls who steady the balance. Aurora was one of them. She was third in her class, first in her classmates' estimation, class president; captain of her team; and very much liked and respected by the faculty, who were rather inclined to make much of her, although she was by no means the brightest student. This partiality of the faculty for Aurora caused no jealousy and no talk. The girls felt that way about her, too. You could always depend upon and trust Aurora. No matter what you did or said, no matter whether she approved or not, she never told on anybody. She just stood by. They didn't know Aurora was in training to stand by.

Aurora grew up, then, tall, strong, fair, calm, and, what is perhaps the most unusual thing of all in women, just. Therefore she was a natural leader, a new woman among new women, with better training and more balanced brains than most. Not for nothing had that old-fashioned mother of hers named her child Aurora! But it is sad to reflect that, had not that same very

sweet and gentle lady, so replete with all lauded feminine virtues, been removed before she had the opportunity to try to mold and make her child in her own image and likeness, Aurora wouldn't, perhaps, have been so strong and fine and free. One of life's subtlest little ironies is that a mother's strictest virtues, lived with and reacting upon one daily in one's most formative years, quite as often as not make for their extreme opposites. Your mother, say, attends her church three times on Sunday and goes every Wednesday night to prayer-meeting; she keeps the Sabbath holy and you quiet; she believes in the command, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands." She has, too, a great respect for her doctor and her lawyer and her minister. She is careful and economical and self-sacrificing; her place is quite obviously in the home; and you watch the results work out in a life which is of course a model of saintliness. But dull. My God! you think, how dull! And while you love her, of course, you are inexplicably averse to leading the saintly life.

Aurora escaped the devastating influences of too much goodness by losing her mother, and being perforce raised by her father in his best years. He made his daughter brave, quite as though she had been a boy; a course of training of which most mothers fail to see the value. The little girl's first trouble was her father's second marriage,

irrupting a strange and inimical woman into the perfect arrangement which had hitherto existed in the Janeway home. It made the child eat too soon and too much of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil; and, surfeited with this, she was left with too few illusions for her years. If she hadn't been so healthy she might have become pessimistic, but her liver was too sound for that: she became only disgusted. But she didn't look forward to love and marriage as most of the girls at school seemed to do; and romantic talk made her feel as if she'd been eating too much candy. Her father had been romantic about his marriage with Lydia. Aurora distrusted romance, and she was afraid of marriage, which seemed to her the most cruel of civilized conventions. She could base her estimate of marriage only upon what she knew of her father's with Lydia, and this filled her with downright loathing.

No. None of that for her! Healthy, sane, ready for work and service, why should she clutter her life with unhappiness? And she resolved that she would never allow any other human being to weaken her by absorbing her: she would remain unmarried, live her own life, fully, freely, doing her own work in the world. She would have no men in it, except such as needed help. She recognized no need of help in herself, abounding with health and strength as she was; and in her youthful pride she despised the parasitic woman. She

couldn't understand weakness. Her own weakness was that she hadn't quite the right sense of proportion, because she was lacking in the sense of humor. Most women are. Though most women would as lief you told them they lacked a sense of virtue.

Nor did a fashionable life, open to her as Bransome Janeway's daughter, appeal to her. Lydia was fashionable, Lydia lived for Society. Lydia's friends were ultra smart, always beautifully dressed in the very latest mode, people who made or unmade styles which other people followed or avoided. They were almost feverishly busy doing nothing. Anything to avoid boredom, which, however, dogged their footsteps, threatened to pounce upon them at any moment. They were always rushing somewhere else, to do nothing when they got there, always arriving or leaving, one didn't know why or wherefore. Idleness, doing nothing, was their profession in life, passionately adhered to, and they worked like galley-slaves exploiting it. They toiled over play. Their gods were Money and Sex, and from these two gods came the true spirit of their lives, Pleasure. When young, gray-eyed Aurora watched these pretty, tinsel women, these sleek, predatory men, who in turn preyed upon one another, all of them as frankly sexual as Congo blacks; when she listened to endless parrot chatter and to brittle laughter, they seemed to her ridiculously unnecessary, quite as though

Something Outside might be making futile, ungraceful gestures . . .

“If the Lord God ever makes bad mistakes, these are they,” she thought. And she despised them because they bored her, instead of being rather grateful to them that they gave her the opportunity of developing a superiority complex, which is necessary if one wishes to lead anything like a comfortable life. Nor did she know that they bored themselves and one another endlessly, and that this was their terror and their tragedy.

Aurora took herself with great seriousness, because she had an able-bodied sense of duty. She saw the world spread out before her, not as a place in which to play but as one in which to work; and she saw her own place in the vanguard; quietly and conscientiously she prepared herself for it. She had the malady peculiar to the newer woman, the incurable race conscience, to which the much-vaunted New England conscience is as a cat-boil to a carbuncle. The New England conscience is, as often as not, the inevitable result of the New England boiled dinner—perilous stuff which weighs upon the stomach, rather than that perilous stuff which weighs upon the heart. Aurora, however, had the digestion of a healthy ostrich—her conscience was her misfortune, not her fault. Money, matrimony, or a thumping dose of soda may lay the New England variety; nothing

but a stomachful of doing what you think is best for others can ease the itch of the other.

She stood five feet nine in her flat-heeled shoes, modeled after the severe antique beauty that only the chosen few see and adore, a maiden stately as a palm-tree, her black-lashed eyes as clear and gray as Diana's, and with never a fleck marring the wonder of her snow-white skin. From the serenity of her low, broad forehead the nose came in the straight old Greek line, and hers were the chin and the lips of a goddess—the former firm and rounded, the latter not at all small, but full, curved like a bow, red and generous. There was in her whole being a sort of physical ecstasy of vigor, the joy of superabundant health, the natural delight of untainted senses. This fine healthfulness was apt to express itself naively in the directness of her mental processes, so that lesser beings were often embarrassed by such translucent truthfulness.

The one thing that kept you from experiencing a sort of awe of her was her hair. It curled naturally, it fluffed frivolously about her ears, it flew flirtatiously about her forehead, it broke into tiny curls on the nape of her neck; it made a shining blond frame to soften her too-classic face. Also, when she laughed, a dimple danced into her cheek. There is always the lure of the unexpected in a tall fair girl whose hair misbehaves in spite

of her, and who has an unlooked-for dimple in the cheek. Aurora wasn't given to overmuch laughter, so that the dimple never had a chance to make itself commonplace, never lost its power of delightful surprise.

Women adored her. First of all, they saw at once that she was a most beautiful woman, and women are intensely susceptible to beauty in other women. Beauty is very much more to women than it can ever be to men; so much so that they, in their hearts, resent the possession of it by men, unless it be boyish and slightly effeminate, when they can condone and adore it quite as though it belonged to themselves. Men who are excessively handsome are admired by men rather than by women, who see in it something that poaches upon their own preserves, something inimical, which threatens their supremacy. That is why ugly men are so fascinating and delightful to women, why women adore them without any subtle reservations. Ugly men cannot compete with them on their own grounds. Great beauty in women is, to other women, even though they may feel naturally envious and jealous of it, an anguished delight, a subconscious satisfaction, a sort of silent "by this sign we conquer" banner.

Women adored Aurora, then, because she was beautiful, loved her because she was kind, admired her because she was intelligent. But they did not envy her, they were never jealous of her; they

never feared her—she wasn't pretty enough to catch and hold the casual eye. The average man didn't fall in love with her; she was too beautiful.

But when a beauty-loving and intelligent man could love a woman like Aurora Janeway, he must feel for her an intensity of passion such as no ordinary woman could arouse. She would spoil his taste for anything less than herself, for hers was not the beauty which is solely physical, but that upon which the spirit has left its ineffable imprint. This was at once her tragedy and her reward: though she was serenely unaware of the tragedy, and it didn't occur to her that she might ever wish to put in a claim for the reward.

She was so busy, and so satisfied in being so busy, that she never gave the matter a thought. She didn't dislike men; why should she? But she didn't need them, never felt any craving for their individual society. Her super-strength had so far been sufficient to meet, unassisted, every crisis; her own trained and balanced intelligence could rely safely enough on its own judgment. And she had no deluding feminine wiles, no practised artifices. There was an almost terrifying clarity of vision in her attitude to life. If she lacked humor, she also lacked subterfuges.

Such young men as she had met said, honestly, that she was a splendid girl, that she had a fine character; and let it go at that. As for her, she hardly recalled their existence, and looked at

them with great, unremembering eyes when she met them again. Never in her calm life had she had so much as a sentimental fancy for any of them. Several times the youthful college male, attracted by her flaming fairness, had timidly and tentatively sought her further acquaintance; and she was charming, she honestly tried to interest them; she talked sensibly! She was interested in sociology, and she shared it with her callers amiably, interspersing it with literature, philology, and comparative religions; so that the hours they spent with her, dear heart, passed pleasantly—to her. Yet she was *not* invited to the proms; though the youthful collegians had set out with that intention, they recoiled from it with a sort of horror. Take that big blonde bonehead to a dance? God forbid! She'd make a fellow believe in race suicide!

“Gosh, I'd as lief try to neck a Greek textbook! She's worse than a co-ed!” was the verdict. And the young gentlemen felt swindled, because, after all, the fool girl had the real stuff when it came to good looks. But what was the use?

The prognostication of Lydia's friend—that if Aurora kept on as she was no other lady need ever be uneasy on her account—seemed in a fair way of being fulfilled.

Aurora had to rush home from college to a disrupted home and a father whose need of her put everything else out of her mind. He clung to her

hand pathetically. He had had a stroke; which left him slightly lame and almost childish. He was suddenly old; he was broken; and he was poor. Lydia had once more acted in accordance with her lights, and Lydia's lights were red. She had departed, leaving, as usual, shipwreck and disaster behind her. The last thing Bransome Janeway could do for her, because he had once loved her, he had done: being an old-fashioned gentleman, with, to her, laughable notions of honor and truth and loyalty, he remained silent, shielding her; though his was a worse case of smash than any of the others, bad as they had been. Having by a really colossal extravagance managed to break down the all but impregnable Janeway ramparts, trailed the Janeway name in the dust, smashed the great Janeway fortune, and, incidentally, the man's heart and health and mentality as well, it was high time for Lydia to take herself off. She took along with her her jewelry, a sizable fortune in her own name which secured her plenty of ready cash, her maid, her Chows, her many trunks, her car, and some carved ivories which had belonged to the Janeways for several generations and which she fancied. Anyhow, she could at a pinch sell the things for a tidy sum. The Janeway pickings had been very good; Lydia felt satisfied, having done the best she could to indemnify herself for the boredom of the man's society. On the whole, she reflected, she could con-

gratulate herself on having gotten out of the mess so skilfully; and there was no open scandal: the old fool kept his mouth shut. He was full of noble feelings!

She had no liver, like her brother Jordan, whom she hated for a fanatic; no conscience, like her stepdaughter, whom she disliked for a prude; and no heart, like Bransome Janeway, whom she despised for a fool; so that what passed for her heart never gave her a moment's trouble. Lydia was that most grisly of all specters, a body without a soul, a specter not so rare as one might think. But her toilettes were far, far above those achieved by ordinary mortals; they were really works of art, for hers was that miracle of judgment, perfect taste. She knew exactly what to wear and how to wear it. She had plenty of money, good taste, charming manners, a perfect digestion and no incumbrances; she was worldly wise to the *nth* degree, and it is written that in their generation the children of this world are wiser than the children of light. Never, by any chance, did Lydia allow herself to be bored by any but the most desirable, the most fashionable. She kept her place firmly in the most select circles. And, as a reward for cutting loose from the Janeway wreckage, she was cynically adored by a sought-after princeling, who said he loved her to distraction because, first, she never bored him, and, lastly, because she was the only woman in the world

who was as wise and as wicked as he himself tried to be.

So the vampire fittid, gorged and revived by the life-blood of Bransome Janeway; and all the bright bad birds of her plumage followed in her wake, their colors vanishing from the Janeway skies, which were now too dun for their liking. Lydia's departure almost consoled Aurora for the ruin the siren had wrought. The girl could better bear the absence of fortune than the presence of her stepmother.

What there was to be saved, Aurora saved. The Janeway estate, great in its time, was sold under the hammer. It had been so heavily mortgaged that virtually nothing remained to the Janeways. The staff of trained servants went first. The stables, the cars, the furniture, the pictures and silver that had been the first Mrs. Janeway's, all went, to pay frightful debts. It seemed to the appalled Aurora impossible that one woman in one part of a lifetime could have piled up debts so enormous; but Lydia had gambled recklessly. Aurora seemed to be drowning in a turbulent sea of unpaid bills, caught in a roaring maelstrom that sucked down everything. All that she had known all her life, all that was dear and familiar to her, was swept away. The lawyers were very kind. They were sorry for the Janeway girl, but the wreck was so complete that even their shrewdness couldn't do much for her. Lydia never left

until the ship was sinking, and then she took most of the life-preservers with her.

When the nightmare was over, everything was gone, all familiar landmarks had disappeared. She wasn't a rich man's daughter any more, but a poor man's chief support. Aurora removed her father into smaller, and, so far as he was concerned, happier quarters. He had been uneasy and frightened so long as they remained in the Jane-way house. The sight of those strange people in it, people who came and took all his old possessions away, walked through his private rooms with their hats on, tramped through his halls with dusty feet, almost drove him insane. He couldn't sleep there any more, and he grew all at once very gray, and thin, and frail—an old man, the shadow of his former self, a sort of sad living ghost.

Out of their household staff but one remained, grim Mary McKinstry, who had served Aurora's mother and had nursed, loved, and at times spanked Aurora herself in her childhood. The two castaways retained this one faithful friend, who shared their fallen fortunes. The rest didn't matter. Aurora had her father to herself, Mary McKinstry had the only two people in the world whom she loved, and once more both of them needed her. Above all, Lydia, whom she hated with Presbyterian fervor, had gone by herself on her way to that hell she was indubitably headed

for in the justice of God. Bransome Janeway clung pathetically to Aurora and Mary; and they had for their reward the nursing of a man, a task to which the primordial instincts of women blindly rise. The three of them were content.

Aurora kept her father for three happy, holy years. He was her child, not she his. He sat in an arm-chair by a sunny window, in which flowers bloomed in boxes and a canary sang in a cage. He read and dozed and dreamed, and his dreams were always pleasant, for in them the wife of his youth came back to him, and he was young again with her. He had forgotten Lydia and the torment and fever and fret of his existence with her; he had forgotten almost everything, except the golden-haired girl who had loved and married him when he was young, and the child who had made both of them so happy. Sometimes, looking at Mary McKinstry, he would ask her gently:

“Who are you, please? I’ve seen you before, haven’t I? Your face seems familiar.”

“Ay, you’ve seen me before, Mr. Bransome. I’m Mary—Mary McKinstry.”

“Yes, yes . . . of course you are, of course you are! I recognize you now, and I ask your pardon for forgetting you for a moment, Mary McKinstry. Dear, dear! how absent-minded I’m getting! I’ll tell you what I think is the reason: I think it’s because I’m getting to be an old, old man; a very old man, Mary. And very old men

forget." And he added, sweetly and kindly: "Oh, please don't let it make you shed tears, my dear friend! Please don't cry, Mary!"

But it made dour Mary McKinstry cry, in spite of herself.

He never forgot his daughter, but he had at times a hazy notion that she was her mother. When she came in, he would greet her with a soft clapping of hands, like a happy child. He was very, very gentle, very patient and sweet-tempered, and it was an exquisite joy to the strong girl to know that he needed her, that she shielded him, that her work provided for him, that she could supply all his wants. It was those three full, beautiful years of love and self-sacrifice and devotion, that softened cold, calm, self-sufficient Aurora—who had had, perhaps, too much of the lily in her and not enough of the rose—into a pitying sweet patience with all human weakness. Adversity gave her the understanding heart. When she looked at you now, her eyes were no longer those of the high young goddess; they were a woman's eyes, which saw very clearly and straightly, and very kindly, too.

When the beloved white head vanished from the sunny window, and Bransome Janeway's place knew him no more, the natural sorrow that ensued held no touch of bitterness. Love and service, the simple happiness of every day, had wiped all that out. Even the cruel memory of his second

wife's heartlessness had faded into the background of days in which Lydia had no share. When Mary McKinstry and Aurora Janeway wept for Bransome Janeway's passing, their tears were the healing tears of pure affection, bedewing and enriching the heart. Love knows nothing but itself. It knows nothing of hate.

In memory of her father, Aurora founded and Mary McKinstry maintained the Bransome Janeway Chair of Social Tea Service, ready at a moment for friendly help. Many came and sat in the old man's chair by the window, and were the better for it. Now it would be some league worker, hoarse from public speaking; now an overworked, discouraged young clergyman; now a busy district doctor, snatching a minute's rest; or a school-teacher, growing old, maybe, and afraid of it; or a show-girl, with a pretty, impertinent, empty face; or a settlement worker with a battling-against-odds one; and now it would be some one of the alien women, the sad patient women who bear and rear and lose, and who can't quite understand. They all sat in Bransome Janeway's chair, and each blessed it. They were waited upon by Mary McKinstry, they were talked to by Aurora. And visited and visitors were all the happier for it. And nobody thought of the Jezebel who, after all, was the true cause of it!

## CHAPTER IV

### SOWING

**I**T was to this Aurora Janeway, very busy and efficient and useful, and very happy in being so busy and efficient and useful, that the imperious telephone message came from Mr. Jordan Courtenay, brother to Lydia of evil memory; that same Jordan Courtenay who had offered no help, given no sign, when Bransome Janeway had been mercilessly wrecked by Courtenay's only sister.

"I wonder what will the old divil be wanting of us?" mused Mary McKinstry, who received the message in Aurora's absence. "'Twould be like him—her own brother as he is—to wash his hands of that hussy and strive to throw her back upon ours, if she's met her just deserts and beggared herself, the *streelogue!*" She looked around the pretty, pleasant room, where she and Aurora had been so happy. "I'll go to jail first!" she thought fiercely.

Later, when Aurora came in, Mary McKinstry gave her the message, cautiously, and with evident unwillingness.

"The barefaced impudence of him, sending for

*you*, as if the very name of him wouldn't be a bad smell in the nose of a Janeway!" she exclaimed.

"Let's wait to find out what he wants, anyhow," said Aurora, practically, "before we blame him for telephoning us."

"Have no clavers with any of that breed," Mary McKinstry begged her nursling, who topped her by something more than a full head. "There'll be no luck in it! I'm misdoubting the lot of them. I'm told there's a callant of the house stravaging about the town; a feckless fool, you mind, joy-riding to the devil, like his precious aunt before him. Have no clavers with *him*, neither!" said Mary, jealously. "Sure, what can you expect from such a nest but a rotten egg?"

"Oh Mary Mack, what a good hater you are! The Scotch-Irish are a terribly fierce people!" said Aurora. "But I hardly think I'll have any clavers with young Mr. Courtenay. He doesn't swim into the ken of poor social workers, you old goose!" And being very tired after a hard day, she braided her bright hair and went to bed. She would attend to the message in the morning.

She had never before given any thought to her stepmother's brother, though she had naturally heard a good deal of him, for he loomed large upon the horizon of public charity. His name headed all worthy lists. He was a public-spirited citizen. Everybody knew that much about him. The girl wondered, sleepily, how he happened to

know of her existence, and what he could possibly want to see her about. Probably some case in which he was interested that she had handled, she decided. Possibly he didn't even know she was his sister's beggared stepdaughter. Oh, well . . . After all, she was just one among other social workers . . .

When she telephoned the Courtenay house in the morning, she was told that Mr. Courtenay desired to see her personally, upon most urgent business, at the earliest opportunity. And when at the appointed hour she called, she saw a great hulking man slumped in a padded chair, in an upstairs room of a fine old brick house luxuriously but somberly furnished. There were Blue Books on the heavy table beside his chair, and it was plain that the man was restless and nervous. He looked sullen. He was sick, she thought, in body and mind, and she, who had so faithfully nursed another man sick in body and mind, looked at Lydia's brother with eyes of softened judgment. She felt—she didn't know just why—sorry for him.

He never while he lived forgot his first view of Aurora Janeway. She was, he saw at once, beautiful; no more so, he thought with a pang, than his wild, idle nephew, but more forceful, competent, purposeful—damn her! And of a sudden he hated her for it. He could respect her, admire her, trust her, feel perfectly safe in leaving great

responsibilities in those strong, firm hands of hers, but he could not like her nor forgive her for being what Frank was not.

She sank with unconscious grace into the chair to which he waved her—such a chair as Frank had refused and derided. She didn't fidget. She wasn't in the least curious—merely intelligently interested. She sat, serene and perfect, her hands folded quietly in her lap, waiting for him to explain what he wanted to see her about, what he wanted her to do for him. It came to him that if he didn't explain she would wait for a reasonable interval and then get up and go about her business, without ever asking him a question. Her repose irritated him. He stirred restlessly in his chair, and his somber eyes, fixed upon her in close scrutiny, smoldered with animosity.

"I sent for you, Miss Janeway, because I have a serious proposal to make you," he said after a short pause in which he sought for words. "A serious proposal. A very serious proposal," he repeated heavily. Again he paused, groping for words. "You are not, I take it, what one might call wealthy, since your father's failure?"

"I am not," she told him calmly, "what one might call wealthy . . . since my father's failure . . . and death, Mr. Courtenay."

She felt slightly disdainful of the man's obvious lack of delicacy. Didn't he—Lydia's own brother—remember Lydia? As it happened, he did re-

member Lydia. He smiled unpleasantly. A dyspeptic wolf might make such a grimace.

"I never had any sympathy for Janeway," he said suddenly. "He ought to have known better. He had two—or was it three, or maybe four?—examples of my sister Lydia's matrimonial forays before him. Good Heavens! what more did he need? What did he *marry* her for?"

"Did you send for me to ask me such a question . . . after my father's death?" asked Aurora, and her gray eyes lighted up.

"Tut, tut!" said he, impatiently. "The man lost his head, and then, of course, his money. It was a mathematical certainty. Why, the minute I heard he'd married my sister, I began to withdraw all my interests from concerns he had anything to do with. I canceled all dealings with him. I knew what was coming."

"Surely," cried Aurora, haughtily, as she rose, "you have not *dared* send for me this morning merely to discuss my poor father's disastrous marriage with your wretched sister!"

"No," he admitted sourly, "I've sent for you on your own account. And please sit down; you make me nervous, bulking up like that! There . . . that's better. First let me ask you: do you happen to know, personally, my nephew, Francis Courtenay?"

Aurora, who had reseated herself, smiled slightly. What *did* the man want, anyhow?

“Your nephew and I move in quite different worlds, you must remember,” she reminded him.

He nodded. His thoughts were not so much upon her as upon Francis—Francis, who had been such a dear, funny little boy only yesterday, brown curls tumbled on his forehead, rosy cheeks, big black eyes; Francis, who was such a dear, handsome, undesirable young man to-day. . . . He gave a sigh that was like a groan. Aurora waited. Again, she didn’t know why, she felt sorry for the man.

“My nephew Francis and I have grounds of disagreement,” he said at last, “such serious grounds of disagreement that it is impossible for us to do anything but separate.”

Aurora said nothing. Just sat there, looking at him with her serious gray eyes.

“He has no moral character whatever!” the man brought out violently. *She* had, he knew—damn her! The bishop had told him so. The bishop had, indeed, waxed unwontedly enthusiastic over Aurora Janeway’s fine character.

“Settled up everything, paid every just debt, took care of her father for the rest of his life, made him happy. Went to work. Everybody trusts her, everybody runs to her. Magnificent character!” the bishop had burred. Did everybody have a magnificent character . . . except Francis Courtenay?

“Miss Janeway, I may as well tell you at once.

My nephew Francis is a ne'er-do-well. He is an idler, a waster, a profligate, good for nothing on the face of the earth except wanton spending. And he has chosen, of his own free will, to disobey me, to defy me, to leave my house . . . forever. I . . . I am a man with a conscience, Miss Janeway. I put it to you: can a man with a conscience, a man who tries to be useful to his fellow-man, a man who believes in serving God, intrust a great fortune to the hands of a reckless, fast young fly-away, whose boon companions are other fast young fly-aways and public, shameless actresses? Could I, could I?" And he leaned forward, trembling, with a sort of cruel intensity.

"If the young man is what you say he is, no—a thousand times no," said Aurora Janeway, after a pause. "But are you quite sure you haven't misjudged him? It is so easy to misjudge people, Mr. Courtenay!"

"Am I sure I breathe?" he asked savagely. "Am I sure I am a sane man, a decent man, a moral man? I tell you he's no good! He's no good! He has but one purpose in life—to amuse himself scandalously. His associates are vicious . . . lost . . . damned! Very well, then, let him go and be damned with them, since he prefers them to me. But he shan't do it in my house and with my money. That, at least, I can prevent." Beads of sweat globuled his forehead, and the intensity of passion, of anger, of pain in his gray-white face

disturbed her. She wished to end an interview for which she couldn't, to save her, see the reason.

"I am sorry that things are as they are," she said directly. "But what have I to do with this, Mr. Courtenay? What can I do? Why have you sent for *me*?"

He stared at her tigerishly.

"What have you to do with it? What can you do? Why, you're to take his place. *You're to come here, to my house, and take my nephew Frank's place.*" And it seemed to him that roaring surges went over his head, the blood beat hammer-like in his ears, when he heard himself say it aloud. His eyes glared and he ground his teeth.

"Would you mind explaining yourself intelligibly? I don't, I'm afraid, gather your meaning," said she, round-eyed and startled. Was the poor gentleman stricken with sudden insanity? Had she better summon help?

"I am explaining myself . . . if you will kindly sit still and listen," he snarled, looking at her with hostile eyes. "Miss Janeway, I *must* have somebody to help me, somebody who has a higher purpose in life than idle pleasure. Somebody trained, intelligent, efficient. I . . . I regard my fortune as a sacred trust, do you understand?" Here he winced; you saw that the statement pained him. "My nephew," he went on gulpingly, "thinks that all trusts should be dissolved. My nephew is a moral anarchist."

“Most anarchists are: at least all I’ve ever known,” said she, honestly. “It makes them so much harder to deal with. They think, because they know they’re moral, that they’re right.”

“There is no room for any sort of anarchists, moral or immoral, in my scheme of things,” he responded angrily. “Now Miss Janeway, please don’t interrupt me again; you confuse me. I am trying to inform you that I need . . . I want . . . I must have . . . somebody who will and can carry out my plans and orders intelligently. I think that somebody is you,” he finished deliberately.

“Oh!” said Miss Janeway, “I see! You wish to employ me as, let us say, a sort of confidential secretary? Why, thank you very much, Mr. Courtenay, but I couldn’t possibly accept your offer. I’m sorry, but it would cripple me, really. But I could send you an intelligent and reliable person, who I am sure would satisfy you. Shall I?”

“No!” he snarled. “No! No! No! My offer is to you—nobody else. Don’t be so quick to offer me something-just-as-good. I don’t want it, I won’t have it.”

“Why, I only wished to help you, if I could—”

“You can. I’m not offering you a secretaryship. What I propose, Miss Janeway is to . . . in a measure . . . adopt you. Now, will you come and live in my house and carry out my orders intelligently?—bring a trained morality to my aid? Will

you or won't you come and help me do a great work? Yes or no?"

"You know nothing about me, Mr. Courtenay," said Aurora, lost in astonishment. "I can work; I can obey orders when I have to. But I am not at all brilliant. I might disappoint you."

By way of answer he reached into the table drawer, and handed her a small typewritten slip of paper. It was the neatest, completest sort of nutshell biography, detailing her varying shades of fortunes, her activities, surroundings, and friends. Nothing was omitted. Every detail was correct, even to the last inch of her height.

"Permit me to say that I never do anything blindfold. I am a business man," he reminded her significantly. "Now then: will you or won't you come here and help me use the Courtenay fortune for the good of others? The bishop tells me you are the one proper person for the job."

Perversely, as he saw her hesitate, his desire to have her take on the position he offered her grew in intensity. It seemed to him, somehow, that if she refused, Frank would triumph. And Frank must be punished. The laws of God demanded that Frank must be punished. He couldn't punish Frank through a girl he liked, could he? And he knew he would never, never, never like Aurora Janeway.

"Am I to be allowed to exercise my own judgment, choose my own methods of procedure? Or

should I be expected merely to obey orders?" she asked directly.

He hadn't thought of that. Her level-headedness abashed him like a dash of cold water in his heated face.

"I hardly think we should conflict," he decided, after a moment's thought. "You are too sensible not to understand and enter into my plans, and I think I am too progressive not to further yours."

"I couldn't think of not continuing, in the main, to do my own work in my own way, as I've been trained to do it," she said quietly. "It has heretofore—pardon me for becoming personal, Mr. Courtenay, but it has really been quite satisfactory, and my superiors and employers recommend it. I shouldn't be of very much benefit to you if I had to change all my methods."

He said sullenly, and even with a twinge of doubtfulness:

"You can continue to do things as you've been trained to do them. The bishop tells me you're the best of them all. I shan't interfere, unless I have to. I make that promise. You will come?" He breathed heavily, and he didn't know whether to be glad or sorry.

"I should be afraid to refuse," she said quietly. "It is such a widening of my work as I had not hoped for; it . . . it looks Providential."

"I have always sought to do the will of Providence," he said stiffly. And he began to outline his

plans for the betterment of man, for the useful expending of much money.

Aurora Janeway listened. He was following the broad and beaten track. Nothing new. He would regild the shop-worn wings of the seraphim over the main altar, and add a beautiful tablet stating that Jordan Courtenay had done this for the greater glory of God. He would give to endowed—but not endowed-enough—hospitals; he would give scholarships in well-established seats of learning; he would give to all sorts of well-intentioned Homes; at Christmas time the “Worthiest Needy” would be relieved by him, he being assured that they were truly virtuous, deserving people. He was, indeed, a public-spirited citizen, ready and willing to aid worthy causes.

He was a good churchman. He would unashamedly kneel down and pray; he was unfeignedly thankful he wasn't as other men. And he would have publicans and sinners come in by side doors and be railed off from the select sanctified. You saw that you could never hope to make him understand that publicans and sinners are quite as often the work of the elect as are the begilded wings of the altar angels. No, there was no place in his scheme of things for any anarchists of any sort, moral or immoral. A safe and sane Christian.

She had met many, and she felt a chilling doubt. How should she reconcile herself to his measure

or make him understand hers? She didn't, she confessed, know. But she did know that one cannot and must not try to evade personal life problems. Run away from one to-day and it starts up like a lion in your path to-morrow. "As thy day, so shall thy strength be."

For young Francis Courtenay, whom she didn't know and had never even seen, she had but small concern. His sort, too, she had met in her time, and she had scant sympathy for it. Shall a trifler, an idler, a wastrel, be allowed to stand in the way of progress, reform, the uplift of the many? No! And she resolved to put her hand to this work to which she had been, as it were, miraculously directed. Who knew what good she was meant to further? It seemed that Heaven itself summoned her. She dared not palter before that divine command.

"I will come. And I will do my best." She rose then, and the beautiful tall fairness, the classic lines of her, the quiet sureness of her strength, gave him, too, a momentary doubt. If his will and hers should come in collision? What then? He put the thought aside hastily. He didn't want to face, even then, the idea of opposing wills with Aurora Janeway.

"I hope you have no entanglements?" he asked. "After we get things started, put in working trim, there'll be no sentimental silliness to upset them?"

"Women like me seldom marry, Mr. Courtenay," said she, seriously, and herself firmly be-

lieved what she said. "We are wedded to Humanity," she added grandly.

"Huh!" his lip lifted. "Children of the barren more than the wedded wife's? Well, we'll see!"

And so it was decided. She was, in a week's time, to take Frank's place, live in the Courtenay house, carry on the work Frank had refused, take what the young man had tossed aside. But Aurora Janeway and Jordan Courtenay did not shake hands over that bargain.

All the way home she felt like one in a strange dream. Everything was unreal. Jordan Courtenay's sister had wrecked Bransome Janeway. Now Lydia Courtenay's brother was offering to adopt Bransome Janeway's daughter, that she might aid him in a work which was her chosen vocation!

The roaring subway added to this sense of unreality. Faces—crowds of faces—passed her in a blur. Even when she again emerged into the fresher air of the streets, her eyes still held the look of one who is seeing visions and dreaming dreams. She, whose work had heretofore been checked by lack of funds, had had of a sudden the most potent power on earth, money, placed at her disposal. It was as if God, seeing and pitying her struggle to aid His children, had personally and divinely intervened—had come, Himself, to her aid! Awed, grateful, she involuntarily lifted her head—and collided smartly with a tall young man.

Something in his gay, dark, handsome face struck her with a haunting familiarity. She knew him. That fine face was as familiar to her as her own in her mirror. Even while each murmured the conventional apology, she stared. And he recognized that it wasn't the usual New York sex-stare, that predatory hunter-and-huntress interchange of glances, but the clean glance of one striving to place some one familiar, the glance of recognition.

"Where on earth have I seen this good-looking young man before?" wondered Aurora. "What a handsome face . . . what a good face . . . what a nice face it is! My Heavens! who can he be? I wish I knew!"

"I have been bumped into and stared at by one of the Immortals . . . on Broadway!" thought Francis Courtenay. "*And she knew me!*"

## CHAPTER V

### ABSTRACT JUSTICE

**A** RED-HAIRED young Russian Jewess was occupying the Chair when Aurora reached home, and Mary McKinstry was serving her as affably as though, instead of being an unconverted Hebrew, she had been a predestinate Presbyterian with her ticket to glory bought and paid for, at no expense to herself, before ever the world was made. Contact with Aurora's people was doing sad things to Mary Mack's orthodoxy. Why, the woman had some doubts now whether even Roman Catholics mightn't be quite good people—good enough to escape eternal damnation and to slip into heaven by some slyly left-open side door. Could a perfectly good Gentile—white, Protestant, Nordic, and living in the United States of America—stray further from the true faith of her fathers than to extend a tentative salvation to Jews and Catholics? Horrible heterodoxy! Yet such was this insidious contact with people—people whom one helped—doing to Mary McKinstry's religious morals!

The young Jewess, whom Aurora particularly liked, happened to be a leader among the garment-

workers. She presented the acute intelligence, the courage, and the astonishing prettiness which seem to belong to Jewesses of that class nowhere else than in America. You saw with delight how thick and creamy her skin was, that her crisp red hair had a sort of snapping electric brightness, that she had the beautiful brown patient eyes of Israel; and that she held her strong body of a potential child-bearer as though it were a sword.

She greeted Aurora with friendly deference, as one salutes an adored and trusted leader. Her brown eyes, rather anxious and tired, lighted up hopefully. She had come to talk over the prospect of averting a threatened strike, which both feared.

“There was a girl that’d come through a pretty bad loft fire, at our meeting last night,” said the Russian. “I couldn’t keep her from talking, you know, Miss Janeway; it wouldn’t be right not to let her talk. And when our girls looked around ’em . . . and saw the risks . . . and they thought of the cut in wages that the bosses are talking of putting over . . . and the hours and all . . . well, they got excited and frightened and angry . . . and they wanted to walk out right then. I talked until I was hoarse, and I’ve managed to hold them in, so far. But they’re bitter, because they’re scared . . .

“I saw the boss this morning, and I talked to him, too, until I was hoarse. And he won’t listen.

He just won't listen to a word, and I'm up against it. I came straight from him to you. Oh, Miss Jane-way, what can we do about it? It'll be such a big strike and such a bad one, when it does come! There'll be so many drawn in . . . I'm scared! I'm scared! We're not prepared for it!"

They looked at each other apprehensively. They had been through pretty bad fights before. . . . Hordes of maddened, hungry workers uttering polyglot shrieks . . . bull-headed Irish policemen brandishing clubs like shillalehs at Donnybrook, . . . scared scabs desperately snatching at work because they, too, faced hunger . . . This thing had just *got* to be held off! Oh, but how? How?

It was at that moment that the full force, meaning, and value of Jordan Courtenay's offer drove home to Aurora Janeway. Surely, surely, Providence was directly interposing, lending the aid of money, using Jordan Courtenay's prejudices to a wider end! Wasn't this proof positive? What did she, what did all workers most need? Money! Money! Money! Money to feed the women and children, to save desperate girls, divert wavering boys, stay frenzied men. And Jordan Courtenay was offering the aid of the colossal Courtenay fortune! Now, God be praised! God be praised!

And when she and the tense, red-haired Russian had threshed the matter out, studied this

weakness and that strength, planned this thing to do and that thing to avoid, how to bring influence to bear upon this one and pressure to bear upon that one, Aurora sent the girl away with renewed courage.

“Oh, Miss Janeway, you’re a tower of strength to me!” sighed the Jewess, gratefully. “What ever could I do without you! But now I think we can hold this thing up indefinitely. Anyhow, until they’re better able to meet the worst of it.”

Even as the garment-worker departed, came another visitor, balancing herself on Aurora’s threshold like a human May-fly. Aurora radiated power, by goodness, intelligence, and superb health; but this smaller and more vivid creature radiated vitality by some sheer flame and spirit. She was intensely, joyously *alive*. The tameless gipsy vividness of the small face was softened by the starry steadiness of the great dusky eyes, the sweetness of the scarlet mouth, the delicacy of the nose. That there was an indomitable will, an unbendable courage under the arch loveliness, was knowledge that one gained later. At first sight, one was stopped, clutched as it were by the heart-strings, by the miracle of this small piece of painted clay fashioned so perfectly.

. . . *I met a peacock’s feather within the pages of the holy Koran, and said to it: “Surely this station is above thy condition!” It replied: “Be*

*silent, for wherever the lovely appear, they shall find no hand upraised, no heart closed to oppose them.*

For this was Dolly Tredegar, that "dancing woman" whose name blazed in electric signs on Broadway when it wasn't blazing in London and Paris. This was she whom men adored and women envied and the public worshiped whole-heartedly. And you knew she might have said:

"There was a star danced  
And under that was I born."

She introduced herself with affable modesty; there was nothing high-hat about Dolly. Standing next to tall Aurora, she resembled some sweet pagan child appealing to a great Norse goddess—say Freya, who also was golden-haired and white-browed and gray-eyed.

"I've been sent to you, Miss Janeway, to talk to you about one of my show-girls in whom I'm very much interested. A very personal case, you understand. And I'm puzzled and worried."

Aurora looked down on this iridescent human May-fly, and felt for her a quick, intuitive liking, the warmth of which surprised her. She wasn't as a rule given to quick, warm likings; trained social workers try to avoid them. And Dolly looked up at the large, fair, calm-eyed girl who resembled Freya, and felt an instant affection for her, a deep

respect and admiration, a sure trust, such as no other human being had ever aroused in her turbulent heart. It was as if deep called unto deep.

Dolly was given the Chair, and a cup of tea. In half an hour she had revolutionized Mary McKinstry's Calvinistic and preconceived notions of dancers. The grim-faced vestal was almost sinfully delighted with the gay naughtiness, the spice of mockery and hint of malice, the impish drollery, of this fairy-like creature.

"Sure, she's like one of Themselfs coming out o' the hills on a white night in May, when the hawthorn's in bloom and the fish do be leaping in the water and the winds o' the world dance with her," thought Mary Mack.

Mary adored Aurora. Aurora was beautiful and good. Beautiful and good as Brigid the Bright. But this small, perfect woman was beautiful and . . . and something else, something human and impish in one, something that smacked deliciously of, say, the toothsome savor of original sin.

And so Mary Mack did homage to dancing Dolly in the shape of offerings of fragrant amber tea in Aurora's best eggshell cups, and such crisp little scones as only a Scotch-Irishwoman can make. She watched Dolly's childish pleasure in them with deep approval.

"Ay, they're fine, just. 'Twas my own grandmother taught me to make them and she the best

cook in the county. There'll be more of them for you whenever you come in for them, ma'am."

The three women settled down for a talk that wasn't so businesslike as intimate and friendly. They parted as pledged friends.

"And now," asked Mary, when they were at last alone, "what would that old chiel be wanting with you?"

Aurora told her; and the wonder of it, the sheer incredible wonder of it, held them for a few moments silent. They looked into each other's eyes mutely. It was unbelievable; something that one might dream of, but that couldn't really happen in every-day life.

"You'll go, of course," said Mary McKinstry, presently; and she looked around the pretty room and sighed.

"Yes. I'd be afraid not to."

"Surely. 'Twas intended. You wouldn't dare shirk it, lass."

"It does seem like that, doesn't it, nursie? As if it had been divinely arranged, and I'd been training toward it. And yet . . ." She, too, cast a wistful glance around the pleasant, homely room, and the chair in the window.

"And the young loon that's flitted . . . to make room for you forbye: what of him, child?"

"I'm afraid the young man really isn't worth much, Mary Mack—just a sort of dissolute dilettante; what *you'd* call feckless. I couldn't let a

character like that stand in the way of the work.”

“Ay,” said Mary, understanding just how it was.

“Nothing . . . I mean nothing momentous . . . happens by chance,” mused Aurora. “There’s a meaning and a reason and a law. So I have to see what I can make of the chance young Mr. Courtenay threw away. Maybe, if I do very well, he’ll be given some share of credit for it . . . by Them above.”

“Ay. Just that. But oh, my bairn, my bairn, I dread leaving this snug harbor where we’ve been so happy, you and I!” Two large tears trickled down her cheeks.

“I, too, Mary Mack.”

And the girl’s face clouded. She had known trouble, loss, grief, death, in that same haven, but she had never known a divided hearth. Everything had been perfectly plain and simple. Love had not touched her, save in his guise of altruism. She did not love a man, but Mankind. She had, then, been quite sincere when she told Jordan Courtenay that she was wedded to Humanity.

“Well, the tide’s turning and the Lord’s aiding, and who are we to go against the power of either?” said Mary. “There’ll be Courtenay money to help you with your men on strike, and out of jobs, and your girls walking out, and your lost girls, and they poor women that’s always bringing bairns into a world where they’re no’

wanted, your tenement folks, and your deserted and delinquent children . . . and the fights you make for the like of such. . . ." She looked at her nursling inquiringly.

"Mr. Courtenay has his own ideas about it all—not such bad views, either," replied Aurora, hurriedly, seeing Mary's bushy eyebrows go up. "The best of it is that he insists I'm to have the allowance Mr. Francis had—an extravagantly liberal allowance, Mary, it seems to me. More than we could ever use for just us." She frowned slightly. "At first I was for refusing it. Then I had an inspiration: I decided that we'd live on our own wee income, just as we've always done, and that I'd use the allowance for my own work in my own way, for individual cases as they come up. That will leave me free to follow Mr. Jordan Courtenay's directions with a whole heart."

At that Mary McKinstry began to laugh.

"Ah well," said she, "you'll be but using the hair of the dog to cure the bite." And again she chuckled.

Aurora didn't smile. And then Mary McKinstry said an unprecedented thing:

"My lass, I could wish you'd the promise of a few laugh-wrinkles about the mouth and eyes. Ay, 'twould be fine and grand for you to be a wee bit gayer . . . like her that's just left us."

Aurora's classic face kindled. She said honestly:

“I’d love to be like that, too, Mary! Isn’t she wonderful? She made me think of a little spoiled pet angel, didn’t she you?”

Mary McKinstry blushed for herself.

“You’re best as you are, darling,” said she, loyally. “You’re that good and that honest I’ve no fears for you in your dealings with himself; though I misdoubt,” and she gave a wicked chuckle, “I misdoubt that same will trouble him sore before he’s done with you. Don’t you ken that God ay uses the best of His angels to trouble the worst of His devils with?”

Miss Aurora Janeway’s presence in the Jordan Courtenay house was not immediately understood, though the disastrous Janeway affair was recalled and discussed and Lydia’s bright-red reputation hung on the clothes-line of publicity. The bishop had brought his wife and his nieces to call on her at once, and that, of course, started an avalanche of visiting-cards into the Courtenay hall. It was conceded that the Janeways were quite as good as the Courtenays or anybody else who was anybody at all, even though the Janeways, unlike the Courtenays, had been foolish enough to lose all their money instead of making a great deal more of it. It was thought, too,—particularly by mothers with unmarried daughters,—that Lydia’s stepdaughter was rather a top-heavy young person, considering. And too big. And wouldn’t

you think she'd bob all that mop of hair and use a little rouge at times? And go to at least an occasional bridge party or dinner? It was admitted, too, that it was very clever of Aurora Janeway, who hadn't a dollar to her name, to use the social-service-philanthropic wedge to insinuate her way into the millionaire's confidence; gain an influence over him at just the right time, when he was unhappy over young Francis. Well, one would see what one would see!

Immersed, almost from the hour of her arrival in the Courtenay house, in the work which Mr. Jordan Courtenay piled upon her so feverishly, all but swamped in lists and figures and investigations, and committees, and conferences, Aurora held to her own job and made no slightest attempt to interfere with the ordered law of the household arrangements. She had been given an excellent office opening into the library, and here she spent most of her time. Frank's rooms had been closed. Aurora had been given those once occupied by Mrs. Jordan Courtenay, which satisfied both her and Mary McKinstry. Simmons had done this, and Aurora had asked no questions, raised no demur. The household reins remained, as heretofore, in the man-servant's lean, capable hands.

The new member of the Courtenay household was somewhat puzzled as just how to regard Simmons. He treated her with the most scrupulous respect. She never had to repeat an order. Nay,

her wishes were more than once anticipated. His contacts with Mary Mack, in spite of the latter lady's sniff, were impeccably polite. Yet, Simmons and God alone knew how, the impression was slowly but surely and most subtly conveyed to Miss Janeway that she was an interloper and her presence in that house a distinct calamity, and that if she were a right-minded person she wouldn't be there at all.

Simmons hated her. He hated her even more because he was compelled to like and respect her: she was all that she should be, and he knew it; and he couldn't forgive her for it. His silent animosity, which never was allowed to appear on the surface, but which she somehow divined, at times troubled her. She couldn't understand.

"I'm afraid Simmons doesn't like us, Mary," she confided to her nurse. "He never does or says anything, but somehow I can't but feel he doesn't like us."

