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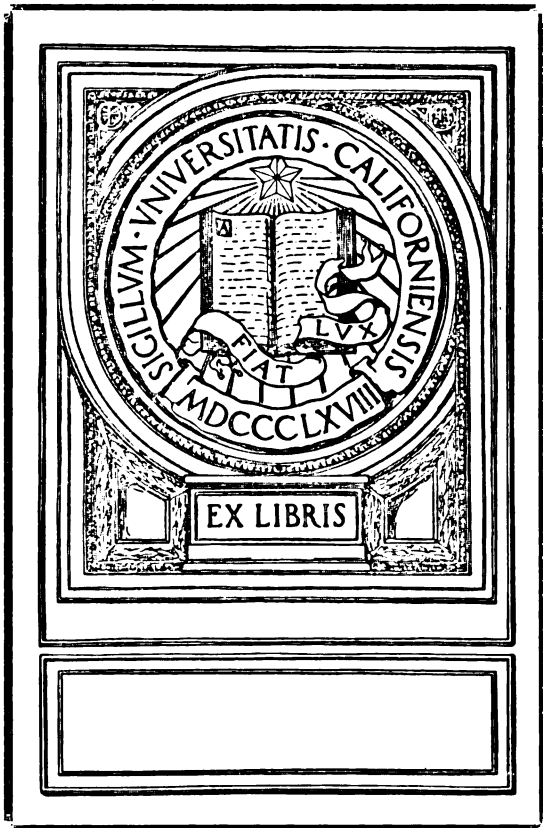
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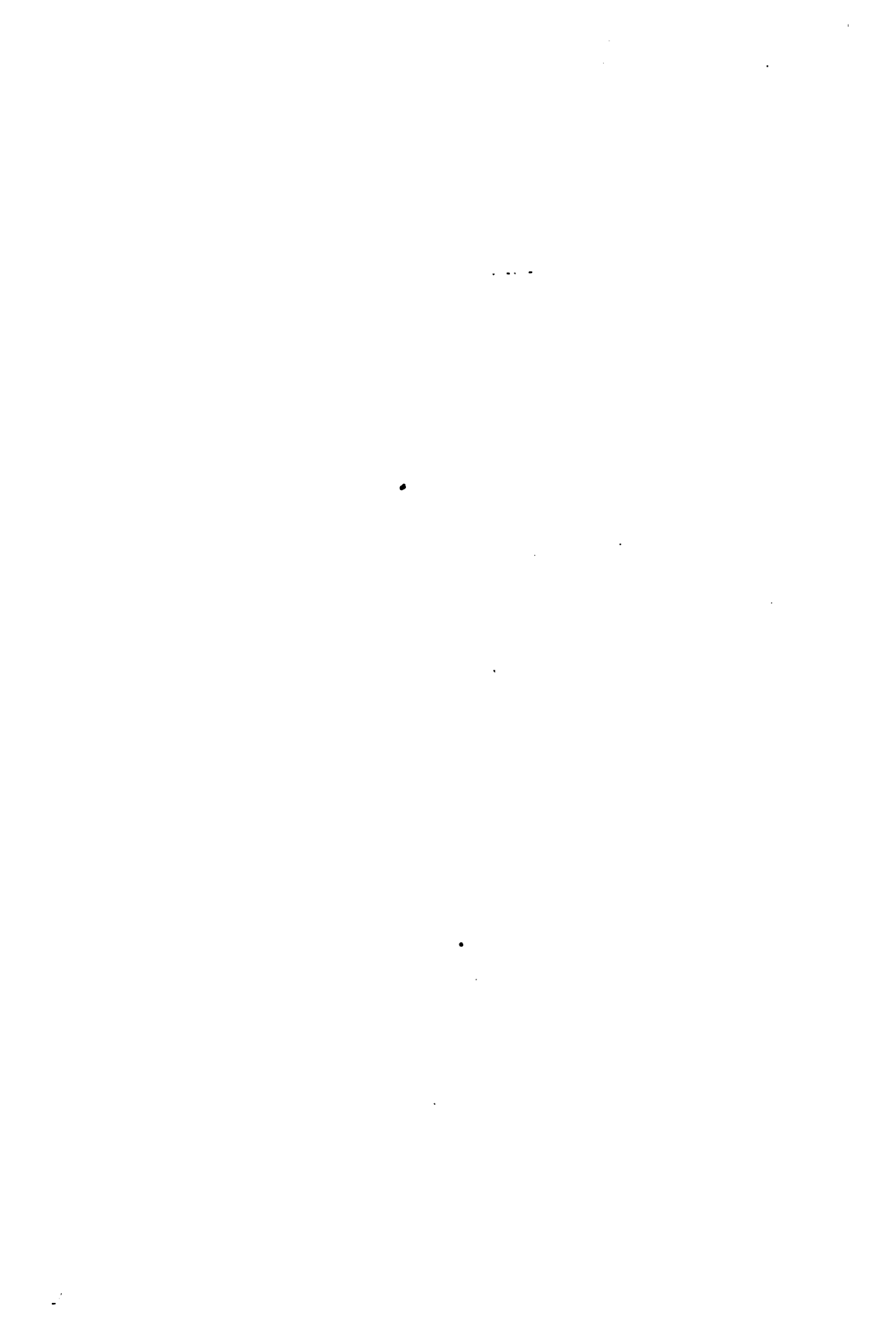
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The

MART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*



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Miss Gwyn

*te Novelette, A Dozen Short Stories, A One-
Another "Enchanters of Men" Article.*



The SMART SET

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The SMART SET

Edited by
GEORGE JEAN NATHAN
and
H. L. MENCKEN

~~UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA~~
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FROM THE BOOK OF FOOLS

By John McClure

I

THERE was a Chinaman in Ching-Too expounded a doctrine of democracy and led the sansculottes in battle array against the mandarins. His commonwealth was established and the man in the street was king.

Two months later he was hanged in the public square of Ching-Too by cobblers and cabinet-makers because he spoke ill of the ancestors of one Lung-Chang, ex-cobbler and alderman in the second precinct.

II

There was a man in Baluchistan, sometime afore the Flood, founded a Society for the Suppression of Sin.

III

There was a Chinaman in Kiao-Chao

forgot he was dead, and came back.

IV

There was a philosopher in Ispahan, ten million years ago, explained love as an attraction of atoms, and laughed at the poets.

He encountered a pleasant atom with blue eyes and hair the colour of storm-clouds and a heart like an April day, and wrote ridiculous lyrics until he was ninety and nine.

V

There was an apothecary in Prague experimented for fifty years and concocted a new and marvelous drink which should cause men to forget all the sorrows since the beginning of time.

He drank the first glass himself and became divinely drunk and lost the formula.

AN ENCHIRIDION FOR CYNICS

By Winthrop Parkhurst

I

In the Spring a young woman's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of how she can make some man believe he loves her.

II

It is easy to meet temptations bravely. Saying good-bye to them is what hurts.

III

Before a woman is thirty she looks eagerly forward to her first great love affair. After she is thirty she looks eagerly back to it.

IV

All cynical observations to the contrary, a woman's affections never vary. All that varies is the object of them.

V

Women are serpents. The only antidote for their bite is alcohol.

VI

In a love intrigue man proposes, woman disposes, the devil exposes.