"He hoped you'd be anything else but what you are; and you're nothing else but what you are," said Mary McKinstry, chuckling. "That fazes him. He's jealous. He doesn't think it's fair."

"I don't understand," said Aurora.

"You wouldn't. Simmons knows you can't. That's what ails him. Don't let it bother you," said Mary. And she laughed wickedly.

Mr. Jordan Courtenay prided himself on being practical. He had insisted from the beginning that

his charity must be practical. Aurora, taking him literally at his word, saw to it that he got exactly what he asked for. His charity was of a sudden practical to a degree that left him gasping; and when he came up for air, this well-trained, efficient, executive young woman fixed her calm clear eyes upon him, and in her cultivated, modulated voice gave him facts and figures, incontrovertible, unanswerable—what he had, in fact, demanded! His head reeled; he knew—he couldn't help knowing—that there was but one thing for him to do: knuckle under and do what she told him.

She never appealed to his sentiment; she tackled him in the name of his common sense, upon which he had always plumed himself. And he, who had bullied others all his life, was, in the name of his common sense, baffled by this big efficient girl who was in herself all that he had vociferously claimed to admire. What he had preached, she practised: worse yet, she took it for granted that *he* wished to practise what he preached! And it appalled him. It made life complex. He didn't know what to do.

She took hold of his philanthropy-business and chucked him head over heels into the racing stream of progress, of modern, scientific social-service work; and he, who had boasted himself abreast of all progressive intelligence, was of a sudden forced to swim for his life. It winded him. It left him gasping for breath.

She had ideas about personal supervision; she

told him he'd understand things better if he saw them with his own eyes. And he came in horrid contact with raw phases of life, frightfully unpleasant phases, which had hitherto been nicely covered up and ignored. His pretty, sugar-coated philanthropic pill was rubbed bare to the bitter heart of it, and it was nauseating to the palate and odious to the nose. The near howls of the under dog gave him earache, and this made him bitterly resentful, as if Aurora Janeway had deliberately stepped on the under dog's tail for the sole purpose of annoying him.

And he couldn't quarrel with her, couldn't criticize. She hadn't any faults visible to the naked eye. Everything she had done was perfectly right, just as he had said he wanted it to be. Also, one doesn't jaw a just young goddess! All Mr. Jordan Courtenay could do was to swear at Simmons, who bore it with baleful suavity and meekness, scenting the cause. It filled Simmons with hellish happiness to see Jordan Courtenay taken at his word and forced to be what he had, with so much satisfaction to himself, posed as being.

When Simmons opened his Lesson for the Day and read: *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap;* his faith in the infallibility of the Bible deepened. Mr. Jordan Courtenay had sown the fields of public-spirited-citizen morals, even to the ousting of young Francis. And now Miss Aurora Jane-

way was making him reap. By and by would come the stacked sheaves. Simmons raised the eyes of gratitude and folded the hands of prayerful praise. Let him catch it!

And while the head of the house gnawed the fist of helpless impatience, and Simmons prayed the prayers of one good man against another, the cause of it all was calmly, coolly, impersonally happy. She had work that she adored and nothing to do but do it! Importunate pleaders for specious helps learned to dread that unruffled presence, so terribly clear-headed and far-sighted. She had the power of discrimination, prayed for by Hindu chelas. She could listen silently, reflect a moment, and decide without an instant's hesitation what and who should and shouldn't be helped or given to.

Sentimental ladies with pet charities, managing heads of this and that, people who wished to give Mr. Courtenay the opportunity of spending a great deal of his money upon noble but untried causes, went away from interviews with a very bad opinion of Miss Janeway. And presently arose the inevitable murmurings, which swelled into clamorous uproar. They said it was all Mr. Courtenay's fault. They said she wouldn't, couldn't, daren't act like that unless he ordered and approved. It was his money, not hers, wasn't it? They said Jordan Courtenay was an old Pharisee, anyhow.

Jordan Courtenay's hair rose on his prickling scalp and stood on end when his works did follow him, and, instead of the chorus of praises and adulations to which his ear had become attuned, he got raucous and virulent blame. So long as he had moved along the lines of least resistance, the planned, cut-and-dried endowing of this or that standard assimilator of shekels, he had been a desirable citizen, a beacon-light, a public-spirited man, a benefactor of his kind! He'd been given degrees by one or two universities, even, and could call himself Doctor if he wished. But now . . . !

He'd told Aurora what he wanted, and she'd done it. She was used to the result of helping the needy according to their needs and her training, not their desires and their lack of training. The uproar didn't in the least disturb her. She had heard it before and was unmoved; but he hadn't and he wasn't. His remarks to Simmons were agitated and profane.

*And* he couldn't remonstrate. Shall one remonstrate with abstract justice?

Simmons rang up the Reference Room of the Public Library.

"Please," said he, politely, "could you tell me where I could get a copy of the poem containing these lines: 'The mills of the gods grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small'? I wish very much to obtain the poem.

“And,” he added to himself, “I shall have it framed, and hang it in my bedroom where my eyes will fall upon it the first thing in the morning and the last thing at night.”

## CHAPTER VI

### THE HE-BUTTERFLY

A FEW days after his momentous interview with his uncle, Mr. Francis Courtenay showed up in Simmons's little sanctum. He was so unruffled, so evidently untroubled and at ease, that he presented a distressing contrast to Simmons, gray-faced and suffering. For the first time in Frank's recollection of him—a recollection extending almost over the young man's entire life—Simmons was betraying human emotion. His eyes looked sleepless; his shoulders, his mouth, his very nose, drooped. The poor man had a waking nightmare on his hands, a nightmare which he couldn't shake off: Mr. Francis, Mr. Francis the gay, the adored, the clever, the beautiful, the joy of his life, the one being he loved with whatever of passion was in him, was going out of his life, beyond his care; and a stranger, an alien, an interloper, was coming to take his place.

Simmons travailed in spirit and refused to be comforted. What was that house going to be without Mr. Francis laughing, without Mr. Francis singing, without the bull-pup barking, without anything of life and youth and gaiety? How was

he going to endure the young man's absence and the strange woman's presence? Tell him that!

"You look green around the gills, Simmy. And you shouldn't," the young man reproved him.

"Oh Mr. Francis, Mr. Francis! indeed, sir, it's very hard on me!" wailed Simmons. "I . . . I . . . sort of looked after you when you were a child . . . and . . . I became rather attached to you, Mr. Francis."

"There isn't any reason for you to stop being fond of me, is there? Even though I'm now that romantic creature the heir who's been given the air? I became rather attached to you, too, Simmons, but you don't hear me lamenting it, do you?"

"Oh Mr. Francis, Mr. Francis! why were you so foolish as to cross him when he was in such a devil's humor? Surely your heritage, your home were worth a little diplomacy! You don't realize what you've done, you don't realize what you've lost! You're so used to having money that you don't understand what not having it means!"

"Well, I'm in a fair way to find out," said Mr. Francis, cheerfully. "The general run of people find out about money long before they reach my age, you know. But honestly, Simmons, I'm sorry to see you so distressed. You've supplied about all the real affection I've ever had, haven't you? I mean, you kept on caring for me even when you didn't approve. Never wanted to make me over

your way, but liked me just as I am. Now have enough real affection for me, Simmons, not to blame me too much for getting out of the gilded cage, old boy, and trying my little wings in the open. How'd you like to be only a bird in a gilded cage yourself, Simmons?"

"You and your wings!" lamented Simmons, "and the sky full of hawks!" He wrung his hands, and his eyebrows climbed up and down spasmodically. "What am I to do?" he moaned.

"You're to get my stuff in shape for me, and remember that I may be the nurse's child, but I'm no longer Lady Clare. I'm merely one of the Army of the Unemployed, seeking board, lodging, and a job. Gee, but I'm growing, aren't I! What d'ye think of that for ambition?"

"I think both of you should be shut up in asylums!" cried the goaded Simmons. "That's what I think, and I'd like to put one of you in a padded cell and the other in a strait-jacket! I wish to God I had the doing of it! You're both crazy! He's even crazier than you! Mr. Francis, do you understand that he's already arranged to have your Aunt Lydia's stepdaughter come here to live? In this very house? . . . Now you see what you've brought on yourself!"

"I? Oh, get out! My uncle's brought her on himself, and if she's anything like her engaging and polyandrous stepmamma, she'll make things hum! Aunt's girl, eh? Whoopee! what a lark!" and he

whistled. "Don't let her vamp you, Simmons. And watch the spoons. Aunty had rather taking ways, I've heard."

"Ah, Mr. Francis," said Simmons, ignoring this persiflage, "was that dancing young person worth all this?" And he groaned.

"Oh no, my good old Simmons! No dancing young person or any other young person is worth all this! But oneself is worth more than one's uncle's money can buy one for. Now do you understand?"

"I understand you're flying in the face of Providence."

"If Providence can stand it, I take it I can. I've no manner of doubt Providence and I shall rub along very amicably together."

He seemed so contented, so altogether joyous, that a suspicion arose in Simmons's mind. He said abruptly:

"Mr. Francis, forgive me for asking so personal a question, but do you really believe she's going to marry you *now*?"

"She? Who's she?" wondered Frank, raising his brows.

"You know good and well who I mean, Mr. Francis: that Miss Dolly Tredegar."

"That Miss Dolly Tredegar hasn't asked me, as yet," admitted the young man, modestly. "Not a word, not so much as a hint, has passed her lips! What should you say to that, Simmons?"

“I’d say I wasn’t ever asked by any woman and I never expect to be; nor yet no gentleman should, much less talk about such!” snapped Simmons. Trifling in the teeth of calamity shocked his soul.

“You always did have excellent morals, Simmons, and such elevated sentiments! But let us switch the conversation from Miss Tredegar to Miss Janeway. What do you know about Miss Janeway? Did you see her? Is she pretty?”

“I know very little about her and I’d be willing to know very much less,” growled Simmons. “I did not see her when she called, for the simple reason that your uncle turned me out of his rooms before she came. I did see her several times when your Aunt Lydia was Mrs. Janeway. This girl had just come home from boarding-school on her vacation, and a more solemn-faced, owlsh young one I never saw. She’d brassy pigtails the size of your arm, and the sort of eyes that stared you out of countenance, and distressing legs, sir, *very* distressing legs. They seemed to dangle all over the place. A most unattractive young woman she’d turn out, I should think.

“She’s one of these uplifting women, Mr. Francis,” Simmons went on; “the sort that meddle with the poor, I believe. The bishop has often spoken of her to your uncle, very admiringly. Indeed, sir, it was the bishop that sicked her on your uncle, so to say. A mind as fine as a man’s, she

has, and a very fine moral character, he says. He carries on extravagantly about what a fine moral character she has. Now you know all I know of her. And I wish to my God this day I'd never even heard so much as her name, which I consider heathenish!"

Francis puckered his curved mouth, narrowed his black eyes, and shuddered. He had seen other ladies whom the bishop praised and his uncle admired for their fine moral character.

"Poor thing!" he commiserated. "Poor thing! Spectacles—horn-rimmed goggles by preference; they have such a literary look! Number nines. With flat heels. No waist. Travelogues at the movies, or Mary Pickford, by way of carnal amusement. Reads stuff with something-ology or -itis on the tail end of the titles, and attends committee meetings as a duty. Bad complexion. Good intentions. And has convictions; you have to, when the bishop burbles about your fine moral character. The law of affinity draws her to my uncle! *He* has a fine moral character, too! Thank God I'm flitting! When's she due, Sims?"

"Next week. Unless," hoped Simmons, "you could see your way to change your mind, Mr. Francis?"

"I'm not to be permitted to change my mind. I'm not to have any mind," said Francis, lightly. "That's why I'm moving out and Miss Janeway's moving in. Whew! The old boy certainly strikes

while the iron's hot, doesn't he?" He grinned at the gloomy Simmons. "Cheer up: the worst is yet to come!" And he looked up at the ceiling, and murmured:

"Meeting of the Society to Procure Forks for Fijians, in the dining-room; class for the Improvement of Bishops' Bazoos in the library; Reformed Burglars, with readings from Browning, in the cellar; and you, Simmons, on hand to open the Apollinaris . . . I'd make it Pluto Water, if I were you . . . with prayer."

"I wish," said Simmons, desperately, "that I'd died, the last time I was sick, in my sleep! I wish Mr. Janeway had died the year before his daughter was born. I don't wish that young lady any harm, God knows I don't, but if she'd go away somewhere else and die right now, I'd take it as a personal favor. And I wish you had sense enough to know on which side your bread is buttered!"

"As you didn't die in your sleep and are afraid to die awake,—which is the right attitude,—you will please overhaul my things and select me a modest outfit, suitable to a gentleman in reduced circumstances. Do you by any chance happen to know where such a gentleman could come by a neat, airy attic? *Not* in the Village. I am not capable of atticking in the Village!"

Simmons reflected.

"I know an old man that's got an old house, both of them most respectable and clean. It was

considered very fine once, but it's not fashionable any more."

"I was considered very fine once, but I am not fashionable any more, either. Give me the address. That old house shall be my lodging. That clean and respectable old man—what a recommendation you give him, Simmons!—shall be my landlord."

The house to which Simmons directed him was four-storied, of faded, mellowed red brick, in a quiet side street in the lower part of the city. Francis liked it, from the dormer windows to the iron-railed front steps. He liked the large old-fashioned room with high ceilings, which was shown him, and the quiet old landlord, whose dignity almost rivaled Simmons's. The place was, as Simmons had said, very clean and respectable, and the price of the room seemed to the young man astonishingly moderate. In the basement was a modest café run by an old Frenchman, which promised to be very convenient.

The house harbored such diverse folks as respectable rooming-houses are likely to harbor in New York. There was a taciturn old man, who spent most of his time in the reference-rooms of the libraries and museums, and who was said to be engaged in literary work of some sort; him one seldom saw and never knew. He shared the parlor floor, in the back rooms of which dwelt a school-teacher who wore glasses over piercing eyes.

Frank's room was on the third floor; and besides him there were a pleasant young woman who typed manuscripts, the prettiest of pretty art-students, who seemed addicted to smocks and whistling; and a rangy theological student who didn't know how to wear his clothes. The attic floor—a pleasant enough floor when one climbed to it—housed a young engineer and his wife. It was given over to cretonne-covered things and cushions, and from it came occasionally the healthy yells of a yearling. Nobody in the house seemed to mind the yells, but everybody seemed willing to mind the baby. Nobody objected, either, to the presence of Sweet Percival, who also howled occasionally.

His new neighbors amused and interested Frank, who was gay and gregarious enough. He learned that the pretty girl addicted to smocks and whistling was Miss Winny Davis Culpepper, from Alabama. She really whistled beautifully, so that it was like having a bird for a neighbor. Sometimes she would sing in a throaty voice, as she moved about her room, and then her neighbors left their doors ajar. Her voice matched her eyes, both being very sweet and fresh and pure. Every so often she received a box from home; and then she would appear at neighboring doors with a paper-doily-covered plate.

“Here's something for *you*,” she would flute, starry-eyed with the joy of giving. “My mother

made it, and it tastes like *Alabama!* It tastes like *home!*”

And it did. Frank decided that whatever Winny Davis brought him from that box sent up from Alabama tasted more like home than anything he'd ever eaten.

“Your mother,” he told her gravely, having devoured the last crumb, “is a genius. She excels in the art of producing perfect cakes and even more perfect daughters. Are there any more like you at home?”

“I am all the daughters of my father's house,  
And all the brothers too,”

said Winny Davis, slurring every r.

“Do they teach Shakspeare at Cooper Union?” Frank wondered.

“My heavenly old grandfather sort o' loved him, and I reckon I just picked it up. You do pick up things you're always hearing at home, you know,” said the girl who wore smocks, simply.

“You were evidently very careful in your selection of a family,” said Frank, admiringly.

“My people were always quite the right sort of people. We used to have governors and senators and doctors and lawyers and clergymen as well as planters, in our family. But we haven't got any money any mo' and we haven't got any boys. We haven't even got any girls, except me,” said

the Southerner, and her bright face clouded. She added, "Aren't you just crazy about yo' family?"

"My family—what there is of it—is just crazy about me," said Frank, laughing. "So crazy, my child, that it couldn't live in the same house with me. I'm the prodigal son, and I've chucked the fatted calf,—veal never did agree with me,—and I'm eating cakes with angels as a reward."

"You mean you've quarreled with yo' family?" asked she, aghast.

"No. My family quarreled with me. Didn't I just tell you I was the prodigal son?"

Prodigal sons are dear to the hearts of women, who haven't any sense of justice and seldom like or understand elder brothers. They will lose the whole world for prodigal sons. Winny Davis stared at this one, and her eyes kindled.

"Yo' family were *horrid*," said she firmly. "And I'm going to give you some mo' of that cake. I'm going to write home to-night and ask Mother to make some mo' right away."

"When I get to heaven," said he irrelevantly, "I shall draw up a petition that all girl-angels be compelled to wear smocks. Furthermore, be it decreed that all lady saints shall be taught the art of cake-making by your mother."

"I'll tell her. I'll add that Yankee prodigal sons are real nice, smooth talkers—just like ours are," said she, and they both laughed.

He liked Winny Davis; and, like the other room-

ers, he watched with smiling interest the progress of the understanding between her and the young man who was going to be a minister of the gospel.

But it wasn't until the engineer's wife was down with influenza, and everybody was taking turns looking after the baby and his parents, that Francis Courtenay really came to know the theological student, Henry Harkness. He didn't dream, as he watched the awkward young Westerner squatting on the floor entertaining the small tyrant, that one of the great deep influences of his life was before him. He merely wondered how a grown-up could divine so exactly just what would please a baby.

"Oh, we had ten in our family," the student explained pleasantly. "We hadn't any money to waste on hired nurses, so I had to help raise 'em because I was one of the oldest. I know babies from the bottom up. Here, you keep on rolling him this ball while I heat his milk. It's about his feeding-time."

The whilom heir to the Courtenay millions squatted on the floor and rolled and rolled and rolled a ball to the engineer's baby.

"What do you do when he wants to lick your boots?" he wondered. "Surely it can't be good for him to lick boots, can it?"

"Oh, just shoo him off, divert his attention. Use your hands," said Harkness, laughing. He turned, the saucepan in his hand, and stood re-

garding the new-comer critically. "Yes, I see you have the knack of it. You're the natural-born baby-minder. You're the domestic man."

"You lose," said Frank. "I never handled a kid before this hour. This is the closest I've ever come to one. And I'm not the domestic man. I—" he stared at Harkness solemnly—"am the he-butterfly."

"Tell that to the marines!" jeered Harkness. "Kneel up," he ordered, "and hold out your arms. Don't say a word to the baby. Just look at him."

Wondering, the he-butterfly knelt up and held out his arms. The baby returned his look with the long, unwinking, heaven-pure stare of babyhood, and, involuntarily, Frank smiled. The baby puckered his rose of a mouth into an answering smile. Then he scrambled forward on hands and knees, and hoisting himself upward by grabbing Mr. Courtenay's legs, stood swaying on his untried feet within the circle of the young man's arms. With great deliberation and thoroughness he investigated every nook and cranny of his new friend's countenance, using a fat forefinger as a search-warrant. Evidently finding everything to his liking, the little man stretched himself upward and laid his rose-leaf cheek against Frank's, bent down to him.

Conscious of a distinctly new sensation, the young man intuitively cradled the rolypoly little

fat body closer. He had never touched anything so soft, warm, young. It was even better than playing with fat puppies, which he had always loved. It was better than jollying with Sweet Percival. The watching divinity student laughed softly.

“Shucks! I knew it the minute I clapped eyes on you,” said he, good-humoredly. “And so did he,” he added, nodding at the baby. “I’ll take his word for you. I think we’re going to be real good friends.”

“Is your process of reasoning logical or theological?” wondered Frank.

“It’s nature,” said the divinity student. And he picked up the baby and fed him as deftly as his own mother might.

This was a gaunt and ungainly enough young man, battling his way through college, older than most students in his class, unashamedly wearing mended shoes and shirts and bad clothes, and with the homely burr of North Dakota on his tongue. He had bony hands and big feet. He didn’t know how to select his clothes nor yet how to wear them, and his ties were atrocities. You were conscious of his Adam’s apple, and his thin eager face was weather-beaten. He had a thick big mouth, like Abraham Lincoln’s, and his eyes reminded you of Christ’s.

A few short weeks ago and he would have been regarded by Mr. Francis Courtenay not with scorn but with amusement. The mere fact that he

was trying to turn himself into a clergyman would have kept Frank aloof; for he had rather thought that such a man must be either a fool to believe or a knave to pretend to believe. He had thought clergymen hang-overs from a less enlightened era.

But when he looked into the brown face of the Dakotan, he knew that this man was honesty incarnate; and that nobody but a fool would ever have called him one. Henry Harkness, poor and obscure though he was, yet had some quality, some strength, which marked him. Already young Frank's new freedom was bringing him face to face with realities. Already he knew a man when he met him.

Frank had many acquaintances, many companions who had always welcomed him, whom he liked and who liked him. When he gripped the Dakotan's big paw and looked into the piercing, kind blue eyes, he realized soberly that he had made his first friend in his changed circumstances.

Henry Harkness looked at the dark, expressive face, the slender, beautiful body, the fine hands, noted the grace of bearing, speech, and manner, the ease with which he wore his well-chosen clothes, and he gave Francis Courtenay the love that only a simple and great-hearted man can give another man who is more fortunate than himself, a love passing the love of women.

"I've got a place to live and a friend," Francis said to himself. "The next thing is to go out

and collect my job, and I know where my job is waiting for me. I shall go and force Colin Murray to give me the one he offered me when he knew I didn't need it."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE SWEAT OF HIS BROW

**W**HEN Colin Murray was a young man, hopeful and ambitious, he had done what very many other passionate youngsters do: he had married for her hothouse prettiness a creature whom he had called dotingly, "My dearest girl." And God knows she had been dear enough! So dear that the cost strained Murray's growing resources, then his patience, and finally whatever liking and respect he had once entertained for her. Even in the rapture of his honeymoon he had had faint qualms of doubt, as her selfishness, her shallowness began to show themselves.

She had been a small-town girl of good family, neighbors of his grandmother's, his sole surviving relative, when Murray, fresh from college, met and fell a slave to her charms. The girl was as pretty as a Persian kitten and almost as intelligent, when Murray married her. He had already secured an opening with a well-known firm of architects, and his future was very promising; he was of the stuff of which good husbands are made—provident, protecting, patient,—and Flora, who

wished to be married and free of family control, saw nothing better in sight. It pleased her to be so adored, at first; then it amused; and then it bored.

He saw, after a while, that she was a fool; what he didn't see was that she had more common sense than he; that she always thoroughly understood on which side her bread was buttered; that she would be in all circumstances perfectly capable of taking care of herself, since she never thought of any one else. His problem was how to meet her demands. It seemed to him incredible that a butterfly could be so insatiate, that it could be capable of making so great demands. But a butterfly is a very expensive possession and comes high. That is why so many otherwise sane American men think they must have one.

Pretty, airy, fluffy Mrs. Colin Murray, who had so much social charm that she was always in demand and made, easily, quite advantageous acquaintances, explained firmly that what her ungracious husband termed her extravagances were in reality only necessities, owed to their position; how can one hope to hold any position in the world if one doesn't live up to what one owes oneself? What would he have her do?

Murray said unpleasantly that it wasn't what they owed themselves that worried him, but what they owed everybody else. Life wasn't pleasant for him when he was dunned by the grocer, for

it spoiled his meals; or by the florist, for it spoiled his appreciation for flowers; or by a horde of department-stores and dressmakers, for it made him look upon his wife's exquisite toilettes with jaundiced eyes. He couldn't reason with Flora, he couldn't even talk to her; there were unpleasant scenes, which made him physically ill. He bored Flora almost to distraction—and he knew it.

He had at first wanted children; he had the usual young dreams of a pretty, simple home, a dainty Flora greeting him at a rose-wreathed gate of nights, of two—or maybe three—exquisite small reproductions of their mother's daintiness and his strength (the boy would look like him: he'd be called Colin, naturally) who would run to meet him with happy shouts of "Daddy! Daddy!" It had given him rather a wrench to relinquish those endearing visions. But butterflies aren't interested in nasty little grubs.

Flora recoiled from the very thought of giving him a baby. She didn't want a baby. She didn't for one moment mean to have a baby. What, spoil her lithe, slim body, make herself sick and uncomfortable, grow offensive to the eye, suffer horrible torments, just to give a selfish man a baby? When he knew she had just managed to get herself quite a respectable wardrobe, every stitch of which would be hopelessly out of date by the time she'd be able to wear it again! And she'd be tied

down, lose touch with all her desirable friends, who were so nice and generous to her, always asking her everywhere! She'd be out of everything! But *he* wouldn't care. He was selfish and horrid and very inconsiderate, suggesting such disagreeable possibilities. Why should he want a baby! Just to tie her down, that's all. *He* wouldn't be expected to stay home and take care of it, would he? Not at all! It would merely increase his liberty and curtail hers.

But men are so selfish, they never think of anybody but themselves. Catch any man born having a baby, himself, and see what would happen! There wouldn't be any more babies! Why, if a man had so much as a toothache, you'd think the sun and moon ought to go out of business, from the way he carried on! But he could be glib enough suggesting that his wife have babies, when it didn't give *him* any trouble or discomfort—quite the contrary. It didn't ruin his figure, nor make him sick, nor force him to undergo terrible pain; and he knew it was simply outrageous even to hint at her spoiling her figure, now she'd gotten it to the perfect size, and had sacrificed herself and gone hungry and thirsty for it, so he could have a wife that was a credit to him and made the right sort of friends for him, and wasn't the fat fright other men had to put up with. . . .

“Oh, go to hell!” thought Colin Murray. His

training kept him from saying it aloud. He asked, staring with unpleasant eyes at this chattering creature:

“Aren’t you ever interested in anything or anybody but yourself? Isn’t it possible for you to care for something, besides your own precious body?”

“Certainly I am! Certainly it is!”

To prove that her husband had underestimated her powers of affection, she went right out and bought the cutest, prettiest little Pom ever seen. Very small Poms were very fashionable at the time, and she paid a very fashionable price for it, but she consoled herself by reflecting that it would go with almost every costume she had. She paid the parlor-maid extra wages to wash it in the servants’ bathtub. For she was a dainty woman. Everybody paid tribute to Flora Murray’s daintiness.

Colin Murray refrained from kicking the waspish little beast that satisfied his wife’s maternal instincts and proved she could feel some affection for something besides herself. But being a red-blooded man, he thought thoughts not at all complimentary to dainty wives and their expensive little Poms. To save himself from thinking worse thoughts yet, he buckled down more resolutely to that salvation of man, work; he worked like the mule to which he had been insidiously likened.

Too often bad good women make good bad women pay for their sins of commission and omission, but in this case the man took to himself a diviner mistress: Work, his own heaven-sent Work.

And so, prodded by the fact that his wife was a fool and nothing but a frightful expense to him, Colin Murray was in process of becoming one of America's truly great architects. In his eager and passionate boyhood, one whose name became anathema to the unco guid but whose hand of a master workman beckoned young men into the path of pure truth and beauty in art had kindled in Colin Murray's young breast the unquenchable flame. Wherefore Murray wrought faithfully for his gods.

A lonely, a childless, an embittered man, whenever he saw in some younger worker a glimmering of promise, he yearned over that boy fatherly and held aloft the torch. But and if that younger man played traitor and went astray to sacrifice on high places to false gods, Murray swore he was the potential sire of many mules, and cursed him with great cursings. And him he cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and wailing of flutes and violins and saxophones, and gnashing of teeth in many expensive hotels and restaurants, and also much marrying and giving in marriage. For in their generation the children of this world are very much wiser than the

children of light, and not anything like so hard to live with. As his wife's wisdom testified and verified.

It had once befallen that Colin Murray and young Francis Courtenay had foregathered for a week-end party at a brand-new bungalow. It was a bungalow fearfully and wonderfully made, and the improvements, and price, and furnishings, and special features, were altogether worthy of the fulsome featurings in Sunday supplements which they received.

"Somehow, this place reminds me of a rubber-plant; isn't that odd?" Francis had murmured in Colin Murray's ears, plaintively. "And I never did think a rubber plant a refined creation, did you?"

Colin Murray smiled unpleasantly. His wife was rabidly envious of the bungalow and its overstuffed mistress. Only last night she had complained that *she* couldn't ever hope to own a home like that; and Murray had snarled that he'd be damned if she could while he was still in his right mind.

A little later, lounging in the library, which was also a period room and had a Spanish altar, iron candle-stands, a meager Madonna or so, and one or two pictures of Spanish saints once evidently shining lights of the Most Holy Inquisition, the bored Francis idly drew some heavy white paper toward him and began to sketch what

Murray, watching listlessly, saw was a hasty little plan of a Spanish house adapted to American needs.

Of a sudden the architect leaned forward, and his eyebrows went up. The plan wasn't stereotyped. It was hasty, but it had some unusual features, it had the touch of originality, it had compactness and design. And it was touched with something that, developed, would mean beauty. *That* wasn't amateurish.

When Francis laid down his pencil, Murray reached for the sketch before it could be tossed into the ornate waste-paper basket. He studied it critically. There were faults, of course, faults which the boy himself would discover and correct. The slight thing was valuable not for what it was but for what it promised, the hint that it contained. For there was in it the incommunicable something which the trained eye of the great workman recognized.

"You could do good work if you were worth your salt," said Murray, with a hint of bitterness. He had had to fight his way up, step by step,—inch by inch, he sometimes thought,—with a wife who was like a millstone tied around his neck. And this careless idler had the Gleam—and played with it, as a child plays with lights on his Christmas-tree! It wasn't fair. Oh God! the weary weight of this unintelligible world!

Francis looked up with his gay, enigmatic smile.

“Oh, everybody has some little gift, some small box of tricks, even triflers like me,” he said lightly. “As a matter of fact, I happen to like this sort of thing. I’ve even taken a course or two, to pass away the time.”

“In my profession,” said Murray, morosely, “there are many asses who pass for horses. It therefore goes against the grain to find a horse who is content to bray.”

“Thanks,” said Francis, gently. “But you’re forgetting that my stall is provided for me, my fodder, so to say, found. And when I bray loudest I’m most apt to be lauded for my exquisite neighing.” And he looked impishly at the architect, raised his impertinent eyebrows, and laughed.

Murray blew spirals of cigarette smoke through his nose, and watched them admiringly. When he looked at Francis again, it was with narrowed eyes.

“It is barely possible that if your gilded stable were burned over your head, your overfeeding checked, and you turned over to a decent trainer, you *might* come in under the wires a winner. I’ve seen quite as unpromising colts as you do it.”

“You do me proud,” said the heir to Jordan Courtenay’s millions. “But go ’way, Satan, go ’way. I don’t belong to horse-flesh at all. I’m really a stalled ox with content, and the dinner of herbs doesn’t beguile me. However, if ever I’m kicked out of content—which Heaven forbid!—

I'll come and beg you to hire me. I'll ask you for a job."

"Stranger things have happened," said the architect. "If the good time ever comes, ask me for a job, and I'll welcome the joy of halter-breaking you."

It was to this same Murray, then, that Mr. Francis Courtenay presented himself, toward eleven of the clock on a fine windy morning. Murray had liked him better than he liked most. The young man's joyousness, his clean zest, his odd twist of seriousness where none might be expected intrigued the older man. Wasn't joyousness, zest, the delight in merely being alive and young, perhaps, after all, high wisdom? Could any other wisdom give you that? Could heaven itself offer more? The architect looked up as Frank entered his office, and smiled.

"I'm busy," he said, "disgustingly and unnecessarily engaged in toil . . . from your standpoint. Nevertheless, O gilded ornament of the idle rich, I'm delighted to see you. What brings you here? What do you want?"

The young man draped himself around the most comfortable chair in the room. He was so decorative that Murray's tired eyes brightened under his green eye-shade.

"If it weren't for your clothes I could make use of you on a cornice, or embody you in a frieze," he mused critically. "Trousers, Frank, are the bi-

furcated curse of modern art. They explain why we have to crib from the barelegged ancients. We can't have slim young joyful gods in breeches, can we? Ever study the effect of bronze breeches on a Hall of Fame hero, Frank?"

"No. I aren't no bronze-breeched hero, and I aren't no blackguard, too, but a single man in trousers, most remarkable like you," paraphrased Frank. "But," he offered shamelessly, "if you think I'd be successful as a slim young joyous god in the buff, I'm at your service."

"You have some very decent instincts," said Murray, gratefully. "I shall hope to make an Olympian of you yet. It's high time," he added, "that somebody should take you in hand and make something out of you!"

"You're getting warm," said Frank. "Your remarks remind me of my uncle. *He* proposes to make a beggar out of me. I'd rather be an architect, Murray. So I've come for that job. You've got a job belonging to me, and I want it."

"I really haven't time to play with you this morning," said the architect. "Come after office hours and blither, but run away now like a dear child, and play with some other little plutocratic pets of pups like yourself. Don't snitch from a working-man like me his most valuable possession—his time. It isn't right."

"When you really wish to conceal the truth, tell it openly, and your best friends will say you're

a liar," commented Frank. "My dear prospective employer, I stand too much in need and awe of you this morning to kid you. I see in you the arbiter of my fate, my potential boss. You once intimated that I'd a bit of the right stuff in one spot, that I might do something in your line, and that if I ever needed a job to come to you. If you weren't talking to hear yourself talk, if you really meant what you said, play up. I'm very seriously asking you to take me into your office and put me to work."

Murray's eyes snapped. He swung around in his chair.

"I did tell you that. I meant it, because it's true. But . . . my dear boy, I don't play when I work, and you've never done anything but play. In my job you dig and sweat and you keep on digging and sweating. You haven't got time to do anything but dig and sweat. You can see I wouldn't have time to waste on you—"

"I don't want you to waste time on me. I want to dig and sweat, too."

"You? Why, you frescoed sybarite!" laughed Murray, shortly.

"My uncle says I'm a dashed he-butterfly."

"Some naturalist, your uncle, some naturalist! No nature-faker there!"

"Oh, he doesn't give a hoot whether I'm one or not. It's because I will sip flowers of my own selecting, and he says they're weeds; and he wants

me to fly around weeds of his raising, and he insists they're the choicest sort of flowers."

Murray said nothing, but made idle marks on a pad of blotting-paper with the tip of his pencil. He had heard that the Courtenays, uncle and nephew, had a habit of locking horns; it was their favorite indoor sport. That was common gossip.

"It came to a head about Dolly Tredegar. She's a friend of mine, you know, and he made remarks. He doesn't like dancers. Also, I admit I did have a pretty spectacular smash-up in the car—the last time, I mean—and he had to pay a good stiff sum. He wasn't so angry about the smash-up as he was about Dolly. He's got notions. Out of Proverbs, you know. I am to cut her dead, for my soul's sake. I'm to have my soul saved by my uncle, and my mind trained by Mr. Burleigh-Smith. How'd you like to have your mind trained by a lummoX of a crook like Burleigh-Smith? So we agreed to disagree, and he told me and Sweet Percival to get out."

"Chucked you? For fair?" Murray was honestly astonished.

"Well, he gave me my choice, and I chose to get out. . . . Now do I get that job?"

Murray looked at the boy earnestly. He got up from his chair, and put his hands on the young shoulders.

"On your faith and honor, and by the Gleam," said he, "if I take you into my office and lick you

into shape, if I give you my tools and teach you how best to use them, you won't go back to the fleshpots? It's hard work, boy, and so many go back to the fleshpots and are rewarded: more than you ever will be, maybe! But if I take you will you stick to me and work and work, until I turn you inside out and back again? There are rewards in that, too, let me add," he finished.

"I don't like your metaphor, which rather smacks of the packing-house, to me," said Francis. "But I swear I will stick to you like a gummed label, and that I will work like hell. When do I start?"

"Right here and right now," said his new boss, grimly. And he led the young man into an inner, barer, less attractive room and introduced him to some deal boards and an eye-shade.

"Courtenay," said the great architect, earnestly, "there is more room and opportunity in this country for the big thing, the real thing, the beautiful thing in all lines of creative work, but chiefly in your work and mine, than in any other country in the world. Other countries have finished, they can only repeat themselves. But we're starting, we're new! This is the coming Kingdom of God, the land in process of becoming beautiful. I tell you, boy, Art is betrothed to Life in the United States of America!

"Shut your ears to the pessimists, your eyes to the hucksters—damn' liars! You are to remem-

ber first and last that Art hasn't got anything to do with anything but Truth and Beauty. Instead, do you—" he turned a kindling countenance upon his new disciple—"praise the Lord God that you are going to be one of the ushers at the Great Wedding!"

So was the whilom heir introduced to his real job.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BIG BLONDE GODDESS

**M**ISS DOLLY TREDEGAR, in a perfectly designed frock which made her resemble a tanager, sat with her slim ringless hands clasped around her knees, in a graceful chair the upholstery of which was mostly green. She was entertaining and being entertained by Mr. Francis Courtenay, for the first time since his break with Fortune. And he had fetched along with him, by one of those whimsies which set Frank apart, a lean, lank, tall man in ungainly garments, a divinity student, of all things under the sun, a curious being who called the lady "marm" and looked at her with so naïve a wonder as made one realize that she was altogether a new species to him.

No other man's eyes had ever regarded Dolly with just the look that this man bent upon her—a look made up of wonder, and curiosity, and speculation, and a sort of admiration that had in it a touch of distrust. You saw that he admired her, because she was beautiful; but the admiration was wholly impersonal; he didn't mean to try to win her good graces or to cultivate her further

acquaintance. She was used to such entirely different behavior from all other men who had ever been introduced to her, all other masculine eyes had been bent upon her with so different an expression, that, while she wasn't piqued, she was interested. This man merely sat with his big hands negligently restful, and studied her without offense, but without the open admiration to which she had become accustomed.

Dolly had at first suspected Frank of bringing in this oddity as the cat brings things into the house. She had been prepared to smile, to be amused. To her astonishment, it was borne in upon her that, so far from this being the case, Frank had brought Henry Harkness not to amuse her but to please her, to do her an honor. She, not the gawky Dakotan, was on trial.

Dolly didn't as yet suspect the rôle she herself had played in what she regarded as the Courtenay tragedy, nor that she was one of the factors in the young man's banishment, for the simple reason that he had most carefully refrained from telling her. She only knew that the differences between uncle and nephew were irreconcilable, and that Jordan Courtenay had called in his sister's stepdaughter, Miss Aurora Janeway, to help carry on his philanthropic work and to further his charitable plans. Miss Janeway was, people said, to take Frank's place in his will.

"Frank," said Dolly, "she's frightfully hon-

est, Miss Janeway is. If there's any sham about your uncle or any dross in his soul, she'll burn it out with her truthfulness, her astonishing efficiency. She's wonderful! If any other woman I've ever met were as truthful and efficient and big as she is, I'd detest her, I shouldn't be able to come near her without putting back my ears and bottle-brushing. But one can't detest a woman like Miss Janeway."

Frank laughed.

"It's easy to be able to admire a woman you don't have to be jealous of," he told her tolerantly. "I dare say you'd be called a grand woman, even by those women who hate you like poison now, if you were the size and shape of the statue of Liberty and plain in the face."

Dolly's dark eyes widened with astonishment.

"You don't admire Miss Janeway's appearance?"

"Well, the bishop says she has a fine moral character. He harps on her fine moral character. So of course I admire her. One always admires people with fine moral characters, doesn't one?"

"Frank," said she, "have you ever seen Miss Janeway?"

"Lord forbid! Simmons met her, though, when my Aunt Lydia was her stepmother and her father was one of my step-uncles. He told me about her."

"Simmons doesn't like her?"

"Well, I'm the lost heir, you know, so Sim-

mons is a bit prejudiced. But he, too, admires her fine moral character. Everybody does. It seems to roam all over the place, doesn't it? He 'phoned me recently that although my uncle seems to be given up to using very violent language of late, it is not the young lady's fault. He says she has a conscience, and that she is not after his money any more than I'd be, myself: which is a great compliment, though it does sound ambiguous. He says the money means to her only what she can make it do. And she's making my uncle do it."

"Well, isn't that what he wanted?"

"No. It's what he thought he wanted. She took him at his word."

"I wish you knew Miss Janeway, Frank."

"Have a heart!" he implored. "I don't like that type. No, dear lady, let her remain from me even as far as is the East from the West. 'Oh, East is East and West is West and never the twain shall meet' and all that, you know. Simmons says she's that good she makes him wishful to be bad. Now, if a woman can make my old Simmy wishful to be bad, and by sheer power of virtue induce my uncle to learn new oaths, what effect do you think she'd have on *me*?"

"Your uncle is a horrid old man!"

"It's his liver."

"And Simmons is another. I don't think I care much for old men, Frank. When they're good

they're horrid and when they aren't good they're worse. There ought to be some scientific method of disposing of people who are too young to die and too old to be agreeable."

"Gray hair," said Harkness, unexpectedly, "is a crown of glory."

"But so many men are bald!" said Dolly, and the three laughed.

They had tea then, and very expensive little cakes, which the young men devoured with relish.

"We don't get anything like these often," sighed the theological student, who had a ministerial tooth for cake. "Indeed, we never get anything like them, except when Winny Davis gets a box from home and shares with us. You'll know how fine yours are, marm, when I tell you they're as good as the ones Winny Davis gets from Alabama." He called it Ollabomma, which is blasphemy.

"Oh! And is Winny Davis as pretty as her cakes are delicious?"

"Prettier. She's studying art at Cooper Union, and she's prettier than anything she'll ever paint. And Henry here . . ." Frank waved his slim hand at his friend.

"Not until I finish my studies and am ordained and receive a call," said the Dakotan, seriously. "But Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days for the love he had to her." He looked at the beautiful dancer

and added shyly: "It comes to me, marm, that you and Winny Davis look something alike—say the daughters of one father by different mothers." And his eyes honored Dolly for that she resembled an unknown girl who studied art at Cooper Union.

At that moment the maid entered with a card, which she handed her mistress. Dolly glanced at it, started, murmured instructions, and then, with a smile of gay malice, turned to her callers:

"A friend of mine I most particularly want you to meet," said she, graciously.

Entered a gloriously tall and most fair young woman, whose masses of golden hair were worn as severely plain as it is possible to subdue rebellious hair, and who had the serene beauty of an antique statue made into warm, red-and-white flesh and blood. Beside her, little dark Dolly, with her sleek bobbed head and her loveliness of an Italian boy, was, Frank thought dizzily, like a humming-bird beside an archangel; and every other woman he had ever seen or dreamed of faded and paled, as stars fade and pale when the sun appears. He recognized her—the blonde goddess, the divine one, into whom he had bumped on Broadway.

Tall woman and tall man, gray eyes clung to brown eyes with a sort of leaping flame of ardor and delight. She recognized him, with a great throb of her heart, kept empty and waiting for

him. She had never for a moment forgotten his face, seen but once. It was a face one could not forget, she thought. Never had any other face so stirred her.

“Miss Janeway,” Dolly Tredegar purred, with a happy crinkling of the eyes that spoke of delighted mischief, “permit me to introduce to you my friend, Mr. Francis Courtenay. . . . Frank, I am really happy to introduce you to Miss Aurora Janeway.”

An inner voice, a braying voice, heehawed hideously through Mr. Courtenay’s consciousness: “*Spectacles,*” it brayed. “*Number nine shoes, with flat heels. Bad complexion. Good convictions. The bishop harps on her fine moral character.*”

And this—this divinity made in the flesh, this beautiful fair goddess—*this* was Aurora Janeway! He had an impulse to get down on his knees and grovel before her in abjectest apology. He felt blasphemous, sacrilegious. The flush of shame, of contrition, came to his cheek.

Aurora’s feeling was one of stark, blank astonishment. And she remembered some imbecile speaking—great Heavens, herself!—saying to Mary McKinstry: “*I’m afraid he isn’t worth much, Mary. A sort of dissolute dilettante. I can’t let somebody like that stand in the way of my work, can I?*”

She, too, flushed with shame. Her crystal-clear

honesty reproached her, for she knew she had done this beautiful young man a cruel injustice. She should have known more about him before she judged him. The stories she had heard about him—his recklessness, his spendthrift extravagance, his arrogant profligacy—had seemed so well authenticated! But . . . this brow . . . those dark, fine eyes, that delicate mouth . . . No, his was anything but a bad face. A gay and mocking face, maybe . . . Even if every story of them all were proved true . . . Well, *this* was Francis Courtenay!

She was no fool; she had no sentimental silliness. She had seen too much, heard too much of life's terrible things, she knew too many men's faces in all conditions of life, to be very easily deceived. Her trained intelligence, the very voice of her soul, assured her that this was a good man's face, that its beauty was no snare but rather a manifestation. Whimsical, careless, haughty, mocking, extravagant, thoughtless, he might be at times, as ripples go over deep waters, as clouds pass over the sun, but evil . . . never, never, never! She'd stake her life on that.

She recognized now the haunting familiarity of his face; he resembled his uncle, as the finished portrait resembles the print. Aurora had no illusions about Jordan Courtenay, that self-deceived Jordan Courtenay who accepted the condition of his liver as the intuition of his soul.

She knew him, that bad-tempered philanthropist, to the core. And she decided that his nephew had been rashly and unjustly thrust aside, and that the younger man must have a very much finer and stronger character than others gave him credit for, to have withstood his tyrannous relative.

Dolly, after her naughty wont, was secretly amused and delighted. Harkness looked on, only partly comprehending. But the two most concerned understood that for them the great miracle had happened: they had found each other, they had come face to face.

The woman was less humorous, less complex, and more direct than the man. She moved toward her destiny as with the force of a natural law. She was the one-man woman, the woman who could love but once in all her life, and this was her man. And he was Francis Courtenay! Nor did the irony of it astonish or dismay her. It was right, it was perfect, it was inevitable, the law of God, that she should love Francis Courtenay, and, as the tide turns to the moon, unquestioning, she turned to him. It was as simple and inevitable as that.

The man had played at love, as all young men do. He was capable, he had laughed, of loving half a dozen girls at once, one quite as much as another; but until this moment he had been incapable of loving only one. And now the one had come . . . and she was Aurora Janeway!

He heard Henry Harkness speaking, and Dolly's tinkling, musical replies; then the blonde woman spoke and he quivered. Never, surely, had any other woman's voice so vibrant and bell-like a note!

The cause of Miss Janeway's unexpected visit was quite simple: she wanted Dolly Tredegar's help for two chorus girls. Also, she needed Dolly's counsel and advice in regard to certain plans that she hoped to see carried through, plans tentatively touched upon at their first meeting. Should she call again, or would Miss Tredegar herself call, some forenoon to be chosen by her?

Dolly, with puckered, scarlet lips, considered. Her sense of irony was akin to Frank's, an odd quirk in the little dancer's make-up. Somehow it intrigued her mischievous spirit, captivated her daring fancy, to visit the Courtenay house as a sister of charity, a forwarder of godliness. For, although she didn't know the worst,—Mr. Jordan Courtenay's acrid notions of her and her calling and her friendship with his nephew,—she did know that he wasn't one of her admirers. She said, with smiling malice, that she'd call some forenoon to be chosen later; she'd telephone Miss Janeway. She'd come directly after a morning rehearsal of her new play.

“You have a new dance?”

“The best ever. My skit's a wow! I'll put the world in my pocket; you watch my dust!”

“Why not let the world continue to lie at your feet,” suggested Francis Courtenay, smiling, “where it seems quite comfortable and content?”

Aurora Janeway, more perturbed and excited than she had ever been in all her life, managed to preserve the air of calmness she was far from feeling. Mechanically she drank the tea and ate the extravagant little cakes that Dolly pressed upon her, mentally registering her preference for Mary Mack’s simpler scones. . . . They hadn’t had scones for a long time. . . . She’d ask Mary Mack to go over to their old quarters, sometime soon, and make some. She’d ask Simmons if he thought Mr. Jordan Courtenay might like some old-fashioned scones. . . .

Unconscious of Dolly’s mischievous efforts to make her prolong her visit, to draw her into the conversation, feeling only the wish to escape, though she hadn’t an idea why or from what she should wish to escape, Aurora said quietly that she had some rather important work to do and must go. She would see Miss Tredegar later. Smiling, shy, with the dimple in evidence in her cheek, and her eyes like mountain pools at twilight, Aurora took her departure and was whirled away in the Courtenay car to the Courtenay house, leaving Mr. Francis Courtenay to make his way to his rooming-house afoot, or maybe take the subway.

Henry Harkness watched Miss Tredegar

thoughtfully. She seemed to him like Titania's self, diademed, clothed in humming-birds' wings, a creature from some airier, alien world shimmering with iridescent colors and exotic flowers, and bathed in the light of a moon more magic than the moon of May.

Her bobbed black hair, sleek and satiny as a black cat's, was trained to a curved point on each cheek, with somewhat the suggestion of mysterious wing-tips. Her dress, which seemed a living part of her slender body, furthered this hint of a bird, a bird that was like some lovely flame. She had the ineffable lure of a woman, with the grace of a boy, one of those beautiful Latin boys who with level eyes and enigmatic lips look hauntingly out of the great canvases of the Renaissance. Her mouth, like theirs, held a delicate hint of ferocity, the slight pout of a spoiled, adored, and perverse child, infinitely alluring. In the depths of her large dark eyes danced a glint of amber. . . .

This was the first theatrical light that had ever shone upon the theological student. It was a bright and beautiful light, but it was, he reflected, a footlight, the very brilliancy and strangeness of which dazzled the eyes. He wondered. He wasn't quite sure. But he was glad that Francis didn't love Miss Tredegar. For Harkness saw to-day that, though he liked her immensely, Francis didn't love her. He hoped Frank knew that.

Lovely as Dolly was, Henry's eyes had turned to Aurora Janeway with a sense of rest and relief, of finding his bearings. He felt that he could be more at ease in Miss Janeway's company than in Dolly's, for he intuitively trusted her. He sensed the reality and stability of any world in which Aurora dwelt, and he knew he could breathe in it with healthier lungs than in Miss Tredegar's. Beautiful big Aurora wasn't foreign to him, and beautiful little Dolly was.

For some moments after Aurora's departure, the two young men were silent. Harkness was thoughtful, Frank felt awkward and embarrassed.

"Do you know, Frank," said Dolly, thoroughly enjoying his discomfiture, "do you really know, I don't consider Simmons a very good judge of a lady's personal appearance? I'm afraid Simmons must dislike ladies on general principles. I think Miss Janeway quite magnificent, if you ask me."

"I have seen her before," said Harkness, "but I didn't know who she was. I think she's the most beautiful person I ever saw. If Gabriel or Michael had a twin sister, I think she'd be exactly like Miss Janeway. I like her," he finished simply.

"I am as one who has blasphemed Diana. I feel . . . sacrilegious. And Simmons is a purblind, mouse-colored old ass. I shall always be grateful to you, Dolly, for enabling me to meet

her face to face. You're an angel yourself," said Frank.

"Frank, your uncle has been a sort of invalid for some years, hasn't he?" asked Dolly, pursuing thoughts of her own.

"No, he just thinks so," said Frank.

"Well, he's changing his mind, I hear," said Dolly, laughing. "Or rather, Miss Janeway has persuaded him to change his doctors. She has called in newer men. She said she was convinced that most of his ills were purely imaginary, that he'd become a sort of dishonest habit with his own doctor and she was also convinced a radical change was best for all concerned. And Miss Janeway lives up to her convictions, let me tell you!

"My dressing-woman has a cousin who's a maid in the Courtenay house, and the gossip reached me that way. One does hear most things through the servants, you know. I hear he throws things at people's heads, Frank! And uses language like a sailor's parrot. I shall keep out of his way. I can't afford to have things thrown at my head, and I fear I might be tempted to repeat the language, if I once heard it."

"Whatever changes Miss Janeway brings about are for the better, I am sure. You see, even Uncle Jord can't withstand her."

"I wish she'd take it into her head to bring *you* back to normalcy!" said Dolly.

"Frank," said Harkness, "is working out his

own salvation, marm. And I don't believe he needs any help from anybody, doing that. But I sure do hope we see that lady again."

As the two young men walked home, they were unwontedly silent. The little dancer, and the insidious glamour of the world in which she shone were so new to the Dakotan's simple eyes, to his almost biblical mind, that he had to think them over seriously. He pondered over Dolly's strange resemblance to Winny Davis, who was so utterly unlike her. Where Dolly's cheek was warmly olive, tinted like a peach, Winny Davis had the magnolia skin of Alabama. Winny Davis was the taller, but both girls had that boyish grace and charm, to which was added the ineluctable lure of the intensely feminine. Winny Davis's hair was flecked with gold, Dolly's eyes with amber. But in the Alabama girl's curved lips was no hint of ferocity. Winny Davis had a mouth that was all sweetness . . . Harkness lost himself.

Frank couldn't talk, because he had Aurora Janeway to think about, and she at her first coming blotted out all that had been before, filled all his horizons. As though a curtain had been drawn aside, he saw the pure beauty that, half divined, had yet always been the secret stuff of which all his dreams and hopes and desires had been woven. He did not even try to conceal from himself the fact that he loved her, at once, irrevocably; that, come good or ill, he must always love her. He be-

longed to her, she belonged to him. They completed each other. And, as things stood, he had to combat the Courtenay money that stood like a reef between them. She was presumably to take his place in the Courtenay scheme of things, while he was now only an untried, unknown young architect in Colin Murray's office. He put up a prayer, at once fierce and timid:

“Lord God Omnipotent, give me this woman . . . help me to win her . . . don't let the Courtenay money come between us! Heavenly Father, in the name of all Thy men and women, help me to win and to make myself worthy of Aurora Janeway!”

## CHAPTER IX

### THE LOVELY LADY

**D**R. FORBES, the Courtenay physician, was a kindly, easy-going man. He wore rimless eye-glasses on a broad black silk cord, and a neatly trimmed gray beard, both of which added to one's confidence in his judgment. His blue eyes were bland and amiable, and they had the power of always seeing the main chance. His father before him had been a family physician, and had prospered because he, too, had been easy-going and worldly-wise.

If Dr. Forbes wasn't brilliant, he did know the most important thing for any doctor to know: he knew the spirit of man that is in him, he knew human nature to the core. This does quite as well as though you should call yourself a psychologist, a psychiatrist, an alienist, or such like, so far as being able to live comfortably is concerned. You do as much good and no less harm, and it doesn't make any more difference in the end. People never do any more or any less than live and die, do they?

In the early evening of his days, Dr. Forbes wasn't at all ambitious to be brilliant, original,

and disturbing, like the newer, younger members of his profession. He liked better peace, prosperity, and the regular fees of satisfied patients. He knew more than many about the heart, which interested him, and gave him enough reputation to cover other deficiencies of knowledge. He had long known that there was absolutely nothing wrong with Jordan Courtenay's heart: it was as strong as a pile-driver in action. Knowing this, the doctor's conscience was at rest. Besides, Jordan was young enough; let's see, he was somewhere around fifty, wasn't he? Well, the stuff we give him won't hurt him any; it will taste nasty, too, and his reactions to it will be, on the whole, beneficial.

An equable arrangement. If Jordan got what he wanted and wanted what he got from Dr. Forbes, without doing himself or anybody else any harm, why upset it?

The physician had known many wealthy men to live long and healthy lives as quasi-invalids and die at a ripe old age, in the odor of sanctity. If Jordan Courtenay, a perfectly sane, sound, and normal man in every sense of the word, elected to sail down the stream of life via the Liver Line, —paying handsomely for the privilege,—who should say him nay? Dr. Forbes didn't cross him. Jordan Courtenay, a strong-willed man, wished to be coddled, like an egg, so to say, and Dr. Forbes obligingly coddled him, keeping him

gently simmering. He advised his wealthy and irascible patient to cultivate calmness, never to allow himself to become nervous or distressed, and to diet; also to take not too strenuous exercise. And he gave him harmless medicines, making them sufficiently nasty to have the proper psychological effect, Mr. Jordan Courtenay being conservative and obstinate enough to cling to a belief in the efficacy of medicines.

It made him feel strong-willed and virtuous to swallow nauseous doses. He had an unreasoning conviction that this was as good for his soul's health as it was for his body's. The bishop had once said something like that, and Mr. Courtenay, forgetting who had made the remark, thought it had originated from his own consciousness. He admired and liked the bishop, who ministered to the health of his soul quite as efficaciously as Dr. Forbes looked after his body. Mr. Courtenay, on the whole, didn't have a bad time at all. If it hadn't been for Frank, he would have thoroughly enjoyed life.

Then had come Aurora Janeway, called in by himself. And she said that Mr. Courtenay had nothing at all the matter with him, except that he didn't diet wisely, didn't take proper care of himself! He almost foamed at the mouth when he heard that. But Aurora had the courage of her convictions, and the younger men she called in, the new men, were altogether different from Dr.

Forbes. They agreed with Dr. Forbes, however, that the patient's heart was perfectly sound. After that came the dividing of the ways.

They were of the modern and more straightforward school, and they used very modern tactics. They said he was settling into a rut, developing a fixed idea, and they meant to get him out of the rut and dissociate him and his idea. They took away all his many expensive medicines. They treated his liver as if he had been a brick-layer, and his diet as if he had been a convict; no longer was he coddled, and wrapped, like a spider's eggs, in silk and eiderdown! They made him get up early, they turned cold water on him, they wouldn't let him sit in his comfortable padded chair all day; they made him go out and walk so many minutes. He wanted to get well, didn't he? That's what they were there for, wasn't it? A visiting missionary once overheard Mr. Courtenay commenting on his new physicians' tactics, and went away wondering if he hadn't better transfer the sphere of his activities from the heathen to the home folks; also whether it is better for a man to gain his body's health and lose his soul.

But having had his hand put to the plow, and being constantly prodded in the back, there was nothing for the exasperated gentleman to do but follow it to the bitter end of the furrow. He'd been told, bluntly, impersonally, without any tact

whatsoever, that there was nothing the matter with his body except too much pampering, that his trouble was altogether mental: he had an ingrowing imagination, a complex, an inhibition, a fixity, which must be checked, otherwise he'd be the victim of a phobia, an obsession, *then* there'd be the devil to pay! That's how they treated Mr. Courtenay's pet liver.

He was sweated; he was trotted; horrid jets of cold water were turned on his naked body; he fared like a poverty-stricken Spartan. They gave him water to drink; they gave him health bread which rasped his throat and all but choked him; and he fared merrily on boiled spinach. It seemed to him that if the spinach he had to take were spread over the Atlantic Ocean, it would become a colossal Sargasso Sea. He who had been what the cook called "pernickety over his vittles," he who had been so dainty, so Epicurean, grew a ravenous hunger, which he was allowed to satisfy only with the most unsatisfactory food he had ever had to eat. It was maddening. Every privilege had been ruthlessly snatched away from him. Every evening, in every sort of weather, they made him go out in his fine new limousine, wherein he sat enthroned, a gold-headed stick between his knees, and glowered upon the universe in which he was so unhappy.

He was in a hideous quandary. He had made his health the pivot upon which his family life

had revolved; he had tyrannized over everybody, as imaginary invalids are apt to do; and now other people had come in—on account of that same precious health of his, over which he had built up such a towering superstructure of fixed rules and habits of daily living and whims to which everybody else must conform—and, in the name of health, tyrannized over him as mercilessly as he had ever done over anybody. They pulled his carefully built-up superstructure about his ears, and called it fallacy!

And he couldn't rebel, he couldn't refuse to obey their orders without making himself appear in the guise of a selfish fraud, of putting on a cap with bells on it. He had quarreled with Frank for not being good enough. He couldn't quarrel with Aurora for being too good. He had loved Frank, whom he couldn't respect. He respected Aurora, whom he couldn't love. And he mused upon the injustice of circumstances. For the best of reasons, for moral reasons, he had sent Frank away and had brought upon himself Aurora Janeway, with results which made him more uncomfortable than he had ever dreamed of being. So he drove out every afternoon and glowered upon the world and everybody in it.

The worst about this new régime was that it was undoubtedly setting him up. Aurora Janeway had gaged his health as accurately as she had gaged his charity: there wasn't anything really

basically wrong with either, but both needed modern treatment, and she was by way of putting both upon a sounder basis. He was an improved man, and he didn't like it at all.

He brooded darkly by day,—he didn't have time to brood at night, for he was so tired out that he slept like a farm hand,—but he couldn't see any method of escape for himself. Suppose he told this terrible, logical young woman that he had had just about as much as he was going to stand for. Not only did she make his physical life miserable, but she troubled him mentally. She had recently closed two settlement kitchens, run—at a heavy expense, of course—in a crowded district, saying that they meddled with the poor instead of helping them, and that she respected the people all the more for not patronizing them: why should they?

He had rather liked the idea of those kitchens, which were to help working-people, teach them what and how to eat at a nominal price. That the poor wouldn't come and be taught how and what to eat wasn't his fault, or the fault of the ladies who gave so much time and enthusiasm to them, but was altogether the fault of the working-people. And the ladies interested in the charity had talked to him so beautifully, too! And then Aurora Janeway had ruthlessly closed the kitchens, as a sentimental venture, a waste of money, a meddling raid into the lives of other people! Why should you force help upon people who really

didn't need it, who could, and would, and should help themselves? she demanded. The ladies had been very angry and had quarreled rancorously with Mr. Courtenay, and said he hadn't any real vision. . . . Oh, good God!

Well, suppose he told Aurora just what he thought. That she was losing him all his friends, that people were beginning to say things about him, that he didn't like her methods, anyhow. *She* meddled, if it came down to that! She meddled with his health. He had a sickening vision of himself trying to be unreasonable with incarnate Reason, trying to jaw clear-eyed Justice. Alas! one doesn't row with Pallas Athene!

"Oh, damn! Damn! Damn! *Damn!*" said the godly Mr. Courtenay, helplessly.

And every day the Spartan régime, the regular exercise, the sane diet so rigidly forced upon him, showed upon him physically. A tinge of healthy red came into his cheek. His eyes were clear. His very hair seemed to have gained vitality, it was so thick and glossy. His jaw was harder, his tall figure, losing flesh, was more upright, springy, alert. Aurora Janeway's convictions were remaking him. He looked twenty years younger.

To-day, returning from his ordered drive, he found another car, a very handsome car, at his door, and from it alighted the prettiest woman he had ever seen. There was about this beautiful woman an air so free, so exhilarating, her every

movement had such a bird-like grace, that the cross-grained man felt his ill humor vanish. You couldn't be ill-humored when you were privileged to see something like this perfect creature. He caught a glimpse of her profile—features of exquisite purity of outline, olive skin of so fine a texture that the blue veins showed through it, lips, slightly pouting lips, of a warm red coral, black hair trained to a point on the cheeks, with the suggestion of wing-tips. She wore a close-fitting little hat that was like a helmet on her small head. You perceived that she was a very small woman, in perfect clothes, a small woman of most extraordinary grace. A finished, perfect little woman, as delicately exquisite as an ivory gem, as a Tanagra figurine. . . . For the first time in his life Mr. Jordan Courtenay's heart misbehaved.

He was devoured by an instant inordinate curiosity as to her identity. She was unlike all other women, he reflected, that he had seen or known. Very unlike the ladies who called on him and talked about charitable objects, and one's duty to mankind and to God. He had an almost overwhelming desire to speak to her, to know her, to meet her eyes, to hear her voice. No other woman had ever so stirred him, filled him with such an emotion.

At that instant another car drove up, and the bishop hailed him. The genial churchman had a

genuine liking for the crusty millionaire who led so sternly strict and ascetic a life; but he knew him to be of a domineering mind and a hasty temper, one to be handled like explosives. He had wondered at the time whether it was wise or good to disinherit Francis, despite that young man's carelessness, despite his irreverent attitude to bishops. Francis had always aroused a mixed feeling in the bishop. Perhaps it was at bottom envy.

He more than respected Aurora Janeway. An easy-going Christian himself, fond, like Dr. Forbes, of a pleasant life and used to it, the ecclesiastic stood just a little in awe of a young woman as uncompromising as an archangel. He was beginning to understand the effect she must produce upon Jordan Courtenay. No pleasant shams, no evasions, no saving, agreeable little sins, around Aurora Janeway! The bishop felt ashamed of himself for secretly sympathizing with his old friend Jordan, but he couldn't help it. Archangels are none too easy to live with; theirs is a rarefied atmosphere, likely to induce, in lesser mortals, bleeding at the nose. The bishop put away the suspicion that in such circumstances his own nose would probably spout gore.

The radiant small woman had run up the Courtenay steps and been ushered into the house by Simmons. And the bishop, whose sympathies

made him greet his friend more warmly than ever, walked up the steps sedately beside him.

“My, my! how well you look!” commented the churchman. “And,” he added, pleasantly, “how astonishingly young! Why, Jordan, I’ve never seen such an improvement in anybody, in all my life! It’s marvelous! You must give me the names of your doctors.”

“I do feel much better,” admitted the other. And suddenly he was glad, tremendously glad, that he looked so much better and so much younger. After all, he *was* young, comparatively. The thought gave him a sense of exhilaration, of real pleasure, of well-being. He straightened his shoulders and his eyes sparkled. He laughed.

Instead of going directly to his own rooms as was his wont, Mr. Courtenay ushered the bishop into the drawing-room. He had a wild hope that she might be there instead of with Aurora, and he wished with all his heart to see the radiant visitor.

The wild hope was realized. She was in the drawing-room, standing before one of the Courtenay portraits, and as the two gentlemen entered she turned and looked into his eyes. His heart all but stopped beating, his blood surged roaring through his veins, and there was fire before his vision and the sound as of many waters in his ears.

She had been smilingly studying the inane perfections of the Courtenay women and the arrogance of the Courtenay men, looking haughtily down from the walls of this old room. Her own immediate forebears had been the son of a Welsh miner and the daughter of a Hungarian fiddler. But they had loved each other with the wild ardor of their blood and their youth; and she was what she was.

She turned upon the two gentlemen a pair of great dark eyes that were like velvet pansies for softness and stars for splendor; and her mouth was a dark-red rose for sweetness, and the wing-tips of her hair upon her cheeks were so black that purple lights were upon them. Into the dazed mind of Jordan Courtenay, who read his Bible daily, crept with a tinkling sound of cymbals iridescent words, fluttering words that had doves' breasts:

*Behold, thou art fair . . . thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks. . . . Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet. Thou hast ravished my heart . . . Thou has ravished my heart with thine eyes. . . .*

So the bright winged words, like the birds of Angus Og, flew and wheeled and fluttered around his head, dazzlingly.

The small woman saw a big man, broad-shouldered and powerfully built, and, one knew,

very strong. He was strikingly handsome, despite the signs of bad temper in the face. His thick iron-gray hair was brushed back from a fine forehead; his heavy black eyebrows and large dark eyes contrasted very effectively with his hair. A clipped dark mustache, touched with gray, shaded his well-shaped, hard mouth. Proud, stubborn, arrogant, dominant, overbearing, the face was yet too like young Frank's to be anything but innately fine. There was a touch of nobility, even. And one saw that, whatever he might be, he was strong. In good and evil, the man was strong.

The two appraised each other—the woman that the man had said was damned, and the man that the woman had thought was damnable. Neither remembered the amiable bishop, beaming in the background.

Dolly smiled. Mr. Courtenay smiled. He was glad with all his being that he was here, that he wasn't upstairs in his comfortable chair. He was joyfully, thrillingly glad that he was alive, that he was a healthy man, even that Aurora Janeway had forced him out of his ordered orbit, to meet the smile of this woman's most beautiful mouth. He was so enchanted with Dolly Tredegar's smile that he gave her an extra one in return; and your congenitally bad-tempered person has the sweetest smile in the world. That smile, the light in his eyes, so changed his aspect, so transfigured him

that Dolly saw on the instant that he was really far handsomer than Frank. She thrilled to the smile.

He introduced the bishop, who also was delighted with Dolly. Then he introduced himself and waited. But Dolly merely countered with the information that she had an appointment with Miss Janeway, who was, however, detained upstairs. She was waiting here until Miss Janeway should be at liberty to see her.

Dolly began to enjoy herself as only such a nature, with a spice of the cat in it, could. Not for nothing did her pouting lips hold that hint of delicate ferocity. Not for nothing did her boyish grace resemble the St. John of Leonardo, that St. John who is also, slyly, the young Bacchus. . . .

Frank's uncle! And he didn't know her . . . yet. She prepared to play with her mouse, gracefully. She was rather sorry at first that he wasn't at all as she had imagined he would be. Then, she thought naughtily, the situation would have been quite perfect. Even as it was, it offered delightful possibilities. So let us make ourselves agreeable, charming, enchanting, fascinating, to Frank's uncle! Looking up at him like an elfin child, she smiled ensnaringly.

## CHAPTER X

### AND THE JEALOUS GENTLEMAN

**M**R. COURTENAY, not noting the dancer's ambiguous resemblance to Leonardo da Vinci's St. John, nor suspecting the feline undercurrent that was willing to play with him as with a mouse, smiled back at Miss Dolly Tredegar ingratiatingly. He hoped Christianly that paralysis might for the time being descend upon the case upstairs and keep Miss Janeway attendant upon it indefinitely. She could spend the rest of her life upon it, for all he cared! Offering Miss Tredegar the most comfortable chair he could reach, and seating himself in the first that came to hand, he remarked beamingly that to-day was a particularly fine day. The sunshine was so unusually sunshiny, the sky so enchantingly skyey, the air so exhilaratingly airy. Hadn't she noticed? Hadn't you noticed, Bishop?

The bishop said blandly that to him it looked just like any other fine day, but that Mr. Courtenay probably enjoyed it more, appreciated the beauty of it more deeply because he'd been shut up indoors long enough to acquire a keen appre-

ciation of out o' doors. And his health was really so remarkably improved—

“*You* have been an invalid?” Dolly looked at Mr. Courtenay with lovely astonishment. Her eyes said she couldn't imagine one so strong, so well, so handsome, being anything but radiantly healthy! It was insidiously flattering, that slight stress on the pronoun “*you*.”

He was strangely modest about his past invalidism. He'd rather she'd know how strong he felt . . . was . . . now. He remembered that women are supposed to prefer strong men; he wouldn't mind it a bit if she thought him as strong as a cave-bear. What a sympathetic voice, what marvelous eyes she had! Give him small women, with sympathy and insight, rather than big women with reason and logic, any day in the year! He remembered, oddly enough, certain old fairy-story books he had had when he was a small boy; and fairies in floating robes, with stars on their foreheads. If she would only take off that absurd little hat, that pretty little hat, there'd be the little bright star, twinkling above her head . . . .

The bishop was wondering where he had seen that enchantingly pretty face before. Perhaps he had met her or seen her at some country house? Or maybe—this was most likely, he fancied—at some one of the legations on one of his visits to the capital? Or maybe it was at the White House, at some brilliant diplomatic affair? For very evi-

dently this was a personage. You'd only to look at her to tell that. Her car, her clothes, her class proclaimed her importance. And her face was familiar. Only, he couldn't place her, and this seemed rather in the nature of a social solecism. He was annoyed with himself.

Mr. Courtenay pursued the same object by a different route. Who was she? Where had she come from? It was of the last importance that he should know. He must know. He asked, with veiled interest:

“You are on one of Miss Janeway's committees?”

(Henceforth he would keep in closer touch with the personnel of Miss Janeway's committees.)

Dolly regretted that her time was too much occupied, her leisure too scant, for such activities. She wished it could be otherwise. Which convinced the bishop that this was, indeed, somebody who was Somebody. But who?

Mr. Courtenay found himself wondering, with a ghastly surmise, if she were married, the mistress of some great establishment, a lady taken up with large social activities. The idea of this was so distasteful that it shocked him. Somehow her appearance did not suggest such misplaced matrimony, or the loathsome possibility of a husband. He forgot that he himself had been the husband of a most estimable wife, that that wife had been, up to this very day, his ideal of what a

woman should be. The gleaming vision didn't at all resemble that ideal, but he didn't think any the less of her for that.

The bishop's conversation ambled amiably among such topics as good society discusses. He named names. Dolly knew some of the women; and some of the men were quite mad to know Dolly. But she didn't explain that to the bishop. He saw, though, that she had a wide acquaintance here and abroad. She seemed to have traveled extensively, to know intimately many foreign cities. Who was she, anyhow? It was very mortifying, this inability to place her who, he was sure, should be recognized at sight.

She had the gracious art of lightly pleasant conversation, and the much greater art of listening intelligently, with interest, to the conversation of others. Any man will gage a woman's intelligence by her interest in and her reaction to what he has to say. Dolly understood exactly how to make men talk so that they pleased themselves and appeared to please her. This is genius.

The bishop and Mr. Courtenay were pleased, if not surprised, at their own cleverness. The bishop told a threadbare clerical joke, hoary with age, shiny from usage, and Dolly laughed like a chime of vesper bells, and looked at the bishop with eyes starry with gaiety; you'd know that, whoever else had heard that joke before, she hadn't, that it was brand-new to her, delightfully funny,

and that the bishop was a man with a real sense of humor! That's what Dolly did to the bishop, who beamed and basked under such blandishment.

Mr. Courtenay wasn't to be outdone; he, too, told a mild joke, not quite so venerable as the bishop's; he told some of the amusing experiences he had had with charitable workers, secretaries, brazen beggars, though they hadn't until now assumed the humorous aspect. Mr. Courtenay talked well, and the enchantress cast upon him a glance that made his heart gambol like the little lambs of the flock; a glance that was his undoing. She did her worst with her eyes. Even in his be-dazzlement he perceived that glinting note of amber in them—like pansies with a golden heart, he thought.

And still, by the sweet mercy of Providence,—he could think it no less than that,—was Miss Janeway detained; still that vinegar-bottle of a spinster, Mary McKinstry, hadn't come to call the fairy queen away from them, in her voice that was like the blunt edge of a shovel scraping clay off a rock. Horrible contrast, the voice of Mary McKinstry, harsh as an unwelcome truth, and the dulcet tones of this delightful incognita, soft as a saving fib!

It occurred to him that he might better interest, please, or even manage to detain her if he could lure her into his conservatory to see his flowers, his one worldly pride, and, since Frank's depar-

ture, his one solace. She welcomed the suggestion, for Dolly was an ardent flower-lover. Behold her, then, led to the cleverly made conservatory at the back of the house, escorted by an eagerly attentive Mr. Courtenay and a most amiable prelate.

Dolly gave a cry of surprise and pleasure at sight of his flowers, for she hadn't expected such a marvel of scent and bloom and color; some of the plants were of particular beauty and rarity, and these the owner cut recklessly, while a gardener at work there looked on aghast. He had seen blossoms carefully cut for charity, for hospitals, for church services, under Mr. Courtenay's jealous eyes. Never before had he seen so much as one of them cut for a chance visitor. And here was Mr. Jordan Courtenay himself snipping them, the best of them, handing them over wholesale to a young woman! Well, you never can tell, can you?

Mutely the gardener looked at the bishop. But the bishop's eyes were fixed fatuously upon the young lady, whom he was helping make a bouquet. He seemed to think it eminently right and just to heap flowers, one's best and costliest, the blossoms which are one's pride, upon her. The workman felt aggrieved. He looked at his employer and the bishop with indignation and disgust. They didn't so much as notice him!

"You should wear this very beautiful scarlet bloom over your ear, I think," the bishop said

critically. "Black hair and bright blossoms belong to each other as by divine law. I learned that in Spain, when I was young." Something not at all ecclesiastical flashed into his fine eyes for a second, a light no bishop's wife ever sees.

"I think you really ought to pay another visit to Spain," purred Dolly, raising her eyes to his. "And I'd like to be there when you visit it," she added, in a lower tone.

Something like the effect of champagne—now, alas! forbidden—raced through the churchman's orderly veins. Her eyes were like nights in Andalusia, he thought, nights full of stars, and the sound of fountains, and laughter, and the tinkle of music, and singing voices, and the scent of red roses in a girl's black hair . . . and a young, young man, in love with love . . .

The bishop's eyes misted. He smiled, and sighed. That is what Dolly Tredegar did to the bishop.

Having stripped his conservatory for her, Mr. Courtenay led the seducer back to the drawing-room, walking springily beside her, the bishop booming behind like an amiable bumblebee. The three were in most amicable conversation; never had Jordan Courtenay enjoyed any conversation—with anybody—so much, never had he been so delighted and thrilled. It was as if he had been given over to some delightful enchanter, the maker of nothing but happy spells which made

one feel young, and boyish, and glad and hopeful; when upon this scene of happiness appeared the unwelcome Mary McKinstry, and explained that Miss Janeway hadn't quite finished her business with her three visitors up in the office, but please wouldn't the young lady wait only a few minutes longer?

"Of course I'll wait. I'm having a perfectly lovely time!" said the young lady, and she beamed upon Jordan Courtenay and the bishop.

"Rampaging union women they are, and standing out for a strike immediately. Herself's against it, showing why and how and where they'll come to grief, the daft creatures! And she feels she can't let them go until she has the word they'll stand still a bit and wait. She's wonderful, just!"

"Oh, she is! She is indeed!" Dolly's kindling eyes glanced up, to see Frank's uncle with a twisted lip, a cold, hard eye, and a black frown that changed him from her pleasant entertaining host into somewhat of the ogre of her former vision. She had a revulsion of feeling. This was the man that had been horrid to Frank. She mustn't forget that.

A few minutes later Aurora herself appeared, calm and serene and very beautiful. Her hair was unusually obstreperous, and she put up her strong white hand and smoothed it back, without coquetry. Dolly would have made it an ensnaring gesture; it was perfunctory with Aurora. Her

manner to Mr. Courtenay and the bishop was kind, polite, but impersonal. It was for Dolly that her gray eyes warmed.

“It was so good of you to wait!” she said, taking Dolly’s hand. “Was the rehearsal successful?”

“Oh, we’re licking things into shape,” said Dolly, without enthusiasm. “And it wasn’t so good of me to wait here. It was pleasant. Mr. Courtenay and the bishop made it so, and I’ve seen the conservatory. Look here!” She held up the gorgeous blossoms.

“We were delighted to be mindful of the stranger in our midst, being not at all unaware that we entertained an angel,” said the bishop nicely.

“You will both forgive me for carrying Miss Tredegar off now; I’ve kept her waiting an unconscionable time as it is. People as busy—and famous—as Miss Tredegar, haven’t too much time to waste,” said Aurora, with her hand on Dolly’s arm. She smiled down at the little dancer.

*Miss Tredegar!* A bomb exploding beneath their feet couldn’t have bowled over the two men more thoroughly than did the detonation of that name. The bishop opened and shut his mouth like a hooked fish. Tredegar! Oh . . . ah . . . Good Lord! The wonder was that he hadn’t recognized her at once, for Dolly Tredegar danced in and out of advertisements, even. He knew her place

now, and while he didn't have at all the same notions of famous dancers that his friend had, he was conscious of a great shock. He remembered the quarrel with Frank, in which this beautiful woman was somehow involved. The situation appalled him for the moment, and he turned pink to his sacerdotal gills. Dolly casting a fleeting, naughty glance bishopward, he turned pinker.

But Jordan Courtenay caught that name like a bullet in the breast. Every vestige of color faded from his face, and his heavy black brows met in a bitter frown. A horrid, sick revulsion of feeling, a very nausea of rage and protest shook him. He shivered as if with deadly chill. He stared at her like a dying man.

"Tredegar! *You!* Oh no, oh no! Why . . . great God! . . . No, you aren't, you can't be that dancing-woman, Dolly Tredegar!"

"But I am Dolly Tredegar," said she, proudly, and wondered that any one should suppose her anything but proud to admit it. Dolly Tredegar was a famous name, an honored name. Why shouldn't it be? She was a great dancer.

"The woman that my fool of a nephew wrecked himself for . . . *you!*"

This was so blatantly unjust and untrue that Dolly looked at him in astonishment.

"I don't think I understand," said she, her chin up. "Neither your nephew nor anybody else's nephew ever wrecked himself for me, that I'm

aware of; why should they? Unless you mean that automobile wreck, in which nobody was hurt, because Frank kept his wits." She fixed her great black eyes upon him fearlessly. "And I'd hardly call Frank wrecked," she finished significantly.

The man laughed harshly. He was sick from the shock of the truth as he saw it. He trembled with rage.

"If you cherish," he spat at her, "any notion of marrying him on the prospect of my relenting in the last chapter and leaving him my fortune, change your mind at once." Stung and frenzied by anger and an agonizing jealousy, he spoke brutally. He wished to hurt her; she had hurt him so mortally! "I told him so when he was imbecile enough to choose you instead of me. No, madam. You may in time wear the Courtenay name—my honored name—but you shan't get my money with it. Was he honest enough to tell you that?"

Dolly smote her hands together.

"I *knew* that boy had something of Brother Francis in his make-up!" she exclaimed, and laughed softly. "No, Mr. Ogre Eatemalive, he didn't tell me anything, except that you'd agreed to disagree, the pair of you, and that he'd gotten out to oblige you. He didn't blame you. But now that I've met you, I don't blame *him*," finished the little dancer, bluntly. Who was this man, to think he could talk to her, Dolly Tredegar, like that?

“And let me ask you: who do you think you are, who do you think *I* am, to dare bawl at me about your old money? Wear your honored name! Wear fiddlesticks! I could have worn a thousand times better names than yours, if I’d wanted to, a dozen times over! Mine’s as good as yours ever dreamed of being. Ask any manager on earth, and find out for yourself!”

“I . . . I . . . I . . .” he strangled.

“You, you, you,” said Dolly, furiously, “are altogether to blame! You haven’t enough good judgment and you’ve too much bad temper for any self-respecting person to stand for you, and I’m *glad* Frank left you.” She stamped her little foot at him. “Oh, you big stupid thing, can’t you understand that it wasn’t Dolly Tredegar Frank was choosing, but freedom, the right to call his soul his own?”

*Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet. . . . Thy temples are like a piece of pomegranate within thy locks . . . and the hair of thine head like purple. . . . Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me.*

The bright words sang in his ears, but the echo of them was like the hiss of whips. It is not always safe for a virtuous, middle-aged gentleman to know his Bible too well.

“Have done with lies and subterfuges, you painted perdition!” he gnashed at her. “Are you

the sort of woman a man gives up? Now that I have seen you, I admit I can better understand the young fool's infatuation! I can see why he likes you." He wouldn't honor her by the admission that Frank loved her. But he believed it.

"If you'd sense enough to allow yourself to become half-way human, you'd like me, yourself," said Dolly, coolly. "Why shouldn't you like me? Why shouldn't anybody like me? Why, I like me, myself!" she flashed.

"Why shouldn't I like you, madam? You have the effrontery to ask me that? Because you have come between me and my boy, because you have wrecked my home!" he thundered.

"Oh, poppycock! Bosh! Tosh! Piffle! Come off your high horse! Nobody came between you and Frank; your villainous temper did it. Nobody could wreck your home. You've never had a home. All you've ever had is a big house to live in and be horrid in!" Again she stamped her foot. It was as if a small black Persian stood up to a Great Dane.

"Very well, madam. I had a house to live in and a nephew to live in it," he retorted, "until he chose you and the godless life you represent! He had his chance. He has made his bed, now let him lie on it."

Dolly stared at him, a puzzled look, a look of wonder.

"What is the matter with you, anyhow? How do

you get like that? Do you have these fits often? I think you must be a little crazy, the way you're raving. Why *should* Frank give up my acquaintance? And what's godless about me? Or about Frank? Is it that I dance? Or that Frank is gay and young and kind?"

"When a very wealthy young man is too kind to dancing-women, it is high time for his relatives to look into his affairs," said Frank's relative, frigidly. And again he was invaded by a frightful jealousy, like a deadly sickness.

All the time the troubled bishop had said nothing. At least they weren't coming to body blows, he comforted himself. He wouldn't slap her, and she wouldn't kick him in the shins, or bite him. But the bishop couldn't help looking distressed and perturbed. Miserable! miserable! He wished he hadn't come to see Jordan to-day. He hated such an *émeute*, anyhow. Heavens! they fought like pickpockets!

Dolly turned to the two.

"Have you ever seen me dance, either of you? No, I suppose not. . . . See here: we all have to live according to our lights; life is sad or glad according to our usage of the gifts God gives us. You, Bishop, hold down your job according to your lights, thanking God they're church lights instead of footlights; though they seem to me to be pretty much the same thing at times, and I can't see where yours make you so much wiser

or kinder or better than ours allow us to be. When the show's ended, who's to judge? . . . And you, Frank's uncle, think you are good and charitable when you are only domineering and stupid. You aren't even charitable to yourself, for you won't allow yourself to be happy, and *that* is the wickedest stupidity in the world; I'm not sure it isn't the sin against the Holy Ghost. . . . Well: you're what you are, and I'm what I am. So *I* bless God for my face, that people like to look at, and I praise him with my dancing feet . . . Like this!"

With a swallow's swoop she was across the floor. A toss and her bobbed head was free of the little hat. A humming-bird's swift movement, and the gorgeous scarlet bloom was behind her ear, as the bishop had suggested; and you saw that he had been right in saying that bright blossoms belonged to blue-black hair. For a moment, swaying like a bell-flower, she stood hesitant, her face uplifted. As if some airy voice had whispered the tune, she began to croon a gay and simple melody heard in childhood from her mother, that daughter of a Hungarian fiddler. The bell-flower motion quickened, the croon changed to a higher note. Dolly Tredegar began to dance.

The life of the men and women watching her centered in their eyes. She was a living flower that swayed lightly to and fro as the breeze of dawn stirred it; she was a leaf, a tinted leaf, that blew softly away on the last breath of sum-

mer. She was a lovely singing bird, a fluttering butterfly, a young birch upon the mountainside, frolicking with the wind and the slanting rain and the golden sunlight that touched her loverly; she was a dryad, a wild thing of forest glades, a spirit, an elf, Medb of the Shee on a May night, a ripple on the bosom of the water in the track of the moon, the very soul of all gracious and beautiful movement. And always she was Dolly Tredegar, praising the Lord with her dancing feet.

She drifted hither and thither, she enticed and eluded and retreated and enraptured. She was that which all men desire and yearn to and none may possess. She was the desire of the eyes, the secret wisdom of the heart, the lure of love and life. She intrigued and enthralled the senses as music and splendor and the silver clashing of singing words do, as birds and clouds and running water and young trees, and sighing winds, and clear lonely spaces, and all lovely things alive do. For she was Dolly Tredegar blessing the Lord with her face that all liked to look at because it was youth and beauty and joy; and praising the Lord for it with her dancing feet.

Jordan Courtenay did not move. He stood rigid, the breath hushed in his breast, like a man struck to stone; and his living spirit stood atip-toe within him, straining and stretching after that bright and ethereal slenderness and grace that was turning motion into a flame of ecstâsy before

his eyes. He experienced that sweet and dreadful pain that the sight of all truly beautiful things wrings from the heart of man, until his heart-strings all but cracked under the intolerable delight of it. No one may sense that emotion and remain as he was before. And then, as a song ceases, a bird flies, Dolly Tredegar was still.

“Themselves, in a May moonlight, when the hawthorn’s out!” said Mary McKinstry, in a deep whisper. “Sure I’ve seen the queen of them all this day with my own two eyes!” And she fetched a long sigh.

Aurora and the bishop said nothing. They couldn’t. The bishop had been young. And Aurora was going to be.

Jordan Courtenay looked deep into the dark eyes of the dancing hussy he had bidden Francis put by, and his eyes were full of pride and torment, and his face contracted. A spasm passed over it, as if his spirit had felt the sudden sting of some unimaginable, flaying whip lash. Then it set, like the pale, still face of a dead man whose eyes, still alive, knew that the last agony was upon them, too. His strong hands clenched until the knuckles showed white. Without a word to any of them he turned around sharply and with his head up walked out of the room.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE FURIOUS FLAME

**T**HE unexpected had happened to Jordan Courtenay. It was as if his sheltered, safeguarded life had been pulled up by the roots like a weed, dislodged from its formal graveled garden, tossed outside into the highway where fierce sun scorched, dust choked, and hurrying feet trampled it. He had, as it were, lost his landmarks—fixed habits of mind, prejudices, prides, convictions. All went. He was in a world entirely strange to him, a world in which raw and raging passions, new and searing emotions, rapture and agony seized upon him bodily, tore him with fierce teeth, twisted and harried and tossed him upon the wind, whirled him, breathless, terrified, to unimaginable heights, plunged him into undreamed-of depths of agonies; and, in lulls which were only periods of keener consciousness of pain, made him feel himself a laughing-stock for men and angels.

For Jordan Courtenay had been seized by one of those terrible passions of the middle-aged that bulk the biggest among the true terrors of life. They are tragedies beside which the romantic

griefs of youth, be they never so keen, are but as summer lightning to the bolt that rends and destroys. They arouse the amusement of the fool, the amazement of the wise, the pity of the good.

When he could catch his breath, his pride by force of habit tried to convince him that the emotion he was experiencing was merely righteous anger, a just anger because an impudent trick had been played upon him by a designing adventuress.

She had snatched at the opportunity to gain entrance to his house for the purpose of ingratiating herself into his good opinion; she was after his money, of course, on Frank's account. This made him rage against Frank; Frank was a scoundrel who would inevitably be hanged! Who ought to be hanged. For didn't this shameless dancing creature love Frank, didn't he love her? Hadn't they both defied and mocked him? Naturally, then, his feeling was anger, just and righteous.

But . . . but . . . had she really intrigued to meet him? Didn't he have to allow even her the benefit of the doubt? How her dark eyes—her most beautiful dark eyes, with that gleam of amber light in their depths—had kindled and flashed, how her face had been like a rose of flame when she faced him, defending herself and Frank! What spirit, what courage, what passion! And when she had danced . . . blessing the Lord for her beautiful face, praising the Lord with her dancing feet . . . *Dolly Tredegar!* . . . Oh, my God!

He closed his eyes, and in the dark she danced toward him, waving her slim hands, swaying her slim body, looking at him with her laughing eyes.

*Behold, thou art fair . . . thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks. . . . Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet. . . . Thou hast ravished my heart . . . with . . . thine eyes. . . .*

Dancing Dolly, lighter than thistle-down, fairer than Titania. And he a very strong man, whose passion had never before been aroused for any woman. He had cared for the estimable wife of his estimable young manhood. But never had his heart, that proud and stubborn heart of his, known anything but calm and chaste affection for that calm and chaste woman. His heart had been, as it were, the small warm hearth fire, the safe domestic fire. There had been nothing to indicate, in all his restrained past life, that that heart could flame into this roaring, furious fire, fierce enough to destroy the world, like the fire of the Last Judgment; a fire which must consume him before it burnt itself out, and which only the heavy damp earth of his grave could extinguish.

And he reflected with terror that all his life, his blameless life, had been preparing him for just this! His quiet pure life, so free from all sinful entanglements, so void of all passionate adventure, so carefully purged of all tang of sex! It had been as if it were swept empty of all else,

waiting for her to come and take possession. She had had but to appear, to walk in, to look at him—and this frightful thing had come upon him.

And her lips were like a thread of scarlet, her temples like a piece of pomegranate within her locks, and the hair of her head like purple. . . . *Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me!*

Did she know, did she guess? Was she amused? Were they both laughing at him? Were they together—lovers? He had visions of Dolly in Frank's arms; and then he would fall into paroxysms of pain and rage and despair. Oh, they were an evil pair, a fatal pair, Dolly Tredegar and his nephew Frank! He had done right to cast Frank out of his house, out of his life. He never wished to lay eyes on Frank's face again! As for that woman, that evil woman, that woman who was seduction, temptation, a snare, a painted lie . . . he musn't think about her any more. That way lay madness. She had been allowed to come into his life to . . . to test his faith, to try his virtue, his integrity. But he must overcome her. He *would* overcome her, the temptress! He would cast her into outer darkness, where she belonged, even as for her sake he had cast out Frank . . . and in that darkness . . . would they meet . . . and love?