VII

The way of the transgressor is just hard enough to make transgressing delightful.

VIII

Marriages are made in Heaven. This is not surprising. So was Hell.



JULIA CONWAY

Complete Novelle

By L. M. Hussey

CHAPTER I

ALL day, repeating the unvaried cycle of her other days, she stood behind the counter and sold little pieces of cheap embroideries. Women came to her counter and questioned her; they fingered the goods laid out for her to sell; they hesitated; they bought; they went away without buying.

At noon she ate her lunch with the other girls, all congregated in a dim, disordered stock room. Their shrill babble vibrated in her ears like the inconsequent chatter of magpies. They did not notice her abstraction; no one troubled her. And she performed her duties at the counter with a mechanical exactness; there were no complaints. Yet her mind was withdrawn, her thoughts were her own, and since the early morning a thought had played in her mind again and again, like the repeated strokes of a bell.

"I'm getting old," she thought, "I'm getting old! What am I going to do?"

At the beginning of that day she had lived exactly twenty-two years. The fact startled her, as if it were portentous and tragic. She was deeply dissatisfied, deeply concerned. Now on her birthday the obscure smoulder of her discontent flared into the urgency of flame. Women crowded about her counter and she answered them when they questioned her. She had stopped too long with these people, and given too many of her hours to these concerns! Across the aisle she saw another sales-girl smoothing her flamboyant yellow hair with swift

little pats of her straightened fingers. A profound revulsion made her hate this trivial perspective, the foreshortened vista, month after month, of that girl patting her bleached yellow hair! Her throat and nose were dry with the hot, close smells of the store, as if she had been inhaling her breath in a perpetual cloud of dust; her ears ached with their response to the unceasing trivial clatter, the cacophonous drum-beat of footsteps, the shrill calls of the sales-girls, the insinuating murmur of floorwalkers, the meaningless overtone of customers, speaking. She waited with a mute passion for the closing hour.

At half-past five there was the sudden clamour of concluding the day's business. Now, in the hurry of all the men and girls to ring out, her own patience lost its fervour. She made her preparations to leave with an almost contemptuous deliberation. The dressing-room was nearly empty when she went in to wash her hands, straighten her hair, dab powder over her face, set her hat at the proper angle. At the other end of the room a girl standing before the mirror with her shirtwaist removed was perfunctorily mending the shoulder ribbon of her chemise. The garment was badly soiled. She hurried out of the place and approached the time-clock. One of the night-watchmen, standing near, grinned at her. She angrily punched her card and passed through the door to the street.

As she emerged a young man, stepping out from the wall against which he had been lounging, stopped in front of her, took off his hat, smiled.

"Hello, Julia," he said. "I thought you was never coming!"

She was not pleased to see him; she did not smile at him.

"Hello," she said. "What are you doing here?"

"Waiting for you, of course. It's so blame hard to see you these days, I thought I'd stop around and catch you on your way from work."

He returned his hat to his head, setting it a little askew. A lock of his straw coloured hair was pushed down under the brim over his forehead. She looked with disfavour at his big-lipped mouth, his large nose, smooth, as if melted a little, his pallid blue eyes. She did not want to talk to him; she showed him no cordiality. It angered her that he had, in a sense, caught her in ambush.

"What's the matter with you these days, Julie?" he asked.

He had enclosed her unwilling arm in his ample hand and they were walking slowly along the pavement.

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean! Every-time I call you up at the house you give me some stall. You tell me you have a date or something. Or else you're sick, or somebody else aint well."

"Jack," she said, "you'd better go on alone if you're going to make yourself as unpleasant as possible. I don't feel like listening to you. I won't, either."

He inclined his head to her, he peered into her face, his voice lost its querulousness and was suddenly pleading.

"Honest, Julie," he said, "I don't want to make you mad. You know I like to see you laugh! But when are you going to let me take you out again? Can't I come and take you out tonight?"

She was about to tell him "no"; a quick contravailing impulse, not immediately fathomed, made her say the opposite.

"Yes, I'll see you tonight," she said. "But I've got to hurry now. Stop at

the house sometime around eight. I'll try to be ready."

She was rid of him at last and, standing at the corner waiting for her car, she wondered how she had ever tolerated the little intimacy she had allowed him. A few months before she had let him kiss her occasionally. She remembered his kisses, they had never thrilled her; she was, at the most favourable, indifferent to any of his fondling. But some hardly admitted urge, some vague necessity, some romantic hope, had led her to the experiment of his caresses. And he was now only another factor in her profound discontent.

Well, she knew at any rate why she had consented to see him in the evening. As she thought of it, a momentary surge of pleasure reddened her cheeks, parted her lips a trifle, made her eyes more lustrous. Tonight she would tell him, with a straightforward brutality, even with a delight at hurting him, that he could never see her again. The initial step in her deep purpose of another sort of life! Her car stopped at the corner, she got on, dropped her nickel in the box, and found a seat with a smile.

Now she felt a greater content than she had known all day. In a way, by the chance of this meeting and its eventuation of her quick resolution, she had committed herself to a long contemplated course of action, a series of renunciations and severances, of merciless denials, of unflinching rejections that would wash her clean of the shoddy way her undesired days came and went. She forgot to be angry with the crowd that pushed into the car at every corner; she looked about her with an aloof disdain, with a stirring sense of fine detachment, that armed her, as in a palpable and impervious garment, against the hurt to her spirit of these uncouth, jostling men in the car, the close, unpleasant air, the mutter of harsh voices, the dirt, the shabbiness. She looked about her with her brows

lifted, the wraith of a smile curving her lips.

Across the aisle her eyes recorded the face and figure of a man that focused her faculties to attention. He was dressed well, his manner was assured, he was set off from the others adjacent to him like a single stroke of clean colour on a palette of mixed and indeterminate greys. She observed his smooth white face, his well moulded lips, the straight, quick line of his brows, the dark patches of his hair brushed close about his ears on either side. Her gaze remained upon his face; it was a moment before, with a sudden embarrassment, she realized he was steadfastly looking at her. Then she turned her head quickly and was afraid to look back again.

Glancing obliquely out of the window, she observed that she was near her street. She stood up; she hoped, palpitantly, that he would stand up also and follow her out of the car. But in the corners of her eyes she caught his blurred, immobile figure, still seated.

She got out at her corner with a swift, deep regret; she stood irresolutely in the street watching the car as it withdrew from her, growing smaller along the converging rails. Finally she turned away with an emotion of personal contempt: why had she failed in the simple courage to smile at him? It was his sort, it was this kind of a man, she could find her delight in knowing!

She had several blocks to walk before she reached her home. The district was a medley of the opposed races, the black and the white. Dim, obscure little streets jutted into the main thoroughfares and when you looked down when you perceived a clamorous aspect of dodging swart figures, black faces, great loitering negresses of fabulous bulk, negro children fighting, in dispute, laughing, howling, being chastised. At the next corner, at the next intruding little street, the complexion was

changed; white men stood about in groups, talking, their women looked out from the doors of the little houses whilst extremely small children entangled themselves in their skirts, emerging here and there like fantastic animals from the marsupial pouch. Occasionally a flamboyantly costumed girl hurried down the sidewalk and pushed her way into one of the houses. Into all these streets there sifted, like an impalpable begrimed snow, the soot of the factory chimneys, and the sun set behind the soiled buildings in a blurred red.