He mustn't think of that. He had judged and condemned Frank before ever he saw Dolly. He

had done so, thank God, impersonally, impartially. He hadn't then seen her . . . to warp his judgment. She must admit that . . . he had been impersonal in dealing with Frank . . .

And all the while that cold and merciless self which dwells in the depths of man's nature, that submarine self which torpedoes the merchantmen of pride and makes the crew of vanity walk the plank, kept thrusting up out of the tumultuous sea, at intervals, an ironic periscope:

"Jordan! Jordan Courtenay! It isn't possible you're trying to deceive *me*? A man may fool his acquaintances, his friends, his foes, his own surface-self: but never, never, deep-sea, immortal *me*. Not any more than he can deceive God. . . . Jordan, this is your hour, and in his hour a man must reap what he has sown, the sheaves of his reaping must be gathered together. Your charity? Your piety? Your virtue? Call upon them—and then regard your sheaves, the sheaves of all your fields. Aurora is truth. Frank is youth. But Dolly is Love, Jordan. *Dolly is Love.*"

He gloomed in his room, a stricken creature, his head on his balled fists. Dolly danced before him . . . as the sirens tormented Anthony in the desert. He could see every turn of her beautiful head, the flower . . . his flower . . . in her blue-black hair; every least movement of the lithe and lovely little body, laughing lips, gipsy eyes, curve of breast and throat.

All that he had never been, that he had foregone, that he had denied and frustrated, had never known, came upon him now, and he was like a drowning man flung into a raging sea. He was a middle-aged man for the first time in his life most terribly in love, and in love with Dolly Tredegar. He was not to escape one pang of jealousy, desire, raw passion, anguish, despair. Dolly danced upon his naked heart, upon his life, his pride, his prejudices . . . his soul. No threat of hell, no hope of paradise, could save him from those dancing feet.

And to him in his agony and bewilderment, came many secretaries with many reports, came brisk dispensers of established benefactions, probers of possible fakers, searchers-out of poverty truly worthy of doles: cases, say, like these:

No. 788999-X. Smith, John. Age, forty-two; pants-presser; tuberculous; squints, slightly lame in left leg; bad teeth; bad heredity; father was unskilled laborer, mother was washwoman. Married: seven living children, oldest ten, youngest six weeks; wife tuberculous also; no work last three months; discharged last position account very objectionable language to foreman when rebuked for spitting on floor. Bad cough. *Worthy of help.*

No. 889133-Z. Jones, Mary Ann. Age, sixty-three; scrubwoman, Hecatomb Trust Building; bad knees; addicted to gin whenever possible; no living children; last son killed by truck, other son, policeman, shot to

death by drug addict in raid on dive; grandmother, two grandchildren, aged nine and six respectively, both newsboys; refuses to send to orphanage as suggested; says they are all she has; says she'd rather turn on the gas; insists she can help support them, though palpably unable. Ungrateful; abusive; defiant; bad surroundings for children. This case calls for immediate, drastic action. Given already, one dollar and fifty cents per week. *Note: We suggest calling in the S.P.C.C., and removing the two boys to some institution to be selected by our committee.*

Now, in the old, easy-going, pre-Aurora days, one got Smith, forty-two, pants-presser, a succession of jobs, until he sensibly coughed and spat himself out of the world. Got his wife a good job, too—possibly the one vacated by Jones, Mary Ann, aged sixty-three, who was now on the Island for having assaulted and flung gin bottles at the heads of the officers who removed her two grandchildren to a Home better able to care for them. A sensible and charitable arrangement, whereby Smith's widow hadn't anything to do but scrub the floors of the Hecatomb Trust Building all night, leaving her free to care for Smith's seven spindling children all day. Whenever one of the children went to join Smith, one helped bury that child. And charged up to the Lord, Who presumably keeps a ledger, what good deeds one had done unto the least of these.

Then, as the Assyrian came down like a wolf

on the fold, had come Aurora Janeway and changed everything. She made one do things that cost twice as much, caused a hundredfold more trouble, and brought one neither repose of mind nor gratitude of man, nor, so far as one could humanly see, blessing of Heaven. Take that model-kitchen business, for instance, which was to have done so much for poorer neighborhoods, which had cost like sin, and in which so many nice good ladies were so much interested. Aurora had shut it up like an umbrella, arousing a hornets' nest about his ears, for many of the ladies, communicants of his own church, had come to his house and quarreled with him.

Aurora had been strangely indifferent to those quarrelings. She said the kitchens weren't doing, couldn't possibly do any good to the people they were supposed to help. She said they merely gratified some untrained and unthinking women's desire to muddle and meddle with the poor, who, to their everlasting credit, wouldn't have anything to do with them. The kitchens did more harm than good, and so she shut them up—two of them. Over the protests of older women, women of high standing in his own church, who assured him wrathfully, tearfully that they were doing as well as one could expect, and that although the kitchens did seem to cost a frightful lot, you had to train poor people for a long time, and he could afford to invest the money with God.

Take those tenements, say: They'd belonged to the Courtenay estate for years. They'd been a most lucrative investment. Always filled to overflowing. Well, perhaps they were somewhat crowded, but the sort of people who rented them always did overcrowd, being used to it in the old countries whence they came. Irish, Italians, Greeks, Poles, Jews. Many Jews still herded there, people who worked in what are called sweat-shops, but these were giving way to other peoples from the East. He knew this because he was so much interested in Near East Relief. Fine work! He always kept Golden Rule Sunday, for the benefit of Near East orphans. Not that *he* needed to, his meals were so meager; but his whole household had to observe it as well, so his name could honestly appear on the list of good Christians who furthered it. He believed in Golden Rule Sunday, himself. It touched one. It had a personal appeal. Good for those servants of his, too, who, Simmons had once told him, stuffed like boa-constrictors.

When clamors had arisen about those tenements and he had wished to sell them—it would have been good business to sell them at that time, his lawyers told him—Aurora Janeway had said that persons who shifted responsibility might be good business men but in her estimation they were very bad philanthropists. She had looked at him with her intolerably clear gray eyes; eyes

that looked at and through him, quite as though they saw somebody standing behind him, somebody else who wore his body and his clothes and stood up in his shoes. It made him uncomfortable to be looked at like that.

She had a horrid list showing the rentals those tenements had brought in for some few years; the money they turned in to the Courtenay estate and the money expended upon them. How many rooms, and how many people in each room, even to the wretch who occupied the cellar and sold bales of rags among which he lived and moved and had his being—and most likely, Mr. Courtenay said, had money in the bank.

Aurora told him the exact amount of space, the cubic feet of air, per person. She made him see all they hadn't got in the way of air and light and conveniences. She had figures showing the death-toll. *Sell them?* So they would go on as they were? He was a philanthropist, a man noted for his goodness to the poor, for his charity! He had been deceived about those tenements, she was sure. Never could they have existed with his knowledge and consent. His agents hadn't told him the truth. But now he knew the truth about them, and she was glad.

There was nothing to do but give notice to a swarming population to get out, even to the wretch in the cellar. The tenements had to be virtually demolished. The entire interior was rebuilt.

They had light, they had air, they had conveniences, they were model and modern and sanitary, and they cost as much as a Charity Ball at which Society appears in fabulous costumes. For Aurora Janeway had insisted that a man must clean up around his own doorstep: that this was no more and no less than his simple duty. And he had done so because, in his position, there hadn't been anything else to do. Also, it would be heralded far and wide that he had done so. He remembered the uproar, the scandal caused by the condition of some property owned by a certain fashionable church corporation, some years before, and the horrid publicity attending it. He couldn't afford to have such a scandal at his own door.

He had been honestly shocked when the condition of his tenements was brought to his attention, and not for anything would he have kept the place like that. He had had an excellent offer for it from two brothers, Jews who had once lived there themselves. And Aurora Janeway wouldn't let him sell it to them at a profit, but made him rebuild it at a loss; told him she had had too many cases from those houses already.

For this reason his foreign missions donations had not been so large this year, and the missionary board was grieved: they needed additions to their schools in China; his gifts to this and that cause had had to be curtailed; even his pet chari-

ties had had to be clipped. *And* he heard himself called a grasping capitalist and a bloodsucker. *And* the dwellers in his rebuilt, model, sanitary tenements, who had space and air and conveniences at only a slight increase of rental, thought he had done no more than he should have done long before; never opened their mouths to praise him; thought that they paid for everything they got and didn't get any more than they paid for; and weren't in the least grateful!

What had been the cellar was now a small shop, occupied by a cobbler, a pestilent Socialist who said all landlords were wrong, that some day there wouldn't be any landlords. The State itself would build all houses and everybody would live in them rent free, just as they lived in the world rent free and breathed air rent free. One didn't pay for being born, for living in the earth, for breathing, did one? No? Very well, then: shelter and food also were necessary, and presently all men would feed all men; one would be born to shelter as a natural law. Therefore landlords were all bum, the proof of civilization's errors . . . see? One should hate them because they wronged THE PEOPLE. Mr. Jordan Courtenay, to whom the cost of those tenements had been as rubies, was a landlord . . . and one of civilization's errors. He didn't like it at all.

But Aurora Janeway told him he shouldn't mind. He had simply done the right thing, the only

thing. What difference did it make that those he benefited most hadn't a word of thanks for him? Besides, they were in a measure right: they paid the rents he asked, rents which, while they didn't bring in as much as the old houses had, still weren't a dead loss, as he must admit. The thing was to do what was right. He wasn't to expect gratitude.

Again, when pleasant, enthusiastic ladies called with the latest notions for prodding the proletariat, dragging the pond for the submerged, procuring green soap for the Great Unwashed,—notions that were sketchy enough to leave room for one's imagination, for some saving personal vanities,—or when clergymen called with a prospectus of some New Jerusalem to be founded here and there by their denominations, needing only some wealthy man's support to make it manifest, Aurora Janeway came and asked questions; and presently she blew these very sketchy and charming plans away like chaff before the wind. Then everybody concerned said things about Mr. Jordan Courtenay—not at all complimentary things. He was a groundling, without vision, without bowels of compassion. He was just like all other very rich men; what did he know about the poor anyhow? He just flattered himself he was charitable; he just gave the people back a little of the money he had made out of them! And so on . . .

Many people, who didn't understand the strings

that pulled him, wondered how that lovely Miss Janeway could put up with him. When he heard that he choked; his eyes stuck out to an extent that suggested a bad case of exophthalmic goiter.

The whole matter of daily living—Dolly aside—wouldn't have been so bad if Aurora Janeway hadn't been so good. But she was so unerringly right that it well nigh maddened him. Her facts were incontrovertible; her figures didn't lie: they wouldn't even lie still. Sometimes he feared that he was going to be waked up on Judgment Day morning not by the Archangel Gabriel but by Aurora Janeway. He had a horrid vision of Aurora Janeway standing on the right-hand side of the Judgment Seat, sorting out the sheep and the goats for the Lord God. And he was sure that if she pronounced, "This one is a goat," no matter if it wore wool and looked like a sheep to St. Peter and all the angels, or if she picked out something with hair and horns, and said, "This one is a lamb in goatskin," her verdict would stand, and the Lord of all His heavens would back her up. Because the Lord knew she was always right!

He fell into fits of sullen brooding, in which Dolly was wrong and lovely and most dear and desirable; and in which Aurora was right, and beautiful, and good, but neither dear nor desirable. And in which he said to the one, "Thy dancing feet go down to hell, but would to God I were with thee!" and to the other, "The God of the

righteous is on thy right hand: but be thou far removed from me!"

He refused his food with loathing, for all things were bitter in his mouth, in which was the taste of ashes and of tears. And he couldn't sleep soundly at night because Dolly Tredegar danced into his dreams and looked at him with mocking eyes, and at times she scratched his breast with sharp little nails, laughing, because she wished to see his heart bleed. He demanded sleeping-powders. Damn it, he wanted sound sleep!

Then again came his new doctors on the run, and poked their fingers into his anatomy, and thumped him, and laid their heads upon his bosom, and had him run out his tongue, and pulled up his eyelids, and said he didn't need any sleeping-powders; there wasn't a thing the matter with him; but he'd been slipping up on diet and exercise, hadn't he? So they made him walk out every day, rain or shine. They redoubled his exercises. They made him get up and go to bed at unspeakable hours, like a convict. When he protested profanely, they asked coldly, "Why have we been sent for, then, if you are not willing to obey orders?"

Simmons led the life of a pariah dog just then. The cook resigned. The parlor-maid said, Well! she never, in all her born days . . . But despite his mental torment, and the torment he was to everybody around him, Mr. Jordan Courtenay

kept on getting healthier and healthier, and angrier and angrier. It was, as Alice said, "Curiouser and curiouser."

One haunting fear obsessed him, was as a splinter in his finger, a cinder in his eye: had he really been swindling himself all these past years? Had Frank been right in saying so? Was the main end of life one's duty done, regardless of how it stunted and frustrated one? What was one's duty? Did one owe oneself a full-blooded and joyous existence? Suppose, now, that the gay echo of happy laughter, of joyous dancing, of singing voices should be sweeter to Heaven than the dismal echo of repentant groans, of the falling of tears, of wails of conscience-stricken sinners?

He knew that life wasn't giving him anything that satisfied him, that filled his heart or delighted his eyes. The lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life . . . he knew none of them. He saw himself growing old without ever having been young, shut up in a narrow, colorless sphere, a sunless sphere of his own making, while outside in the sunlight, happy, laughing, loving, moved Dolly Tredegar and his nephew Frank.

"You are losing weight too rapidly," his watchful physicians said, weighing him in the balance and finding him wanting some pounds below perfection. They fed him rare beefsteaks, and cold, raw, cowy milk, and ordered him to suck eggs like a thieving puppy. Because men of great posses-

sions must be carefully protected against ill health. They let him walk less and ride more.

His tailors had often sighed over the rather sedate and old-fashioned cut of Mr. Jordan Courtenay's clothes. It was a pity, they thought. So much could be done with a man of his figure! Now they shuddered when they saw him enter their doors, and even their best and suavest salesmen wished to avoid serving him. Indeed, he barked for heads of departments, and these he made sweat before he had done with them. Never had they had a more captious, hypercritical, difficult patron. Nothing they had ever made for him would suit him now. Everything must be changed. Styles for men became for a while as a Bible to him. He found fault with trifles. Nothing short of perfection would do for him.

His tailors' bills were outrageous, but the tailors earned their wages by the sweat of their brow. For the outward form of Mr. Jordan Courtenay became a model for youngish middle-aged gentlemen. He looked a young forty instead of his actual age. He shed weight and years, he added grace and dignity. He was sartorially perfect. Like Richard Cory of poetic fame, he seemed to glitter when he walked. The word elegant, the word distinguished, fell short of the perfection that his tailors released. He wasn't even early middle age; he was rather late youth, in the pink of condition, a particularly handsome gentleman who wore his

perfectly selected clothes with an air. Even the tailors were moved to wonder and admiration. It might take nine tailors to make a man. It had taken all their pains, their thought, their craftsmanship—and they were the best of their kind—to make Jordan Courtenay. The result more than justified the work.

Having reached the sartorial acme, he took the step he had been secretly contemplating. He followed the crowd and went to see Dolly Tredegar dance. And he took meticulous pains with his personal appearance, the night he went to see her dance. He could no longer resist the desire to see her again. Even her name, in glaring electrics blazing about the theater, thrilled him. It had, he thought, something of her own witchery in it, her own wonder and magic, glittering up there above the heads of all lesser mortals. . . .

He sat back and watched her come out upon the stage, and saw how the great house rose to her with shouts and roars of welcoming delight; and he turned cold and shuddered with an emotion so intense that it was agony. He watched her drift across the stage like a bright blown leaf, with a glory and a glamour upon her almost more than mortal, so that she seemed to make visible the secret yearning of each man's heart. The huge audience, the silent audience, hung breathless upon her every movement. And when she ceased, a long, long audible sigh went up, and the applause

crashed thunderously. Dolly Tredegar was blessing the Lord for her beautiful face, and praising Him with her dancing feet. . . .

There were mounds of flowers for her whom the public adored. *He*, too, had once given her flowers, very rare and costly flowers, one of which she had worn in her hair, the while she danced for *him*. He sat back in the shadow of his box, watching her with burning eyes. Delight, desire, despair went over him like terrific billows, in which he was submerged.

He wondered, miserably, if Frank was with her often. It had astonished him that Frank had gone to Colin Murray, and that Murray with his great reputation had taken the boy in and was apparently content to keep him; but that, he had reflected, was due rather to Murray's known eccentricity than to Frank's ability. As a child Frank had been addicted to drawing, but all children try to draw. Frank had liked to draw houses and things like that, he remembered, and his teachers had laid stress upon the boy's talent. But Frank had never shown any desire to become an artist. His talent—if it had been really a talent—had been cultivated as an amusement, an accomplishment, rather than as a natural gift. Strange that at a crisis he should have turned to it instinctively! Stranger that hard-headed Colin Murray should take him in and keep him!

He wondered what *she* thought of Frank, how

she regarded him, now that the boy was a beggar. Now that he couldn't wreck himself for her. No more gifts. No more flowers. No longer glamorous, the heir to a great fortune. Merely a clerk in an architect's office, one man among millions of men.

In his heart he understood with painful prescience that change of fortune would make no difference, could make no difference, to those two. It must to other people, but never those two. They had youth and beauty and genius . . . and love. What more could the whole universe offer them?

And he recalled how spiritedly the little dancer had defended Frank and herself, putting him and the bishop in their proper places! He writhed. Circumstances had prepared a trap for him, and he had blindly fallen into it. How brutally he had conducted himself, in his own house; to her, *to her!* He had had the miraculous opportunity to win her liking, and he had not only let it slip, he had cast it aside and trampled upon it! Oh God! what horrible madness had possessed him to act thus, to *her*, the beloved, the beautiful, for whom he would have given his soul? Oh, why, why, why? He might have made her like him, and he had instead insulted her. If she thought of him at all, it must be with astonishment, with aversion, with disgust!

He was a proud man, a stubborn man. Never in all his life had he been able to humble his stiff-

necked, arrogant spirit to any other human being, But . . . never had he so loved any other human being. She drew him as the moon draws the tides of the deep sea, so that his soul leaped and strained toward her. He had had but to see her to adore her with every fiber of his being, so that, he knew now, he must follow her wherever she went.

Yet it took him some time to do what he realized he should have done at first—seek her, ask her pardon. He remembered Frank's gallant defense of her; Frank had been so sure that he had been willing to face beggary for his belief; and Jordan Courtenay clung now with pathetic eagerness to Frank's opinion of her. He desired as passionately to believe in Dolly as he had passionately desired to impute evil to her.

And thus it happened that Dolly Tredegar received a curt note signed, "Jordan Courtenay," asking for a few minutes of her time.

"Oh! Indeed!" puzzled Dolly, astonished. "Now what under the sun can Mister Highandmighty want to see me about? I'd think he'd seen enough of me that one time to last him for the rest of his life. My Heaven! he did everything but throw me out bodily!" And at the remembrance of his astonishment and anger, and the bishop's pink gills, she laughed.

"I wonder, though, if it's something about Frank. I wonder if I could do Frank any good.

Well . . . I'd better see this man and find out," she reflected.

While he was waiting in a fury of impatience for her reply, Simmons thought of resigning, the doctors thought of cyanide, and his pastor thought of hell with Christian joy.

He refused aid to his pet Chinese mission, telling a horrified secretary to her teeth that the Chinese could hang themselves by their own pigtailed for all of him, and that he thought the habit of drowning girl babies a highly commendable practice; it prevented them from growing up and plaguing men.

As for Aurora, he told her to go ahead and do her worst, but for God's sake not to torment him about it. Just do what she wanted to do, and keep away from him. He'd been fed up with philanthropy!

"As for you, you'd better look around and pick yourself out some decent chap, marry him, and have babies of your own, instead of meddling with other people and their brats," he finished, acidly.

"You must have been eating something that disagreed with you," Aurora reflected aloud, staring at him. Under her steady eyes he squirmed. He couldn't roar at her, "Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples: for I am sick of love," could he? Oh, good God! didn't he have enough to bear without having Aurora Janeway come and look at him?

"I have been eating nothing . . . nothing! I am not in the least ill," he snarled at her. "Please let me alone!"

Aurora rang for Simmons.

"Mr. Courtenay seems to be in a highly nervous and excitable state," she said, a puzzled frown between her brows. "I have never seen him like this before."

"Yes, miss?" Simmons smiled bleakly. He had begun to think Mr. Jordan Courtenay possessed of a particularly malevolent and obstreperous devil. Or rather, say, of seven of them.

"You had better telephone Dr. Haygood and ask him about it," suggested Aurora. And she narrated the happenings of that morning, his rudeness to the missionary, his impatience with herself, though she didn't repeat all his remarks.

Doctor Haygood advised a certain nerve tonic, for once. He'd see Mr. Courtenay later. Meantime just give him a small dose.

Simmons saw the tiny dose of nerve tonic flung in the fireplace and had the tray shied at his head for his pains.

"Simmons!" grated his employer. "Look at me! Do I look like a man who must be bottle-fed at every whip-stitch by a puppy-faced squirt of a doctor?"

Simmons looked at him.

"No, sir," he agreed respectfully, "I shouldn't say you do, sir. I never did believe there was any-

thing the matter with you, sir. It was just an error of your mortal mind."

"Well, I'm damned!"

"Oh no, sir, not necessarily," protested Simmons. Was there regret and resignation in his dulcet tones? Picking up the tray, he left the room, leaving Mr. Courtenay's mortal mind staggering.

He had written to her: wasn't she going to answer him? Or had he sinned against her too deeply to hope for forgiveness? Was she going to ignore him altogether? He couldn't blame her.

Dolly was in no particular hurry to reply. Frank, she knew, was making progress in his work, he was happy, he was busy; she was reluctant to disturb the even tenor of Frank's present way. As for Mr. Jordan Courtenay, she thought she knew that overbearing type. At the same time, she was a little curious; what could he want to see her again for? To quarrel with her? To make fresh accusations? At any rate, one mustn't let him think one was anxious to comply with any wishes of his. In consequence, a week elapsed before he received a sheet of monogrammed note-paper stating briefly that Miss Tredegar would see Mr. Courtenay upon such an afternoon at such an hour.

Promptly upon the stroke of the hour named he was ushered into Miss Tredegar's very pretty sitting-room, a room full of flowers and chintz and books and photographs. It gave him a pang

to see all those photographs. Certain names scrawled on them staggered him; he, merely Mr. Jordan Courtenay, had been rude, had actually looked down upon this artist whom the great ones of the earth honored and applauded, were friends with . . . were *glad* to call friend! He wondered, ashamed of his own blindness. He felt abject.

She received him with demure dignity. She was cunningly and carefully dressed in one of those scarlet frocks which so subtly expressed and suited her personality. It was part of her; it manifested some hidden flame, so to say; made one think of fire. She took his breath away. He couldn't speak, for the minute; he could only stand there looking at her with eyes which startled her.

In spite of the fact that she was naughtily, impishly mischievous, she was so truly kind-hearted, so free from all real malice, so unspoiled and human that he found it easier than he had dared hope to make her understand he was abjectly sorry and apologetic for his conduct to her, and that he desired to be friends.

Dolly was too familiar with the inconsistency of men's behavior to women to be even passingly astonished at this exhibition of it. But she admired this man for his straightforwardness, and she hoped that having, somehow, seen the error of his ways toward herself, he would presently see the error of his ways toward Frank. She'd like mightily to be able to do something for Frank.

But it was significant that neither of them mentioned Frank's name in that first interview, nor did either of them mention Aurora Janeway.

They had tea together, than which nothing makes so quickly for ease and intimacy. Dolly knew how effective she was at a tea-table, her little hands fluttering like white butterflies over her priceless tea-cups. He didn't like tea, but he would have swallowed a cup of hemlock that afternoon and found it delicious. One or two younger men—he knew their fathers and uncles, confound them!—dropped in. It didn't so much as enter their heads that the handsome and distinguished gentleman at his ease in Miss Tredegar's living-room, a gentleman whom they envied for the perfection of his get-up, for his stately manners, for his grace of bearing, could be Frank Courtenay's ogre uncle, who had turned his nephew out neck and crop for his friendship with this selfsame Dolly Tredegar! Frank, indeed, had never mentioned him save with respect, even with affection; but the story had crept abroad and gained in the going.

When the younger callers had gone, Mr. Jordan Courtenay, too, rose reluctantly. He stood looking down at her and there was that in his eyes upon her that made her heart skip a beat or two. Big man and little woman shook hands. He intrigued her oddly . . . more than anybody she'd met for ages. He'd asked humbly if he might call

again. And she'd said he might, she'd be glad to see him. And she knew, with a little laugh at her own whimsies, that she *would* be glad. They parted friends.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE APOSTLE

**H**ENRY HARKNESS, born to poverty and hardship, to many makeshifts, to striving and fighting for everything he got out of life, had developed the born leader's knack of seizing and using whatever material came to his hand. He had the leader's genius for making the best of whatever he had, in whatever place, time, and circumstance. He possessed a flair for finding latent gifts in other people and calling them forth, often to the astonishment of their possessors. He seemed to know, even before they did, just what certain people could and would do in given circumstances.

He felt sure that God had sent young Francis Courtenay in a most propitious hour, for he unerringly divined Brother Francis in that gay young man; here was such a helper as he had hardly dared to hope for. He proceeded to make use of the whilom he-butterfly's unique gifts for the greater glory of God.

That same Francis Courtenay who had shuddered at a false note, to whom an ugly sight or an

evil smell were moral offenses, to whom life should be a colorful pageantry in which beauty was the end and aim of being, went down into unlovely places with Henry Harkness; he played at times upon a frightful piano to whose tinny tinklings the under dog frisked with forlorn floppings of mangy ears and singular contortions of flea-bitten ribs. He lifted the sweet, carefully cultivated barytone that had been one of his most applauded social graces, a voice that had been heard in great houses for the delight of the elect, and sang folk songs and ballads to which outcasts, the evil dwellers in life's back alleys, paid the tribute of grimy tears and of adenoidal sniffles.

The unbeautiful and damned among whom Harkness had chosen to go his ministering ways, liked, feared, and respected the theologian. He had the telling simplicity of unaffected sincerity. But they loved Francis Courtenay, whom Harkness brought with him. They'd tell you they knowed that guy Harkness was straight as a string, and he was kind, too. But that other fella that come with him, he was straight an' kind . . . an' . . . an' . . . somethin' else besides, see? Somethin' that . . . aw, hell, you couldn't jist say what it was, but you knowed you was goin' to fall for him, time you lamped him. He . . . er . . . well, he didn't ack like he was jist there to help the preachin' bird save your blasted soul. He acted like he sorta had as good a time singin' an'

playin' for you as you had listenin' in, git me? You knowed he sorta liked you an' you sure knowed you liked him. Yeah, he was a little bit o' all right, he was.

And so his name and his friendly young face became, as it were, a sort of legal tender in the depths. They adored his playing, his singing. They liked everything about Mr. Francis Courtenay, for the under dogs were discovering what Harkness had divined at sight: Brother Francis. If anything astonished young Mr. Courtenay, it wasn't so much their liking for him—he was used to being liked—as his liking for them. They didn't disgust him, didn't shock him; instead, some curious feeling in himself drew him to them. It puzzled him.

“I'd always flattered myself I was fastidious,” he told the sympathetic Harkness. “But I seem to have unsuspectedly low tastes.”

“Cheer up: the worst is yet to come,” prophesied Harkness, smiling.

Harkness wished passionately to save these people; to do that he would starve, freeze, rot in jail, die if necessary. He liked them because he saw in them sheep for his Master's fold. But Francis Courtenay liked them because they were men, singularly like everybody else when one knew them; and so long as they wore the semblance of men he was sorry for their misfortunes and he liked them. They had so little, they missed so much! Whatever small gifts of his graced their

dull days for a little while, were theirs to command. Disgust merged into compassion, compassion into affection.

And as he went with Harkness into places he had never heard of, saw things of which he hadn't dreamed, met people whose like he hadn't known existed, his old life, with its gay and dissolute companions, its carelessness, its color and beauty which never went beyond the sensuous, retreated farther and farther into the distance; was as far away from him now as the antediluvian world must have been to the pilot of the Ark, after the waters receded and the strange, new, unknown world appeared, swept clean of all he had ever known.

There was one factor in this change, quite as potent as Henry Harkness and his people, one that he hardly named even to himself: Aurora Janeway. In the world in which he moved now he saw her at intervals. They passed and repassed, and the eyes of both lingered, flashed messages of encouragement, of hope. He thought at times that he had purposely been led into that queer world to meet her. She lent its sorrows, its sordid sins, its grim tragedies an air of pity, of mercy, covering them with the mantle of her own goodness. He hadn't thought that any girl could be so impersonally sincere, so unaffectedly, simply good. And in his mind she took the place of his lost saints, the pure ideals of his childhood.

The first time he had gone out with Harkness they had met Aurora at a settlement house, and Frank had been almost pathetically glad to see her. She had been very friendly; she was as glad to see him as he was to see her. They hadn't time for more than a greeting, both being on the wing. But he told her he was coming again on the chance of meeting her.

As for her, she wished, wistfully, that he had found her as fair as, say, Dolly Tredegar; she wished that there were about her something of the glamour that clung to Dolly: she wished for the first time that she weren't so big and fair; that *she* were little and dark and lovely. For the first time she was girlishly conscious of a young man, she wished to please him, to find favor in his eyes. And his dark face was forever coming between her and all other faces; she couldn't forget it. She was conscious, too, of a resentful sense that he had been wronged. He himself didn't seem to think so, but that didn't alter the fact for her: he had been misjudged.

That she herself would probably never have met him at all except for just these circumstances, didn't enter her head, for it seemed to her inevitable that she should meet Francis Courtenay. She could no more think of living without meeting him, than of living without breathing. She didn't understand . . . yet. She thought it was her sense of justice which kept him so persistently in her

mind. She felt that she had taken his place under a misapprehension, and her conscience troubled her. She didn't know that love lay in wait for her with a hook baited with that same dark face which haunted her waking and sleeping dreams.

And she didn't know, either, that under his grave respectfulness was the wild wish to take her by the hand and never let her go away from him any more. She didn't know that he lost himself in endless reveries as to what her mouth was like when she smiled; how her gray eyes would look when they kindled; or how vehemently he wished that the beautiful mouth might smile, the gray eyes, clear and grave as the eyes of Diana, kindle to him alone.

Well, that was impossible, Frank knew. Circumstances had built an impassable barrier between them. He had nothing to offer her who had changed places with him; neither could he expect her to care for him, though he thought her too just, too fine to condemn him on hearsay. At the best, though, her opinion of him couldn't be too flattering. He was glad she knew and liked Dolly. There'd be no mistake on *that* score, at least. He made no foolish effort to forget her: he couldn't; he was never going to forget Aurora Janeway so long as he lived. In the meantime he must do what Murray did, what Henry Harkness did, what all worth-while folks do: plunge into his work, make the best of it. His work, he knew, would come

to his rescue: it would be his salvation. His secret prayer was that it might lead him toward Aurora Janeway.

Murray was a hard taskmaster, but he was a just and a generous one. He had the fine art of bringing out the best in those who helped him—and this helper had the Gleam! The younger man amused and interested him, piqued his imagination. There was something impudently unspoiled about him; he was so capable and so unafraid, he faced life with so debonair and insouciant a gesture! His companionship was dear to the elder man, and as he taught the boy he foregathered with him more and more.

That old red-brick house in which Francis had taken root and become a part delighted Murray. A lonely man, he formed the habit of spending evenings in Frank's room, where all these queer people came and talked and were at home. Harkness, so badly dressed, so frightfully in earnest, so good and so humorless . . . and so wise . . . made him chuckle. He accompanied the oddly matched pair, at times, when Frank's thrilling barytone was at the service of many singular audiences, and their reaction to the young man's friendly personality made him thoughtful, when it didn't make him grin. He wondered what the boy's erstwhile fashionable companions would have thought of that audience? And he, too, perceived what Harkness had counted upon from the

first, that there was a great deal of Brother Francis in young Frank Courtenay.

That startled and astonished Murray. He had known, of course, that there was talent, even a great deal of talent, in the careless, graceless idler who had been the Courtenay heir; talent only waiting opportunity to declare itself. He had discovered that there was patience, the capacity for taking infinite pains. And now he was discovering . . . Brother Francis! He wasn't only amused and amazed; he was delighted . . . and curious. It was so unlooked for, it was so ironical! And he wondered where it would end.

Frank was becoming used to having Murray spend the evening in his room—a big, thin, quiet man, smoking a pipe, which at times he would hold in his fingers while he listened, with quizzical eyes, to some argument Harkness was presenting, or some story the young engineer's wife was telling, or some drawling comment made by Winny Davis. Particularly some drawling comment by Winny Davis. Frank could not remember just when he began to notice the subtle change coming over Murray; he never for a moment sensed the approaching disaster—until it was upon them.

The thing came about so simply, so inevitably, grew so insidiously! There was nothing to warn one. But he found himself sitting on the edge of his bed, one night, with a leaden heart and an anxious mind, wishing to high heaven he had

never brought the folks in his rooming-house to Colin Murray's attention, never asked Murray to come, in an idle hour, to smoke and lounge in his old-fashioned room, to smile secretly and tiredly at Harkness, and meet Winny Davis Culpepper.

He remembered just how Winny Davis had looked, standing on his threshold with the inevitable doily-covered plate in her hand. A white smock covered her worn blue dress, and one noted her ankles, slim as a deer's, her pretty feet in worn slippers. Winny Davis had skin like one of her own magnolias, a boy's flat-hipped slenderness, a girl's virginal lips. Her hair was dusky brown with plenty of gold glints in it, her eyes as brown and deep as mountain pools when the sun shines upon them through the shadow of trees. Murray, taking his pipe from his lips, turned and looked at Youth incarnate standing in Frank's doorway—Youth brave and ardent, and very sweet. So fate in the slim shape of Winny Davis Culpepper came upon him.

Murray didn't mean to fall in love with Winny Davis. He thought her a darling kid, a courageous, darling kid, struggling against odds. She was going to be an interior decorator, and that amused him; and when Frank explained that there was astonishingly good stuff there, it interested him. He felt for her, at first, something like the tender delight of one to whose hand a wild, bright bird has fluttered, a feeling half of fear lest it take

fright and fly away again, and of wonder and pleasure at the creature's innocent beauty. He adored her slow soft voice, her slurred r's, the graceful turn of her head, the light on her brown hair as though it had been sprinkled with gold-dust. He was moved by the unselfish courage with which she faced life, at the little that satisfied her. A girl-kid, evidently from a sheltered home. Good Lord! a couple of his wife's extravagant frocks, a few of her fallals, would mean something like a year's support to this lovely child!

And when the lovely child learned to look up, presently, with an eager and innocent pleasure at his coming, and exclaim:

“Why, good evening, Mr. Murray, I'm mighty glad to see *you*,” Mr. Murray's heart lilted and danced like an Irish child.

One evening he found himself fighting a mad desire to pick up Winny Davis in his arms, put that darling brown head of hers on his shoulder, turn her creamy young face up with a tender hand, and kiss her, and kiss her, and kiss her . . .

Murray was startled almost out of his wits. The thing had come upon him so stealthily that he hadn't even sensed the shadow of its approach; it was the proverbial bolt out of the blue, or as if, say, a tiger had pounced out of a bush by the highroad. He had thought himself immune. With snarling old Socrates he had boasted that he was free from passion, that for him the chain of love

was broken. He forgot that Socrates was eighty and ugly when he made that impudent boast, and that he himself was far from being either.

Colin Murray had the power to intrigue and enchant Youth, when he chose, and he chose now with a fierce intensity of passion hidden under a cool and pleasant friendliness. His wife meant nothing, and less than nothing to him. He had had for her a boy's infatuation with a girl's prettiness. He had married her for her skin, so to say: well, he reflected, she had skinned him! He meant nothing to her, except as a convenient check-book. Because of her, he had hated women—unfair players who cheated whenever they could, and squealed and reneged. Creatures without any sense of honor or justice; indeed, without any sense of any kind whatsoever. Swindlers of men, out for everything they could get. Shirkers always. No, he didn't like women. His wife had taught him that much.

Until Winny Davis appeared on the scene. After the first staggering astonishment, when he had time to catch his breath, he admitted that he loved Winny Davis. He wanted Winny Davis, and he meant to have her if he could get her. Harkness? For *her*? He eliminated Harkness. Right? Wrong? A man's a man, he lives but once, and he can't forego everything, can he? And oh, good God! he loved her! Life had swindled him, and he'd been paying the price for years . . . until

Winnie Davis came. But was he to sit down with folded hands forever, and die without ever having lived?

He helped her with her drawings, teaching her more in half an afternoon than her regular teacher could teach her in half a month. The quality of her work, her quickness delighted him. He might have known his girl would be like that! She wished she might furnish some of the beautiful houses he built? Well, by God, she should! They'd work together, he and she. She was all his dreams-come-true. How ardent she was, how vivid, how vital! There was, he divined, a depth of passion in her, untouched, undreamed of. Oh, what couldn't Winnie Davis be when she loved? Give her up? Not for anything and everything on earth!

She had said, once, that she liked violets; the paths of the garden at home were bordered with violets. Thereafter he brought her violets, great lavish blobs of purple sweetness to bury her straight little nose in, and be wet-eyed over because they were so reminiscent of the garden down South, and of moonlight nights and mocking-birds singing. When the young girl thanked him, mutely, with her wet eyes that made him think of pansies in the dew, Murray cursed his gods even while he blessed them.

For all her bravery, Winnie Davis wasn't anything but a very lonesome girl in a very big city;

there were nights when she cried herself to sleep, missing her own folks so much. He seemed to know that, and there were evenings when he walked out with her and drew from her all the simple details of the loved, unforgotten home, until she was comforted by just talking about it to her sympathetic listener.

He knew that quiet household in all its details and circumstances—the old grandfather who had been one of Lee's boy captains; the thin, tall aunts, pleasant old ladies who were wise and at the same time simple; the adored father, gone in his prime; the gentle grandmother, who had been blind for some years before she went to the Country where one sees and is seen in the light that never yet; the gallant mother; the fine shabby house drowsing in its overgrown garden; and the pretty only girl who was all that was left of the once proud line. He knew the kindly negroes, the horses, the dogs, the birds, the tame squirrel Jacky that ran up your shoulder and hid nuts in your hair. He listened with so much interest, he laughed just when he should laugh, was silent when he should be silent, was so understanding and sympathetic!

He was so big, so kind, so sure, like a friendly hand to hold fast to when one was a little doubtful of one's foothold. She was glad to talk with Colin Murray about home. He always understood. That's what touched her heart.

And he never talked about himself, although he

was a great architect, an architect whose fame was steadily mounting. It lent a cachet to buildings if they could be advertised "Designed by Murray." Sometimes, almost shyly, he would hand you sketches, certain details of some building he had made or was going to make, and let you study them, sitting at Frank Courtenay's table. And then he'd talk with you. Or if the sketch was of a house, a home, he'd tell you to go ahead and show him how you'd furnish it. He'd listen critically to what you had to say, or maybe he'd pore over the drawings you brought him later. Sometimes, when you'd exclaim with delight over some lovely unexpected touch, maybe a wrought-iron balcony or a grille, because you loved wrought-iron, or maybe when you were silent, with a tight throat, because the fine harmony and strength of something he was doing had squeezed your heart, he'd look at you across the table, with those drawings spread out before you, and you knew he understood exactly how you felt.

"You like it, Winny Davis?"

You said:

"It is beautiful and strong. Beautiful and strong things always give one a feeling of terror as well as delight. I can't put the feeling into words . . ." You fell silent.

He said, after a while:

"Somewhat like a partly opened gate, with light streaming through? And something in you,

half knowing, half guessing what's beyond? Awe and glory that almost pull your heart out of your breast? And after that . . . nothing you can ever do quite satisfying you, because it always falls short of the thing you mean?"

How could he know just what and how you felt? You'd say, breathlessly:

"Yes, oh yes! But . . . I reckon that gate was wider open for you than for most of us. I reckon you've seen more light."

"I have paid the price for what I have learned, Winny Davis. May God keep you from ever paying that price!" A look would come into his clever face, making it older, sadder, more bitter. Winny Davis would feel the impulse to run to him with outspread arms, as if to make her young body a shield between him and whatever it was that hurt him.

One night, when he had brought some marvelous drawings of the capitol building he was planning for a Western city, Winny Davis looked up humbly.

"You said once that you'd paid the price for what you've learned, Mr. Murray. I'm sorry if it hurt you. But I don't think I'd mind paying any price if I could get out of it what you've got."

She was unusually pretty that night, but paler and a little thinner. Her eyes looked larger. Flora was in Europe just then, dawdling from place to place. Winny Davis was here, overworked,

maybe under-nourished; in shabby clothes, though they were exquisitely neat. Murray's eyes upon her were tortured.

"Would you be willing to pay in terms of loneliness? Always, Winny Davis?"

"I am very often lonely, Mr. Murray. Especially at night," she said simply.

"And frustration?" he went on somberly.

"Frustration? You? What more do you want?"

"That which maybe I can't get. Would you be willing to give up everything . . . for achievement?"

Visions of the shabby home, of those dear people who had sacrificed so much that she might come here and have her chance, crowded upon her. Achievement? What wouldn't she sacrifice to make that dream come true for their sakes! She said steadily, a light coming to her eyes, her chin up:

"I'd be willing to give up 'most everything in this world, if I could make myself come true! For my people!"

He said, after a while:

"I've helped you a little bit, haven't I?"

"You've been more to me than anybody else in the world!" she replied impetuously. "You've held me to my work when I was tuckered out and discouraged. Oh, Mr. Murray!" Tears rushed to her eyes. "You've made the future look mighty bright to me, promising that some day I might

be able to work for you. Don't you know I'd be *made* if I could do that?"

He sat silent for a while. "You say you'd be willing to give up 'most everything in the world just to make yourself come true. Aside from my value as a possible employer, would you be willing to give up . . . *me?*"

Startled, of a sudden terror-stricken, she turned very pale. Give up the most wonderful companionship she had ever known? Take him away from her, and what would be left? Give up Colin Murray? Could she? Would she? Never to see him any more, this most understanding friend? Why, it was just knowing him, she realized, that made the world right! She was shaken to the soul, filled with a pain so new and keen that it terrified her. She didn't, she couldn't say a word. She could only stare at him with her honest young eyes. Murray saw her heart in her eyes, and again he cursed his gods, even while he blessed them.

He knew he was never going to let her go. He knew that he could make her care. Deliberately he set himself to make Winny Davis care.

And then Francis Courtenay began to wake up. It had surprised and flattered him of late to have work to which Murray attached great importance left more and more in his hands. It kept his nose to the grindstone; it absorbed him body and soul; it made him keep ungodly hours; but it was invaluable training, it was a reward for which he

hadn't hoped. It put him upon his mettle, filled him with a passion of gratitude to Murray, that generous friend who was giving him, so soon, such a chance. His big chance to prove himself. And he buckled down to his work with fixed determination. He had to prove to Murray that his trust and faith were well founded. They were.

He was chagrined and astonished when he discovered that it really wasn't of him that Murray was thinking, but of Winny Davis Culpepper. Having so able a lieutenant on the field gave Murray more time. He knew his work was safe in Frank's hands, he knew that the younger man, given the chance, would rise to it. Frank was grateful to him for the trust. But . . . there was Winny Davis to think of.

Murray was a good man; Frank knew that. But he was a desperate man, a swindled man, his life empty. He was very much in love with Winny Davis, and he was unable to renounce his one happiness, the companionship of his beloved. Nor did Frank blame him. Winny Davis, when he began to reflect, seemed made for Murray.

And you couldn't blame Winny Davis, either. Suppose you were lovely and sweet and twenty, transported from Alabama to a New York lodging-house; and you studied art at Cooper Union, at such times as you weren't washing your stockings in a hand-basin in your room or frying a sausage over your alcohol burner; and there

wasn't enough money; and you were only one among many art students; and the future didn't seem so rose-colored. Would the fact that the best of good divinity students loved you so much, that because you were so frightfully lonely you had felt grateful, and because you were frightfully ignorant you had mistaken your gratitude for love, keep you from really and with all your heart falling in love with a man like Colin Murray?

No. It would happen to you exactly as it happened to Winny Davis. You'd be astonished, at first, that he—a man like him!—should notice you and your little work at all. You'd be glad and grateful that he liked it, wild with delight that he promised to give you a chance, later, to work with him. Think of "doing" houses for Colin Murray! Oh, the miracle of it! And you'd work harder, harder, harder!

And you'd be a-thrill to your finger-tips with quivering delight when you knew him better, when you had tasted the wonder of the perfect companionship he gave you. Everything and everybody would be delightful. You'd laugh like an April brook, cry like an April rain, and your voice would deepen and flute and mellow like a thrush's, and your eyes would be as summer stars, and your youth would be as a rose with the bright dew of your heart fresh upon it, and the morning gold of your life would be as sunshine upon your head. Winny Davis didn't know as yet that she

loved Murray. But she had learned that she didn't love Harkness—not as Harkness loved her.

Murray was torn between contending forces. Suppose he gave up Winny Davis, stepped aside and let her go? Suppose he made her know her own heart, made her know what they two were to each other, claimed her for love's own sake? But that would be to bring upon himself a desolation not to be endured; and this would be to invite shipwreck in which they might both perish.

He went over and over the possibilities. Divorce his wife? On what grounds? He had no legal grounds. She stayed in his house, when she was in America. She bore his name, he paid her bills. She occupied her own rooms, coming and going as pleased her. He had never objected; had let her do as she chose, so long as she didn't bother him, didn't interfere with his work. She never did interfere with his work. It didn't interest her in the least, except for the income it meant.