Finally she turned into her own street, walking slowly, speaking to no one. As she drew near her home she saw her brother loitering on the steps. He edged aside to let her pass him. He was sitting without his hat or coat, in his shirt sleeves, smoking a cigarette.

"Hello," he said.

"Hello," she replied.

She walked up the steps and was about to open the vestibule door.

"Say," he called, "can I see you a minute after supper?"

She turned and looked at him with a manifest contempt.

"Yes, I suppose you can."

He wanted to borrow money; she knew that. Probably he had quit his job again.

CHAPTER II

JULIA closed the vestibule door behind her; a smell of cooking, coming out of the kitchen as a pungent effluvia of pepper, steaming vegetables, rigorous onions, coffee on boil, assailed her like a presence. The hall was dark, a dim hatrack arose directly in front of her, bulging with the amorphous shapes of disorderly headgear, whilst a few feet further on the stairs to the second floor jutted up abruptly, duskily, like niches cut along the slope of a cavernous wall. There was no one in the hall; she parted the hangings at the parlour door; the darkened little room was empty.

She took off her hat and hung it negligently on the rack.

Her depressed mood had returned, as if there were something in the air of that house, a malign gas, that affected her spirits like a narcotic. The voice of her sister came out from the kitchen, talking to some one, her mother, no doubt, in a narrative monotony.

She hesitated a moment and then walked through the hall, through the dining room out to the kitchen damp with the vapours of cooking. Her sister was perched on a low, three-cornered stool, her mother, with limp, bedraggled hair, was stirring a pot; they both turned and looked at her without greeting.

"Here," exclaimed her mother finally. "Set the table, one of you. Haven't I anything to do but slave in this kitchen while you two look on?"

Making no comment, Julia walked over to a closet and slowly began to take down the thick dishes, scratched on their surfaces, nicked on their edges, as if they were the survivors of a battle. Her sister languidly disentangled herself from the stool, stretched, yawned, sighed, pulled out a drawer and rattled the knives and forks. Burdened with a pile of plates, cups and saucers, Julia went into the dining room, lit the gas, and placed the utensils around the table. She took the knives and forks from her sister and made their distribution.

"Call Harry, call the old man, one of you!" her mother's voice commanded.

The two girls moved simultaneously out into the hall. Julia's sister paused at the stairs; Julia opened the vestibule door to summon her brother.

"Mr. Patterson! Hey, Mr. Patterson! Supper!"

The shrill-pitched voice of the girl ascended to the upper corridor; a thump was heard, the noise of deliberate footsteps; the sisters retreated to the dining room. A moment later Harry, eyeing the food, followed by a disorderly old man, their boarder, entered the room.

They all sat down at the table and reached for the dishes. The old man, Patterson, plunged into an irrelevant backwoods anecdote; he talked steadily, monotonously, between bites; he peered at his plate through his rimmed spectacles; his white beard flapped on his chin with the movements of his jaws like a slack sail. The patriarch came to the end of his tale; he chuckled alone at the denouement:

"And Potter said: 'I won't pay you nothin'. I'd rather give my money to a learnt man!'"

Nobody gave him any attention; his cackle of pleasure merged into the metallic click of knives and forks, the guttural sound of deglutition, the sibilant hiss of sipped coffee. There was a period of morose silence; they gave themselves up, like devotees, to the urgency of taking food. Julia, her eyes downcast, was glad of the silence. She hurried through her meal with an immense desire to get away from the table; she ate without any sense of savour, from a sheer physical necessity. At last her sister began to speak of a piece of dress goods she had seen in a store, her mother entered into the subject; between these two a harsh, disputative talk broke out like a sudden conflagration.

There was no ceremony of departure at that table. When Julia had finished, she pushed back her chair and stood up. Saying nothing, she left the room. Her brother followed her quickly and detained her in the hall. It was as she supposed: he needed money. She saw that he was prepared to be aggressive, to be endlessly argumentative; she surprised him by yielding at once. She gave him the money he wanted with a tired acquiescence, with a sense of weariness, as a part of her routine, one of the regular acts of her undesired days.

She went up to her room, the room she shared with her sister. She was used to its cubic smallness; she manoeuvred the passage between their bureau and their bed, seating herself in front of a dingy little dressing table.

Already it was dusk outside. The one side of her face received a pallid light from the window, the other was dim, in a half-purple shadow. She sat aimlessly for a moment and her indistinct counterfeit looked at her from the glass of the mirror.

Presently she struck a match, stood up and lit the gas that jutted out from the wall on a short, discolored bracket. The flame flickered in the draught from the window, the yellow light cheapened the cheap furnishings of the room. Julia looked at a little clock, a celluloid imitation of ivory, that loudly ticked off the seconds from the bureau. Her engagement for the evening was in her mind, and she saw that she had very little time in which to dress.

She walked over to the closet, opened the door, looked in at the close-hung dresses falling limply from their hooks. She did not remove any. She stood in front of the opened door in a curious irresolution, conscious of the necessity for hurry, but nevertheless without action. She heard someone coming up the stairs. In another second her sister joined her in the room.

"Are you going out, Julie?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Where?"

"I don't know. Jack's coming."

There was a brief, silent interval.

"Julie?"

"Well?"

"Do you like him?"

Julia turned around, looked at her sister. The girl was leaning against the back of the bed, her arms spread out, her head thrown backward, her lips parted in an inquiring smile. Her face, pallid with the frailty of a forced maturing, had an indefinite, an uncertain prettiness. In a shadowy way she resembled Julia, a meagre duplicate, a Julia ill-nourished.

"Do I like him? What do you mean, Bertha?"

She did not press the specific nature of her query, she modified it, she made it general.

"Did you ever go with a fella you

really liked? You know what I mean, kid."

Julia laughed a little, she shrugged her shoulders.

"I met a new fella last night," said Bertha. "You ought've seen him. Maybe I'll bring him around here sometime."

Her eyes brightened, she smiled with an ardent delight. She tapped her spread-out fingers on the rail of the bed.

"Where did you meet him?" asked Julia.

"Oh, in the park. I saw him and I gave him a smile. He spoke to me right away. We sat down on a bench; he wanted to get fresh but I managed him. I know how to take care of myself. Afterwards I let him kiss me a little. Julie do you like to be kissed very much?"

"You better look out who you let kiss you."

"Oh, don't worry about me. I felt funny when he kissed me. Kind of like I couldn't breathe easy. Wouldn't it be funny if he'd be the fella I'd marry? You think I'm too young to marry, don't you? You better look out and get some John yourself. Let me tell you, I wouldn't take a chance as long as you, Julie!"

Her mother called below; grinning with delight, Bertha ran out of the room. A swirl of air from her skirts agitated the dresses hanging in the open closet. Julia looked after her, faintly smiling.

She was a naïve child; Julia envied the effervescent sparkle of her spirits. She was young, but no doubt she would get married soon—anytime; six months, within a year. She would become married with a full abandon, with a joyousness.

"She is sure of herself," thought Julia. "And I am so very different."

Julia began to dress for the evening. She let down her hair, it dropped about her shoulders exuberantly, in the waves that were natural to it. She seated herself before the mirror, meticulously arranging the coils in the fashion she de-

sired. Her fingers played about her hair with a white deftness. Her bare arms, yellowed a little in the gas light, shifted their gracile contours as she moved them. Innumerable, slender hairpins disappeared in her hair. Presently it was piled up on her head in a manner that lengthened her face a little, accentuated the slender column of her neck, the round smallness of her throat, giving her an aspect that was gracious and a little fragile. She dropped her hands and looked at her face in the mirror.