Suppose he should ask Flora to grant him a divorce, buy her off? She had had innocuous flirtations, many of them; once or twice some unlucky man had been madly in love with her, taken by her exquisite prettiness. But she had been amused by the flirtatious, bored by the passionate. There had never been a breath against her; she wasn't human enough. If he asked her for a divorce, she'd most likely refuse. Why should she divorce him? She was satisfied with things as they were.

She had no responsibilities, an excellent social position, she was well provided for. Life was easy to Flora Murray, as it is often to the selfish, the cold-hearted, the ungenerous.

He couldn't go to his peers and say: "This woman is a cheat. She shirks every duty, she takes all, she gives nothing. She has given me no child; she is too coldly selfish even to sin humanly. Wherefore I pray you to release me from the bonds that bind me to her." All he could do was to suffer, to devour his own heart, gnaw the wrist of desire with the teeth of despair.

He would have neglected his work disastrously save for Frank Courtenay, who, so to say, held up his hands. Once privy to the real state of affairs, Frank stepped into the breach, bringing all his tact and skill and patience into play, forcing Murray to keep the pace.

The younger man was poignantly troubled. A little more than a year since and he would have raised the eyebrow of indifference at so commonplace a situation; he might even have been faintly amused. For Frank's morality had been, say, politeness, a graceful gesture, a certain fastidiousness of temperament. To him the unpardonable sin had been crudeness. The unlovely was the immoral. One might do as one pleased so long as one behaved like a gentleman. One won and lost without noise, without futile gestures.

But Henry Harkness had given him another

point of view. Or, rather, Harkness, by being himself, had torn away all the tinsel, all the pretty painted screens, and forced him to face realities, truths, the stern terrible face of life itself. Harkness had shown him the grim fundamentals; also he had shown him the beautiful eternal verities: truth, religion, pity, purity, service, duty. So Francis didn't blame Murray, whom he understood and pitied. He didn't blame Winny Davis; how could she help herself? But he agonized and sweated over Harkness, whom he loved as the princely Jonathan loved the stronger David.

Harkness had been grateful to Murray for brightening the young girl's rather drab and dreary life, for the help he was to her, for the interest he took in her, for the promise of great things to come. The student understood that Winny Davis loved things of which he himself had but scant knowledge, sometimes knew nothing whatever about, because they were things outside his poorer life. So when Murray appeared with tickets for this or that exhibit which meant much to the girl, Harkness would instantly urge her to go, was anxious for her to go, and would remind her, smiling, that he hadn't time, or maybe money; and very often he hadn't even the faintest interest in the thing! He couldn't so much as understand these things! He didn't care for art; mostly, he admitted, the sight of gods and goddesses and nymphs and such like undraped gentry only fired

him with the desire to take them to the nearest second-hand shop and buy them some clothes. No, he couldn't take much interest in the things Winny Davis and Murray seemed to adore; he was too much interested in living people, people who needed such commonplace things as food and shelter and help. He laughed a little ruefully at his own artistic lacks.

At first the girl had hung back, hesitant. She knew he had counted on an hour or two with her that evening. But Harkness himself had gently forced her to go; why, he'd heard her say, herself, that she'd give anything to see that exhibit . . . or maybe that show, or whatever it was. And since Mr. Murray had been so kind . . . Winny Davis went, and enjoyed every wonderful minute of it, the companionship of Murray making those minutes pure gold.

Later she took it for granted that Harkness wasn't coming, and forbore to ask him, or to expect him to be interested. He didn't care for that sort of thing, it would bore him to death even to discuss it. In turn, she and Murray ceased to accompany Harkness. *His* exhibits were not at all pleasing: they were smeared and dull with dirt, or they were too much a-glitter with meretricious lights. They distressed the eye and offended the nose.

Under the magic touch of love, Winny Davis grew softer and gentler and lovelier, so that Mur-

ray was altogether mad, and Harkness wondered, reverently, how God had allowed one of His angels to care for his unworthy, humdrum, poverty-stricken self. It was so sweet a miracle! How was he ever to make himself worthy of it?

Frank Courtenay was cold with apprehension. He watched the progress of it, dreading the breakers just out of sight, hearing their nearing, ominous murmur. He saw Murray growing thinner and grayer, and, away from Winny Davis, morose and resentful. Murray would sit hunched up beside his desk, lips straight, eyes narrowed, and brood. He was cynical and bitter over life, over work, over everything, in fact, but Winny Davis.

Frank worked as he had never dreamed himself capable of working. What terrors he felt when he was confronted by sudden, unexpected necessities for decision, for instant action, he hid under a smiling calm face. He dug and sweated, and for the time stood behind Murray and ran his great business for him. He discovered unguessed-of capacities in himself: he had organizing power, he could command, he had executive ability. He could hold down his job.

The wings of the he-butterfly were expanding, growing into eagle plumage; he was taking to the heights, facing the sun.

## CHAPTER XIII

### BROTHER FRANCIS

**F**RANK had known for several weeks that Murray had about come to the end of his tether, and that, at the least excuse, he would take the bit between his teeth and bolt. Frank felt that this must be forestalled; he knew he could, at a pinch, knock Murray down and sit on him; he could lock him up, even, if it came to that. But how was he going to deal with Winny Davis? He couldn't knock Winny Davis down or lock her up, much as he might have wished to do so for her own good. What, then, of Winny Davis? What did she mean to do? She cared, he was sure, as passionately for Murray now as Murray cared for her. Besides, the thing involved Henry Harkness. How to act, so delicately as not to hurt Harkness, anger Winny Davis, estrange Murray? Good Lord, how?

He might have told himself that it was none of his business, and let it go, let come what might come. He had nothing to do with it; however bad and sad and mad it might become, it couldn't interfere with or injure Francis Courtenay. But . . .

these people were his friends, all of them, dear and near to him. It was very much his business. He must do what he could for them. And while he wrestled with the growing problem, racking his brains for some solution which would help them without giving himself the appearance of a meddler, Murray placed his hand on Frank's shoulder one morning and told him in the most offhand manner:

“Frank, I'm going to trust you to look after things for a while by yourself. I'm going to run off to a little place I know, and rest. Fact is, I'm just about all in. I've got to lay up a bit, and I'm going to do it now, before I go smash.”

He looked as though he might go smash at any minute. He was hollow-eyed from lack of sleep, and his hands trembled, his face was whity-gray. Frank thought he had never seen any one so nervous. If ever a man needed pause for rest, for quiet, Murray needed it then.

Frank didn't remind his chief that he had been running things by himself for some time. He merely said he thought Murray could trust him to do his best. And that he meant to stand guard and see that for at least a month or two no one, for anything, could or should interrupt the rest that Murray needed and was going to get. Just drop everything, chief, and fly!

Secretly the young man drew a long breath of relief. Here was the solution of the problem, the

elimination of Murray from the scene, at least for a while. A month or two in the North Woods would pull Murray through the crisis, if anything could; it would give him time and opportunity to get his bearings, to fight things out. He thought sympathetically that Murray was very wise to run away while there was yet time.

And in the meantime, he reflected, he and Henry Harkness—for he meant to use Harkness—would see to it that things weren't too hard for Winny Davis. They'd stand by, be ever at her beck and call. Whatever he could do to entertain and amuse Winny Davis, to keep her from brooding or being unhappy, Frank meant to do. And—please the good Lord—everything would come out all right in the end!

He might have trusted Colin Murray to do the right thing. Running away from the danger zone when he could no longer trust himself—bless him! And that poor pretty kid . . . It was hard. Damnably hard. But he meant to help Murray all he could. If Murray had to flee, he could at least do so with a mind satisfied, so far as his business affairs were concerned. Frank meant to attend most scrupulously to every detail, to see that nothing worried him. Murray could trust him.

The two rushed through what necessary personal details Murray had to attend to. With a long hand-clasp Murray was gone. At the door he suddenly turned.

“Frank, you’re really a friend of mine, aren’t you?” he asked unexpectedly.

“I think so, chief,” said Frank.

“Don’t forget it,” said Murray, earnestly, and closed the door after him.

Frank sighed with relief to have the offices to himself. Murray had been nothing but a great worry to him of late. He could work better, now that he knew Murray was taking that rest, out of the danger zone. And he would have no trouble with the other members of the staff; they were a well-trained lot and now they were all going to dig in. Everything was going to be all right. He whistled as he worked.

That night he took Winny Davis to a show, and afterward they had a merry little spread in his room, at which Harkness and the young engineer and his wife from upstairs joined them. Everybody talked freely—Harkness of some work he was planning among newly arrived foreigners, the engineer of a trip on which his company was sending him, Winny Davis of some new apartments Murray wished her to try her hand at decorating. The apartments were for exceedingly wealthy people, and she was to give herself a free hand.

“I’m leaving room everywhere for old and beautiful things. But I shan’t have period stuff, a different period for every room. I think it’s horrid to live in half a dozen centuries under one modern

roof. It . . . it seems to me as if you hadn't got a proper sense of proportion, when you do that," she said naively. "If I ever have a house of my own, I'll live in the best of my own century in that house. I won't have fourteenth-century Spanish and fifteenth-century French and sixteenth-century English and seventeenth-century Italian and eighteenth-century American, all rubbing elbows. I don't want to live in a museum. I want to live in a most beautiful my-own-century home, with, of course, some beautiful things from the past to accentuate the comfort and convenience of the present. Mr. Murray told me to go ahead and show him what I could do, and I'm trying to."

They exclaimed over the water-colors she showed them. She had made the most of her own time, subtly blending the best of the new with just enough of the old to strike the right note. But she hadn't let the old dominate. The result was a truly beautiful, astonishingly graceful American home. Frank expressed his approval. What a help-mate for Murray she could be! And what a ghastly shame she couldn't be! But they didn't talk much about Murray. And presently Winny Davis gathered all her papers together, said she was sleepy, and left. She had been in excellent spirits all evening, and that reassured Frank. She was going to breast this thing gallantly, he reflected, like the game little thoroughbred she was. No whining, no noise.

And he thought, too, that he had never seen her look prettier. It was as if she had summoned all her youthful beauty to her aid, proudly, for a mask to hide whatever troublesome emotions she might have to endure. No one could look at Winny Davis and say she was unhappy! Indeed, she was like a rose. By contrast Harkness was plainer, shabbier, more gaunt and ungainly than ever. Nevertheless Mr. Francis Courtenay went to bed that night with a more relieved mind than had been his for some time.

"It's going to be all right. I was a fool for having been afraid for either of them," he told Sweet Percival, who slept beside his bed—and sometimes on it. The bull-pup leaned his head on his master's knee and looked at him wistfully with his brown eyes.

"And as a reward, you and I'll have a little holiday on our own, S. P., by and by when all is serene again," Frank promised him. "Get on in, puppy. You aren't too proud to share my humble couch, are you?"

The pup climbed in joyfully. Presently both slept.

A day or two later a note from Miss Dolly Tredegar, gently reproaching him for neglecting old friends, was laid upon his desk. He brightened. He had been rather overdoing things of late, and he hadn't had time for weeks on end to see Dolly; his mornings, and such of his evenings as

he could spare had been claimed by Murray's business and by his devotion to Winny Davis. But the work was progressing to his satisfaction, and Winny Davis seemed quite her old, normal, happy self. He could afford to relax a little, he considered. Dolly was a good little scout, and a friendly chat with her was just what he needed. He telephoned her and she promptly insisted that he must lunch with her. Then he remembered that he had a half-way engagement with Harkness, to whom he telephoned, explaining that he wouldn't be able to keep it until later: he was lunching to-day with Miss Tredegar.

Dolly was unfeignedly glad to see him. She gave him a perfect little lunch, in her own apartment, an honor Dolly didn't vouchsafe to many men. She plied him with those subtle little attentions with which women ensnare men, all the while she exercised her own fine art of inducing him to talk about himself. She was far too clever not to notice the fine reticence with which he evaded all personalities, while still retaining the most charming frankness. And he gave the impression of quiet strength, of sweetness.

Frank was growing up with a vengeance, she thought. His mouth was still boyish, still laughing, it still curled at the corners; but the eyes were deeper, more reflective and penetrating. He had been seeing and feeling many phases of life; he had looked into the eyes of Cain, of Lazarus, of

the Prodigal Son, since Henry Harkness had taken him into the underworld and showed him the Lost Brothers. Having nothing else to give them, he was being taught to give himself, and to be very tender in the giving. So that when he heard them blamed and reproved now, he could say to himself, with that other Francis:

“After a while there won’t be anybody but God and me left to love poor sinners.”

Dolly divined this deeper note and it touched her. She only partly understood, for she had never stood in need of compassion. There had been very little struggle for her; she had climbed the heights easily and with untired young feet. She liked Frank better than she had ever liked him, but he perplexed her. She asked, to hide her astonishment:

“Frank, why didn’t you tell me that your uncle had really quarreled with you about *me*?”

“You were,” he conceded smilingly, “merely a contributing cause, my dear. The break was sure to come, sooner or later. You had nothing to do with his real dissatisfaction. You don’t need to bother your pretty head about it, Dolly.”

“But he did quarrel with you about me, didn’t he?”

“Yes. He thought you were a sign and a symbol. But his true ground of complaint lay in my being what I—” he hesitated a second, and finished, gallantly—“was.”

“And what were you?” she probed.

“Exactly what he said I was,” said Frank, laughing. “But,” he added, “I’ve since got an honest-to-God, sweat-of-my-brow job. I owe Uncle Jord a great deal for pitchforking me into the proletariat. Sort of

“Something attempted, something done  
Has earned a night’s repose.

You see?”

“I see,” she concurred shrewdly. Frank, as she had told Jordan Courtenay tartly, had fought not for *her* but for his own freedom, the right to call his soul his soul. To-day she realized that he had won it. For a while both of them were silent.

“Dolly,” he asked her presently, “if you were to see one of the best and nicest girls in the world walking about on the edge of things, what would you do?”

“I see that every day. Everybody with eyes has been seeing that every day since the beginning of time,” said Dolly, promptly.

“But what does one do?”

“It all depends on whether or not they’ve made up their minds to tumble in.”

“But if they don’t know? If they don’t realize they’re on the edge?”

“Is it so wise to enlighten them, Frank?” she wondered in her turn. “Mayn’t they need the experience?”

"But this is a nice girl, I tell you!" he protested.

"Nice girls need experience, too, Frank, to round them out."

"This is not answering my question: what must one do? What ought one do?"

"Dear Brother Francis, can any one do anything for people until they've discovered they're fools? And then, of course, it's what other fools call too late!"

He blanched. Dolly regarded him with quick interest.

"Are you," she inquired, "by any means . . . involved? I hate to believe that: it doesn't jibe. Or are you merely the innocent bystander?"

"Bystander," he explained briefly.

"Then," said Dolly, not attempting to hide the relief she felt, "you move on, young man. Put a large section of our country between you and that dangerous young-person-playing-on-the-edge. Or if you can't get out, try to get yourself a cyclone-cellar in the shape of a law-proof alibi."

"But that's just what I can't do," he explained. "It wouldn't be necessary, in any event." He looked so acutely distressed that she said impatiently:

"Frank, listen to me: If you try to make it plain to a woman that you suspect she's going to make a fool of herself, and she's *not* a fool in the way you think she is, she'll have it in for you

to her dying day for misunderstanding her. And if she *is* a fool in the way you think, she'll never forgive you for understanding her. And the man in the case will impute to you . . . well, personal motives. Break all the commandments, if you must; but keep holy the Eleventh . . . if you can. Now, do you see?"

Frank saw, unwillingly. So unwillingly that Dolly was astonished.

"You display unwonted feeling," she commented.

"I do. I happen to love the other man," he said sorrowfully. "I never loved any other man quite so much. And any way I figure it, he's going to be hurt pretty badly."

"Does your girl by any manner of mercy happen to know Miss Aurora Janeway?" asked Dolly, eagerly. "If she does, there's your life-line! Aurora Janeway is the only woman I've ever known that other women were willing . . . and glad . . . to have take a hand in their affairs. She can come in without meddling . . . like . . . well, like a kindly, beautiful Providence. I'm crazy over Miss Janeway, Frank."

"I don't doubt it. I admire her very much, myself. But, you see, it just happens that my little friend doesn't know her. And . . . well, one couldn't call in a stranger . . . not even such a one as Miss Janeway."

"Yet she could straighten things out. She's like

that. She has certainly worked wonders with your uncle, Frank. She made him make himself over. The result is a bit miraculous." Dolly stopped and regarded Frank curiously, looking at him with an odd sidewise intensity. "And I don't think he thanks her. In fact, I think he chafes on the bit and rears and paws the air." She added, "Yet, do you know, Frank, I really *like* your uncle?"

"You have met him?" Frank looked startled, astonished.

"Oh, yes. I went to the house to see Miss Jane-way one morning, and he and I had a head-on collision. He wasn't at all glad to see me, and he told me so. Very frankly! When he discovered my identity, he went up in the air. In fact, he made remarks—not at all complimentary remarks! My Heavens, you should have heard him!"

Frank reddened painfully.

"Oh, don't look so ashamed of him!" said she, laughing. "He was ashamed enough for himself, afterward. He came and apologized. We're quite good friends," she finished, with a fluttering of the eyelids.

"Holy cats!" gasped Frank, recalling diatribes against shameless dancing-women. He grinned. "You're a witch, Dolly! A sorceress, an enchantress! They'd have burned you, a little while back."

"Oh no I'm not. One doesn't have to be any-

thing more than just a woman," purred the little dancer. "Frank, do you know what I'm wondering? I'm wondering if your rusty, raw-boned Westerner in the slop-shop clothes—why will Virtue dress so abominably?—can be the man you're so troubled about. I'm wondering what in the name of wonder could have induced that gangling saint to misbehave. *Did* he misbehave, Frank? You never can tell, can you?"

Frank's eyebrows came together. He looked at her with something like anger.

"Harkness? *Harkness* misbehave? He couldn't. He wouldn't know how. It's not in his nature to think evil, much less do it. Harkness," said Frank, slowly, with finality, "is really and truly one of the good God's anointed and appointed servants. Harkness is a saint."

Cuddled in her cushions, her cigarette between her fingers, Dolly threw back her head and laughed aloud.

"You!" she laughed. "You! Oh, he-butterfly! . . . All right, Saint Francis of New York! Mr. Harkness is a saint. And naturally there's a good-looking, healthy, well-dressed sinner that the girl prefers? Not so long since, I'd have thought the sinner in the case must be yourself. Ah, my poor friend, you make me feel sad! You were such a dear, delightful sinner, Frank!"

The dear, delightful sinner didn't smile. His

mouth took on sternness, those changed, wise eyes deepened; there was something of the priest in their look.

"I was, as you called me, as my uncle called me, a he-butterfly. He was quite just in his estimate of me," he said simply.

Dolly stared at him, and her penciled brows met over her little nose.

"Frank," she cried, in an alarmed and moved voice, "Frank, for mercy's sake remove yourself from the bad influence of the good! That man Harkness is ruining your character. You're losing your sense of humor!"

"That man Harkness is saving my soul," said Frank, quietly.

Dolly could hardly believe her ears. She flung her cigarette away, sat erect, and regarded him with widening eyes.

"This is terrible! perfectly terrible!" she exclaimed. "Gracious powers! why doesn't somebody do something? You must be stopped!"

"Stop having my soul saved?" asked Frank, smiling.

"Somebody must do something!" went on Dolly, excitedly. "Why doesn't Colin Murray do something? Surely he must have some influence over you! Surely you'll listen to Colin Murray! Why does he allow you to be hypnotized by a gangling wretch who wears atrocious clothes and bought ties and calls a lady 'marm'? Undoubtedly,

you are mad! The next thing you'll be thumping a tambourine, jumping up and down yelling, 'Gee-ell-oh-arr-y, Glory' on street corners! Does Mr. Murray dream how far you're gone?"

Frank's face at that expressed so curious an emotion that of a sudden Dolly, watching him intently, started, and puckered her lips into a soundless whistle of astonishment. With one of those terrifying flashes of woman-intuition, she pounced upon the truth.

"Frank! The man is Murray? And the girl is the girl your gosling gospeler is engaged to, the girl he said resembles me?"

"Why," faltered Frank, taken aback, "why . . . I may be mistaken. I don't really *know*, you know. I . . ."

"No. You're not mistaken," said Dolly, soberly. "It's too sad and horrid not to be true," and she shook her head. "It was inevitable," she decided presently. "If Murray wants that girl hard enough, he'll take her. And I think he is going to want her hard enough. I've met his wife! You've met Mrs. Murray, too, and you know what she is—a selfish, useless little fool. I'm sorry for Murray. I'm sorry for the girl. I'm sorrier for your preacher, if he loves her."

"Oh, Henry loves her," said Frank, gloomily. "I'm sorry for them all, Dolly. And I wish to God I knew what to do!"

"Tell me all the details," said Dolly.

“Well, Murray has made one good move—to get away for a while,” she consoled, when Frank had told her what he could. “Let’s pray his good resolutions and his common sense hold.”

Her neat maid appeared with the intelligence that somebody was at the telephone, asking for Mr. Francis Courtenay.

“This is Harkness,” said a flat voice over the wire. “Thank God I knew where to find you, Frank! Can you come to me? And are you ready to start at once on a short journey?”

“Yes, I’ll come at once, Henry. Can you tell me over the ’phone what the trouble is? Not an accident to . . . to . . . Winny Davis, is it?” The fear in his heart grew and grew.

“Not exactly. But it concerns her. Oh, Frank, don’t talk: come, come at once!” There was a note of agony in that entreaty.

“All right. Throw a few things into my suitcase for me and bring it along with you to save time. I have my check-book with me. Where shall we meet?”

Harkness named the station, and the receiver clicked.

“You must pardon me for having to rush off and leave you so unceremoniously,” Frank told Dolly. His troubled face said more than words could have done.

“Wasn’t that your friend Harkness?” she asked.

He nodded, and she said, with her hand on his arm:

“Frank, when a man and a woman find each other irresistible, the only thing a sensible friend can do is to stand by until they shall have bumped their heads so hard on the stone wall of reality that it brings them to reason. Just stand by: they’re going to need you. But if there is anything under the sun that I can do, you’ll let me help you, won’t you? You promise? I’d do ’most anything in the world for you, Brother Francis.”

He thanked her, refused her proffered car, and ran for the nearest subway, which wasn’t subject to traffic jams or likely to be held up for maddening and interminable minutes by the imperious paw of a monolithic policeman.

He was in such a raging hurry that he didn’t see the face of all faces, watching him from a passing car. She sighed, drooped her golden head, gripped her hands in her lap, and sank back upon her cushions. She had seen him coming out of Dolly Tredegar’s apartment-house. If Aurora Janeway ever experienced a pang of jealousy, she felt it then. She recalled the gossip she had heard, that the quarrel between Frank and his uncle had been about Dolly. She recalled the horrible contretemps of Dolly’s first call upon her—how Mr. Courtenay had blazed out upon the little dancer, and how distressed the bishop had been, how indignant Mary Mack was.

No wonder Frank loved little, glamorous, loyal, beautiful Dolly Tredegar! Aurora sighed. No wonder, too, that the dancer clung to that beautiful young man! For of course she loved him. How could she help loving him? How could anybody fail to love him? Aurora sighed some more. Then she straightened her shoulders. Well . . . for her there was work!

And neither she nor Frank saw the tall, iron-gray gentleman who, a few minutes later, alighted from his limousine and, with an eagerness that made him boyishly brisk and put color into his cheek and fire into his eyes, had himself taken up to Miss Tredegar's apartment. He was welcomed by the little dancer with the easy familiarity of established friendship. He offered flowers, candy, a book. And one wonders what Frank or Aurora would have thought could they have seen him take a case from his pocket, snap it open, and with his own hands fasten around Dolly Tredegar's perfect throat the finest string of the old Courtenay pearls.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MADNESS

**H**ARKNESS had been receiving anonymous letters for some time, he explained. They puzzled him, for, anonymous though they were, they seemed rather friendly warnings than slander. There was no venom in them. They besought him to open his eyes and see what was going on under his nose, to avert trouble.

After the first two or three, he thought that possibly the warning referred to Frank's friendship for Winny Davis, and that made Henry laugh. Fancy being warned against Frank and Winny Davis! He paid no attention to the letters, despising their unknown writer for an idiot. Some day he'd tell Frank about them, maybe. If anything in the ridiculous business could hurt Harkness, it was that even a sender of anonymous letters could be evil-hearted enough to misinterpret anything so pure as Frank's sincere liking for Winny Davis. Harkness meant never to let the young girl know anything about it.

Evidently the writer of the letters must have gaged his mind and divined what he thought, for

he received another begging him to "wake up, for Heaven's sake, if you would avert disaster! You are evidently suspecting the wrong man."

Whoever the silly writer might be, he or she was evidently as persistent as a stinging fly, he thought disgustedly. If ever that sender of unsigned warnings came within reach of his hand . . . ! Harkness felt the hard muscles on an arm corded and made strong by farm labor. He was even stronger than he looked, as some had found out to their cost.

"If it was a man, and I had got him, I meant to take him across my knee and give him the licking of his life with my old razor-strop, I didn't care who he was or how big he might be," he said simply.

He went about his business free from worry, for it had never once occurred to him that the man meant might be Murray. He hadn't so much as thought of Murray. Why, Murray was a married man! That of course let him out. Harkness, one sees, was an old-fashioned person with an old-fashioned code. Such persons still exist.

"I was raised by simple people, farmer folks," he explained seriously. "They've got a sort of code, when it comes down to marriage. They think the marriage tie is sacred. Binding. With people like mine, plain people, God-fearing, church-going people, when a man stands up and marries a woman, vowing before God and man to cherish

and protect her until death does them part, he usually means what he says. He sticks to his bargain so long as it is humanly possible. I know that our sort of people," he smiled twistedly, "are quite laughable. The booberie . . . isn't that what we're called? Hicks. Hayseeds. But . . . we have some sense as to the value of oaths, of vows. We keep them.

"When a man makes a mess of his marriage, when his wife isn't what he thought she was, when it isn't humanly possible for them to live together without scandal or maybe murder, they quit. But the man doesn't set out to win the affections of another woman, knowing all the time that he can't make her his lawful wife, and get away with it."

"The laws of a rural community, where everybody knows everybody, would make against it," Frank said gently. "The conditions of a great city—where nobody knows his neighbor, and doesn't want to know him, where he prides himself on the fact that he hasn't got any neighbors—make for a different attitude. Make allowances, old chap."

"Damnable behavior is no more or less than damnable behavior anywhere, city or country," said Harkness, sternly, "and this is damnable behavior. It is one of the unpardonable sins. If that man injures a hair on her head, he must answer not only to God but to *me*. She has neither father

nor brother, nor any man of her family. But she still has *me*. I am her father and her brother and all the men of her people.”

Frank was genuinely distressed. He looked at Harkness’s set face with sudden alarm.

“Thou shalt not kill,” said Harkness, simply. “I believe in the laws of my God, even when—” he again smiled twistedly—“they conflict with my personal feelings. No, Frank, I won’t kill Murray, if that is what you fear. But I’ll break him with my hands. He’ll spend the rest of his life in a home for incurables. Maybe I’ll have to spend mine in a penitentiary . . . that is as God wills.” And seeing Frank’s look of horror, he added, “That would be one way of saving her, don’t you see?”

“No, it would send her to him on flying feet.”

“I will try to be very thorough,” said the big man, ominously.

“Harkness, you don’t know all he’s been up against. I do. Man, he’s had to suffer.”

“Suffer? Why not? Suffering is the price-tag on existence. And you pay it without yelping, if you’re a man . . . a decent man. Or you’re a thief and a welcher and shirk it. Make somebody else pay for you. There’s no middle course on *that!*”

But Frank, whose code was less biblical and more merciful, shook his head.

“I happen to know that Colin Murray is a good

man. I've worked with him, intimately, long enough to know him pretty thoroughly, Henry, and I tell you Murray's a good man. But he married the wrong woman. She's a ghastly fool, a self-righteous, unbelievable, selfish little fool. He hasn't lived with her for years. But he pays."

"And now he wants to live with Winny Davis. *My* Winny Davis. And she'll pay . . . for all of them. . . . *No. No. No.*"

"Amen to that 'No.' But . . . they are so suited to each other! Henry . . . forgive me for having to tell you that! And I'm afraid she loves him, Henry. We . . . have to help them *both*. I care for Winny Davis very much, as you know, but I'm Murray's friend, too. I am sorry for him."

"So am I. But that doesn't change the case where Winny Davis is concerned."

"No," agreed Frank, "it doesn't. But it softens my judgment of him. You see, I know Flora Murray. She's an incentive to homicide. But go on with your story. I haven't heard it all."

"Well, as I told you, I destroyed the letters as they came, and went about my business. I thought the only way I could punish the writer was to ignore his warnings—treat them with the contempt they deserved. I hate anonymous letters. But the last letter was so explicit that . . . it opened my eyes. I was furiously angry for the minute; then I was stunned, Frank. The writer was desperately

afraid I wouldn't understand, wouldn't believe, and meant to *make* me aware of . . . of what might happen if I . . . if I didn't take some action . . . soon. I was terrified. I was afraid the very light of day might see her name . . . my girl's name . . . written down in black and white, and his name following it. So I burned that letter as I burned the others, feeling like a hangman. . . ."

He paused and wiped his forehead. One saw how his hand trembled.

"Then I sat down for a think. I went over details. I . . . Frank, I began to see things, to fit all sorts of little happenings together, things I hadn't paid much attention to at the time. The things he meant to her, the things he did for her. All the times he'd taken her out . . . when I wouldn't go, you will remember. And how he'd looked at her, and she'd looked at him. . . . And then, Frank, I visualized me, myself, just as I am."

Frank laid his hand on his friend's arm in sympathy and understanding.

"I wondered I'd been so blind while this thing was coming upon Winny Davis. It seemed to me that I'd been . . . a false guardian . . . that I hadn't remembered enough how pretty she is, what she could mean to other men. I couldn't fool myself any more. In my heart I knew that, bad and bitter as it was, cruel as the consequences threatened to be . . . to me as well as her . . .

the thing was true. Whoever it was that was sending me those letters, was doing it out of friendship, not malice." And he broke out, with subdued violence: "I knew it was true. But oh, my friend, don't think I blamed my girl! Not for one moment! How could she help caring for him the most? Look what he is . . . and then look at *me!* Could she help loving him the most?"

"And I don't blame him for loving her; how could he help loving her? But, knowing her, loving her, how can he let her come to grief? How could he bring sorrow upon her? I," said Harkness, wildly, twisting his big hands, "I would rather die on the cross! I'd *drive* her away from me, rather!"

It came to Frank Courtenay that Winny Davis knew this—knew he would drive her away from him to save her—and that perhaps a woman deeply in love might prefer the human need, the human weakness that took because it loved and needed, rather than the stern strength that could forego and stand alone. For love looks askance at caution, in which it scents coldness. Its secret verdict always is, always will be: *If you really cared, if you loved me as I love you, you would not, you could not, let me go! You would think the world well lost, for me.*

Frank looked with pity at Harkness, who was telling him, in broken whispers:

"I knew. She cared for him. And I groveled

before my God because I saw that she whom I loved as my soul, she who meant everything sweet and good and holy and happy to me . . . did not love me, but . . . loved the husband of another woman. I saw that he . . . adored her . . . and I said to myself: 'Because he loves her, because he knows what she is, he will go away. He won't harm her, he won't bring grief upon her. Nobody could know my girl and dream of harming her. He'll go away.' And when he did go away, I thanked God with tears, Frank. I thought he'd gone because he was a good man. I was thrown off my guard. I . . . oh Father, oh Father!" He looked up, miserably, still twisting his big, trembling hands. "I thought he'd gone to Canada. You told me he'd gone to Canada—and I believed it."

"But he did go to Canada!" cried Frank. And felt himself go pale. "Why . . . why . . . his address is uncertain; he is off in the woods, with guides . . . no use to wire or write him . . . he wished to be let alone, didn't want to hear one word about business or anything else, until he came back. He'll wire me when he's coming back. He was on the verge of a breakdown, and I was glad to see him get away. So I haven't worried. He's somewhere in Canada . . ." stammered Frank.

"He's within fifty miles of us, and she has gone to him to-day," said Harkness, with a stony face. "Miss MacDuffie discovered it." Miss MacDuffie

was the woman who typed plays and roomed on the same floor with Winny Davis.

“Miss MacDuffie? Miss MacDuffie?” mumbled Frank, incredulously.

“Miss MacDuffie. She came to me just before I 'phoned you and told me all she knew. It was she who'd sent me the unsigned letters—out of the affection she bore us two, and not knowing how else to act. She was terribly upset. She had seen that he cared for our dear girl and that frightened her. She discovered that Winny Davis cared for him, too. Not me. She wondered at my blindness. And . . . well, she played watch-dog . . . for the love she had for us.”

Frank could well believe that. Miss MacDuffie said her prayers to Henry Harkness, and she adored Winny Davis. She was a lonesome woman, and these two friendly creatures were the hills of youth and romance and beauty in her flat life.

“The day Murray left, a special messenger brought Winny Davis a letter from him. Miss MacDuffie happened to be with her at the time, saw the envelope, and recognized the writing. . . . You know she's seen his writing scores of times about your room, Frank, and anybody'd recognize that singular hand of his. Knowing what she knew, suspecting what she suspected, she was worried. Why should Murray be writing to Winny Davis to-day, when he'd seen her only last night? She'd . . . well, she'd heard him speaking to

Winnie Davis once . . . and seen his face . . . and she'd heard our girl answer, and seen her eyes. . . . I guess I *was* mole-blind, Frank!

"Winnie Davis read the letter and made the boy wait for a reply. It was a short note she sent back, for it didn't take her but a few minutes to write it, Miss MacDuffie says. She evidently knew exactly what she wanted to say, for she didn't hesitate one minute. Then she went on quietly showing Miss MacDuffie some new sketches." Harkness paused, stared grayly at Frank. "She thinks this is a piece of his letter. The rest of it was burned, you see." He put into Frank's hands a scrap of charred paper. Frank stared at Colin Murray's unmistakable handwriting.

with what impatience! This is such a little place as we have dreamed of, but not so perfect as it will be when you come, my dearest dear. My heart ticks off the minutes until I see you. Beloved, you promised! Winnie Davis, you promised, and all my life hangs upon your word. Oh my love, come! Come!

Yours, ever yours,

C. M.

"*Well?*" breathed Harkness. But Frank, with a face of stupefaction, turned the charred bit of paper over and over in his shaking hands. He had no words. Murray!

"This morning Miss MacDuffie got a message to come after some manuscripts. You know she's

always getting messages like that. Well, she went. While she was waiting on a corner for a cross-town car, Winny Davis passed in a taxi, and Miss MacDuffie glimpsed her big old suitcase on the seat beside her. She was surprised, then uneasy. Winny Davis hadn't mentioned going away, though Miss MacDuffie had spoken to her only that morning. The more she thought of it, the more anxious and uneasy she grew.

“So instead of going after her manuscripts, she got off her car at the Grand Central and made for a telephone booth. She wanted to telephone me, to see if I knew anything about it and if it was all right. There was a great crowd coming in at the minute, and Miss MacDuffie caught sight, a little ahead of her, of a familiar profile. It was Winny Davis, at the ticket window. Winny Davis was so intent upon her own business that she wasn't paying attention to anything or anybody else. She bought her ticket, but of course Miss MacDuffie didn't know where to. Keeping well in the background, she saw the girl go through the gate to her train.

“Miss MacDuffie looked around her, and by the providence of God, our old friend Connolly, the policeman, was within a dozen feet of her. Connolly went with her to the ticket agent, who fortunately remembered the pretty young lady she described, and the point for which she'd bought a ticket.

“Miss MacDuffie raced home. I hadn’t come in yet. So she went into Winny Davis’s room and looked about. Everything was in apple-pie order, as it always is. There was no sign of a hurried departure. *Winny Davis had known she was going.* That made Miss MacDuffie a little sick. She says her knees went wabby, and she sat down suddenly on the floor and began to cry. Then she saw that the girl had been burning things in the grate, and she went over and pried and poked among the burned pieces. It was only when she moved the fender that she found this one small scrap. Everything else was burned. She remembered the special letter, and there was no doubt in her mind that this was a piece of it.

“When I got home I found her waiting for me, crying. She told me and I ’phoned for you . . . I thought you’d know better just what to do than I.” And he added quietly: “We two are Winny Davis’s brothers, and this thing concerns our little sister, Frank.” The two shook hands.

It was a short enough journey, the railway station being some miles from the point of their ultimate destination. A gloomy station agent told them apathetically that a young lady had arrived on the one-o’clock, had hired one of Brown’s Fords and driven off, he didn’t know where. Possibly Brown’s could tell them. He could rent them a Ford, too.

Brown’s told them the young lady had gone to

Sweetfern Farm, a very pretty, quiet place, some six or seven miles across country. They'd been told to expect her, so their best Ford was awaiting her when she arrived. Did the gentlemen also desire a Ford to take them to the farm?

Frank remembered all his life that ride across an exquisitely pretty country of green rolling hills and lands that sloped like a breast, of little creeks, apple-trees, stone fences. It was a quiet day, fading into a quiet afternoon. The Ford ran nimbly, sputtered, stopped. The driver, a lanky person wearing corduroys, got out.

“You eighteen-carat solid gold platinum-lined hundred-percent all-American idjit, quit your dum foolishness and go on!” he addressed the Ford. And he kicked it in the snout, a kick which jarred it all over. Then he cranked it, climbed in, and started. The Ford quit its dumb foolishness and went on. Frank asked seriously:

“What was the matter with it?”

“Ain't nothin' the matter with it. It's just a Ford.”

The road was a beautiful one, but its beauties were lost upon Harkness, who had relapsed into a stricken silence. The minutes it took them to reach Sweetfern Farm seemed to him like hours.

The landlord, a Dutch farmer, received his unexpected guests stolidly. Yes, he could take them in. Yes, there was another gentleman; also a young lady. She had been given the upper front

room, a very good room, with a fine view. They were friends of hers, wished to see her? So? But she had gone out with the other gentleman, who was the only other guest in the house. Perhaps . . . he shook his big head and looked around him vaguely . . . perhaps they might walk down to the orchard and find her there. He didn't know where she'd gone. She hadn't said.

A very ugly child with two front teeth missing came to their aid. She volunteered the information that they was a young lady an' she was walkin' out with a gentmun an' they was over to our cimetry. For a quarter she piloted them thither; and for another, left them.

It was an old, old cemetery, that, with lichened stones, and green, mossy, forgotten graves, old-fashioned flowers, old gnarled trees set aslant by the winds of many winters. Over in a corner a bit of a brook tinkled its trickling lullaby to the dead. Near it, with her hat off and her back against a scrubby oak, sat Winny Davis. Her face was uplifted, and she watched with quiet pleasure the white clouds drifting slowly, lazily, overhead. Prone his long length beside her, his head propped upon his hand, his eyes upon her tender face, lay Colin Murray.

She was the first of the two to see the intruders, for Frank felt they were no less. She was surprised, but not at all confused or disturbed. She looked at them inquiringly. Murray's bright-

blue eyes, of a steely intensity, questioned their right to be there.

“Winnie Davis,” said Harkness, looking down at her from his great height, “Winnie Davis, why do I find you here, among the holy dead, with the husband of a living woman?” He did not speak as a man to his beloved, but rather as the minister of the gospel, with grave authority.

She considered his question with equal gravity. One saw she wished to answer it truthfully, to make him understand.

“If you-all will sit down—” she indicated Frank as well as Harkness—“so I can look in yo’ eyes, it’ll make it easier for me to talk.”

Frank felt foolish and sorry; Harkness held himself in with an iron hand, but one could guess that he agonized; Murray, after that one resentful glance, paid no further attention to them; he kept his eyes upon Winnie Davis, still with that steely intensity.

“All these holy dead, as you call them,” said Winnie Davis, reflectively, “used to be alive, like us. Some of them took their love . . . and some of them let it go. Died without it. And now they’re all dead together, and you can’t tell the unhappy from the happy, the wise from the fool.

“What I’m trying to figure out,” she went on, smiling faintly at Harkness, who made an impatient gesture, “is this: Aren’t you just as bad off in the end, if you let yo’ love go from you and

die frustrated and dissatisfied, as you'd be if you took it when it came, and it was yours? Nothing can take that from either of you: it was yours! You had it! So . . . isn't it just as well to listen to yo' heart and say, 'Yes,' and bear whatever comes afterward, without whimpering, as it is to say, 'No,' and die alive, wither and wither, a little bit every day, every empty day, until you die . . . at last . . . without ever having lived? That's what I'm trying to figure out."

Frank said nothing. Pity choked him.

But Harkness, stiffening, said sternly:

"There is but one answer to all such questions: one does one's duty."

Winnie Davis looked at him reflectively.

"But what *is* one's duty? To walk by rule or to walk by heart? To be good and unhappy or . . . natural . . . and happy? Besides, I've got this to think of: *I don't count, not in the least, and he does.*" And she turned her head and looked at Colin Murray with exquisite tenderness, with a passion so unselfish, so genuine, so pure that Frank's throat ached, and Harkness groaned and turned, if possible, paler. Murray was not, strictly speaking, a handsome man, but as he met and returned her glance then, he was glorified.

"He possesses genius and I don't," said Winnie Davis. "If anybody in the world ought to be happy, ought to go to his great work with a satisfied heart, it is Colin. But . . . could I make him

happy, long enough to count? Could I help him, just by loving him and belonging to him, just by being *me*? Oh, if I could . . . !” cried Winny Davis, with an uplifted face.

“Love sacrifices!” cried Harkness, hoarsely.

“Sacrifices what?” wondered the girl. “Do you mean it sacrifices what it loves, to notions of right and wrong? And . . . is that any better for anybody, in the end?” She looked wistfully at the green forgotten graves. “Is that worth while? is one any the better . . . in the end? I wonder! I wonder!”

Harkness struck his breast, as if he struck at his own heart.

“The cross!” he cried. “The cross!”

“Ah, but you can be damned upon the cross just as well as off it . . . and not so cruelly, either,” said Winny Davis. “I’m finding that out. That’s why I’m here, Henry, among the holy dead, with the husband of a living woman . . . and that woman not me.”

Harkness gave an inarticulate cry. He could hardly bear to think that this was Winny Davis, speaking these terrible things to him with her virginal mouth, looking at him with her innocent eyes. Oh, God damn Colin Murray! Send him to hell for this!

“It’s such an old, old, old world!” said Winny Davis, wistfully. “And we’re young in it such a little, little, little while!”

“We are in it such a little while; and it isn’t the end, but the beginning. And there is reckoning,” said Harkness.

She smiled faintly.

“From the beginning folks have been struggling with just my problem. And now they’re dead, those poor struggling folks, and nobody remembers . . . anything . . . any mo’. Whether they were what you’d call good or bad, there’s nothing left of them, and the world isn’t any better or any worse. Maybe they themselves don’t remember whether they were good or bad. Whether they took their own when it came and made their one love happy for a little while or pushed it away from them and died broken-hearted: they’re all dead together. And I’m wondering. Both ways you lose. Always . . . in the end . . . you lose. But which way do you lose the most?”

“You lose most when you take what is not yours,” said Harkness, flatly.

“But who is to say, truly, except you yo’self, what is yo’s and what isn’t? If somebody else gets hold of something that really belongs to you, shall you let them keep it when you know it isn’t theirs, that it’s yo’s? Or shall you take yo’ own, when it’s crying out for you?”

At that Francis Courtenay smiled at her. Never had his eyes been so like the eyes of Brother Francis as when he spoke to her:

“I should say a good deal depends on who and

what you are, don't you think? On whether, for instance, you're Winny Davis Culpepper from Alabama, last of an old line, raised in an old house where old gray ladies take old gray jackets out of locked trunks every now and then; and there's a signed picture of Lee on Traveler, in the parlor, and, say, a couple of bales of Confederate money in the barn . . . and the family has . . . traditions," said he. "I think, Winny Davis Culpepper, that that would make the difference."

She thought that over, carefully. A puzzled frown came to her clear brow. Then she looked up, with a smile.

"Colin needs me just because I *am* Winny Davis Culpepper," she said simply.

Frank had no answer to that. Murray did need her because she was herself.

"Would you be really happy, though?" he wondered. "Those people of yours down South, you know—what of them? Many, many women before you, Winny Davis, have made the supreme sacrifice and it was shipwrecked, my dear. The man never pays the price the woman is called upon to pay, remember. He's always got his work: it doesn't hurt his work, Winny Davis."

"Oh, but that wasn't *Colin!*" said Winny Davis, sweetly. "And . . . it may be finer and better . . . and it is certainly braver . . . for you to come to shipwreck on the high seas, with all yo' flags flying than it is to rot, rot slowly, at

yo' mooring's, without ever once knowing the waves and the winds."

"Yes: I admit that," said Frank, honestly. "It is all a devil of a puzzle." Into his mind, hazily, there drifted a line or two:

The loves that send warm souls to hell  
While cold-blood neuters take no loss.

"A clandestine love-affair! For you! Your people will be proud of you!" said Harkness, stingingly.

"Oh, but it won't be clandestine. It will be in the open light of day, Henry. And it will be right, because he is mine, I am his, we love each other. My people won't like it: but they'll understand, because I'll tell them the truth. . . . And . . . I shan't drop my work, Frank. I shall go on with my work."

"It is all a devil of a puzzle," he repeated.

She nodded.

"I know. That's why we came here, Colin and I. We talked it over and over; and he couldn't get a divorce, so that gate was closed. Then we hit upon this plan: we'd stay under one roof, see each other every day, try to find each other out. No," with a straight proud glance, in return for Harkness's anguished one, "don't you dare to think evil of either him or me! We're studying each other, that's all! We're to give each other a few weeks, put each other to the acid test of daily

companionship, discover whether we can be friends and fellow-workers, as well as—” she flushed divinely, hesitated, and then added proudly—“lovers. And if at the end of a few weeks we find out that we can do without each other, for all the rest of our lives, why, we will. And if we can’t . . . why, we can’t. That’s what we’ve got to find out.”