It was a face that had loveliness; her eyes gave her that assurance. The eyebrows cut two faintly arched lines, and the eyes below glinted with commingled lights, browns and sudden greens, like the scintillant reflections of concealed emeralds. The nose was straight, bridged rather sharply and worked with fineness at the nostrils. Her lips were unexpectedly full; they had not the ease of smiles, but seemed to hesitate at the corners, in an almost tense indecision. Her skin's texture had a rare softness, like the petal of a white rose. Her face was without decisive coloring. Above it her brown hair, with its subtly suggested bronze, was heaped in sudden plenty. Looking at her reflected face, she knew a relieving sense of pleasure, even a brief content.

She stood up and drew on a dress stamped with pink flowers that made her instantly younger, girlish, almost blithe. It was cut into a low V at the neck; around her throat she fastened a string of imitation pearls that rose and fell in a faint rhythm with her breathing.

She was standing at the mirror again, straightening her dress, when Bertha thrust her head in the door with the suddenness of an apparition.

"Your Jack's here!"

She hurled the words across the room in a vibrant whisper, melodramatically, like a conspirator.

Julia turned quickly, staring, surprised. She had quite forgotten Jack! She had forgotten the reason for all

her preparation: the flowered dress, the elaborately fixed hair, the string of pearls. It seemed impossible now that she had asked the fellow to call. She did not want to see him; she did not want him near her. Bertha's head remained in the door, a face and neck without a body, suggesting a humorous Medusa, grinning, snapping her eyes.

As if suddenly weary, enervated by the cumulative weight of long travail, Julia sank into the little chair before the mirror.

"Bertha," she said, "I don't want to see him. Tell him I can't see him!"

The eyes of the head in the door rounded and expanded like enlarging discs.

"What!"

"I say, tell him I can't see him. Send him away!"

"Girl, you're crazy!"

"Send him away! Tell him anything. Tell him I'm sick; that will do. Yes, go down and tell him I've got a sick headache."

The incredulous face remained a moment longer, pushed through the partly opened door; then it withdrew with a lingering stare that seemed to remain a moment as an imponderable presence, after the eyes that had given it expression were taken away. The door closed. She was alone again.

Her hands were dropped in her lap like two pallid flowers, her shoulders flexed in a drooping curve, her eyes looked downward. After a time she turned in her chair until she again faced the shabby little dressing table. She did not look up at the mirror. Her glance sought the picture of a woman poised slantwise on the table, framed in an oval of celluloid-ivory, that matched the tireless clock on the bureau. It was a quaint portrait, the photographic reproduction of an old and indifferent painting. Julia took it in her hands and looked at it with earnest scrutiny.

This was the valorous woman that had lived in her family more than a hundred years before, the grandmother of her own grandmother. What an

old family it was! How incredibly degraded, how insensible to its past fineness!

As she had a hundred times before, Julia studied the curious photograph, examined the uplifted face, the eyes that looked out bravely, the chin with a gracious and courageous curve. She tried to see alive the woman of whom only a likeness survived, and a memory; only her memory, surely neither her brother or sister recalled it now. Often the day returned to her when her father had told the story. That was years ago; he was dead and the story of his family with him, save for her single recollection.

CHAPTER III

THIS woman, strangely aloof now in the little picture, had once done a simple, courageous thing. She had done it unreasoningly, from the urge of a sheer unbending spirit. The King's troops had won the skirmish in Germantown, Washington had withdrawn, and the British officers were being billeted upon the better families. And this woman had refused—foolishly, irrationally, magnificently—the order upon her house. Somewhere, in the obscure and inadequate armies of the states, her husband added his arm to the forces of the colonies. Perhaps his sacrifice and his spirit supplied her determination. Her own courage sufficed for the act. She stood in the door of her home with a smooth-bore musket in her hands, a muzzle-loader rammed down with slugs, and she defied the enemy to enter. There could have been nothing wavering in her countenance, in her poise, in her determined aspect, for no frontal assault was attempted. Of course they overcame her finally, they managed an entrance through the rear of the house and disarmed her as by an ambush, but that was the fortune of the odds against her.

Beatrice Conway! Julia remembered her father as he told the story, and she recalled the air of melancholy that

seemed to hang like a suspended veil over his recital. She believed now that he recognized himself as a failure, that the history of his people, transmitted orally from one generation to another, accentuated his knowledge. But surely he must have had his brave designs, his time purposes, his precious aims, when he was young. Then why had he married her mother! What allure had he found in her?

Below she heard the front door close sharply; a loose globe on the gas-bracket vibrated with the shock; she put back the picture on the dressing table. Jack must have gone out.

She listened a moment with a countenance tense and alert; she felt a confirmation in the succeeding quiet. Now she was done with him; she had made the first break, the first severance! All her immense urge, her passionate desire, to get away from everyone she knew, from all the hated concerns that seized as by theft her hours and her days, filled her senses in an overmastering emotion. She stood up swiftly, her eyes widened, the luminous white of her cheeks splotched with red colour, as if a flame had touched them. In a collected, instant picture she saw all the persons of her present concern, her mother, her sister, her brother, the families on the street, the men and women with whom she worked, the young obscure men driven to her by the appeal of sex. They were as if before her, grouped together, blended one into the other, an undesired presence. She spoke to them aloud in a passionate whisper.

"I'm going away from all of you! I don't want to see you again! I never want to see one of you again!"

She walked to the closet once more and taking a hat down from the shelf, fastened it to her head with long hat-pins that she thrust into her hair with savage swiftness. She turned out the gas and left the room, without a design or a definite purpose, with only an intolerable wish to leave the house with an impulse beyond denial.

She went down the stairs swiftly,

and as she passed into the vestibule Bertha appeared, a sudden materialization in the dining-room door and called something after her. But Julia did not wait to hear her; she closed the door behind her; she hurried out to the street.

The night was warm and every doorstep was crowded with coatless men, with women inadequately dressed, with an occasional girl cheaply immaculate. The spawn of these people, children begrimed and hot, ran about in the streets in an aimless and unending activity.

Julia hurried along the sidewalk, she hurried to leave behind her the families on the steps, the children in their turmoil, the hot, still air, the commingled smells of the houses that passed out from the dusk squares of their opened windows. She turned into the main street; the stores were lighted and their cheap goods, arranged to attract by transparent devices, lay under electric bulbs like the meaningless litter of some futile and monstrous industry. She passed with her eyes straight in front.

As she approached the next corner she saw the sidewalk crowded to the curb by a small, swaying mob, expanding and contracting as one body, like a fabulous and grotesque amoeba. She came nearer; men were yelling, their cries vibrated harshly in the heated air; through an occasional opening in the crowd she caught a dark glimpse of two men fighting. Abruptly she crossed the street. Now the crowd was plainer, the two figures of the fighters revealed themselves as a white man and a negro. Just as she passed, another pair struck out at each other on the edge of the mob, and instantly they were the nucleus of a second press of yelling men. From the side streets a trickle of running boys and men contributed to the mob.