The splendid, reckless youthfulness of the thing, as well as its piteous futility, made Frank blink, and set Harkness raving. Winny Davis had thought of it, he knew: but how could he blame Murray for snatching at this little glimpse of happiness? Murray was wrong, but he must have been driven clean desperate to agree to something like this. Yet he would play the game, gallantly, too, to the end.

“Always him! But where do I come in?” cried Harkness, in a quivering and hoarse voice. He was not yet a saint out of the flesh, and a torturing human jealousy beset and bit like a serpent.

“Oh, Henry, I’m sorry! I’m sorry!” cried the girl, regarding him with pity and understanding. “If you’d waited until to-morrow morning you’d have had the letter I mailed you to-day. I hated to have to tell you the truth, but I had to be honest with you, Henry; you’re too fine not to be honestly told the truth. And you’re strong; you’re terribly strong, Henry. I could never mean as much to you as I do to Colin.”

The strong man gave a great desolate cry.

"I love you!" he groaned. "I love you! Oh, Winny Davis, put by this horrible, sinful madness! You don't know what you're doing to yourself, what you're doing to me!" and he twisted his big hands.

"Nobody can do very much to you, Henry," said she, very gently. "You're strong, I tell you, stronger than just human love is. You've got a celibate soul, my dear, like the Apostles had. You're for the mountaintops and the deepest depths and I'm for the fireside. You're for everybody; I'm for just one. You're for all the world. With you, I'd be just one little wee corner of things."

"But I love you!" he cried. "Winny Davis, I love you!"

Her eyes upon him were pitiful and maternal.

"Yes . . . and I'm sorry," said Winny Davis. "But I haven't got any human fears for you. You'll grow stronger and stronger and better and better and mo' and mo' saintly and less and less human . . . just as well without me as with me. I'd be in your work, never of it. But I could help *him* work, Henry. Mo' yet, he could help me, direct me. I'd grow, with Colin: I'd dwindle . . . with you. I'd never, never be really necessary to you or you to me. And that's what counts most with women."

He staggered. But he took the blow standing. After a while, he asked in a whisper:

“This is final . . . for you and me?”

“Henry, I’m sorry, but this is final.”

“So be it. I eliminate myself. I am altogether out of the picture; indeed, I should never have been in it, I never belonged. I do not in the least blame you for . . . for me. I do not any more ask you to consider me. You don’t love me. You love . . . the husband of another woman. And I beg you to believe that I don’t desire to save you from yourself on my own account. I desire to save you for yourself, for your family, for decency, for duty, for God. I am here for that.”

“Can any one save you but your own self?” she wondered. “Mustn’t everybody work out his own salvation, by himself? No, Henry: you can’t do it. It remains with me . . . alone.”

“But you can’t be allowed to save yourself here, alone with him,” said Harkness, quietly. “Winnie Davis, dear girl, I am not only your very good friend Henry Harkness this evening: I am your old grandfather, and your father, and the brothers you never had. I am all the men of your house, here to protect you.”

“But I do not need you!” she flashed. “This is impertinence! To me, Henry!”

“The men of your family wouldn’t think so, Winnie Davis,” said Harkness. “See, now. I have

been very patient. But I assure you solemnly that I shall not stir a step from here, until this thing is settled. It can't go on. Don't push me to extremes."

"Are you daring to threaten me, Henry?" she demanded indignantly.

The big Dakotan looked down at her sorrowfully.

"Only with my unwelcome company," he answered gently. And then he looked at Colin Murray.

The architect had liked Harkness well enough. He was sorry for him. The man was not without a certain gaunt dignity now, which Murray did justice to. His likeness to Lincoln came out startlingly—the great figure, the shaggy head, the sad, patient face, the tremendous power of him. And suddenly it came to Murray that this big awkward man was inimical to him. Murray wasn't a very patient man. He asked haughtily:

"Is it possible that you are threatening me, Harkness?" And he got to his feet like a panther.

"No. I am not threatening you," said Harkness, very quietly. "I am merely telling Winny Davis that she can't stay here alone with you, Murray. And while I am about it, let me tell you that if she goes to you, you must account to *me*. There is a dead-line, Murray."

"Oh, good Lord! The man talks like the movies!" cried the exasperated architect, glaring at

him. "Look here, Harkness, you are meddling damnably—"

But Francis Courtenay stepped between the two men.

"Murray," said he, "I'm sorry, but Harkness is right, you know. This thing is absurd, preposterous, unjust. We can't stand for it. I'm your friend, and I understand . . . and I'm mortally sorry, Murray. But this child's got very decent people down South, and the situation isn't fair to them or her. You shouldn't have let her in for it. You understand, old chap, don't you?"

"I understand he's a preaching nuisance, and you're another meddling nuisance yourself, Frank Courtenay."

"It isn't Henry or me or you, Murray. It's Winny Davis."

"You look here. This thing concerns just us two, Winny Davis and me. It's nobody else's business," cried Murray, furiously.

"You know better than that, chief. For one thing, it concerns Harkness very nearly. That alone would make it concern me."

"And your wife. Surely it concerns your wife!" put in Harkness.

"My wife! What has she to do with it?"

"She keeps you from marrying the girl Henry was once engaged to—"

"So? Well, then, before you climb up in the judge's seat, suppose you and Harkness put your-

selves in my place. Suppose you take my empty house, my empty life, my lonesome day. Take turn and turn about and supply Flora Murray's insatiable wants, pay her endless bills, listen to her idiotic complaints, bear with her shallow, brainless, heartless pettiness, until she drives you mad! Pay, pay, pay; and when you beg her to release you, offer to pay her off, have her jeer and laugh and mock you!" He looked at his judges with somber, hopeless eyes. "And having done all that, for years, without hope, meet truth and faith and loyalty and love . . . and then come gabble to *me* about duty, about sacrifice, about giving up!"

"We didn't marry Flora Murray, and you did," said Harkness, sternly. "Having done so, you should at least abide by your bargain, and not, because your bargain didn't suit you, bring evil and wrong and loss upon the innocent." His voice was like a whip lash.

"I do what I do with my eyes wide open, Henry. Because, knowing everything, I love him," said Winny Davis, proudly.

Murray bent and lifted her hand to his lips. That was his only answer to Harkness, who looked helplessly at Frank.

Frank reflected. Winny Davis needed neither him nor Harkness. What could any man alive say to her or do for her at such an hour? She needed a woman's help. And before him rose the beautiful grave face of all faces, sweet and strong and

noble. If anybody on earth could help Winny Davis at this hour, it would be Aurora Janeway.

“I’m going to get out, Murray, and Harkness’ll stay here until I come back. And when I come back, I’m going to come back with Miss Aurora Janeway. I’m going to ask her to stay here with Winny Davis.” He looked at the girl with his direct, kind, friendly eyes. “She’s the girl I’d choose for your best friend if you were my mother’s daughter, Winny Davis,” he told her. “You’ll like her.”

“I’m sure I shall,” said Winny Davis, politely, quite undisturbed. What could Aurora Janeway or anybody else mean to her now?

Murray’s eyebrows drew together. He was chagrined and disgusted. Oh, damn these two fools who had spoiled what might have been an idyllic, exquisite, innocent interlude, such an experience as comes but to few, and then but once in a lifetime! He felt the doors of Paradise shutting in his face, he saw the Happy Mountains, the Delectable Mountains fade away into the farthest mocking blue. If these meddlers hadn’t come in to spoil everything, he and Winny Davis might have looked back to this, in years to come, as to some palmy oasis in the waste. And it had been spoiled, tarnished, disrupted. Bitterness almost choked him.

Harkness nodded assent to Frank’s suggestion. The Dakotan was in deep waters, in which he

struggled drowningly. He gasped, "*All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me,*" the while he buffeted the encompassing waves.

This whole episode of Winny Davis and Murray was impossible, wrong, wild, sinful; it spelt to his mind disaster, death, hell. And yet he, whose Christian duty was to convince and restrain these two mad creatures, to set them on a better way, found himself hampered in the task by all too human feelings. He alone knew the terrible temptation to seize the architect by the throat and throttle him, to break his body between his hands. He thought too much of himself, of his own grief and terror and pain and jealousy, so that he could not think singly of them and their salvation. He was afraid of himself, of the violence of his own emotions. . . . How dared he ask God for help, feeling as he did? A man of so unclean lips?

The four walked back to Sweetfern Farm in the pleasant late afternoon sunlight, just beginning to fade. Nobody talked. Winny Davis, very proud and silent, walked between the uneasy Frank and the angry Murray. And presently Harkness dropped behind, and let them get far in advance, and in mercy they let him do so. His heart, a leaden weight, tired him inexpressibly. He was oppressed by the sorrow and wrong and bewilderment of the world.

Winny Davis wasn't what he had thought her; all his shy dreams of happiness with her withered,

as flowers in one night of killing frost. She didn't love him, she was lost to him. And with her was going something inexpressibly sweet, ineffably tender, young, glad, never to be replaced though he should live to be a thousand.

The higher and holier reality, the beauty of holiness, remained, of course; that reality which never leaves one. The great twin peaks of Sacrifice and Prayer glimmered on the farther horizons, white and cold; but they were blotting out all the little happy valleys from which arose the smoke of hearth fires, the sound of children's voices, the gleam of the lighted windows of home.

He turned aside his shaggy head, and a rending sob tore itself loose from his laboring breast. He saw before him the lonesome, lonesome road which he must tread. Then and there Henry Harkness consecrated himself forever to his calling, as though in answer to some airy voice. His lips moved in silent prayer. But even while he lifted his face, tears ran down his cheeks like November rain.

## CHAPTER XV

### THE STRIKERS

**A**ND in the meantime the smoldering strike that Aurora Janeway and the red-haired Jewess had seen afar off, a cloud the size of a working-man's fist in the business sky, and had sought desperately to avert because they feared it so much, came to a head at last, fomented by greed, injustice, and stupidity. It was as if a lighted match had been flung into a keg of gunpowder, which exploded and set fire to everything reachable, scattering brands in all directions, setting up dangerous blazes in the most unexpected places. It was a serious strike. Miss Janeway had been called frantically by the pretty Jewess, and the two were on the job night and day. So were the police. Women were striking as well as men, and the female of the species was more deadly than the male. Life, limb . . . and property . . . must be protected.

Mr. Jordan Courtenay, too, found himself a very busy man. He had to attend to details of which Aurora should have relieved him, and he found it irksome and annoying. He hated details.

They tired him. Aurora didn't mind them, being so conscientious and exact. But now that Aurora had been snatched from her desk he had some of her work to attend to, and it made him angry. Damn these idiotic strikers! A lot of rattle-brained foreigners hell-raising in America; probably Russian Jews instigated by the Bolsheviks. Not only interfering with business, but actually interrupting the smooth running of a private gentleman's household: *his* household.

What were our police for, anyhow? Why didn't they use their wits—and their clubs, too? But he supposed they knew only too well that if you whacked a Jew on the shins in New York, his mouth would be screeching "Murder!" in Europe. Or maybe if you cracked some brawling little Italian striker, somebody in Rome would be brandishing fists at the State Department in Washington. Why didn't the police call the lot of them Reds and pop them all in jail? Then anybody who objected could be told to go to Leningrad. Mr. Courtenay wished he had charge of the Police Department for a few days right now. Of course, foreigners among us have their rights which must be protected. He believed in Americanization, himself, and spent money on it. But when it came right down to letting a lot of foreigners interfere with business . . . and with one's household arrangements . . . !

That very afternoon he'd been bothered with

matters that Aurora should have been seeing to, and he was cross about it. He sat glowering in his car, brooding, until it came to an abrupt stop in obedience to the paw of a red-faced policeman, who spoke gruffly about people being where they hadn't oughter.

Mr. Courtenay looked around him dazedly. The car was caught on the outskirts of a seething and rapidly augmenting crowd of strikers, picketers, sympathizers, strike-breakers, policemen, plain-clothes men, news-reel camera-men, newspaper men, and a general ruffraff of lookers-on, all the idle curious. He had for the moment forgotten the strike and had taken a short cut. Before the chauffeur was aware, the car was in the thick of the jam.

"That you, Cullen?" The red-faced policeman recognized the chauffeur. "Wotinell you doin' here, blockin' traffic? Sweet mess, ain't it? I just seen your Annie with them strikers. You'd ought to learn her better, Cullen. I'd take me slipper to her, I would that."

Cullen climbed out of Mr. Courtenay's car.

"Sorry, sir, but I gotta go after that girl o' mine. Besides, we can't get out o' this for mebbe another hour, an' I'll be back before then. I *gotta* go." He nodded, said a few words to the policeman, and plunged into the mob. For a few moments his deserted employer could see his broad,

olive-drab shoulders ruthlessly forcing their way through; then he disappeared.

Mr. Courtenay, speechless with rage, resigned himself to the enforced wait. It soothed his feelings a little to think how early the next morning he'd give Cullen notice. Daring to leave him alone in the car, at such a time! He had never been in a mob in his life. Every now and then a policeman—huge, brutal under stress—mowed his way like a tank through the packed mass of humanity and laid an imperative paw upon a vociferating somebody's shoulder. At which arose shrieks, jeers, cheers, hoots, catcalls, shrill whistles of derision, while the mob danced on its outraged feet and shoved and jostled and pushed and snarled and swore. Mr. Courtenay looked on, disgusted.

And then he saw her. In the thick of things—large, lovely, serene, vividly distinct in a multitude, like a great fair goddess among mere mortals, a palm-tree in the waste sands, a stately tall shaft of a white lighthouse in the midst of furious seas—appeared Aurora Janeway.

Jordan Courtenay stared at her with mounting anger. The very beauty and grace of her proved her unfitness to be there, in that howling horde. He hadn't bargained for this. The woman ought to know better. She was a member of his household, backed by his name, buttressed by all he stood for. He wasn't going to stand for anything

like *this*. She had no business to be here. It was outrageous of her to be here! He meant to make her get away at once . . . just as soon as he could manage to speak to her. As soon as Cullen came back, he'd force Aurora to get in the car and take her home with him. Where was Cullen, anyhow? Why didn't he come back?

Watching Aurora, he could see men and women force their way to her, speak rapidly, nod, dart away again, evidently bent upon obeying her orders. Sometimes he could see her shouldering her way to particular groups, with whom she appeared to be arguing. The noise was so great that he couldn't hear what she was saying. Every now and then a handful of would-be strike-breakers would run and join the strikers amid jubilant shouts. And then he saw a policeman, a strawberry-faced policeman, force his way to her side and order her, not unkindly, to move on, miss. Orders. Move on!

Aurora moved on, obeying orders, shifting her ground without changing her tactics. She was still speaking, explaining, expostulating, arguing, cajoling. The policeman watched her, reflectively, speculatively, admiringly. Gosh! what a great girl she was! how much these dumb kikes an' wops an' ginnies thought of her! how they listened to her! Should he order her to stop talkin', miss, or shouldn't he? He knew Miss Janeway and liked her well, he was familiar with the real power she

wielded, and he was chary of conflict with her.

"I will not," decided the policeman, "but I'll keep me eye on her. She'll bear watchin' this day, an' things as they are. Yes, I'll keep me eye on Miss Janeway."

He turned away deliberately, to the watching Mr. Courtenay's chagrin. Mr. Courtenay had been in momentary hopes that the policeman would make her shut up and get out of that. But even a policeman the size of a house was, apparently, unable to cope with Aurora Janeway!

Behind Aurora buzzed another woman, a striker, a creature so grotesque that the two formed the extremes of womanhood. Where the one was logical, sane, clear-headed, the other was a firebrand, as astonishingly ugly as the first was beautiful. Mr. Courtenay, staring at her, blinked. It didn't seem to him possible that one woman could have much ugliness in one short lifetime.

"My God!" he murmured, and blinked again.

She was as ugly as a comic section, as noisy as a child's rattle, as quarrelsome as a choir meeting, as safe as a keg of dynamite. When she pointed a skinny forefinger at some would-be "scab," and made vitriolic comments upon the unlucky one's probable past, present, and future, throwing in a neat little sketch of ancestry and religion, the crowd screamed with delight, while the victims, red and raw, doubled fists or bared teeth. She was as audible as a steamboat siren.

Foreseeing trouble—and bad trouble at that—the police began to close in upon her in a narrowing blue cordon. But she was, it would seem, fluidic. She ducked under their arms, she glided through their fingers like water, by the skin of her teeth she managed to miss the outstretched hand of the law. She slithered and turned and twisted, doubling on her tracks like the hunted hare. She was like a flea; they always reached the spot where she was last, to find she'd hopped somewhere else. She was here and there, everywhere and nowhere—the original Artful Dodger. And she could be heard from all points of the compass, piercing the skies with her siren voice.

“Aw, you big hams!” she yelled. “You’re sure the biggest bunch o’ oil-cans off the dump! You Reagan, you big Mick, if you could catch me as quick as you can catch your pore scared wife when you wanta hand ’er a coupla wallops, I’d ’a’ been in the jug a hour since! You, McEvaddy—you with the undershot jaw—if I was a bootlegger, you’d reach me mighty quick, lemme tell yer, ’specilly if I was to hold out my hands to ya! I ain’t doin’ nothin’ an’ you know it! Tha’s why you’re after me; tha’s the on’y kinda people you ever do go after, you big bums!”

The crowd laughed, hooted, jeered. The policemen were even redder than nature had made them.

Enjoying her, hoping for the worst, many per-

sons made it their business to retard the officers. Picketers and sympathizers got in their way. Strike-breakers, enraged at telling taunts, stung by unforgivable insults, rashly sought to hedge her in, and were roughly jostled and shoved aside, with jabs in the ribs and the dinner. The noise increased deafeningly. Growls of rage swelled it. And all the while, grimly insistent, the policemen hung upon her heels like Apaches who scent a scalp and mean to have it or die. As she realized this, she redoubled her taunts.

There is that in the normal human breast which instinctively sympathizes with the hunted and takes a natural pleasure in baffling the hunters, throwing them off the scent, hearing their view-halloo turning in another direction. Mr. Courtenay, sitting in his car, had watched this unlovely game of tag, of hare and hounds, with bewilderment and disgust. He thought the woman frightful. He showed the whites of his eyes at such a raven croaking in the forum; she offended him by existing. He thought she was, without a doubt, the ugliest human female he had ever seen, and his soul shuddered at her. He thought that women like that should be given lethal gas, in pity. Yet when he saw the man-hunt loosed upon her, he was stirred to disgusted compassion. He watched the set faces of the police, and hoped, with a sickish feeling in the pit of his stomach, that Reagan, or McEvaddy, or some of the others whom her

taunts had stung wouldn't use their night sticks. Mr. Courtenay didn't want to see that.

It was a ticklish moment, a stormy moment, weighted with unpleasant possibilities. Both sides had been heckled, both were chafing ominously, raw passions were straining on the leash. The least false movement would precipitate a crisis. One felt the electricity in the air. Only Miss Jane-way and her committees had so far been able to keep things peaceable, to prevent open rupture; and that only because some of them were always there, in the thick of things, preventing clashes by constant watchfulness. But in spite of them, trouble was imminent. Feeling ran high, people were bitter. That was, in a measure, inevitable. And in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, trouble broke.

Stung unbearably by a telling taunt hurled in her teeth, a scab suddenly leaped for the defiant green feather adorning the bony firebrand's hat, all but scalping the wearer, as she tore off hat and a handful of hair at the same time. The firebrand's bony fist caught the hat-ravisher in the mouth, and in an instant, shrieking and clawing like cats, the two closed in. Instantly other ready and waiting fists, that had been balled and itching, came into play. Ensued an uproarious free-for-all shindy, with police whistles blowing for dance music.

The unlovely lady, the chief cause of the row,

bore the brunt of the battle, giving and taking magnificently. The fight she put up was homeric. She was yanked thither by friends and jerked hither by raging foes, until Mr. Courtenay thought she would indubitably be dismembered between them. Her good green feather had gone by the board, lost to her forever; her hair stood on end; her dress was torn almost off her back, there were marks of nails, and her own blood on her already all-too-unfortunate countenance; and a too-ripe egg, thrown with deadly accuracy, overcast one of her lantern jaws, lending her a yellow-brown shininess. Always was she harried by the plunging police, eluding their clutches by her own slipperiness and the elbows of her friends. Once one of them grabbed her. She writhed in his grasp, and deftly wiped off most of the odoriferous egg on his manly breast-bone. He shoved her away intuitively and with strong repulsion.

Mr. Courtenay had never before seen a woman manhandled and it looked as though this one were going to be killed. He was filled with nauseated disgust. When somebody fetched her a clump on the head, and another somebody, a woman, leaped and came away with a handful more of her hair, Mr. Courtenay stamped upon the floor of his stalled car and yelled, "Stop it! Stop it!"

Nobody stopped it. Nobody paid the slightest attention to him, for nobody heard him . . . or would have listened to him if they had heard him.

On the impulse of the moment, moved by the spirit of excitement, he leaped from his car and fought his way by sheer brute strength through the struggling, yelling mass, until he reached her side and caught the beleaguered lady by an elbow. He held on to her while the two of them were jostled back and forth deliriously. All the time he pushed her before him, until they had almost reached the hem of the swaying mob.

“Come . . . with me,” he gasped. “I’ll . . . get you . . . away from this and . . . take you home. My car . . . is . . . right over there . . .” He had to shriek his message in her ear, to make himself heard above the din.

The woman looked at the big handsome man, the stranger who was offering to take her home. A well-dressed, powerfully built man, who was trying to lure her away, to carry her off, God knows where, in an automobile! She drew back, boring him with a gimlet eye. She had a very poor opinion of men, by and large, never having observed in their bearing or behavior to herself anything that might soften her harsh judgment. Also she had read fatally often of the perils to which virtuous working-girls are subject. Lured away into terrible dens of iniquity. Kept prisoner in dark cellars. Beaten, starved, lost, ruined! You read in the newspapers, almost daily, about vanished girls, frantic relatives, searching police. And you saw it in the movies, too. And invariably, the vil-

lains were just such classy guys as this! His car right over there! Come with him! Oh Gawd!

“Where was you wantin’ to take me?” she jerked out.

“Home. Or to . . . my own house. Until you’re . . . safe,” he jerked back.

For answer, she hooked a steely hand in the breast of his coat, nipping his skin. And then she opened her jaws like the mouth of hell, and from them there tore a rending, frightful screech, as of a freight-train on a long down grade; as of all the cats in the universe having their tails stepped on; a screech that stunned and bewildered and deafened him.

“You will, will ya? Carry me off, hay?” she screamed piercingly. “Po-le-e-ee! Hel-l-p! I’m bein’ took off by a white-slaver! Oh my Gawd, somebody come save me! I’m bein’ drug away an’ kidnapped! I’m gonna be ruint! Save me! HEL-L-L-LP!”

Her penetrating yells pierced the eardrums even of that great crowd, which stirred and moved like a huge grain-field over which a strong wind passes. Heads turned, twisted, craned.

“Stop that noise!” cried Mr. Courtenay, peremptorily. “You idiot, what would I want to kidnap *you* for? Go and be arrested, for all of me!” And he tried to release himself from her clutches. He couldn’t. She clung to him like some horrible nightmare.

“He’s tryin’ to take me away in his car!” she screamed, her Medusa-like hair bobbing almost in his eyes. “Wants me took to his house! Poleeece! Why don’t them dumbdoras come an’ save a innercint girl from a white-slaver?” and she took a yet firmer grip upon Mr. Courtenay’s wearing apparel. A disquieting sensation made itself felt in the pit of his stomach.

That ominous word “white-slaver” ran from lip to lip like wild-fire. They, too, read their penny papers; they, too, had heard tales fatally often. Lost girl. Accosted and lured away into strange houses. Prisoner. No hope. Lost! A woman screamed. A man let fly an oath.

The psychology of a crowd is a moving study for men and angels. This one had been ripe for trouble of another sort, on another score, a moment since. But here, suddenly, while they were in the mood for mischief, was fresh material for summary action, and such action as made them all one, scabs and strikers together. A well-dressed stranger was trying to carry off one of their own women! As to why any man not stone-blind or deaf or raving mad should wish to carry her off, nobody gave a thought.

Those nearest him saw him plainly; a sleek, well-set-up person, dressed like the wealthiest of their bosses. He was so obviously of another world than theirs, that they instantly suspected him. And the woman’s shrieks incited them. In

an instant there was a mob movement in his direction, those who couldn't see and didn't exactly understand crowding upon the heels of their fellows. Somebody close to him kindly knocked his hat off. A pair of large, thick-soled shoes kicked him in the shins, viciously. A maul of a fist smote him suddenly in the ribs. Clawing hands clutched at him. Inflamed eyes glared. People who evidently consumed vast quantities of garlic breathed upon him suffocatingly. Polyglot cries sounded in his ears.

For many months Jordan Courtenay had been nursing a mounting grudge against things in general, and of a sudden his smoldering anger flared into mad rage. These were the people he'd been helping most, spending his money to improve their condition, build them better places in which to live,—hospitals, schools, playgrounds, rest rooms,—wasting his time. He didn't want to help them now. He didn't want to help anybody. He wanted to *hurt*. Knock his hat off, kick him in the shins, punch him in the ribs, call him white-slaver, would they?

“Kick him in the slats! Push his face in! Give him a poke in the beezzer!” howled a big man, fighting his way to the scene of battle.

Jordan Courtenay, wrenching himself loose from the harpy who held him, and giving her an ungentle thrust backward, gave an answering bellow. The primal color red flickered before his

eyes and settled down to stay. He turned upon his assailants like a Bengal tiger, and charged. Just what followed, what happened in the next ten minutes, he doesn't remember, but the men who tackled him in that space of time will remember so long as they live. It was a berserk outbreak, a throwback to the fine old fighting days when the English Church added to the Litany the petition to be delivered, good Lord, from the wrath of the Danes!

A new strength flooded Jordan Courtenay, the hot blood of fighting men raced through his veins, he saw things—figures, faces, fists—through a red haze. He opened his mouth, bellowing like the bulls of Bashan. And then he moved forward like a tank, and everything went down before the onslaught of him. All that superb new strength, stored up by years of clean living, cunningly brought out by the Spartan régime to which his newer doctors had subjected him, came to the front and exerted itself. He was like a giant refreshed. He struck like a trip-hammer, and, wherever that balled fist fell, blood flowed. At intervals he roared primally, his eyes glowing with the lust of battle. He was loose, he was free!

A few minutes later he was unrecognizable. His collar, a wilted rag, hung from his torn shirt by one button in the back. His coat had been literally torn off, his trousers looked as though they had been in the midst of barbed-wire en-

tanglements. His car, his recreant chauffeur, his name and race and religion and manners and customs and prejudices were clean forgotten. He was the hot heart of turmoil, a primitive man fighting with his bare fists. You heard those fists go *whack! whack! whack!* Every whack hurt somebody. There was blood in his eye and on his jaw.

He caught red glimpses, every now and then, of the unbeautiful and damned woman who had called him a white-slaver. Now was she tossed and shoved and pushed and jostled toward him, now was she dragged and pulled away, always screeching like a catamount. A nightmare of a woman. The sight of her was all that was needed to madden him completely. The red haze in which he moved and fought and had his being deepened, glowed ruby-colored; he actually tasted it.

He surged onward, his arms rising and falling like flails. A wall, a blue, human wall, opposed him. White-faced . . . streaked with red . . . sweating, breathing deeply, fighting like an arena full of tigers, he kicked aside a last few intervening men, and charged the rampart of the blue line, which rolled forward to meet him. They opened out. He was in their midst. Grim-faced, they surrounded him.

Other policemen suddenly appeared. Many other policemen. The riot call was answered, the squad had been reinforced by what seemed to Jordan Courtenay a couple of regiments. Each

man of them had in tow two or three rioters. But six of the strongest were detailed to the bemaused and tattered desperado who, it was asserted, had started the row. The six had their hands full when it dawned upon him that they were actually arresting him; that they meant to take him to jail.

It was a slow process through the crowd, which scowled and snarled and jostled and hurled insults instead of brickbats. All the way, silent, panting, bloodthirsty, Jordan Courtenay fought his captors with bulldog obstinacy. The lust of battle, murder, and sudden death was still upon him. Rage blinded, choked, deprived him of all power of speech, or even clear thought. They used their sticks when they could.

Along with the screeching woman,—who clung to a raging cop and besought him to protect her, and in company with a score or so of battered rioters, Mr. Courtenay was eventually hustled into one of several waiting patrol-wagons. Ambulances were removing some of those he had encountered. It was while he was being lifted, pushed, shoved, hauled into the wagon, that Aurora Janeway caught sight of him.

Their eyes met for a terrible second—hers full of amazement and horror, his full of deadliest rage. When he recognized her, he lifted his arm in a gesture of impotent menace and fury. Had speech been at his command at the moment, he would have howled imprecations at her. In his

heart he understood that it was she, Aurora Jane-way, who had brought him to this. But for her it would never have happened. It was altogether her fault. He roared incoherently, stamped his feet, tried to brandish his fists. Then he went down suddenly, weighted and overborne by two policemen catching him by the legs and two more policemen hanging onto his arms, which they pinioned behind him. With a shrill noise of whistles, and a clanging and banging of gongs, the wagons began to move stationward, slowly, because of the crowd.

Aurora stood there all but petrified. She was dreaming. It wasn't so. It couldn't be so. Mr. Courtenay! She uttered a loud cry and started to run, to make her way to him, to make the police understand who he was. But the mere mass of humanity checked her. For once she could not make herself heard or noticed or understood. The red-haired Jewess was gone from her side, swept away like a leaf in the wind. Aurora looked about her desperately and discovered that she was lost like a needle in a haystack of alien people, foreign workers who had joined the strike sympathetically. She didn't understand their speech, even, nor could they understand a word she said. They didn't know her. She was shoved, jostled, buffeted, as they swayed back and forth. Then she tried to make her way through them by main force. Her hat went first; her hair, which she

had never bobbed, swept loose from its tight confining coils, and flung itself free in a glittering blond cataract.

A man behind her, a man in overalls, laughed, and caught a strand in his unwashed hands.

“Lika yaller,” he grunted in her ear insinuatingly. Somebody pushing him, he perforce gave her hair a harder tug than he intended. The Valkyrie in the big fair girl came to sudden, full-blooded life.

“Beast!” she exclaimed, with flashing eyes, and bending, gave him an elbow in the stomach. He howled. And then somebody else pulled her hair in dead earnest, and got as fine a punch in the eye as ever a college-trained lady’s fist delivered. It was a beautiful punch. She had put her full weight behind it.

A sinister-faced woman suddenly snatched at her neck, possibly for the small gold chain she wore, a gift from Bransome Janeway to his little daughter one happy birthday long ago, before ever the shadow of Lydia had darkened their lives. The chain went, the front of her simple silk dress was torn away with it, and through the rent one saw a shoulder and part of a breast whiter than Diana’s.

Rage swept over Aurora. She was not in the least frightened, she was only fighting mad. She used her shoulders and her elbows, shoving these unlovely foreign workers aside ruthlessly. Not for

nothing had Aurora Janeway pulled the best oar, tossed the best ball, been the swiftest, strongest, cleanest-cut in her school. She must get out of this, she was thinking frantically. She must get home to the Courtenay house, get Simmons, get young Mr. Francis Courtenay, get the bishop, get the doctors, get everybody, go to the police and make them comprehend the full enormity of the horrible mistake they had just made in arresting Mr. Jordan Courtenay. He must be back in his own home that very night.

She had never been caught in so nightmarish a crowd. They were as strange to her as she was to them, and to them what was strange was inimical. Desperately she sought to get out, to fight her way through. When she looked around her, there wasn't a face she knew—nothing but inflamed, hostile eyes, tossing hands, open mouths bawling unintelligible uncouth sounds. As far as she could see, bobbing heads surged and swayed. She could hear, above the uproar, the screams of police whistles, the clanging of gongs. Where were they taking Mr. Courtenay? What had happened? Oh, she *must* get to the police!

A tall, fair figure with glittering unbound hair, a full head above most of the undersized figures surrounding her, she became as it were a target. A grinning, furtive-eyed man gave her hair a vicious yank. Indignant, she reached forward and boxed his ears, a stinging slap that set his head

reeling. He cursed volubly, gave her a vicious shove, called her a name that had never before been applied to her or hers personally. Her eyes blazed. Her fist shot out. She packed a hard wallop, and the man went down, knocked out. And then a large red hand at the end of a large blue sleeve was laid upon her arm possessively. She flung it off indignantly, but it came back and stayed. The large red hand belonged to a large red policeman, a sweating person new to the force, and perturbed to the soul by his first riot duty. He didn't know Miss Janeway. He had never heard of Miss Janeway.

"Come on, lady," he ordered.

"How *dare* you put your hands on me?" she blazed.

"Come on, lady. I seen you when you done it. Knocked him out cold."

"But he pulled my hair! He cursed me! He called me a horrible name!"

"Come on easy, lady. Come on. An' you better shut up. This ain't no time for lip. Save it for Hiz-zoner when you come up."

"I tell you—"

"Come on, lady," he took a firmer grip upon her arm.

Inevitably he urged her toward a waiting patrol-wagon. The law had swooped down upon Mr. Jordan Courtenay. Now it scooped up Miss Aurora Janeway.

## CHAPTER XVI

### BRINGING IN THE SHEAVES

“**M**ISS JANEWAY?” bleated Simmons in response to Mr. Francis Courtenay’s impatient query. “Miss Janeway? No, Mr. Francis, I can’t call her nor yet you can’t see her here nor now. Why not? Because she isn’t here. Where is she? She—” an infernal joy irradiated the meager little man—“she’s in jail.”

“Simmons!” cried the young man, sternly, “are you drunk?”

“She is in jail, in jail, in jail!” singsonged Simmons. “Locked up in jail; and I have never been intoxicated in my life, as well you know, Mr. Francis.”

“Then you’re crazy,” said Mr. Francis, shortly. “What do you mean by it?”

“Nor I’m not crazy, either,” said Simmons, smiling beatifically. “But she is in jail. For rioting. And knocking people stiff with her naked fists. And resisting arrest. She resisted arrest to the last minute.” He licked his lips with the tip of his tongue as if he’d just swallowed a particularly tasty morsel. He seemed to purr, to exude happiness through the pores.

Mr. Francis appearing to choke, Simmons added with pious resignation:

“Also they’re holding for identification a dirty crook that claims to be your uncle—and that *is* your uncle, Mr. Francis!—for attempted white-slaving, and rioting, and beating up officers of the law while in the discharge of their duty, and violently resisting arrest, and knocking a man into insensibility, and pretty near tearing up Headquarters, when they got him there. Also for false impersonation, and perjury, and profane language. He swore something frightful at the desk sergeant.

“I know it’s your uncle. He went out with Cullen in the car and he hasn’t come back yet, though Cullen brought the car in half an hour ago. Cullen says they accidentally got stalled in the mob, and a policeman friend of his told him his girl was hell-raising with the strikers, and he hopped out of his car and went after her. He left Mr. Courtenay in the car. When he could get back, the car was still there, but Mr. Courtenay wasn’t. I wouldn’t want to be in Cullen’s shoes when your uncle does come back!”

Frank dashed to the telephone.

“Yes,” admitted the desk sergeant, in mortified tones, “Miss Janeway is here. We are awfully sorry about Miss Janeway. Corrigan didn’t know her from Adam, him being new to his job. We got a couple doctors and the matron with her

now, account she's got such horrid hysterics we couldn't get anything outa her, nor yet do nothin' for her. . . . No, she ain't hurt none a-tall. But she'd got her dress tore an' her hair pulled some, an' she's got a bad case o' nerves, account of her bein' shocked something fierce. And we wish to the Lord you'd come take her home, Mr. Courtenay."

"I'll be right down, Mitchell. And my uncle?"

"The fella says he's him, but he's no more him than the babe unborn. A more barefaced lie I never listened to. Say, I was to the war, y'know—Château-Thierry an' the Marne 'n Belleau Wood 'n Verdun. Now I ask you as one man to another, would a honest American gentleman like your uncle behave himself like the whole Hindenburg line . . . and a tiger and a devil and a Chicago gangster all in one? That's what this bum done. Called me things that made me blush, he did. I should think we'd know a crook when we seen one, shouldn't you? I'm bettin' this fella's wanted right now somewheres for bloody murder or highway robbery or arson or somethin' else *bad*. He's a rotten egg, he is, just by the looks of him. Yeah, 'course you can lamp him if you wanta. But if you'll come quick an' get Miss Janeway away from here we'll be everlastin' obliged."

Miss Janeway had twisted her magnificent hair into something like its wonted neat, close coils, had bathed her face and powdered her nose, and

the matron had managed to mend the torn silk dress, giving it an appearance of order. But the young lady's nose was still undeniably pink, despite the helping powder, her mouth was swollen where she had bitten her lips, her eyes were red from crying. She had had, for the first time in her healthy, normal life, a downright attack of hysterics. The horrible hostile crowd, the appearance of Jordan Courtenay as she had seen him in the patrol-wagon, his malign glare at her, the loss of her cherished little chain, the very rough handling she had received, the rage and shame of her unjust arrest, had been too much. Add to this the fact that her position in the Courtenay house had for some time caused her acute unease, that she was painfully dissatisfied, that she wasn't happy, that life had seemed to her gone all awry. It can be seen that hysterics were unavoidable.

She sighed deeply at sight of young Frank Courtenay's indignant face, and became, if not altogether calm, at least coherent. She clung to his hand while she talked, looking at him as a woman looks only at the man she adores. And although her eyes were red and puffy and her face disfigured from violent crying, he thought her the most beautiful and desirable girl he had ever looked upon. There wasn't, there never had been, there never could be any other girl in the whole world quite so beautiful as Aurora Janeway!

She hadn't been rioting at all, she explained.

Quite the contrary. But she had seen Mr. Jordan Courtenay in the hands of the police, dragged to the patrol-wagon and carried off, she didn't know why. He had been very roughly handled, for his clothes were all but torn off, his face was bloody, he looked perfectly frightful, and she had been trying to get to him, to get to the police, to make them understand. And she herself had been handled like a malefactor. People had torn her clothes, pulled her hair; women had robbed her, men had insulted her. She'd been mobbed. And then the police had come and grabbed her, and told her to shut up when she tried to explain, and she'd been pushed into a patrol-wagon. Her lips quivered. But she pulled herself together, and wanted to know what they had done with Mr. Jordan Courtenay. Where was he? Why had he been arrested? What had he done?

The officials looked at each other uneasily. They knew that great wealth built a golden wall around men like Jordan Courtenay, they knew how powerful he was, what influence he wielded. Suppose that the raging devil they'd mishandled, and who had certainly mishandled them until they'd had to use their sticks on his shoulders . . . suppose that the human hyena it had taken a whole squad to arrest and get into a cell . . . was really Mr. Jordan Courtenay. Good Lord! They had never in all their experience seen any mortal man so angry, or fight so tigerishly. And they remem-

bered again, with perturbing qualms, that they'd had to use their sticks quite smartly on him before they could finally subdue him. He'd been threatening ever since to have every man who'd mishandled him broken on the wheel, if it took his last dollar. And here was Miss Janeway saying it was really Mr. Courtenay!

It was hard for Francis Courtenay to believe that the wreck he faced a few minutes later was really his uncle. The man was all but unrecognizable; he was all but naked. He looked like a husky, formidable tramp who had been kicked off a freight by a big-footed crew, rolled down a briery hill, and then rolled into a refuse heap. What remained of his clothes hung upon him in strips. His face was bruised, his lips and nose were swollen, one eye was black and puffed. His head was bloody but unbowed, and the light of battle that still glared from the good eye was startlingly ferocious. He had been beaten and manhandled; he had been treated like a workman that the police are down upon and have orders to get; and he was reacting after his own fashion. So far was he from being properly subdued, that, for him, the fight was just beginning.

Frank gasped: "Uncle Jord!" Breath failed him.

The truculent desperado nodded his banged head.

“I told the damn fools who I was; but they wouldn’t believe me,” said he. “Go and get my lawyers! Call up the commissioner! Get the mayor! Send a message to the governor! Telegraph to Washington to the Secretary of Labor . . . and our State Senators . . . and Congressmen. . . . Have me deported, would they? Put me on the rock pile, would they? Use their damn’ clubs on me, would they? I’m a Red, a bum, an escaped murderer, am I? I’ll show ’em!” he roared.

“Sweet Jesus, willya listen at that!” cried the jailer. “That’s how he’s been goin’ on right along. Nutty! Bugs!” He addressed the tattered wreck:

“Sure: send for everybody. You’re the Wild Man of Borneo and you eat ’em alive! *You* ain’t escaped from nothin’ but a tiger cage, or maybe you’ve got out of the biggest gorilla den at the Zoo. What oughter be after *you* is wild-animal keepers with heated irons, not plain Christian cops.”

But young Mr. Courtenay gasped again, “Uncle Jord!” and a minute later, he asked, “Do you know that Miss Aurora Janeway is here, too?”

That acted strangely upon the Wild Man of Borneo. He said abruptly:

“What? Did they get *her*?” and he began from that moment to calm down. He returned to nor-

malcy. Unclothed but in his right mind, Mr. Jordan Courtenay stood before the uneasy, the horror-stricken police.

A smile of satisfied vengeance, of cold and deadly joy, wreathed his swollen lips at sight of a trembling, pink-nosed Miss Janeway. She'd been arrested! She had been mauled a bit, too, eh? Oh, interlopation of Divine Providence! She'd had her hair pulled, thank God! Oh, kind, kind angels and ministers of grace, for once ye were beatifically off the job, ye didn't defend her! To see her thus—her hat gone, her dress badly mended, her nose and eyes red from crying, was balm of Gilead to his goaded soul. Never had he thought to gaze upon such a sight. It was the one bright gleam in a ghastly situation. For it was his intention, his fixed and firm intention, to break the entire police department, that gang of organized thugs into very small pieces. Also to catch the misbegotten female who had brought her absurd charges of white-slaving against him and have her sent to the nearest lunatic-asylum.

He had little more to say to the chapfallen Headquarters, except to express bitter regret that he'd crippled only two or three of them instead of killing the whole squad outright, as he should have done. He didn't even thank his nephew for so arranging matters that he could go home at once, instead of having to spend the night in a cell. They let him have the use of a telephone, at

his curt request, but, instead of calling up his own house and ordering his car, he called a number that made Frank start and stare, for it was Dolly Tredegar's.

"Sorry I couldn't keep my appointment to-night, Dot. But I couldn't manage it, you know. . . . Eh? Oh, I've been in jail. Fight with the police. Arrested. . . . Oh yes! . . . All right, laugh! My Lord! it sounds good to hear you laughing, Dots! . . . No. I ran up against some of Aurora Janeway's dear friends, and one of 'em had me arrested for trying to kidnap her. . . . What's that? . . . Heavens, Dot! *Me?* Lord, no! Uglier than home-made sin: ugliest old witch I've ever seen. . . . What are you laughing at? . . . Where is Miss Janeway? She's here too. . . . Rioting. Had her hair pulled and her ears boxed. . . . What's that? I don't see why you should be so upset! She can take care of herself. . . . Yes, she's all right. . . . No, you can't do anything for her to-night. Yes. You can see her in the morning. . . . Coming to the house? . . . To-morrow morning? Fine. I'll be there, of course. . . . Dots, anything you say *goes*. . . . All right. Good night, dear." He hung up the receiver. He was smiling.

The precinct captain felt very grateful to young Mr. Francis Courtenay for having arrived on the scene ahead of inquisitive reporters, who would have made a fearful thing of this affair. It would,

he fancied, suit the Courtenays better if it could be kept out of the papers, and word was passed that the police were to be mum. He didn't breathe easy until he saw those prisoners, who had given everybody so much trouble and might make more, into a taxi and out of his charge.

They were a silent trio. Mr. Jordan Courtenay understood that night that his bright career as a reformer, an uplifter, a philanthropist was finished and done with; and he was damned glad of it! He was deathly sick of the whole business. In future, he would be humanly kind whenever he got the chance. Also, these institutions that really needed help, that really were doing good, he would stand by. But the Courtenay-Janeway Association was automatically dissolved. When he reached that conclusion, he felt as though he had taken off very tight shoes. From now on, life was going to be more pleasant; he was going to live.

He stalked into his house, a fearsome sight for servants with delicate nerves and aristocratic sensibilities. Before he gave himself into the hands of his new Swedish valet, who had superseded Simmons as attendant upon him, and who could work wonders with a gentleman's personal appearance, he said to Frank, curtly:

"I don't suppose you want to stay here to-night? No? Well, if you'll come back to-morrow and let me have a talk with you, I'll be most

greatly obliged to you. It's high time for you and me to have a talk, Frank. Eleven o'clock, please."

Frank considered. He was glad to have been of some use to his uncle, but he had rushed to the station-house, not for him but for Aurora Jane-way. Helping his uncle had been incidental; his main thought had been to serve Aurora. He thanked Heaven devoutly that he had been able to serve her. Also, he wished to talk with her about Winny Davis, the sooner the better. But Aurora was in no condition to talk about anything now. What she needed was a hot bath, and the loving ministrations of Mary MacKinstry. She herself settled the matter by saying pleadingly:

"Please come, Mr. Courtenay! *I* have something to say to you, too. Something I've been wishing for some time to say to you."

Frank went away wondering what she could have to say to him. He would come back in the morning, at eleven o'clock.

Life pressed upon him hardly just then. His work was growing, life was opening out before him; he didn't know what changes Murray's affairs might bring. Murray, Winny Davis, Aurora, his uncle, Dolly, himself, Henry Harkness—they all seemed to have been flung together into the same whirlpool, which bore them around and around together, giddily. If he could only help! The evening's untoward events, fragments of Winny Davis's conversation, the look Aurora

Janeway had turned upon him, the tears he had seen on Henry's face jumbled together in his mind. He didn't sleep much, the remainder of that night.

Before Mr. Jordan Courtenay went to bed he had an interview with the recreant Cullen.

"You're fired," he said curtly.

"Sorry, sir. But I wasn't takin' no risks, with my girl Annie out with them strikers. I had to get 'er and I got 'er. And when I come back you was gone. But I got Annie home, and that's all I got out o' this day's work."

"You got the girl home, by yourself?—a striking girl?"

"Yes, I done it," said Cullen, angrily. "Can't you see the face I got on me for doin' of it?"

"On second thoughts," said Mr. Courtenay, reflectively, "I hire you again. A man that would tackle one of those women in that crowd . . . and make her go home . . ." He looked thoughtfully at the disgruntled chauffeur, whose countenance was reminiscent of a cat fight. A faint smile hovered on his swollen lips.

"I slapped 'er. I sez, 'You get in that house an' you stay in that house, you jade, or I'll take the hide offa you,' I sez. 'Look what you done to my face, like I was already married to you! Get in,' I sez, 'or by the livin' God I'll off with my belt an' take the back off you!' sez I. An' she

went in, cryin' fit to kill. . . . My Annie! . . . Ain't I in a helluva mess?"

"You put her in her right place," said Mr. Courtenay, firmly. "I'm glad of it. Good night, Cullen. Report as usual in the morning. I may need the car."

"Good night, Mr. Courtenay. . . . And I aim to keep her there!" said Cullen.

The Swedish valet deserved his recommendations, for by eleven o'clock next morning he had succeeded in removing from Mr. Jordan Courtenay's handsome outer man almost all traces of yesterday's rough encounter. The black eye, so swollen last night, had been reduced to a slight puffiness; probably he had painted it. Fittingly clothed, his skin glowing, his hair beautifully brushed, the big man showed up magnificently beside the more slender Frank, who was too pale and a bit care-worn. While the two men were shaking hands and regarding each other searchingly, Dolly Tredegar came in with Aurora, whom she was gently upbraiding for having risked herself in a mob of striking workers.

Dolly was at her best. She glowed and sparkled. Beside the tall, fair Aurora, the little dancer resembled an elf, an exquisite sprite attendant upon some blonde Norse goddess. Dolly's presence in the house, and his uncle's open and unashamed delight in her, quickened Frank's chastened irony.

His old smile crept to his lips. Catching her eye, he winked at her swiftly.

“Mr. Francis Courtenay,” began Aurora Jane-way, earnestly, “I have been wanting for some time to say to you what I am going to say now. I came to this house, Mr. Courtenay, under a very serious misapprehension as to your real character.” She paused, as though feeling for words, as though she were anxious to make herself perfectly understandable, to leave no room for doubt of her real meaning. She stood there, tall and fair, and very earnest. With a quick glance at all of them, Dolly seated herself in the most comfortable chair, lighted a cigarette, and crossed her little knees in comfort.

“You are not at all what I stupidly supposed you to be, Mr. Courtenay,” went on Aurora, to Frank’s astonishment. “I apologize with all my heart for my error. I didn’t know that your uncle had misjudged and misunderstood you—how much, I have been finding out all along. I don’t accuse him of deliberately doing so, but I do know he has misjudged you as much as—” here she turned her great gray eyes upon Mr. Jordan Courtenay’s wrathful and astonished face—“he has misjudged *me*. The longer I live under his roof, the more clearly I am forced to see how utterly wrong he was. He is impatient, unwise, unjust. And the more I come in contact with him the less I admire his mind, his methods, himself!”

Her cheeks flushed, her eyes darkened and sparkled. For once she was unjust, humanly unjust and mistaken; and for the first time Jordan Courtenay had a glimmer of liking for her. She *could* make mistakes, after all, like the rest of us!

"My mind, my methods, and myself are human," he replied with asperity. "Yours are not. You're a . . . a . . . a . . . a . . . dashed archangel, that's what ails *you*! No mortal man can live in the house with a seven-foot female archangel and keep his temper!"

Dolly Tredegar sank back in her chair, and blew cigarette smoke through her nose. She watched the pair of them with narrowed, naughty eyes. She was enjoying herself.

"You couldn't live with anybody and keep your temper," said Aurora, frigidly. "Though, I assure you, you don't have to try, so far as I am concerned."

"I do so have to try, so far as you are concerned," he interrupted her. "Anybody'd have to try, so far as you are concerned. You are enough to drive anybody to drink, with your perfections and your goodnesses; you're worse than the pope with your infallibility."

"I do not find you amusing," said she, coldly. "I find you, as usual, very prejudiced, very wrong-headed, very unjust. Though I take it you do the best you can; you are not very intelligent. But you can understand that I must leave your

house. I *am* leaving your house. I shall pursue my work in my own way—”

“And get your hair pulled and your ears boxed, and have the police run you in for your pains . . . and serve you jolly well right, too, say I!”

“That,” said she, outraged, “was entirely your fault!”

“My fault!” he yelled. “*My fault?*”

“Your fault, altogether. How was the girl to know better? From what I was able to gather, she judged you entirely by your personal appearance!” Aurora was *not* an archangel.

“Do you mean to stand there and tell me to my face I looked like that sort of scoundrel?” he demanded wrathfully.

“You most certainly did not look like a philanthropist. Far from it. You looked more like a prize-fighting philanderer!” said Aurora, acidly.

“Why, you big Swede—” he gasped.

Dolly Tredegar laughed, threw her cigarette aside, and stood up.

“This family,” said she gaily, “has tossed enough bouquets at each other’s heads. You are ridiculous, the pair of you! Though I must confess that Miss Janeway was quite right about your not resembling the cut-and-dried helper of strikers in distress, Jordan. You’re far, far too good-looking! I’ll cherish her fatally accurate description of you as a prize-fighting philanderer . . . for . . . the remainder of my life. She might

have added that there's even a suspicion of *diablerie* about you, my friend! No wonder that poor woman thought you dangerous!"

"She thought me," said he, reddening, "a kidnapper."

"How intriguing! But she must really be an early-Christian-martyr sort of woman, not to have fallen for you at sight. Such virtue awes one. I'd like to see that woman with my own eyes, to convince myself she's real."

"She's real enough. Hellishly real. As real as rattlesnakes and bubonic plague," he snorted.

"Oh well, she saved her virtue," said Dolly, coolly. "I love to see a poor working-girl save her cherished virtue from the machinations of handsome, fascinating villains, don't you?"

Astonishingly, he threw back his head and laughed.

Dolly nodded.

"One sees," she reflected, "that last night's experience hasn't hurt *you* any. You're getting a proper sense of humor, which means a sense of proportion. I think you are finding yourself, Jordan."

He looked at her with real humility.

"I found myself the day I found you, Dot," said Jordan Courtenay.

Frank smiled. He wasn't surprised. Colin Murray's defection had taken the power of surprise out of him, he thought. He knew Dolly, and his

uncle's capitulation to that little Circe was natural enough. That she returned his liking was evident. But . . . Miss Janeway leaving the house . . .

He turned to Aurora, and looked at her admiringly, gratefully. To know that she thought well of him was priceless, but he had to tell her the truth. That Uncle Jord hadn't misjudged him so very much, after all!

"I . . ." he began. "I . . . Miss Janeway, it's mighty good of you to say what you've said about me, but Uncle Jord wasn't so far off the track as you think. He really didn't do me so much injustice. I was a worthless sort of fellow."

"He did, too, do you injustice—horrid injustice!" said Aurora, indignantly. "Why, he said that you . . ." she stopped confusedly. What hadn't Jordan Courtenay said about his nephew? Idler, roysterer, profligate . . . and she had believed it all! "And you're not!" she finished, hotly. "Why, you are one of the best men in the world!"

"You are. She's right, Frank. You've got the angelic temperament, my poor fellow," said his uncle, commiseratingly. "And I did do you a great injustice. You were quite right about . . . certain of your friends . . . and I respect and admire you for . . . for standing up for them . . ." He flushed darkly. What hadn't he said about dancing Dolly?

“Meaning me, Frank,” said that little lady, equably. “Did you take up for me? You two must have had it, hammer and tongs! I can well imagine just how Jordan carried on about your friendship with poor me! When I fall out with him I’ll worm it all out of you.” She added: “Don’t look so wretched . . . and so scared, Jordan. You’ve made up.”

“And my dear boy, if you’ll come back home and let bygones be bygones, we’ll start again, turn over a new leaf, and everything will be all right,” said Mr. Courtenay, hastily.

“Go back to piffing? Fall down on Murray? Not on your life!” said the young man, instantly.

“Not at all. You can keep on with your work with Murray. It is a gentleman’s calling. One can go far as an architect, with proper backing. But you must resume your proper place in society; you owe it to your name, Frank.”

Frank smiled queerly.

“You mean that I’m to chuck all the friends I’ve made since I quit being no-account and went to work for my living?” he asked, gently. “I don’t think you understand just what that would mean to me, Uncle Jord.”

His eyes went to Miss Janeway, speculatively. What of her?

“Miss Janeway will lose nothing by having been associated with me for a while,” said Jordan Courtenay. “At the worst, it’s been only an un-

pleasant experience for her; and I'm sure I hope she'll profit by it! I shall settle a fixed income upon her. Also, I shall place what will be called the Courtenay Foundation at her disposal. She will overlook all disbursements. All I ask is that she shall take the entire responsibility, and leave me free."

Aurora shook her head.

"No," she decided. "You won't settle any income on me, Mr. Courtenay. I don't want it, don't need it, won't take it. I am going back to my own place, where I belong. I am going to live my own life, and I shall give *myself* to my work, something you've never done. Money is all very good, but money isn't the principal thing, even in charity. I have discovered that . . . thanks to you."

"What! You won't take charge of the Foundation?"

"No. Assume your own responsibilities."

"Women," said Mr. Courtenay, thoughtfully, "some women, at least, were much finer characters in the good old days when men were allowed to give them a whipping every now and then." He eyed Miss Janeway speculatively.

"Well, the beating *you* got last night seems to have excellent results, I must say. I hope you get another, very soon, for your soul's sake," said Aurora, without a smile.

"I hope they run you in again, too . . . soon,"

said Mr. Courtenay. "You need it!" He turned to his nephew. "When are you coming home, Frank?"

Frank shook his head. Get back to unreality, after having met reality? Leave Harkness to walk up his Calvary alone? Get out of reach of all those empty hands outstretched to him? Come up into ease and idleness and pleasures, out of the depths where the saviors, the forerunners of the race, sweat and labor and *know*? Lose that . . . for this?

"You're a brick, Uncle Jord," he said warmly. "Honestly, I like you better this morning than I ever did in all my life. You're a big man and I'm proud of you. But I've found my job . . . and it isn't here."

And Aurora Janeway, who had been watching him anxiously, clasped her hands and drew a deep breath. Her eyes were starry. She wasn't going to lose touch with him, then: he belonged to her world, not Dolly's!

"I told you the young idiot had the angelic temperament!" wailed Jordan Courtenay.

"I thank God for that!" cried Aurora Janeway.

"Oh, you glorious lunatics!" shrilled Dolly Tredegar, joyfully. "As God made you, He matched you! . . . Aurora Janeway, you make me proud to be a woman. . . . Frank, you make me proud I'm marrying into your family! Be-

cause I'm going to marry Jordan, you know—to cure the worst-tempered, strongest, nicest man I've ever met, of being too much in love with me." She laughed in their astonished faces; but her eyes were suddenly wet.

"My sainted aunt!" gasped Frank.

"Oh, not yet!" said she, laughing.

Aurora looked thunderstruck.

"Why, I never even dreamed of such a thing!" said she, looking from one to the other with puzzled eyes.

"Archangels never do dream of things like that," said Dolly. "I'm almost tempted to ask you to be my bridesmaid, Miss Janeway!"

Aurora dimpled.

"Will you?" said she, surprisingly. "Do you know, nobody has ever asked me to be a bridesmaid before? When do you want me? I'd perfectly love to be your bridesmaid!"

"Then that's settled. And now will you and Frank get out while I talk business to Jordan? Somebody's got to think intelligently for all of you, and as I'm to be a sainted aunt, it might as well be me."

## CHAPTER XVII

### EDEN FOR TWO

**T**HEY went out together, their intense awareness of each other making them both shy, but very happy, a tingling, heady, exhilarating happiness. In the distance the gates of Eden swung softly ajar upon rainbow vistas which trailed and melted into blue infinity. Every cloud had become but its own silver lining. The barrier of the Courtenay money had been swept aside, the road lay clear and sunny ahead. They two stood on equal ground, they were free to love each other without secret let or hindrance. They were face to face. That made the power and the glory: they were face to face.

She had had a sound night's sleep, undisturbed by troubling dreams. She had that morning said exactly what she wanted to say, what she thought should be said. She was extricating herself from what had become a false, an untenable, an impossible position. No longer was she a living reflection upon Francis Courtenay, that best and most beautiful of men! Therefore her conscience was at peace, her sense of justice satisfied as to

both uncle and nephew. Her duty well done, her spirit rebounded soaringly.

She turned to the young man a shining-eyed and rosy face, a kindling face so beautiful that it took his breath away, and dazzled him, and filled him with rapture and at the same time a little awe. She was more exquisite, he thought, than the Dawn for whom she had been named, and he thought that he was in truth walking beside one of the Immortals. For this was Aurora's hour, and she was meeting it at high tide, full-blooded, full-spirited, unspoiled, flame-pure.

The big girl had never so much as played at love. She didn't know how. There were no simulations or dissimulations in her, she had no pretty bag of feminine small tricks, none of the little artifices with which women beguile and befuddle men. And so she had everything to give, straightly, honestly—all that she was, all that she was going to be; virginal heart, crystal soul, flame of pure passion. All this Aurora Janeway brought lavishly, with full hands, to Francis Courtenay.

She was exquisitely happy with all her healthy being. She had found her one man, she could love him without shame. He didn't love Dolly, Dolly didn't love him. Dolly—inexplicable choice!—was going to marry another man! Even after having seen Francis!

In the hall they met Simmons, leading Sweet Percival on a leash. The dog had insisted on fol-

lowing his master that morning, and Simmons had joyfully taken him in hand. He had washed the pup in Frank's own old tub. He had afterward entertained Sweet Percival on lamb chops in the kitchen, meeting the cook's disapproving eye with a cold, stern glare. Gorged and glossy, Sweet Percival met his master with wriggles and loud yells of joy. The house echoed to it as of yore.

"Sweet Percival! Don't let him bark like that, Simmons!" exclaimed Frank.

"I am taking him upstairs to my office, Mr. Francis. He can have a nap on the divan. He always liked that," said Simmons, dotingly.

"Don't spoil him; he's become used to a boarding-house bed. A good-enough bed, too, but not up to that divan as I remember it."

Simmons looked pained.

"Simmons," said Miss Janeway, cheerfully, beaming at him, "there's going to be another change in the house. I'm leaving. Very shortly."

"Oh Miss Janeway! I trust no unpleasant consequences from yesterday!" You saw he was honestly shocked.

"Oh no, I hardly think I'll be put back in jail for having knocked down that nasty wretch. As it was, I think they were sorry they arrested me at all. What I mean is, I'm going back to my own place. You were right all the time, Simmons: I should never have been here at all."

“And Mr. Francis . . . ?” In his excitement Simmons dropped the leash and Sweet Percival rushed his god, almost knocking him down. He even bestowed indiscriminate licks upon the goddess, catching her in the eye and on the lips. Man and maid bent at the same time, reaching for the leash. There was a most audible bumping of heads.

“Oh Miss Janeway, I’m sorry! I mean I’m sorry about the dog making you and Mr. Francis bump heads. . . . Did you hurt yourself, Mr. Francis?” asked Simmons.

“I am supposed to have one of the hardest heads on record. . . . Miss Janeway, have I maimed you?”

“I shall probably grow one horn on the forehead, like a unicorn,” said Aurora, laughing. She rubbed her brows.

“And you are going, Miss Janeway?” asked Simmons. He tried politely and almost successfully to keep delight out of his voice.

“Yes, back to my own place, to my own house, to my own work. Mary Mack and I,” was the glad answer.

“And you, Mr. Francis? Your uncle has come to his senses? When are you coming home?”

Mr. Francis regarded the plunging and leaping Sweet Percival, recaptured and resenting it. Simmons was holding him in by main force. Mr. Francis shook his head.

“No, I think not. I fear this atmosphere isn’t good for Percy’s manners; he never behaves like this in his rooming-house. Many a decent dog has been ruined by too much luxury, Simmons. I shouldn’t like to subject him to temptation,” said Francis, virtuously. “Besides, I fear that the new missus mightn’t appreciate him. She likes cats, and he doesn’t.”

“The new missus? What new missus? Who? When?”

“My new aunty. The lady my uncle is going to marry.”

“Marry? Who to?”

“Ah, Simmons! Even you err. You thought she had her eye on me, and she hadn’t,” said the young man, with a shake of his black head, a wave of his slim hand. “She never did ask me, Simmons. I don’t believe, looking back, that she ever intended to ask me. In the meantime, my uncle has asked *her*. In consequence, we’re to have orange-blossoms, wedding-bells, rice, favors, all the rest of it. ‘*Keep your lamps trimmed and burning, for the bridegroom comes.*’ ” He sang the last dismally, through his nose.

“You mean to tell me somebody in her senses is going to marry *him*?” Simmons for once forgot the respect due the family. “Not that he hasn’t been very much better of late, and that careful with his clothes he’s a pleasure to look at. But . . . yesterday . . . A human hyena, the

police told Cullen! Mr. Francis, does the lady *know?*”

“She knows the worst. She has a queer taste for human hyenas. I think she dotes on human hyenas, especially when they look like Uncle Jord. I saw it in her eye. She has a remarkably beautiful eye. Trust Uncle Jord to pick a winner!”

Light began to break upon the astonished manservant. It befuddled him.

“Mr. Francis!” he gasped. “Is it . . . is it . . . Is he . . . is she . . . ?”

“Is it Miss Tredegar? It is. Is he going to marry Miss Tredegar? He is. Is she going to marry Uncle Jord? She is.”

Simmons blinked. He looked at Mr. Francis owlshly.

“I think it is time for the dog to have his nap, sir. I will take him upstairs to my office,” and he added, as if to himself: “Your first aunt, my late mistress, was a . . . a very different sort of lady—”

“My first was useful, but not strikingly ornamental or what one might call disturbing. My second is nothing else but. You always put things so intelligently, Simmons!”

Simmons almost ran away, taking the unwilling dog with him.

“Please ask me upstairs to your rooms,” said Francis to Aurora. “I want to talk to you. I want

to ask you to do me and a friend of mine a very great favor." And they went to Aurora's rooms, and she told Mary Mack the great news.

"Marry *him!*" cried Mary Mack, open-mouthed. "Why, we thought 'twould be your own self, Mr. Courtenay! Oh, I hope she's not behaving bad to you? I'd never think it of her!"

Aurora had talked over Mr. Francis Courtenay's position, character, and present affairs many, many times with Mary Mack, who heartily shared the girl's changed estimate of him. Mary Mack felt that she knew him.

"Behaving badly to me? Of course she isn't. She never has," said Francis, promptly. "She has given me a thumping big surprise this morning, though!" And he burst out laughing. "My aunt! Think of Dolly . . . *Dolly*, mind you! . . . becoming my aunt!"

"And you don't mind?" asked Mary Mack, staring at him.

"Why should I mind? I congratulate Uncle Jord with all my heart!" said the dutiful nephew.

"Well, if you look at it like that . . . a man can hardly be in love with his aunt," said Mary Mack, dryly. "Not that I'm wishful for you to be. 'Twould be a sinful complication," she finished piously. "However, she's one that knows her own mind, the wee thing. She wouldn't have him if she didn't want him, though why she wants him

there's no knowing. But she's one to straighten him out. None but herself could do it."

"She will make him an ideal wife. I know Dolly. She will make him happy and she won't allow him to make her unhappy."

"She will make him at least a bearable human being," said Aurora.

"'Tis an odd thing, love is. Him getting that bonny lass . . . and she caring for him! Well, well . . . But I was thinking all along 'twas you yourself, young man. 'Twas more fitting. It's glad I am you're taking it so well."

"I never loved Dolly, if that's what you mean. She never loved me. We both knew that. That's one reason why we could afford to be such good friends."

"And I am going to be one of her bridesmaids!" said Aurora Janeway, musingly. "Think of my being a bridesmaid at Mr. Courtenay's wedding!"

"Suppose she'd decided on me, as you thought she would?" asked Frank, lightly.

"I should have been sorry. You don't need her. He does," said Aurora, with unexpected shrewdness.

"Sorry? Yet you thought me in love with her! Miss Janeway, it isn't what a man needs; it's what he wants, after all, that counts."

"I thought it was inevitable that you should

love her. I didn't see how you could help it. I think she is the loveliest, the most fascinating creature I have ever seen. I . . . I love her myself," said Aurora, honestly.

"So do I. But I'm perfectly willing to have her marry Uncle Jord." He looked at Miss Janeway speculatively. "I wonder if I'd have been so willing if it had been you. You wonder how I kept from falling in love with Dolly. I wonder how my uncle ever kept from falling in love with *you*. I am very glad he didn't, though. I am sure you would never make a successful aunt. I am afraid I should abhor you as an aunt. Miss Janeway, promise me you'll never be an aunt to me!"

"I? I would rather be burned alive," said she, recoiling.

"Than be Mrs. Courtenay?" said Francis, holding her eyes.

"Than be Mrs. Jordan Courtenay," said she, blushing divinely. "And so would he," she added truthfully.

"Forgive him; he's in love with Dolly. And oh, Aurora Janeway, thank you for that 'Jordan'!" said Francis Courtenay. His eyes upon her loved her.

A queer panic invaded her. She wished to run away. She wanted to be by herself, to become acquainted with the new joy that filled her heart to overflowing. She adored him, but she wanted a

little breathing space, to think of him. She said hurriedly:

“Let’s not talk any more about Mr. Jordan Courtenay, except to wish him joy. Let’s talk about my plans, my more immediate duties. I am really going to leave here, the sooner the better, and there are a thousand things to be done. . . . Mary Mack, how do you like the idea of going back to our old quarters, to have the Chair back in the window?”

“I’d not been in this house above a week before I knew ’twas never our rightful place,” said Mary McKinstry, thoughtfully. “I knew we’d be fitting, sooner or later; and I knew I’d be glad, whenever it was. I never liked staying here, so while you were out I had nothing better to do than keep our own quarters ready and waiting. They’re that this minute. You can go back to-day or to-morrow, my lass, just as you like.”

“I wish I could. But I can’t make it within the week. Oh, Mary Mack, think of going back home . . . and the Chair again in the window . . .”

“Ay. Just,” said Mary, happily.

Thus lightly Aurora Janeway tossed away the Courtenay money and patronage and all it implied, rejoicing that she was free. Thus she freed herself from that sense of injustice, of occupying a false position, that had tormented her since she had met Francis Courtenay.

She couldn’t stay . . . in his place . . . as if

he were unworthy of it. He *was* worthy. He was good, he was kind. In her own work she had met those who had been benefited by his understanding heart, his sympathy, his delicately given help. Occasionally she had seen Brother Francis moving among the under dogs. She had learned much about Henry Harkness, too. She made it her business to know.

“Very good man, Harkness,” she had been told. “Very valuable.”

“Yes’m, Mr. Harkness is sure one good man. But that singin’ guy that runs with him, he’s the real stuff. Mr. Harkness, he acts like yer sky-pilot an’ yer doctor; but Mr. Courtenay’s yer *frien’*. You could tell that bird *anything* an’ know in yer heart he wouldn’t fall down on yer. He’d unnerstan’. Sings like a angil, he does, an’ makes any ole pianner sit up an’ talk. Yeah, he’s the goods.” The under dogs themselves had told that to Aurora, many times.

But she didn’t give Jordan Courtenay the credit due him for having sent Francis out to find himself. She never stopped to think that but for that he wouldn’t have gone to the under dogs. She was too tremulously happy that things were as they were, and that because things were as they were he wasn’t going out of her life. She could see him, she could know him, she could understand and love him, because he was what he was, in her world, among her own people.

“I have really come to you for help, Miss Janeway. Before you begin to plan, before you make any move, do you think you could take a short journey with me? I want you to get acquainted with a dear little girl who needs you. She needs you terribly. I don't know anybody else I'd trust to handle this matter.” And very delicately and kindly he told her about Winny Davis and Colin Murray.

“She loves him so passionately, so unselfishly, so completely that she's ready to make any sacrifice. She knows he needs her, and that's enough for Winny Davis. There's nothing clandestine. There couldn't be, with her. When you see her, when you listen to her, you can only see how true and good and pure she is, you know she can never be anything else. She makes you feel that going to him is the right thing, the only thing to do. And you know it isn't. She mustn't. You can see how much she needs you.”

“I should like to help her. I would do anything I could to help her. And him, too. I am sorry for him.”

“Murray's desperate. Winny Davis knows it, and that's her danger-line. We can't allow these two fine people to go on the rocks. Particularly Winny Davis.”

Aurora Janeway nodded. She knew Murray's wife; she had known many others like her. Pretty, empty, idle, selfish, self-righteous. Because Flora

Murray wasn't what she called bad, she thought herself good, and therefore entitled to an unlimited reward here and hereafter. Aurora was sorry for the man, and for the girl who really loved him. It was not infatuation that moved Winny Davis: it was love, unselfish love. It wasn't fair or—or moral—to make Winny Davis and Colin Murray pay for Flora Murray's sins of omission.

"I think we'd better catch this afternoon's train," decided Miss Janeway, swiftly. "I must clear up some necessary work, and in the meantime Mary Mack will have packed our suitcase. We'll be ready when you come for us, Mr. Courtenay."

"We will that. And I'm good and glad you're taking her out of town for a few days, Mr. Courtenay. She's needing it. And she'll be away from they daft striking bodies. D'ye see, I've never had to bear with her being dragged off to jail, before. I'm not so young as I was, and I can't be standing such shocks. She was in such a state when you brought her to me last night . . . Yes, I'm glad to leave town for a while," said Mary McKinstry.

They settled their plans, and Frank went to Simmons's office for the dog, whom he found lolling in silken ease on his own old divan, with Simmons in attendance.

"I hate to let him go. He remembers me, I think,

Mr. Francis. And he is such an affectionate, intelligent animal! He . . . he comforts me. I need it," said Simmons, dejectedly. "I had been in hopes you were coming back. The disappointment is hard for me to bear. I am growing old, Mr. Francis."

"I wish you would keep him for me for a few days, Simmons. You wouldn't mind?"

"Oh Mr. Francis! It would be a great comfort to me. I need somebody that I don't have to conceal my feelings from, right now."

"Try it on the dog, by all means. And buck up, Simmons. You're going to see a happy change in this house. The new missus'll see to that. And she is very kind. Honestly, genuinely kind. I want you to promise me one thing. On your honor."

"What is that, sir? You know I . . . I have a deplorable weakness where you are concerned, Mr. Francis."

Mr. Francis put his arm around the meager shoulders and gave them an affectionate hug.

"Lord love you, so you have, Simmy! I don't know why you should, you old duck, but I'm mighty glad it's so. Simmons, I want you to promise me faithfully, on your honor, that you'll stand by the new Mrs. Courtenay. There'll be times she'll need you. Old boy, she never cared for me nor I for her, but she does like Uncle Jord, and he's mad over her. Get that straight. She's

marrying him because she likes him. She's one of my best friends. And you're to stand by her, to run this house on greased wheels, to be her friend and ally, as you were mine. Is it a go?"

"I will do anything in the world to please you, sir. If the lady is a friend of yours, she is due my faithful service."

"So is Miss Janeway. *She's* getting out because she thinks my uncle didn't properly appreciate me. She told him so. Women get strange notions about us men, don't they, Simmons?" His words were light. His eyes, his voice, were full of feeling.

"I always said she was honest. I do not blame her for expressing her opinions to your uncle. I admire her. I respect her." He added: "I do *not* admire the McKinstry person. A difficult person to deal with, sir; I have avoided her as much as possible. I heard her refer to me—and she knew I could hardly fail to hear her—as 'yon old dried herring.' I dislike her manner of speech. I am very glad she is leaving."

"So is she. She said so. I suspect she is even at this moment playing upon the psaltery—or maybe the hautboy or the sackbut—and singing '*In exitu Israel,*' which, roughly done into our modern tongue, might be rendered: 'When we get out of here, away from this low-life bunch, including yon old dried herring Simmons, we'll sure

praise the Lord for it.' Don't choke, Simmons! As I was about to say, there's nothing like the point of view, is there?"

"No, Mr. Francis. And my point of view is that I am glad she is getting out. I, too, can praise the Lord for it," said Simmons, calmly enough.

Mr. Francis shook him playfully. Then he rushed back to Murray's office, to attend to that absentee's business. In spite of his worry about Murray, his anxiety about Winny Davis, his deeper anxiety about Henry Harkness, he couldn't help but feel joyous. He tried to subdue the feeling, but it wouldn't be subdued. He was joyous. Aurora Janeway was beautiful, approachable, human; she thought so well of him that she had vacated the Courtenay house to do him what she thought justice. She had faced his uncle, for him. He loved her. And he had begun to hope that she might, in turn, love him.

He took her and Mary McKinstry down to Sweetfern Farm that afternoon, and Winny Davis loved the blonde girl at once. The very sight of her soothed Winny Davis, struggling with the big problem of her life. She thought she had never seen anybody else quite so sane, so kind, so good. It was as if, stumbling along in the dark, she had suddenly seen a very clear, soft, steady light making safe the pathway. She felt that in Aurora Janeway she had found the perfect woman-friend, the one woman to whom she could safely tell

everything, and who would understand and help. Francis Courtenay had been kind and wise to bring the two together.

Murray greeted Miss Janeway pleasantly enough. He wasn't resentful of her presence, and this rather surprised him. But her simplicity, her classic lines, her art of melting into the background, so to say, and belonging to the picture as any beautiful natural object might, soothed him. He liked her, impersonally, as he liked, say, the Elgin marbles. She had an authentic beauty, and he respected her as he might have respected a moral law; she was close to the heart of Nature, he thought, but the true force of her lay rather in her goodness than in her intelligence, as it does with all large souls. And she was at once very simple and very wise; she had an instinct, a flair for humanity; and this, he reflected, made up for her lack of humor, adjusted the balance. On the whole, one would be less likely to tire of her, at close contact, than of more brilliant and witty people. And she was as independent as a well-fed cat; no more than the cat did she thrust herself upon one.

All goddesses, even the best of them, were at times a bit thick, Murray decided. Therein lay the salvation of man. This Pallas Athene of Frank's was wiser and kinder than most: she never asked questions, she kept out of one's way. She had seen at first glance that Murray lacked the com-

placency of the self-righteous, and he had won her sympathy. But . . . she wasn't going to let him have Winny Davis. She had come in and spoiled his golden hour; he was going to lose.

He didn't reflect that no man's golden hour ever reaches what he thinks must be its perfect end, its natural conclusion. Fate couldn't allow it. Life couldn't allow it. Man must be permitted to retain some illusions. He must be permitted to apply to circumstances the everlasting "If." Murray had thought that, as against Harkness, Frank, her traditions, her people, her place, her work, he could win: Winny Davis loved him. But when the struggle narrowed down to Aurora Janeway and himself, he knew he would lose. He couldn't win against her beauty of goodness, her strength, her sanity. As the days passed, he set himself to lose without noise, gallantly, going down like the captain of a foundering ship.

"You're going to win, you know," he told her one evening. "I shall lose. I am going into the outer darkness."

"But you wouldn't wish to take Winny Davis into the outer darkness, would you? It isn't her place. She'd suffer horribly, and you couldn't bear that."

"It wouldn't be darkness if she were with me," he said. "But you're bat-blind to the truth, and you won't let her come, and we'll both be desolate. And yet I don't hate you for it. I find myself lik-

ing and respecting you, Aurora Janeway. I should even like to use you—you are classic, you know—for decorative purposes.”

“That is the sanest and most hopeful thing I have heard you say since I’ve been here, Mr. Murray,” said she, smiling. “And you may use me for decorative purposes when you wish. Am I to be a caryatid?”

“I think you are to be the youngest of the Fates,” said he, somberly.

She fixed him with her clear gray eyes.

“I can’t understand why men go on butting their brains out on the stone wall of circumstances, and wreck their lives, and ruin themselves, and are so frightfully unhappy, when the remedy for most ills lies ready to their hands—their work! It is their hope and their salvation.”

“And do you really think that work by itself can fill a man’s life?”

“I think it is the compensation,” said she, very gently. “And I know you are a good workman.”

“Old stuff, Fate! I have my work, and I’m a good enough workman. But you can’t satisfy a starved heart on nothing but work.”

“No,” she admitted, remembering her own heart’s hunger for love. “I don’t think one can, either. But I do think work can help one to bear the burden of daily living . . . alone.”

“Oh, *I* believe in hell, too. In fact, I know all about it. It’s my home address,” said Murray.

“And you want it to be her home address, too, Mr. Murray?”

“Yes, I do. Then it wouldn’t be hell for either of us,” he insisted.

“It would be hell for you both, in its most awful phase, for you would have to make each other suffer, and to see the suffering. You might be willing to make her suffer: I don’t know, men are queer like that. But she couldn’t bear making *you* suffer. She always would know it was because of her, and she couldn’t bear that. She couldn’t bear having to stand by and hear others blame you, and justly blame you. I should condemn you, myself.”

“The same old shop-worn arguments!” said Murray, contemptuously. “What will the neighbors think? You never can get away from it, can you?”

“What our neighbors think of us determines the conduct of nations as well as individuals, Mr. Murray.”

He turned upon her with a sort of somber rage, all the more bitter because he knew the futility of it.

“My God! you women!” he exclaimed. “What you could be, what you demand, and what you are, what you insist upon remaining! Don’t you ever think for yourselves? You shriek for the universe, and cling to the squirrel cage. If one of you gets out of the squirrel cage, makes for the open, the

rest of you squeak and bite and chatter and frighten her back inside. . . .

“The freedom of the new woman, the revolt of modern youth . . . A girl, let’s say, is free to smoke and paint and drink and pet, to become an empty little fool, an expense and a snare and a nuisance; but is she free to live her own life, her own love life, her own sex life, sanely, honestly, naturally, in the open? Not at all! The church, the law, society wouldn’t stand for that sanity! What you’re all trying to do is to make human nature something it never was, never ought to be, never will be. And you won’t admit it. You won’t face facts. You’re afraid of consequences. And so we can’t live naturally, can’t love naturally—”

“Women in love are always facing the consequences, Mr. Murray. And . . . they always lose. You can’t sugar-coat the pill with revolts, with words, with theories. I know that Winny Davis would lose: She would end by losing . . . you. That is the law for women.”

“It is not!” he said furiously. “It is the damned conventions, the bugaboo that women have made into a law for other women!”

“Well, it is the law of life, of religion, of civilization as we know it. Without it, I rather fear that society as we understand it would disintegrate. For whether we like it or hate it, the conduct of women holds civilized society together. I have seen the consequences of flouting it.”

“That is for the weak, for cowards. What has it got to do with her and me?” he demanded arrogantly.

Aurora’s serene eyes pitied him.

“Everything,” she assured him patiently. “You think you are different, that the law of the common lot doesn’t hold for you. You are strong, clever, wise, an artist, above the law of plain people. Maybe you are different from other men. I hope you are. But to gamble on the chance, to stake her all in life on the bet that you are unlike all other men, is too great a risk. It isn’t fair to Winny Davis. Life has loaded the dice against her. Her very innocence, her high heart, her love for you are against her.”

“Don’t I know what she is?” he cried, goaded. “Don’t I know, who must lose her?” And he added, with a sort of bitter wonder: “And you know, and are willing to part us! You are willing to take her away from me!”

“I haven’t won, yet,” said she, honestly. “I have only succeeded in getting her to extend the time limit, so to say. She has not said she will give you up. The best I could do was to get her to agree to go back with me, to go on with her work, to stick things out for one more year. In that time she will neither see you nor write to you. More than that she wouldn’t promise. She hasn’t said she would abandon . . . her plan.”

“When you get her away from me, you will

keep her away. I don't blame you: from your point of view, you are only doing what is right. But you are wrecking my happiness forever."

"No. I am only trying to safeguard hers. And . . . I wish with all my heart I didn't have to, Mr. Murray!"

"All you have to do is to get out," he insinuated.

"I can't do that," said she, sorrowfully.

He looked at her for a long moment, laughed harshly, and turned on his heel and left her.

"I am going back with you, I am going back to work. I won't see him nor hear from him for a whole terrible year," Winny Davis told her, wearily. "That much you have won from me, I don't know why nor how. But let us stay here together for a little longer, Aurora!"

"We will stay for ten days. Then we must go," said Aurora, after a moment's thought. She was breaking in upon her own time, doubling her own work; but she didn't say a word of that to the other girl.

"And then . . ."

"Then you will pick up your work. Carry on."

"How hard the very good are to the very unhappy!" cried Winny Davis, piteously. "Oh, why did you make me promise!"

Aurora's eyes were full of tears. She made no reply, but she put her arms around Winny Davis, comfortingly.

“I never had a doubt, until you came,” sobbed Winny Davis. “I was thinking . . . I am thinking . . . always, of him, just him. But you have made me see that I would hurt him . . . I couldn’t be of much help to him, under these circumstances. He’d be always tormented about me, because he loves me. I . . . I’d die a thousand deaths rather than hurt him for a moment! Oh, Aurora, why are things as they are? Why is it wrong for me to love Colin?”

“It isn’t wrong for you to love Colin. But it wouldn’t be right for you to go to him.”

“If I were to murder somebody, torture somebody to death by hunger and thirst and cruelty, people would say that I was a monster, they would hate me and punish me for it. And yet everybody says I must do that to my own heart. I must starve my heart, I must cripple my life, I must torture my soul . . . I must let my youth perish of misery . . .” She began to cry, silently, hopelessly. After a while, she added drearily: “And while I am starving my youth to death . . . I can work. And when it is dead . . . I can go on working.”

Aurora Janeway put her arms around the weeping figure.

“You can work. Yes! And you will work . . . and go on working. That is not your punishment, it is your reward. Work,” she said. And her voice was a promise, her face like a lighted lamp.

Winnie Davis looked up and stared at her through tears.

“I have to see you when I hear you,” she sobbed. “If I didn’t love you, Aurora, I should be horribly afraid of you.”

## CHAPTER XVIII

### TO THE STARS!

**H**ARKNESS thought at first that he couldn't bear it. It seemed to him that his heart had been violently wrenched from his living breast, dragged up by the bleeding roots. Pain tortured and bewildered him. He loved Winny Davis. He hadn't known until this hour how much he cared, how much he really depended upon her for happiness, how greatly he looked forward to life with her. It would have been, perhaps, a hard life at first, but he thought it would have been a happy life. He would get on, there would be recompenses. He would work as few men work—for God and Winny Davis.

He knew now, sorrowfully, that it had been an impossible dream, that he had been living in a house builded upon the sands. In herself she hadn't fitted into his plans for her. Winny Davis, who adored all beautiful things, a girl like an exquisite piece of porcelain, to become the wife of a poor gospeler? He wondered he hadn't had common sense enough to understand how vain his dreams had been from the beginning. He had been so blind! And now he saw with so terrible a

clarity that very sharpness of vision forced tears into his eyes.

She hadn't meant to deceive him. Simply, Winny Davis hadn't known the truth about her own feelings. And he recalled his friendship with her—those happy, blithe, innocent days before Murray came and made her know her own heart. Even in the depths of his misery, Harkness couldn't blame her for preferring Murray. Murray was so perfectly suited to her temperament that she really had no choice, poor little girl! She couldn't help it. Harkness felt that if things had been different he could have given her up to the more suitable man without a whimper. As it was, Murray couldn't have her. The very idea of it sinned against Heaven. Harkness could give her up, loving her. But he meant to stand between Winny Davis and any possible harm.

Murray couldn't marry her: he couldn't divorce his wife. Very well, then, to reach Winny Davis he must not only demolish all the law-protected rights and privileges of Flora Murray, but he must step over the body of Henry Harkness. The thought of that gave the Dakotan a painful happiness; she didn't love him, but . . . he felt that he protected her, that he was essential to her safety, to her welfare in time and eternity.

He had been able to leave her at Sweetfern Farm only because Aurora Janeway and Mary McKinstry were with her. Murray was a gen-

tleman; nevertheless Harkness wouldn't have stirred thence if Frank hadn't brought Aurora Janeway. And so, with a heavy heart but not a fearful one, he had been able to go back to town with Frank.

Harkness was a simple and straight soul and he reacted to his own temperament. His studies, his appointed work, everything palled upon him; the world and all therein had lost its savor. But he must go on, whether he liked it or not. Gradually the pity and the terror of things as they are would grip him again. He thought humbly that he had been offering his Master a divided heart. Henceforth he would give all. He wouldn't, he couldn't tear her innocent and passionate image from his heart, but he would shut it up there and close the doors upon it; and, because of her, he would try to be more patient with all human weakness. He didn't know that, in taking the pure love of his youth into the secret shrine of his being, he was as it were putting a very precious ointment into an alabaster vase, and that it was to lend all his years an unforgettable fragrance, a sweetness which permeated all he thought and said and did. That much Winny Davis was permitted to do for Henry Harkness because he loved her.

But Francis Courtenay, whose days were devoted to Murray's work, and who read, studied, and went out with Harkness on his nightly labors, sometimes felt as though he had become a

looker-on in Gethsemane, while he watched his friend's desperate fight to pull himself together, to mend the broken pieces of his daily life. With his pity for the man, grew his affection and respect. "*I have fought a good fight . . . I have kept the faith.*"

And as his friend fought and won, his own faith was strengthened. No intelligent man can resist faith and courage. Harkness made no sound, but the effect spoke for him irresistibly. He had become gentler, more sympathetic, more understanding. There was a new note in him, a sweeter note, and at the same time a more authoritative one. Where others merely believed, Harkness seemed to know. He was beginning to gain in power. Nobody laughed any more at the ungainly figure in its ill-fitting clothes. You didn't have time to think of clothes and graces and such non-essentials when you looked into that homely noble face and met the sad, wise, patient eyes of Henry Harkness.

Harkness had had his dream and it was over; he let it go without bitterness. He was merely an extremely poor and to the casual eye astonishingly homely theological student, one at whom the worldly-wise might smile. He had, as Dolly Tredegar said, horrible taste in ties. Apparently, the most unpromising person; an apostolic person; would never go far, in this age. No fashionable church with an electric cross blazing on it for *him!*

His work had been almost altogether self-appointed. There were neglected things to be done, and he did them voluntarily. If nobody hindered him, nobody helped him, until Francis Courtenay came. He had followed his own bent, gone where he thought he was most needed, and there had been none to notice, except the very poor and the very definitely lost. He had no popular emotion-stirring tricks, he wasn't offensively familiar with Deity; he had no money-making revivalist antics to catch trifling souls to the blare of brass bands and well-paid hymn-singers. He was, instead, so profoundly in earnest that he prayed quietly; stumblingly at times. And he had no graces of oratory; he couldn't preach a rousing sermon; he could only speak as a wayfaring man who knew the dangers of the road, to other wayfaring men whom he wished to help.

Fortunately for him in this crisis, he found himself in demand. It was discovered that the common people heard him gladly. And so he was asked to come and speak to all sorts of listeners in all sorts of places. He had nothing to gain, except the hearts of his hearers; he had nothing to lose but his life, and he wasn't afraid of that. His thwarted affection for one girl was diverted into many channels of service to all men.

And then the irony of fate brought one of the most influential members of his church one night to a meeting at which Henry Harkness had been

asked to speak. The influential member, a very good and keen-witted man, sat back and watched the ungainly Dakotan towering head and shoulders above the audience that hung upon his words, profoundly moved by the homely pathos and sincerity of him. The man of affairs was astonished and stirred. He had the thrilling feeling of discovery. Who was this man Harkness, and how was it possible they knew nothing about him? There was tremendous power in reserve here, he reflected, if it were properly handled. Anyhow, he'd bear watching.

Satisfied, after a quiet following up of his find, of the potential usefulness of the ugly, arresting young man, the very important member took the floor at the next board meeting and spoke of his discovery to others almost as influential as himself.

“He is astonishing; one remembers him. A sort of dynamic force. There's something in him, some quality of faith and personality that sets him apart and makes him different from anybody I've ever known: something that the Apostles must have had; I think it must be selflessness. As if he knew that nobody had power to do him any harm, and he was made free and fearless to bear witness to the truth. An ambassador quite sure of his credentials and the backing of his King, if you see what I mean. I am free to say that he impressed me very much; and I am not an emotional man.

Gentlemen, I have been seeing and hearing one of the world's true, great evangelists at the outset of his ministry."

They thought it must be indeed an unusual young man who could arouse so much feeling in so cautious and self-contained a person. They were all of them quiet and conservative men, and their personal investigation of Harkness was very noiseless but very thorough. And they were satisfied as to the correctness of the influential member's judgment. He really had made a find.

Harkness suddenly found himself being unostentatiously helped. Men very far above his humble sphere appeared ready and willing to assist him. They let him know that they wished to lessen the bitter grind of poverty, to make his upward path somewhat easier, to give him more time for his studies, more opportunities for useful work. But Harkness, used to poverty and hard work, was inured to both. He didn't mind the daily grind, which had become for him usual and familiar. His new friends found themselves fronting a somewhat unusual dilemma, not without irony. He looked upon their help as a dispensation of Providence, not in his own behalf but for others; he had enough for himself, he thought. And he gave away, with delight, all that they provided for him. The more he had, the more he could give!

But, being wise, they persevered. They couldn't induce him to leave his bare room, though with

Francis Courtenay's connivance they added certain comforts. He accepted and used these with the simplicity of a child, for Harkness was entirely free of ordinary prides. And they added to his wardrobe, replacing the various articles as he gave them away. The influential member explained to Frank that one didn't often have the opportunity of indulging in vicarious charity.

Upon no one person was the effect of Harkness more profound than upon young Mr. Francis Courtenay. He still used his social gifts at Harkness's needs, his fine barytone being always in great demand. When Aurora Janeway and Winny Davis returned, he very often took them with him when Harkness was to speak.