It occurred to her then, vaguely, as a corollary to her discontent, that serious trouble might arise in this augmenting crowd: the mixture of black and white in this neighborhood was un-

stable and sensitive; riots were not uncommon. She was glad to reach the corner and get on a street car. Her destination was still undetermined; she rode with the goalless desire of escape.

Nobody in the car interested her. Seated next the window, she rested her chin in her palm and stared out at the street. Her eyes were unobservant and the squares streamed slowly behind her like an obscure phantasmagoria, a dissolving view of uncertain streets dimly peopled. The neighborhoods merged into each other, sometimes suddenly: a mean row of buildings was followed by a gracious square, houses irretrievably smudged and soiled were replaced by clean, straight façades and even the surrounding air seemed clarified.

Finally she was tired of riding; she stood up and left the car. It passed and she paused on the corner looking about.

Opposite was the park, a breeze blew out from the trees and she was glad that she had come here. She crossed and went in on a gravel walk. Just within the entrance, behind a clump of shrubby sassafras, a man and woman sat close together on a bench, and the murmur of their low voices, unheeding her, came into her ears as she passed them. She felt lonely then and melancholy.

She saw an empty bench and seated herself. Its back was pushed against the trunk of a tree, and she was in the shadow of the leaves, a slender quiet figure in the dusk. In front of her the trees opened up into a slope of closely cut grass that had an emerald luminousness in the artificial moons of tall arc lights. The clamour of the streets entered the park as an endless sound subdued, like the murmur of a near other world. Across the grass-slope, near the walk, the shadow of a tree was darkly laid like a fantastic, sable figure, lying there. Julia looked down at the ground, she dug her heel into the gravel and she yielded to the longing of inconsecutive and half-apprehended desires.

She looked up at the sound of some-

one approaching. A man appeared around the turn, walking slowly, tapping a light cane on the loose stones. He saw her and as he drew nearer she perceived that he was looking at her. She watched his approach with an undeviating gaze. After a second she knew that he pleased her, the easy little swing of his cane, the dim whiteness of his face, the poise of his strolling figure.

As if shocked into awareness by a sudden stimulation, her faculties were alert, her sight more penetrating, her ears cognizant of new sounds. For an instant it seemed to her that she recognized the man who drew near, that he must be someone she knew. Immediately she thought of the man she had seen earlier in the evening in the car. A second, and it seemed that this one was the same. But he was closer now: his was another face.

She looked up at him; their eyes met. He paused; he stood still. She knew that she wanted to know him. There were subtly apparent in his dusk outlines those indefinite qualities that touched her desire. She wondered a second at her courage in so steadfastly meeting his eyes. She had an inner surprise that her lips were smiling.

"Good evening," he said.

"Good evening," she murmured.

He sat down beside her. She felt by the sharpened perceptions of her augmented sensitiveness the slight bending of the bench under his added weight. She turned her face to him. He was scrutinizing her with a half smile, his eyes lighted with an evident pleasure in her features. Her countenance surprised him as if, in the first indistinct moment of seeing her, when only the invitation of her uplifted face, and not the closer knowledge of it, had drawn him to the bench, he had expected features of another and more common quality. She gave him her smile, but the lips that expressed it seemed in a fascinating way without the habit of smiling and even now parted, curved, they hinted an inseparable melancholy,

as if this were an imponderable tissue of their substance.

His scrutiny of her gave her no embarrassment; she forgot herself in the interest of searching his face. No, he was not the man she had seen in the car, nor even, in a strict sense, was there a resemblance. Nevertheless, she thought of the two in conjunction, with a quick assurance of their similarity. She liked him; she was glad he was sitting near her.

She sought to know his face in a comprehensive instant, to make it a part of her immediate pleasure, as if her mind must have a sudden, adequate image of him before he could function in her thoughts. In that swift picture she recorded the dark colour of his eyes, the contour of his cheek and chin, the shape his lips took when they spoke to her. She waited for him to speak, leaning a trifle toward him, naïve in her eagerness.

CHAPTER IV

"WHAT are you doing here?" he asked.

She was about to answer him; he interrupted her.

"It was foolish of me to ask that, wasn't it?" he said. "I don't doubt you may have come to the park for the same reason I did; perhaps you were tired or a little out of sorts and wanted to be somewhere in the quiet for a while. Are you sorry I sat down? Would you rather I went on?"

His consideration did not surprise her; it was in consonance with her assumptive knowledge of him. Nevertheless, a warm delight thrilled her in the actual bearing out of her assurance.

"No," she said, "I want to talk to you."

"I'm glad. I didn't expect to meet anyone here tonight; that is, make any acquaintance. I wasn't thinking of anything particularly, just walking along the path, and I saw you looking at me. You . . . you appealed to me. . . ."

His last hesitant sentence received her smile that now contained the quality of tenderness. She knew that he would have passed her seated on the bench and gone on with never a word to her if the sudden courage of her lips had not drawn him to her. Yet she liked his assumption otherwise, the assumption of his own volition, the pleasant false postulate of his masculine aggressiveness.

"Do you know," he went on, "I don't as a rule like to meet a girl this way. You don't know anything about each other; don't you think it's hard sometimes, to hit on a common ground for conversation?"

Her eyes dwelt upon his face, and more accustomed to the shadows of the trees, she began to apprehend their colour.

"But it's interesting, too, isn't it?" she asked. "To find out about each other! To make discoveries!"

They began to ask questions, but in all the answers she was required to make she maintained a scrupulous reserve, a fastidious caution. She did not want him to know where she lived, how she spent her days, or even that she worked at all. She was evasive, or silent.

He was frank with his own answers; she learned many of the details of his life. She was pleased to discover that he was a business man, for that added a solidity to his character which, in the practitioner of some more romantic occupation, she would have found lacking. Among his confessions he said that he lived alone. At once her emotion included a maternal pity.

"Who keeps your apartment straight for you?" she asked.

"There's a woman in the building who attends to that."

"It must be in a dreadful state!" she exclaimed.

"No—she's not so bad. I manage to get along."

"Poor man!" she exclaimed. "I know it's all upside down. You must be lonely too!"

Her concluding words aroused an

emotion, a new apprehension. Her dusk face was near him, his widened eyes were eager in meeting her own. For the first time an emptiness, a fundamental lack, appeared in the aspect of his life. His feeling was that of missing something, of knowing the deprivation of a certain graciousness, a colour, a rhythm, a perfume, a sweetness, that now in this illuminated moment he saw was his deep desire.

He put out his hand and his fingers touched the arm of the girl near him, pressed upon the sheer sleeve of her flowered dress and felt the communicated warmth of her skin beneath it. She remained motionless, the quiet of the park was complete, the shadow of the trees moved faintly on the slope of the green grass, like a dusk and fantastic pendulum, animated by an unfelt wind. Then she withdrew her arm and suddenly she stood up.

"I must go," she said.

He arose too; he expostulated.

"Why?" he asked. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing! I had no idea of staying here so long!"

"You must let me see you home, then."

"No! Not tonight! I can't!"

"But you're going to let me see you again!"

"Yes, I want you to! I'll call you on the telephone. Write your number on your card—can you see to do that here?"

He removed a cardboard slip from his pocket and wrote down the number on it; she took it and dropped it into her handbag. He secured her hand, held it a moment, pressing her smooth skin against his palm.

"Will you really call me up?" he asked. "I want to know you better. I should feel immensely disappointed if I could never see you again."

"I'll keep my word," she said.

He watched her as she walked away along the path; she knew that he was standing looking at her. She hurried, her heart pulsing rapidly and she felt that she had averted a real catastrophe.

He must never come to her home; he must never see one of her family! All her hateful associations were doubly now the objects of her utter discontent. Whatever charm she could make him know in her required a setting that would not chill his sense of her allure.

For months she had schemed a break with everyone and now she must make it, within a day, within a week, if ever she wished to see him again. And she wanted this: to watch his face, to study his eyes, to see his slender hands that gestured faintly to his thought, and to know her content that had been instant in the indefinable flavour, in the caressing quality, in the evident charm of his personality.

She came to the corner, saw her car approaching; she got on and found a seat mechanically, seeing no one, thinking solely of her encounter in the park.

CHAPTER V

WHEN she reached her street her thoughts were wrenched from their desire by a dramatic turmoil, an immense excitement, that afterward formed her final remembered picture of these people and these streets among which she had lived for so many unwilling years. Afterward she recalled in a conglomerate picture a picture tinctured with fear and a profound contempt, the shouts, the screams, the mad yells; the rush of a body of police with drawn clubs; the hoofbeats of the mounted police riding into the mob; the loud reports of firearms thrust over the human clamour with a sharp, sinister penetration; the frantic figures of women running along the pavements, children hugged in their arms, their hair unloosened and straggling over their faces; the sight of a negro she saw in the gutter, sprawled unconscious, with the welt from a heavy weapon dark and swelled over his eye. The night became in her memory a dramatic representation of all her other nights there, the just estimate of

them, their brutal osmazome, their malignant flavour.

A policeman stopped her as she stepped from the car.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

She looked up at him, astonished, speechless.

"Do you live here?" he asked.

"Yes . . ."

"Where?"

She told him her street.

"I'll take you there," he said. "Go in the house and stay in. Don't come out again tonight. We've got our orders: we're going to rope these streets off and arrest everyone that's out without a reason."

She did not need to ask the trouble. It was apparent to her already, and she remembered the fight earlier in the evening, that must have been the beginning. Another race-riot! Senseless violence, brute, unreasoning rage!

A platoon of mounted men galloped around the corner, with long riot-sticks in their hands. Two squares below a swaying mob, an indescribable surge of yelling men seemed to hold like a barrier of insuperable bodies before their swift approach.

The policeman held her arm, his fingers pressing painfully into her flesh.

They stood on the corner watching. She drew in her breath, retaining it in a second of supreme excitement. For a lurid instant she saw in her imagination the horses rearing upon inextricable struggling bodies, she witnessed the frenzied blows of steel-rimmed hoofs upon the faces and forms of screaming men. They swayed and surged, they bent forward and backward like a chain of linked and inseparable figures, like a doomed chain sinisterly transfixed. The dust of the unclean streets rose behind the horses. And then the chain parted, it dissolved in the middle before the clattering hoofs, it beat back upon the sidewalks, it lengthened and spread out, and men darted away from it and ran.

A shot was fired from somewhere in the crowd and with an appalling sud-

denness one of the uniformed men fell out of his saddle.

In another instant the horses were riding up over the curbs and the long clubs held in upraised arms, beat down in to the mob.

The man holding her arm jerked her forward.

"Hurry along now!" he commanded. "I think we can get through."

He turned her with him at the first street.

The houses were dark, the windows were shut; white faces, pressed against the glass, looked out like ghouls restrained in prisons of enchantment. Half way down the block a man ran, ran from nothing, blindly and insanely as if pursued by whispering and invisible devils.

The policeman pulled her along mercilessly, saying nothing, and she ran at his side to keep up with him. Her spirit felt an immense ignominy, an overwhelming horror; she hated the man who was hurrying her from violence.

They turned again, they reached her street. It was like the other, unpeopled, silent. He took her to her door.

"Hurry in there now," he said.

She fitted her key into the lock, she turned the knob, she entered the vestibule and closed the door behind her, and her mother and sister rushed out of the parlour and fell upon her with an hysterical babble.

"Yes, I'm all right," she said. "Let me get up to my room. It sickens me! I don't want to hear anything about it!"

She ran up the stairs and shut the hall door. She lighted the gas and dropped into a chair, her face supported in her hands. Against her palms she could feel the excited throb in her temples.

All at once she was planning. She would go tomorrow; she would go finally and forever! She knew how much money she had—five years' secret savings—not quite two hundred and fifty dollars. She would never go back to the store, never see the yellow-haired

girl patting down her hateful hair, never eat another lunch in the clamorous stockroom, never tell a price to another fingering woman. Something would happen before all the money was spent, something would come to her. She gave herself over to chance, to fortune, to the mercies of her destiny with an abandon that stirred her, that thrilled her with a physical tremor, like a fanatic delivering himself to the will of an inscrutable and voiceless God.

She raised her head and looked into the mirror. Her face was white, the colour gone out of it utterly; her hair was loosened at one side and a strand hung suspended against her cheek. Her gaze dropped to the table and she saw the little framed oval and the eyes of Beatrice Conway, remote and calm in a hundred years of death, looked into her own. They calmed her, they quieted her like the touch of a potent beloved hand. Suddenly she was assured, suddenly her courage was adequate to her determination. Her cheeks coloured as if a dust of carmine had been blown upon them, her eyes were wider with their emerald glints. She took the portrait in her hand and pressed her lips, the tip of her light lips, upon the pictured face. She leaned back in her chair, the gas light wavered and flickered, the vague presence of lovely dreams seemed all about her.

She thought of him again: the man who had sat with her in the park. She remembered his touch on her arm, the touch that had frightened her with the thrill of it.

Reaching out hastily, she secured her handbag and undid the clasp and sought with eager fingers for his card. She did not even know his name! Her fingers closed over the thin rectangle and she held it under the light. She read it: Walter Hastings. Her lips shaped the two words, they said the name aloud, they repeated it like a charm, like a precious enchantment, like the sesame of delightful treasure.

She went over to the window and

leaned out. The night had become cooler, there were stars in the sky. Coming up to her like a malign discordance she heard the sound of yelling in a distant street. It passed into her ears unheeded. For a long time she looked out of the window at the dark roofs of the houses and at the inaccessible stars.

Finally her eyes grew heavy and she turned from the window; she began to loosen her skirt. When her sister came to bed she was asleep.

CHAPTER VI

SHE awoke with the persistent scream of her mother's voice, calling to her from below. She yelled back; the calling ceased. Her door opened and Bertha came in from the bathroom. She was brutally rubbing a towel over her face, stamping her feet, shaking her head like a poodle. In the morning Bertha was always sullen. Her eyes were red, the tip of her nose was red, her hair hung in lank strings about her face. The exuberance of her spirits seemed a quality gone forever with the departed yesterday. Now she stooped in front of the mirror and began combing out her tangled hair.

"Oh, damn!" she said. "Damn this everlasting getting up in the morning."

Julia stirred and sat up in her bed. The girl at the mirror stared at her a second with her morning's animosity.

"Mom screeched around here a couple of hours to wake up this morning. You better get up," she snarled.