Aurora and Mary McKinstry were back in their old lodgings, and the Courtenay adventure was, apparently, ended. The Chair once more occupied the window, the flowers that Bransome Janeway had loved blossomed gaily in his window-boxes. Mary Mack's cat watched Aurora's canary with tireless topaz eyes. People came and went. Life went on.

At the earnest pleading of Dolly Tredegar, to which was added the moral suasion of the bishop, Aurora had consented to handle a yearly sum donated by Jordan Courtenay, to be used as she thought best. It was Mr. Courtenay's gesture of apology, or otherwise washing his hands of troublesome charity and at the same time satisfying

his conscience. Miss Tredegar had prevailed upon him to make the offer, and upon Aurora to agree to it. But even at that, the sums she would handle were much less than the donor had intended, and he was sulky and chagrined at the outcome.

“She ought to be in heaven, devil take her!” said Jordan Courtenay, angrily. “But I’ve got even with her, the big Swede! She doesn’t want to handle Courtenay money, eh? Well, I’ve named the hulking hussy in my will, unknown to her, and the day’ll come when she’ll be forced to swallow some Courtenay money! I don’t give a fig who or what or how or why she spends it upon or for; it’ll be Courtenay money, and she can’t get away from *that*.”

“Do you know, Jordan, I think she will eventually marry Frank. And that will mean heaven for them both. I think they’re in love with each other,” said Dolly Tredegar, thoughtfully.

“And it is all my fault! I alone am to blame. I brought her on him. She and that wire-haired Westerner who looks like a caricature of Abraham Lincoln have just about ruined my nephew, between them.”

“I’d hardly call Frank ruined, Jordan. Colin Murray tells me he is making good, that he has a great future. He says he has a really terrifying capacity for hard work. He says it doesn’t hurt Frank a bit to run around with Mr. Harkness, who seems to be a most remarkable person. Even

the bishop admits he's a good man, and you know the dear bishop hasn't any use for evangelists, particularly when they don't belong to his church. Church people hate rivals who steal their sheep and re-brand them, don't they? Rancorously. Yet the bishop himself told me he thought quite well of Mr. Harkness. He says he does very well for a schismatic. Wasn't that nice of the bishop?"

Mr. Jordan Courtenay looked at his betrothed with a slight suspicion. She was all that was beautiful and perfect. But she did have queer little ways of poking fun, at times.

"Nevertheless I feel guilty of bringing Miss Janeway upon my nephew's head. I can only say that I didn't know what I was doing when I did it," he complained.

"She is the only truly beautiful woman I have ever seen. And she is as good as she is beautiful. I wonder at you."

"Why, Dot, she isn't a patch on you!" exclaimed Mr. Courtenay.

"She is too! And she's to be my own bridesmaid. Don't forget that."

"I shan't see anybody but the bride, at my wedding," said he. "As a matter of fact, I don't seem able to see anything or anybody else when the lady I am going to marry happens to be present."

And Dolly laughed and kissed him. For Dolly was quite satisfied with her fiancé. She laughed at him, teased him, but she loved him in her own

way. She wasn't cold-blooded, or mercenary, but she was shrewd, and she had common sense. She hadn't the passion for him that Winny Davis had for Colin Murray; or the ecstasy of love that Aurora Janeway gave to Francis, but she cared for him, and she understood him very much better than Aurora or Winny Davis would ever understand Frank or Colin. Jordan Courtenay was a very strong man, an unusually handsome man, and he was single-hearted in his passion for her. He loved Dolly better than anybody else had ever loved her, and she knew it. He would always adore her. There would never be anybody else for him. Her wishes would be his laws. He, who domineered over others, willingly and gladly bent his stiff neck to her yoke. Dolly would use the reins lightly, skilfully, surely. She would lead him gently, but she would lead him. Already the change that happiness had made in him was marked. He was radiant. On the whole, Dolly was satisfied. She meant to make him happy; and she was determined to see to it that he made her happy. The prospect of being Mrs. Jordan Courtenay was not displeasing to her.

She had certain engagements which she had to fulfil, and he bore the necessary delays impatiently. Dolly stood firm. He had to wait. But as soon as these engagements were over, they would be married.

“And you’ll have to kiss my bridesmaid,” said Dolly. “Honestly, I care more for her than for any other woman I’ve ever known. I adore her. Jordan, can’t you two be friends? *Please!*”

“I will love her, Dot. But I can’t promise to like her. She is too big and too good. . . . Besides . . . she is a reminder of . . . of things I wish to forget.”

“But you’re going to marry the dancing-woman, Jordan. Surely that’s repentance with a vengeance!” said Dolly, gaily. “There . . . don’t look so stricken, you blessed silly. Simmons told me yesterday that he was glad I was coming into this house, now that Miss Janeway had left. So if Simmons and I are satisfied, why shouldn’t you be?” And she stood on tiptoe and held up her beautiful laughing mouth.

And in the meantime Winny Davis, as she had promised Aurora Janeway, slipped back into her own place and went on with her own work, doggedly. But the glamour of hope had faded from her skies, and something had gone from her. There wasn’t the old spontaneity in her work or in herself, and she realized that she wasn’t living up to her old self, to the promise that had been hers. She couldn’t. She did her best, but she was paler, and her brown eyes didn’t dance any more. They were wistful, they questioned you dumbly. You saw that she was puzzled as to why life should

hurt her so much. Aurora Janeway had her with her as often as she could. Francis Courtenay was always at her command.

Winnie Davis made no slightest effort to avoid Harkness; the two were very gentle with each other. It was almost as if they consoled each other. She wondered, sometimes, why she couldn't love him.

"But I suppose it was because I knew he wouldn't really need me . . . and Colin did . . . Colin does. Henry wants to save my soul . . . and I can't make him understand that I love Colin better than my own soul. . . . Colin *is* my soul. I haven't got any to save, without him. I can't even work. I wish I could die!" thought Winnie Davis.

Yet Harkness stimulated her, and the friendship of Francis Courtenay comforted her. She guessed that the two young men stayed on at the rooming-house now mainly on her account; they wouldn't leave her, and she was grateful. But she was weary of all things under the sun. Love was the warmth of life to Winnie Davis, and without it she pined and drooped. Sometimes Aurora came and carried her off, and Mary Mack, won by the girl's pretty ways, would seat her in the Chair and make scones for her, would even succeed in making her laugh at times. She mothered Winnie Davis as she mothered Aurora. Mary Mack had an apt

tongue and a wise philosophy of life, she was shrewd and kind, and she praised the cakes from Alabama lavishly. Winny Davis was more cheerful when she was with Mary Mack.

Murray the girl never saw. He came no more to Frank's room and smoked and looked at sketches, and talked cleverly. Nor did he write to her. There was but one sign of affection: the square boxes of violets still came to her, and these she hugged to her heart and kissed and cried over. She was very lonely; she missed him; she wanted him. Nobody else could take his place; she wanted him.

Sometimes when Henry was speaking, by request, at some last-hope mission, she went with Frank and Aurora to hear him. Winny Davis would sit with her hands folded in her lap and her eyes riveted on his kind face. Sometimes her lips quivered as she listened. He, too, had suffered. Nobody could speak like that who hadn't suffered keenly. That's what she had meant to Henry—suffering. He had only needed her, to allow him to experience suffering as a part of his spiritual growth. But he hadn't needed her humanly. Not as Colin needed her.

Henry would go on, as she had told him. He was an apostle, wise and kind and sad, but the atmosphere of loneliness was necessary to him. It was as it were his native air, and he thrived upon it. He had the celibate soul. She wondered just

what credit she herself deserved, in Henry's developing powers of mind and heart. He would never have developed, become what she divined he was going to become, if he hadn't loved her or if she had loved him, if she hadn't loved Colin so much. Oh this queer, terrible, lunatic, divine world!

But Henry, by the power of his personality, gave her courage to go on. He seemed so sure! And as she listened to him, she realized that she, too, must walk the lonesome road; she and Colin could not tread the happier pathway together. *Henry was right.* The faces of all her people rose before her; her mother's smile, her father's eyes. . . . Oh no, she and Colin couldn't have each other. It wasn't one short year that stretched before her emptily: it was a lifetime, a whole empty lifetime. And she might live to be an old, old, old woman! Uncontrollable tears ran down her face, they splashed on her clasped hands.

A hand firm and kind took hers, and she turned her tear-misted eyes upon the face of Francis Courtenay. The whilom he-butterfly was regarding her with eyes of tenderest understanding. He was holding her hand in a gentle and brotherly grasp.

"Courage!" he told her in a low voice. "Courage! To the stars, Winny Davis!"

That had been the motto of her family, when it had been a family. There were old seals at home

with *Ad astra* on them. The high-strung girl lifted her head of a thoroughbred. In tears, with a quivering mouth, she smiled at him.

“To the stars!” said she, very gallantly.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE REWARD OF VIRTUE

**W**HENEVER Mrs. Colin Murray returned from her travels and took up her residence in her own luxurious quarters in the Murray house, the whole residence—except the one floor that Murray reserved for himself—was hers. Rooms never used in her absence shed their enshrouding covers, light and warmth and color were once more in evidence. She liked flowers, and flowers were everywhere. Her favorite perfume, delicate and pervasive, subtly charged the air. Like most frigid women, she basked in warmth, and Murray felt stifled in the hothouse atmosphere.

She had an exotic temperament, she said, upon which her immediate surroundings reacted; if everything didn't match her temperament, it made her perfectly miserable: her soul felt colors. She amused herself hunting for things to match her temperament. Usually only those things the most expensive matched it, as even the little dogs she affected had to ring the exact note. When her temperament changed its mind, as often happened, everything around her must change with it. As,

for instance, an early American room, simple and costly, must change over-week into what the decorators said was an Italian Renaissance one; or maybe it might be Spanish of the fifteenth century. Her temperament craved change, and thus her rooms were always up to the minute, always smart, and, as she had good taste and an excellent eye for effect, they caused much envy. Murray always hated them. He abhorred the subtle scent which permeated them and clung and cloyed. They made him perspire.

Husband and wife maintained separate apartments, separate keys, separate service, under the same roof, and their lives never really touched. Neither ever intruded, and both were, as a rule, carefully polite.

“As I often say,” she was fond of explaining to her friends, “I feel sure that many marriages go on the rocks because married people are, for one thing, too often rude and inconsiderate; and, worse yet, they aren’t willing to allow each other any privacy. The minute one marries the average person, he or she seems to take it for granted that one doesn’t need to be polite to one’s husband or wife, and that one hasn’t any right to privacy. This is one of the commonest and maybe the worst errors in marriage, because politeness and a certain decent privacy are absolutely essential if one is going to live with another person in any sort of happiness or peace. Prospective brides and bride-

grooms should be compelled to undergo a course of etiquette and swear to maintain it.

“Now,” she explained, “my temperament demands not only beauty but privacy. So far as politeness goes, I like to treat my husband as though he were a complete stranger, and I made it a rule, early in my married life, never to interfere with his business or to ask embarrassing questions.”

And really, you understand, she didn't. She wasn't at all interested in Murray's business. All her friends applauded what she said: they said Flora was clever. She was. Very.

“You really ought to write a book, Flora—‘Murray on Matrimony.’ It would sell like hot cakes,” they told her admiringly.

Flora smiled.

“Maybe I might, sometime. But not now. Colin might read it,” she said cleverly. And she thought how patient she was, and how little her husband understood her or appreciated her.

Usually, when she came home and meant to remain for any length of time, she and Colin held what she liked to refer to as a business conference. She always sent him a little note in advance, stating that she wished to have a business talk with him, so everything would be quite plain and straight.

Murray smiled grimly when he received those notes. He knew the uselessness of any attempt to explain, argue, reason. What she didn't want to

understand she wouldn't understand. Blindness and deafness were hers when she didn't wish to see or hear things unpleasant to her. The two generally parted without an open quarrel; he found it better to pay than to quarrel, for a quarrel reacted disastrously on his work. It made him very nervous, as she knew. This enabled her to turn the feminine trick of taking unfair advantage.

He liked his quarters in the Murray house; they were very comfortable and his Japanese was efficient and devoted. This arrangement suited him and Flora, who liked to keep up appearances. Anyhow, she didn't have to live in the house for over-long periods. As Murray's vogue increased and his income tax expanded, she indulged her taste for travel more and more. She preferred her little apartment in Paris, where she shone in the American colony; and Murray was so glad to have a large section of the Atlantic Ocean between him and his dear helpmeet, that he paid without a whimper. He liked her out of sound and out of sight.

Colin Murray was congenitally generous, as she knew; and his tastes were those of a cultivated man, as his rooms showed. But he wasn't luxurious, he wasn't extravagant, and he was personally abstemious. She was sultana-like. She reveled in costliness, she lapped luxury as a cat laps cream. He remembered with sad wonder how he had once adored her, this silly odalisque, and

he was ashamed for them both. It made him feel abject to understand her so well. It didn't seem decent to see her spirit so nakedly, all its secret defects and ugliness revealed so starkly. Therefore he covered her spiritual nudity with the mantle of a scornful charity, a contemptuous generosity, as generous men do with ungenerous women. Nor did he complain; what was the use? In his heart he despised her: and he felt that he must pay for that.

She took everything and asked for more. She hadn't the slightest compunction. She was a good woman, and she hadn't been to blame. She hadn't separated herself from him but he from her. He had taken over an entire upper floor of the house and left the rest of it to her, on the specious plea that her constant running back and forth upset him. And he made it plain that he didn't want her in his rooms. He'd even gotten himself a slick-skinned Japanese who was of no earthly use to her, who had refused to attend the door, or to wait on her guests at one of her receptions. Colin had backed him up. Told her if she didn't have enough servants of her own, to get more, but she mustn't meddle with his private arrangements.

She ignored and detested the Japanese after that, nor did she ever interfere with Colin in the slightest. If he wanted to go his own way, so much the better. *She* kept up appearances. She hugged to her heart the obvious fact that she was a good

woman. Nobody could say a word against her. If he wouldn't live with her, the least he could do was to support her properly, as she'd told him a thousand times.

She really didn't want to live with him. She didn't want to live with anybody else, either. Things suited her perfectly as they were. But she concealed her entire satisfaction from Murray. It had genuinely shocked her when he first asked for a divorce. That had been some years ago, before the coming of Winny Davis, at the time he moved into separate rooms.

"Why should you want a divorce?" she wondered. "I never bother you. *I* don't ask for a divorce, do I? I don't believe in divorce. I consider it vulgar, the admission of failure. I don't want to appear as a divorced woman. People are too likely to misunderstand one. Anyhow, you can't sue me. You haven't any grounds."

He looked at her curiously. Complacent, perfectly self-satisfied. From her point of view, blameless. Incased in a proof-armor of selfishness. He said wearily:

"Oh, if you prefer to hang on . . . I thought maybe you might like to go free of me. Marry somebody else, maybe."

"You mean you might want to marry somebody else. Men are like that. They are all fickle and faithless," said she.

"I hardly think I'd ever want to face the pos-

sibility of another wife," said Murray. "You've done that much for me, at least!"

"And a good thing for you, too," said she, tartly. "But you never thank me for anything. You don't in the least understand me."

"No? Well, I am going to thank you now for teaching me to distrust and despise women," said her husband, gallantly.

From time to time he returned to the subject. It made her angry. Talking to her about divorce! Of course she wouldn't consider it. But other wives wouldn't be so patient, let her tell him! When other wives had to deal with husbands as disagreeable as hers, they allowed themselves to become interested in other men. Did she? Not at all. And it wasn't as if she couldn't, if she'd wished. Other men found her agreeable, desirable, even if her own husband didn't. Other men appreciated her. But she had remained faithful to him. Let him be never so horrid and rude and cruel and purposely misunderstanding, she would be true. She could never dream of being anything but true; it was her nature to be faithful, as everybody who really knew her must bear witness. Her intimate friends, who knew how slighted and neglected she was, were without exception sorry for her. They all said she was an exceedingly patient wife—

"Oh, go to hell!" thought Colin Murray, disgustedly, hopelessly.

When he discovered himself to be deeply and

sincerely in love with Winny Davis Culpepper, when he knew he wanted to marry Winny Davis, —more than he had ever wanted to marry Flora,— Murray once more took up with his wife the matter of a divorce. She was at home again, fresh from social triumphs in London and Paris, and she was in an amiable and complacent mood. Also, he thought he had never seen Flora so pretty.

“Flora,” said he, bluntly. “You know I have asked you many times for a divorce. This time I am asking you to grant it for my own peace of mind. You . . . you won’t be a loser by it, Flora.”

“Oh! So there *is* another woman!” said she, and her eyes narrowed. She puckered her lips.

“You will?” he asked hopefully.

“No. I will not,” said she, after a moment’s reflection. “I don’t think it would be moral. Besides, I have told you I won’t appear as a divorced woman. I meant it. I won’t be misunderstood, nor occupy an ambiguous position. It would be an insult to me to have you marry another woman.”

“You refuse? Even though you know you don’t love me, nor I you? And that I do love another woman?”

“For that reason if for no other,” said she, doggedly. “You have no grounds against me, Colin, I tell you. I will not. I will not. Never! Please understand that. I am going to visit the Pelhams next week; they are very nice people, but

what would they think of me if I appeared before them as a woman her husband had discarded? I am your wife. I remain your wife. I will not divorce you—for your own sake, as well as mine. I have a standard to maintain.”

And she went to the Pelhams, in Washington, and had a beautiful time. All you had to do, she decided, was to keep your head, not rock the boat, and remain firm; and after a while your man would come to his senses and be grateful to you for saving him from making a fool of himself. Just don't pay any attention to him, even when he pleads frantically with you, as Colin did more than once. Just tell yourself that you know what is best for him—and for you, too, incidentally—and become blind to his silly tears and deaf to his silly outbursts of despair. . . .

“When I married you, I meant to keep my vows. I intended to remain your wife, no matter what happened,” she told him gently and inevitably. “I am not going to allow you to make me angry with you, Colin. I am going to continue treating you as though this had never happened, as though I hadn't been wronged and insulted by you.”

There had been very bad half-hours, at the end of which she always emerged victorious. She wouldn't divorce him and he couldn't divorce her. And she was very nice and polite and never brought up the subject, and never asked him any

questions about the other woman. She kept herself busy and amused; and let him go his own way, without comment. She gave the most delightful little teas and luncheons, with bridge. She really knew how to entertain; her rooms were smart, her color schemes unique and charming; she was always exquisitely dressed, and many of her guests were emphatically worth while. Murray had the satisfaction of knowing that his pretty wife was more successful socially than he would ever be. She looked like a lovely piece of old Dresden china, dainty and fragile. Her eyes were wistful and appealing in her pink-and-white face, her pretty mouth was even slightly sorrowful.

“Probably she’s hungry,” thought Murray, brutally. “Starving herself to keep her shape! She looks as delicate as a wind-flower, when the truth is she’s as strong as a mule. And she’s as soft as the best Portland cement, especially in the heart.”

Flora liked to give her husband a brief outline of her plans after she had arranged everything to suit herself. When Colin came back from Sweetfern Farm, looking worse than she had ever seen him, she waited for a couple of weeks before sending him the accustomed note that she would like to see him on business. A Colin she didn’t know presented himself—a grim, pale man with hard eyes and a straight-lipped mouth. Her rooms were pervaded by the delicate scent she loved, and he

frowned. She sat among her many pretty little pillows, her slim feet in satin mules, the many shaded lights softening her charming face.

“I had a wire from dear Mamma this afternoon, Colin. She hasn’t been well, and she’s asking for me. So I thought I’d better tell you I am going to her to-morrow morning.”

“Nothing serious?”

“Oh no, but she wants me with her and I want to go. I don’t know just how long I may stay. And I thought, too, that before I go I’d better talk to you about some changes I want made in my rooms. They haven’t been touched in some time, you know—”

“Something like a year, to be exact.”

“—and they are rather passé. They are beginning to make me nervous and unhappy. You know how it is when a color scheme goes stale on you and jars on your temperament. I saw a perfectly beautiful suite in Paris, the most original thing, and I’d like to copy it . . . with some modifications. No one in America has anything in the least like it. Of course it’s somewhat expensive, but I hope you don’t mind?”

“I hope I shan’t,” said he. “What difference is it supposed to make whether I do or not? I am not living in the rooms.”

“And would you object if I added to my little string of pearls?”

“I don’t know. Do you need them?”

He was pale and thin, there was gray on his temples, and his eyes looked hot and tired. Winny Davis was back at her own work, and he was back at his, and he could neither see her nor do anything for her. Flora was asking that new and expensive decorations be replaced by newer and more expensive decorations: and would he mind if she added to her string of pearls? Murray's lips writhed.

"Of course I need them!" said she, sharply, staring at him. "I should have had them long ago, and I would have, if I'd had a husband who cared. Pearls are my birth-stones, and I adore them. . . . You once called me your pearl of great price," she reproached him.

"There was no doubt about the price," said he, and he looked at her queerly.

"But I am only asking you for one or two, Colin. I am not at all greedy, and you can very well afford to let me have them."

And then Murray did the strangest thing. He came closer, and stood looking down at her, and he smiled stiffly.

"I am glad you sent for me to-night," he told her. "I have been thinking about things, too, Flora. Let us leave the pearls for the moment; we'll go back to them later. As you know, I've been pestering you for a divorce. Told you I wanted it rather badly. I—"

"But I have told you a thousand times I won't.

I married you intending to remain your wife," she interrupted him. "You don't have to put up with my presence, Colin. I don't even have to stay under your roof. I am permitted to travel without giving grounds for divorce, especially since you seem glad to see me go. And you have no grounds, not the shadow of any. I have always been perfectly faithful to you."

"And you intend to remain my wife?"

"I intend to remain your wife," said she, firmly.

"I am very glad to hear you say that, Flora. I'm afraid I haven't always understood you," said Murray, and his eyes gleamed. He was desperate. "So you will remain my wife, in my house, not in name only, Flora, but in fact. I've thought it over, and I'm going to be your very devoted husband from now on, my dear. But as your husband may I say I think you're rather extravagant and I don't altogether approve of it? So I am going to give you what I think is a just and liberal allowance, and you must live within your income. If you go over it, I shall refuse to honor your bills, and stop your credit. I don't think it right for my wife to set the example of boundless extravagance."

"You will dare to do that?" she gasped.

"Husbands have some rights, even in America, that paradise of pampered pretty women," he told her. "You are going to remain my wife, dear Flora, and you must live up to it. You must take

on your job. You've shirked things heretofore, but we'll change all that. I have thought it all out and I know exactly what's going to happen. To begin with you, you are going to have a child."

"I? I will not!" she cried, and turned pale.

"Oh, yes you will, Flora. I mean to get something *I* want out of life, and you're going to give me a child. Don't begin all the old arguments. I may as well tell you the truth: I don't give a tinker's damn for your figure, or your clothes, or your social engagements, or your discomfort, or your spoiled looks, or your pain. It is your duty as a wife—a very expensive wife—to bear me an heir, and you are going to do it."

"What is the matter with you?" she asked, shrinking back. "Colin, are you mad?"

"You are the matter with me," he replied. "I have allowed you to double-cross and cheat me, Flora. But you haven't driven me mad . . . yet. Get ready to stay home, then, and be my wife. I am mortally tired of paying for a peripatetic matrimonial loafer. I have made up my mind, Flora, that if you stay with me you shall give me fair exchange. I demand a child."

"But I might die!"

"All right. But I don't think so. You are really as strong as a horse."

"I don't want a child!" said she, hysterically.

"I do. That is why you will have one. You are my wife, you know."

“But you know I am a delicate woman, a nervous woman! I couldn’t stand it! I might die!”

“We’ll run the risk,” said he, composedly. “In the meantime, to satisfy you that you won’t be in the least danger of death, I’ll have a couple of specialists in to look you over. They’ll get you ready. And I make you a promise: when you present me with a baby I’ll present you with the pearls you want. Not before. And if you’ve sent for decorators to come here and tear up your rooms again, countermand the order. I won’t have it. These rooms will do quite as well as they are . . . for the present. Afterward . . . if they jar on your temperament, it will be quite understandable, and I’ll have them changed to suit you.”

She looked at him with growing fear. She had never seen nor heard him like this. It seemed to her that he was actually threatening her life. What he proposed was not to be endured. And there he stood, his hot, tired eyes gleaming in his chalky face. Suddenly she was both angry and frightened.

“Oh . . . you brute!” she gasped.

“Not at all, my dear. Merely your husband. You wish to remain my wife, don’t you? I am simply taking you at your own word and proposing in my turn to remain your husband. We’ll forget about the divorce. We’ll live together. I’ll support you in the style to which I intend to accustom you. And we’ll have a family. You’re going to

have children . . . several, maybe. That will depend, naturally, upon how you manage with the first."

She saw, then, that something had happened to him. She could no longer evade him. He meant what he said. Hideous possibilities confronted her.

"But you don't love me!" she exclaimed, aghast. "You told me yourself that you don't love me."

"I support you in idleness." He smiled damnably.

"I shall ask the law for protection from you!" said she, violently.

"Get out an injunction?" he asked ironically. "Try it. Be a laughing-stock? No, Flora."

"But I have made arrangements to go to Mamma to-morrow morning! What on earth am I to tell her?"

"I shan't stop you. Go. Tell her anything you like, tell her nothing. Please yourself about that. But understand this clearly, Flora! When you return, you return as my wife. I look upon you as the prospective mother of my children."

"Oh!" she clasped her hands in a sort of frenzy.

"You are not so young as you were, I know, and there may be some risks," he went on composedly. "But we'll take the risks. You owe me that much, Flora, and I have made up my mind to collect . . . before it's too late. Don't delude

yourself that I won't, that I don't mean exactly what I say."

She glared at him, but he met her glare smilingly.

"And now that we have settled this most important matter, you may visit your mother, but you mustn't stay away from me too long. Remember that I'll be waiting at home for you. Give me a list of what you need at present, and I'll check it over. Good night, Flora, and pleasant dreams."

At the door he turned. His face was still chalky, his eyes still glittering. So he stood regarding her.

"If your mother is not really in need of your presence," said he in a deadly voice, "and you overstay your time, I shall regard it as deliberate shirking and desertion. Your job is here. Come back to it as soon as you can . . . and carry on. Do you understand?"

Their eyes locked—his hard and bright, hers full of amazement, anger, fear.

"I see you do," said he, bowed, and left her.

It came to her with something of shock that he hated her. And she knew, too, that she hated him horribly, and that she was afraid of him. She didn't want to live under the same roof with him. It wasn't pleasant to contemplate.

She had always been, she was sure, a good woman, a blameless wife. A frigid woman, she gave herself great credit for being faithful to a

husband who didn't want to live with her, and, because she was good where she was never tempted to be otherwise, she thought that all the deadly virtues were hers. She had no spiritual unease. She was like that old French noblewoman who was sublimely certain that Monseigneur le bon Dieu would never think of being anything but agreeable to a person of her quality.

And now came Colin—Colin of all men!—and threatened her. Flora Murray did some quick thinking. She had to protect herself against such dire possibilities as Colin's demands upon her. To anything that threatened her she reacted as surely and intuitively as a fox, that other clever predatory little animal. Colin had become refractory, nor would he ever again be easy to deal with. Her present pleasant mode of life was at an end; she saw that clearly.

For an hour she sat, planning swiftly, weighing this course, rejecting that. Then, her plans cleverly outlined, she summoned her maid with orders to begin to pack. She wished she had saved more money, but it wasn't too late to avert disaster. She was going home to her mother on a visit, and then she was going to see her Grand-aunt Martha and stay with her for a while. She smiled. An hour before train-time next morning, Mrs. Murray was ready for her campaign, whatever it was. She took all her trunks with her.

Her mother wasn't at all seriously ill. She ex-

pressed herself as delighted . . . and surprised . . . to see Flora. Flora left most of her trunks crowding her mother's house, and, to the family's relief, took herself off to her grand-aunt, who also said she was surprised to see her. This was a rather terrible old woman, very wealthy and very narrow.

Flora, at her prettiest, simplest, most appealing, had come to her for advice. You know how it is, dear Aunt . . . you can't go to your most immediate family for advice as to your own intimate personal affairs, for they're too apt to be biased in your favor, and you don't want any injustice done. . . . And you can't talk too much to your friends, because that's how things get out, and the first thing you know there's a scandal, and you dread a scandal. So you can only come to somebody very calm and just, and with a mind far, far above the ordinary, whose advice is sure to be sound and unbiased. Somebody like you, dear Aunt Martha.

"Aunt," she went on, "suppose your husband didn't love you, hadn't loved you for years, had neglected you, lived in his own rooms, made you understand he didn't want you in those rooms. Suppose you had turned a deaf ear to all other men, and had remained faithful to him, even though you couldn't love him any more—love can't survive continual coldness and neglect and

sneers and harsh words, can it?—and he told you he didn't love you, he loved another woman and wanted you to divorce him so he could marry her. And you wouldn't agree to that, because you didn't think it was right, you didn't think it was moral. And then, when he found out he couldn't cast you off and marry the other woman, suppose that, just out of hatred and revenge, just so he could torture you and make you suffer, and wreck your life, he came and demanded that you should stay at home, and cut yourself off from all your friends, and live according to his ideas,—he'd been quarreling with you and insulting you for years about money, though he made loads of it,—and told you in the most beastly manner that you had to have a child for him . . . what would you do? You really weren't as strong as you seemed to be, Aunt. If a child were forced on you, you might die. Didn't one have the right to defend one's life? And . . . you didn't love your husband. His treatment of you for years precluded the possibility of that. It was only to revenge himself upon you that he made that odious demand. Think of bearing a child for such a father! So hard, so utterly undeserving . . . hating you with all his cruel heart . . . loving somebody else! No, you didn't know who she was, but, knowing him so well, you couldn't think much of her. Aunt, what would you do?"

The old woman looked at the pretty, appealing figure. She liked Flora, who had always been agreeable to her.

“Why have you come to me?” she asked.

“Why, I’ve told you, Aunty. I know you’ve got more sense than all the rest of our family; and, at the same time, you’re a good, good woman, a truly Christian woman,” said Flora, looking at her with wistful blue eyes. “I . . . I wanted to talk to you because I haven’t anybody else I can talk to, I’m in great trouble, and I knew you could advise me better than anybody else could.”

“He’s never been stingy, Flora,” said her old relative.

“No. But that was because I never intruded. He paid me to keep away from him. I have always made the most of my allowance, I know how to dress so that I’ve been a credit to him, and I seem to have the gift of making friends. Most people don’t seem to share my husband’s bad opinion of me,” said Flora, simply.

“I don’t think you ought to have a child for that fellow. It would be outrageous. He must be a bad man.”

“Oh no, he isn’t really bad. Just selfish and hard-hearted,” said his wife, charitably.

“Are you sure you don’t care for anybody else?”

“He was my husband. I never allowed myself to care for anybody else. I dare say I *am* old-

fashioned, but I can't help feeling like that. When I told him that, he . . . he was . . . very insulting." Tears of anger came to her eyes. They looked like tears of grief.

"Flora, are you sure you don't care for him still?"

"I have to struggle against hating him, Aunt. Unkindness . . ." She closed her lips. She wouldn't say anything more.

"What do you want to do? What would you like to do?"

"I have a tiny apartment in Paris. I should like to go there. I should feel safer if the ocean were between us. Hortense, my maid, would stay with me, and I should like to live there quietly. Do you think that would be right?"

"Flora, divorce him," said her aunt, unexpectedly. "Let whatever sin there is be upon his own head. God does not expect His obedient children to suffer too much from the children of disobedience. You are a good woman, you are a patient woman. You do not, you cannot love this evil man. You can't be yoked with the unbeliever."

"But, dear Aunt, what shall I do about money? I am dependent upon my husband. He says he won't even pay my bills unless I come back to him and—"

"He will pay," said the old woman, grimly. "I think we can make him pay through the nose."

"And in the meantime?"

“In the meantime, you escape. Leave the country. Go to that apartment of yours in Paris, small as it is.”

“I sublet it when I was last in Paris. The money came in handy. I can visit some friends of mine in the country in England. They have been asking me to come. You don’t think it would be wrong to go to them . . . do you . . . just now? I don’t want to make a convenience of my friends, Aunt Martha.”

“No. Go, child. It is sweet of you to feel like that. You have too much heart, Flora. And in the meantime, start your divorce proceedings.”

“I shall have to do that in Paris, Aunt. And I’m afraid it’s expensive.”

“I will bear the expense, my dear. Divine Providence has given me enough. I think the virtuous should be protected against the evil. Let this man go; you must work out your own salvation. My lawyers will see to it that you are well provided for. And . . . you please me, Flora. You are a good woman. I don’t mind telling you, my dear, that I will remember you amply. You deserve it. You have clung to a bad bargain as few would; you escape from it only to escape sin.”

“Ah, Aunt, it isn’t the money, it is the understanding heart which is the true reward! I think God sent me to you!” cried Flora, and believed herself. She knew she was exactly what her grand-aunt said she was. And the two women admired

themselves in each other. They were really very much alike.

“I will do exactly as you say,” Flora told her Aunt Martha, gratefully, kissing her. “I never thought to divorce my husband, but you make it clear that I must do so at last. And I’ll go on to Paris and start things.”

## CHAPTER XX

### THE BEST OF ALL MOTTOES

"I AM not," protested Francis Courtenay, "working like a nigger, Harkness. If any white man had sense enough to work like a nigger, he'd quit when he had enough. The black brother has a whole lot more sense than the white man. He is much too much occupied with the pleasant experience of being alive, to spoil the flavor of his little hour of sun by overwork for anything or anybody."

"From a gentleman who flouts the eight-hour day—" began Harkness.

"From a gentleman who hasn't got any hours," said Francis.

Both young men laughed.

"Nevertheless, you *are* overdoing it," persisted Harkness.

"That," said Francis, sapiently, "is because the white man's palate-for-work is spoiled. He's trained himself to take too much. 'He won't be happy without it.' That's me, Henry. I can't help it. I'm crazy over my job. I'm like a maiden lady who marries late in life and unexpectedly finds herself all wrapped up in a pink-and-white home-

made baby: you mustn't blame me if I dote on what has come to me. It's such a beautiful job; I never dreamed I'd have one like it."

"Moderation in all things," said Harkness.

"Preach that to your poor," suggested Francis, "and maybe there won't be so many of them. *But* in the meantime the object and aim of my young life is to make myself into an architect, a mighty good architect, as good as Murray, for instance. I wasted a lot of time before I started in, so I've got to work hard, to catch up."

He didn't say he had to catch up with Murray's overdue work, but smiled so charmingly that Harkness smiled back affectionately. He thought he had never seen any one take religion, life, work, so gaily, so debonairly, with so happy a zest. It was a habit of heart which Harkness understood he himself would never attain.

Indeed, Murray worked his young friend mercilessly, put him to the acid test of sustained labor. To work with Murray during those months was an unpleasant experience. There were times when Frank's patience with things in general was so strained that it threatened to snap. It was only the knowledge that his chief was most desperately unhappy that enabled him to brace his shoulder under the shaking edifice of Murray's professional existence and steady it. He told himself angrily that that fool woman was doing her darnedest to kill the goose that laid the golden eggs for

her. Murray held to a grim silence, but it was a boding quietude, suggestive of impending disaster. There was but one thing Frank could do for Murray then: work. He had long since arranged his philosophy of life to a very simple formula:

*“When in doubt, be kind.”*

To this he now added:

*“—and keep on working.”*

It was that last that saved Murray. Francis Courtenay kept on working, and somehow he managed to keep Murray at it, too, though it was as by the skin of his teeth that he did so.

“I shall soon be, as lady novelists like to put it, ‘slightly gray at the temples,’ ” he said to himself.

“How would you like to come into the business?—make it ‘Murray and Courtenay’?” Murray asked him one morning, unexpectedly. “As a matter of fact, you’re keeping up my end of the firm right now.”

“I’d like it very much, naturally. But I haven’t got any money to put into it yet, and you know I won’t take Uncle Jord’s. And I don’t feel that I’m quite ripe for a partnership with you. But consider me a probationer—say, for the next six months or maybe a year,” said Francis calmly, though his heart beat like a trip-hammer.

“There mayn’t be any ‘Murray’ in it within the next year,” said Murray, in a low voice.

“No? Then there wouldn’t be any inducement

for my entering it now. But I'd take the risk where you're concerned," said Francis, easily.

"I am seriously thinking of . . . giving up, dropping out, letting everything go," said Murray, after a long pause. "What's the use of working one's head off? I don't get anything out of it. I could disappear, you know. That would settle things."

"What makes you think so? You can't run away from trouble, Murray—not unless you can go without taking yourself along."

"No. But . . . I shouldn't have to take Flora along, either," said Murray. "That would make me laugh myself to death—to think of Flora without her pay envelop coming in. No Murray, no money. Blooey!" He laughed harshly.

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of Flora. Damn the Floras, anyhow! I was thinking of you, yourself, the real you, the workman. I rather think a man can be forgiven very much so long as he's faithful to that real self of his, the creative self. And . . . you owe me something, too, Murray: you owe me my faith in you. You owe Winny Davis her faith in you. You can't be a quitter."

"Nevertheless," said Murray, and winced, "I seriously consider lighting out."

"Just because you aren't happy? What a reason for a creative worker to give for chucking his job! He quit work because he wasn't happy!"

“It would be one way of getting even.”

“Nobody ever gets even with a fool, Murray. Only a fool would try to.”

Murray glared, snatched his hat, and stalked out. But his threat explained why young Mr. Courtenay was always, as Harkness complained, on the job.

“That would just about finish that poor kid,” he thought worriedly. And he called Aurora Jane-way up on the telephone, told her he was frightfully busy, and begged her to take Winny Davis out with her whenever she could. He even induced the two girls to go and see Dolly Tredegar dance, and a hint to Dolly secured a warm invitation to a pleasant, quiet supper with her and his uncle, afterward.

Winny Davis stood in awe of Frank’s uncle, and she looked wistfully at Dolly, who was so beautiful and so successful and so beloved. In her turn Dolly looked at the pale girl, thought her pretty enough, but wondered that two such men as Harkness and Murray should be so unhappy on her account. Of course she was a very nice little girl, but . . . Mentally, Dolly lifted her eyebrows.

Aurora rather resented Mr. Jordan Courtenay, who had metamorphosed himself into all he had once blamed Frank for being, and who was being rewarded for what he had become.

There he sat, in perfect health, laughing, self-possessed, a gentleman of the world, radiantly

happy because he was going to possess Dolly Tredegar. He was even charming to Aurora, and she admitted that she found him very much more agreeable than she had ever dreamed he could be. That gave her a sense of disloyalty to Frank. Was it quite faithful to Frank to find herself unable to dislike his uncle any more? He was really very handsome; and he was so much pleasanter, so much, somehow, more *honest*, in this natural rôle of Mr. Worldly Wiseman! He talked entertainingly, he was even witty, and she saw that the clever dancer was proud of him, that she admired him, that she cared for him.

“He is really very good, since he stopped trying to be too good!” she told Aurora, slyly, amusedly watching her watch Jordan Courtenay. “He is very much like Frank. A saint got loose in that family, somewhere or other. That’s all that ails them—my Jordan and your Frank. Don’t forget that.”

Aurora blushed divinely and Dolly laughed and gave her a light kiss on the cheek. But Aurora telephoned Frank, honestly, that she thought his uncle had greatly changed for the better; and that Dolly was coming to see her and they were going to plan her bridesmaid’s dress.

Frank had been, at Murray’s request, opening all the architect’s mail and attending to his correspondence; and so it was he who opened the letter bearing the address of the great French

lawyers who were representing Mrs. Flora Murray in her action for divorce against Colin Murray. The young man read and reread that notice, and gaped over it, and pinched himself to see if he weren't dreaming. The impossible had happened! Flora was suing her husband for divorce! The lawyers thought that, while it might prove quite as expensive, the case might be more amicably settled if they and Mr. Murray's attorneys could confer and agree upon terms. Mrs. Murray was averse to undue publicity. And might they hear from Mr. Murray at his earliest convenience?

She had charged him with cruelty and neglect and desertion. She wanted alimony, a great deal of alimony.

"She can charge me with anything short of murder, and I won't answer back, so long as she agrees to free me," said Murray. He would have agreed to any demand, had not Francis Courtenay restrained him.

"But I was tempted to chuck everything and light out! She'd rather be shot than live with me, though she was perfectly willing to live on me. And I'd rather be shot than have things go on. I was so desperate that . . . I . . . threatened her. I meant what I said, and she knew it, though it would have been hell to us both. So she bolted, thank God, and I'm willing to pay a good stiff price for that. I'm like a condemned felon that

gets a pardon at the eleventh hour!" Color began to flow back into his face, his eyes sparkled. Once more he was Colin Murray, the great architect.

"It's a good world, after all, Frank," he said, and he looked around him with appraising eyes.

"Beautiful view from the windows, especially," said Frank, ironically. "Lovely treeless street, ornamented with fireplugs and 'No Parking' signs. Nice small pale patch of sky. Nice small bipeds scurrying around a few stories below. A noticeably inartistic absence of color, though, don't you think?"

"Very noticeable. Perhaps that is really why I want *you* in the firm—to add a little needed color."

"My year of probation isn't up yet, chief," said the other, honestly. "I told you I'd work for another year . . . the last time you asked me . . . remember?"

"I remember that you've worked for me as no one else ever has, Frank. The best work, too. I wouldn't want you if I weren't sure of the work."

"I wish I could tell you how proud and glad I am, Murray! Why, man, you're one of the biggest! You . . . sort of take my breath away! You mean that, honestly?"

"My dear fellow," said Murray, with much feeling, "it will mean a great deal for me to have you with me. I can't afford to let somebody else get you. We'll make a great little team, shan't we?"

And . . . you have meant a great deal to me, Frank," he finished.

"You are making me, Murray. I think I can promise that you won't regret it."

For a while they discussed their plans, the older man kind and calm, the younger one almost prayerful with joy and gratitude. Presently the architect asked shyly:

"Frank, do you think I could see her . . . soon? Just for a few minutes? To tell her? It would mean so much to us both!"

Frank considered.

"I don't think there'd be any harm in your meeting a young lady and me, on the public street, and walking along with us for a little while, do you? I am hard of hearing in the left ear, at times. I shouldn't like you to come to my room—on account of Harkness. It would worry and hurt him."

"I see."

"But any gentleman may join a lady and her escort, on the public street, and walk along conversing with them without arousing any questions. Particularly if the lady happens to be an interior decorator, and the gentleman of the first part is thinking of making the gentleman of the second part his business partner," continued Frank, gravely.

"You are a brick, Frank!" cried Murray, ecstatically.

"No. Merely an accomplice."

“You will arrange it as quickly as possible, won’t you?”

“I will arrange it and I will let you know. But I fear it is going to be a night when I am very hard of hearing.”

“Amen!” cried Murray, and wrung his hand. “Now let’s get to work!”

That night Mr. Francis Courtenay called upon Miss Aurora Janeway, who blushed divinely at sight of him. He was ushered into the charming living-room which Mary Mack called the sittin’-room.

Aurora was astonishingly beautiful; the dimple came out and frolicked, the hair misbehaved deliciously.

“Let it alone!” said Frank, impulsively, when she put up her hand to smooth it.

“You like it disorderly?”

“I adore it. It brings you nearer the common level. Nearer me.”

His voice was warm. His eyes were smiling at her. And suddenly she was shy and the instinct for flight was upon her, but she subdued it. Instead, she looked in his eyes and what she saw there stayed her. Her hand crept to her heart, which was beating unwontedly. Something was surely the matter with her heart.

“I have been wanting to talk to you,” he said, “about me, myself. My prospects. Things you should know.”

She was silent. But she looked at him with limpid gray eyes.

“You know,” he said, with a catch of the breath at the wonder of her, “that I’m no longer the Courtenay heir, nor am I ever likely to be. I’m what might be called a poor man, Aurora.”

“Are you?” she murmured, and the gray eyes kindled and shone. “I thought you were a very rich man!”

“I think I might become one. Murray has offered me a partnership.”

“Oh, how wonderful! and how sensible of him!” said she.

“When that is arranged, and my future is predictable, I am going to ask you to marry me. It is a great deal to ask you, for you are the dearest and best and most beautiful woman on earth, Aurora. But I am going to ask you to marry me when I can fill that partnership with Murray.” And then he told her about Murray’s impending divorce.

“I don’t,” she said thoughtfully, “approve of divorce. But in this case it seems to me to be the one way out of an impossible situation. It would be immoral for two fine people, who really loved each other, to have to suffer all their lives because of one selfish and unloving person, wouldn’t it? Besides, there are no children to complicate matters. . . . I approve of this divorce with all my heart.”

“He will be happy with Winny Davis. She is the one perfect wife for Murray.”

“I am sure of it. She will bring him love and intelligence.”

“Marriage isn’t all beer and skittles, in spite of love and intelligence,” said he.

“Why should it be? I have seen many, many unhappy marriages, and yet I am sure it could be made both holy and happy.”

“I am sure,” said he, “that I can’t be happy without it. You know I adore you, Aurora. I have loved you from the minute I laid eyes on you, the day I bumped into you on Broadway and thought I’d bumped into one of the immortals.”

“Did you feel like that, too?” she asked naïvely. “I thought it was only I.”

“I did. I loved you, and I hoped you loved me.”

“I hoped so too,” said she, honestly, “all along.”

“That is why I shall ask you, just as soon as I can manage it, to marry me.”

Instinctively they drew nearer. Her unexpected dimple came out and danced, divinely.

“When I was in college,” she said musingly, “one of my classmates had the motto-madness. It became a habit to give us mottoes on every occasion. She gave me one, once, and hung it over my desk. She said it was the best of all. It is a very good motto. I still believe—” her beautiful eyes

fixed upon him earnestly—"that it is the best motto in the world to live up to."

"What is it?" Bewilderment was in his tone, but his behavior was very rational, for as he spoke he reached out and drew her close, and she made no resistance.

"*Do It Now,*" said Aurora Janeway.

And at that he kissed her.