Julia made her no retort; she dressed in silence. Presently she went below and ate her breakfast with the rest. They were talking about the riot; they said the streets were quiet now. She did not listen to them, she closed her ears to the clatter of their tongues. At the customary hour she left the house: no one had a suspicion of her purpose. Outside, on the pavement, she hurried for a few steps, a reflex, a long morning habit; suddenly she stopped, walked with an exquisite lan-

guour, a deliberate slowness: she was never going to work again!

In an occasional broken window, an overturned sign, a store door burst open, she saw the evidence of the night's violence. The streets were full of uniformed men; they stared at her as she passed. Already the experience was remote; the riot was a reminiscence from a chamber of old and useless memories. From these circumstances she was detached and their vitality no longer oppressed her. In a few minutes she came to the car tracks and took the first trolley into town. She tolerated the jostling crowd because it was no longer her morning necessity to be with them.

When the car reached the business section she got out. To walk slowly when everyone else was hurrying was a delight that made itself known in a physical pleasure. She strolled, looking into the store windows, and the crowd swayed past her. Presently she bought a newspaper from a corner newsboy, and folding it under her arm, turned in at the first department store.

She went up in the elevator to the women's room and sat down in one of the comfortable large chairs. There was no one else in the room save an attendant in a white cap. She opened her newspaper and turned to the advertising section; she searched the list of furnished rooms. Taking a stubby pencil out of her purse she made small check marks beside the likely addresses.

She finished this task and leaned back in her chair, her hands in her lap, her head pressed against the padded leather.

Women began to come into the room: the morning shoppers. She watched them and appraised them; to be one with them in their leisure, to be freed of the hourly necessity of serving them sufficed for her immediate content, stirred her and warmed her, like the gratification of a forbidden emotion.

After a time she got up and left the resting room; she walked through the store already full of purchasers, acutely aware of the salesgirls behind their

rectangular counters, acutely conscious of her happy separation from them. Finally she stepped into a telephone booth and began to call the numbers she had checked in the newspaper.

It was finally necessary to visit two or three of the more promising locations. She went to one; the woman in charge of the place displeased her; she decided against it. She bought herself a small lunch and visited her second prospect. The street was in the northern section of the city, the houses were old and somehow gracious, the locality was quiet.

She found an agreeable front room communicating with a small bath; it gave her a view upon the calm street. A pleasant and discreet little woman exhibited the apartment to her. There was a bed with a tall wooden back, carved into wooden arabesques, a big chair heaped with cushions near the window, a dressing table with a generous mirror at the other side of the room, another mirror, full-length and pleasing, set into the panels of the closet. She asked the price; she reflected a moment; she agreed to it. A sudden reckoning up of her resources occupied her mind.

"If I manage, she thought, "I'll be safe for two or three months. Something is certain to happen by then!"

"Can I come in today?" she asked.

"Yes, certainly! Of course!"

She paid a week's rent in advance, she looked out of the window a second at the street that pleased her and then smiled at the little woman holding the money in her hand.

The woman spoke to her a moment, obsequious small commonplaces, and then left her alone in her room.

Julia stood near the door smiling. She experienced a sense of profound security and a deep assurance, as if by a miracle of oracular revelation her eyes had witnessed the golden certainty of her future. The act of securing these quarters was momentous in its simplicity.

Motionless, near the door, smiling like an idol dedicated to inscrutable

joys, Julia thought of Walter Hastings. She envisaged him complete in that embodiment consonant with her exulting mood. She saw him as in the revealing shadows of night, with his dark eyes looking at her face, his voice speaking to her with the quiet of a thrilling restraint, his hand touching her arm in a second of prophetic intimacy. Now she could see him again; now she was assured of knowing him!

She looked about the room once more and then, opening the door, went out softly. Downstairs the little woman said good-bye to her in her trivial and agreeable voice. Out on the street Julia's mind became wholly practical: she thought of the arrangements she must make within a few hours. There would be no one home now; all the members of her family were at work. If she hurried, she knew she could get away without encountering any of them. She hurried to the corner and took the street car.

When she reached home she went up to her room and began to pack her things into a small, flat trunk. She had already engaged an expressman whose ring at the bell was momentarily anticipated. From the opened closet she disentangled her dresses from Bertha's and hurriedly laid them in the trunk. She stripped the shoddy dressing table of those things strictly hers, her comb and brush, a cheap manicuring set, a box of face powder, a little flat cake of rouge, a small jar of vanishing cream. On top of everything she put the picture of Beatrice Conway, calm as always in her remote and distant courage.

Today Julia held the portrait in her hands with a new emotion: in a measure she felt worthy of its traditions. She seemed to have done some brave, fine thing herself, some deed, more of the spirit than of physical enactment, that brought her closer to the woman of the story that renewed, in a fresh embodiment, the lustre of her courage.

As she closed down the lid of the trunk she heard the bell ring; it was the expressman. She let him in, and

le carried out the box and drove away with it. She sat down at the table with a pencil in her hand and pondered the necessity of writing a note to her mother.

She tapped the pencil on a sheet of white paper creating a little scrawl of thatched lines. It seemed necessary to leave some word. Otherwise there might be inquiries, a hue and cry.

At last she began to write, but she addressed her note to Bertha. She told her that she had gone, that she was tired of living there, that it was useless to make any effort toward her return. She made her words terse, and a quality of bitterness was written into them, like the shadow of a second and more fundamental meaning.

She left the sheet with the pencil beside it lying on top of the table. She went out of the house without turning for a last look behind her.

CHAPTER VII

It was late in the afternoon when Julia reached her new quarters. She found her trunk already delivered; she spent half an hour distributing her clothes in the closet behind the tall mirror. Then, with a certain timidity, she went downstairs to use the telephone. She had his card in her hand with the number he had written on it. She took off the receiver and gave the number to the operator.

A girl's voice answered her. She asked for Mr. Hastings.

Presently she heard him speaking. she recognized the character of his voice, it did not surprise her that the sound seemed that of a profound intimacy, a colour of tone to which her ears had long responded.

She smiled as she spoke to him; she leaned closer to the mouthpiece; her eyes were expectant.

"Do you know who this is?" she asked.

"Who is it?" he questioned.

"This is Julia; have you forgotten me so soon?"

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"You kept your promise!" he exclaimed. "I'm glad!"

"Did you expect me to call today?"

"I hoped you would. After you had gone last night I sat down on the bench and thought how foolish I'd been to let you go the way you did—I mean, without any notion on my part where I could reach you. Why wouldn't you let me take you home?"

"Then you really felt you wanted to see me again?"

"Certainly! Of course I did! When may I see you? May I see you tonight? Will you take dinner with me? Do that, Julia; I'll meet you anywhere you say."

His voice revealed his eagerness to her and stirred her with delight as if it were a long desired gift. Nothing could be closer to her wishes than his proposal. At once she told him she would see him.

"Where shall I meet you then?" he asked. "Anywhere you say! I can call for you in my car, if you like."

"Do that!" she acquiesced.

And then she gave him her new address and set a time.

They talked a moment more before she returned the receiver on its hook.

For a few seconds, standing motionless with the instrument held loosely in her hand, she gave over all her faculties of apprehension to the emotions of the moment. They were defined clearly in no respect; she had, largely, a sense of warmth, a tingling in her finger tips, a glow over her responding body as if, coming out of a bitter cold, she had found the caressing flames of an open fire.

Finally she put the telephone back on the table. Looking about her for an undecided instant, she turned swiftly toward the stairs. She ran up the steps buoyantly.

Entering her room, she realized that there was very little time in which to dress. It was growing dusk, and she turned the button of the electric light.

For some moments her mind was concerned with the clothes she would wear; none she possessed seemed ade-

quate to the occasion. She saw the physical fact, simple in itself, of going out to dinner against a background of enticing and scarcely discerned significances. The coming of this man, her dining with him, the food they would eat, the words they would say, were, she knew, immeasurably greater than the bald prospect of their enactment; the foreseen events in pure fact were engauded before her eyes in a symbolic representation. This evening she was as one stepping across a threshold from a room of soiled and trivial things into a chamber of magnificence, complex in its accoutrements, intricately proportioned, filled with long desired objects for the eyes' immediate seeing. Despite what she knew was no more than a very ordinary enterprise, the prospect of the coming hours garmented themselves in the vestments of a gallant adventure, an adventure that aroused her imagination like the high clear call of a trumpet and touched her mind to the vibrations of dreams. She was happy; she was aboundingly expectant.

The bell rang and she hurried to the window. A car was waiting outside, trembling from the pulsings of its motor, as if it had a beating heart. She knew that he was at the door.

Turning from the window, she took a step toward her door and stood then motionless, slim and erect, poised silently like a fair and fabulous statue, just touched to life in that instant by a necromantic hand. The door of her room opened and the little woman of the house disclosed herself.

"There's a gentleman waiting below," she said.

Julia smiled at her with the graciousness of a queen.

"Thank you," she said. "Will you tell him I'll be down in a few moments?"

She was ready to go at that instant, and her impulse was to run to him with the suddenness and naïveté of a child. Yet she restrained herself with an instinctive feminine artistry sensing the truth that she must not reveal her

eagerness. She walked to the dressing table and appraised her face in the mirror. She was conscious of the new colour in her cheeks, the fresh glow in her eyes; she did not mistrust her charm; she knew that she was lovely.

Finally she walked to the door and passed out into the hall. She descended the stairs slowly, paused a second at the portieres that screened the parlour, and, parting them at last, entered with a smile. He was seated near the window. He stood up at once and returned her smile with his own.

There was a moment of restraint, of hesitation. Then, in the consciousness of her allure, seen in the pleasure of his eyes, she laughed a little. She put her hand into his.

"We don't know what to say to each other, do we?" she asked. "That's because we don't really know each other—not so much. Isn't that true? . . . I have been thinking about you a great deal since—"

"Since last night?"

"It was only last night, wasn't it? Why does the time seem longer?"

"It seems longer to me, too. When I came in here tonight I had the double sensation of something new and at the same time of something old—and pleasant. . . ."

She passed her pleased eyes over his slender, tall figure, and rested them upon his lips with their almost hesitant, diffident smile. She laughed quietly.

"It's because you knew me two or three thousand years ago, in Rome or Greece or Egypt—isn't that possible? What were you like then?"

He laughed a little and did not seem to understand her entirely. He glanced toward the door.

"Where shall we go?" he asked. "I'll take you any place you say. My car is outside."

"You choose," she said.

Together they left the room and she took his arm as they descended the steps of the house. She had experienced a swift emotion of intimacy with her companion that gave her senses the happiness of content. Perhaps he did not

pique and stir her as she had imagined he would; her feelings were of another order: quiet, close, tender. This was better. She was, after all, a little tired, aware of a certain flexion of her spirits, and his nearness soothed her, like comforting words. They approached the car and he helped her into the seat beside his own.

They drove away and she began to question him.

"Tell me," she said, "what did you think of me? What did you think of me last night? What sort of a woman did you imagine me to be?"

"The sort of a woman you are," he said.

"What sort of a woman am I?"

"You are unusual."

"Why?"

"You're different from the women I know."

She laughed.

"You don't know what to say, do you? Really, you don't know anything about me; you have everything to find out!"

He turned his face to her a second with an eager light in his dark eyes. Within herself she smiled with resolve. He would never know all about her; she would keep always a mystery and an aloofness for him; she would preserve, like a hidden gem, a strangeness for his consciousness, for she knew that to lack mystery was to lack allure.

For a moment she was silent, watching his profile as he drove the car.

"Do you know," she said at last, "there was something that pleased me about you last night!"

"Will you tell me?"

"Yes; I was glad and I liked you better because . . . because you didn't try to kiss me."

He looked at her, surprised; she thought he coloured a little.

"Why?"

"Because it made you seem more like the person I imagined you to be."

"Which is the worse?" he asked.

"Kissing you, or just wanting to?"

She touched his arm, she let her fingers linger on his sleeve.

"I'm glad you wanted to," she said.

CHAPTER VIII

THE contrast of her new life with the old came to her most pungently in the restaurant. She watched the men and women as they walked to their tables, observed their attitudes, examined their faces as they talked—these were not the sights of her former hours. But already the years of the unpleasant yesterdays were remote, the substance of a bitter dream; she was awakened now in this lighted place and one of her desires was near her. An orchestra played behind a lattice hung with wistaria and the music made her senses languorous, like an old wine. She did not want to leave this place; she was regretful when they stood up to go.

They came out to the street. A blind beggar was near the door with a decoy of never-sold pencils extended in a grimy and rigid hand; his features were contracted in a dumb grimace. A young woman and a man, walking rapidly, passed close to him, ignoring him, like a pair from another world. The young man bent down close to the face of the girl and they talked to each other with the eagerness of portentous communication. A taxi stopped at the curb and a large woman with a gaudy, painted face descended like a goddess from a disreputable heaven. Julia, linked arm to arm with her companion, drew in a breath of ardent pleasure, conscious for the moment of the manifold aspects of life and viewing them as a thrilled spectator in the stadium of a gorgeous coliseum. He had turned his face to hers, and was speaking to her.

"Where shall I take you now?" he asked. "We can go any place you fancy."

"Any place where we can be alone and talk to each other," she replied.

He hesitated a second, puzzled.

"Well—" he began.

She pressed her fingers intimately against his arm.

"Let's go to your apartment," she

said. "I want to see how you live without anyone to take care of you!"

His laugh responded to the mocking pathos of her voice.

"That's better than any other thing we could do," he said. "Maybe you can tell me many ways to make my lot easier!"

He started the car and they drove away side by side. Julia felt that her companion was a little surprised; he had not expected her suggestion. It pleased her to pique him, to make herself a little unfathomable, to touch their intimacy with the quick and the unexpected that would be like a zest to their companionship. With a fine assurance she recognized herself as the composer of their situations; the potentialities of their actions were in her hands like plastic clay, awaiting the modeling of her deft fingers. And this knowledge gave her her personal acquaintance with the unexpected; she had not foreseen such a rôle. Her senses stirred with the pride of her power.

The man at her side was silent now, pondering the girl who was near him. His mind groped for a symbolic picture of her, a representation that would illumine that which was essential in her. Yet he captured no single image; he found no sure interpretation. He saw her dusk in the night, waiting for him in the park, her features uncertain, her eyes large in the dim light. He perceived her parting the curtains in the little parlour of her home, coming in to him, smiling and slender, with the bronze glints of her abundant hair accentuated by the unmellowed light. She sat near him at the table in the restaurant, vivacious and zestful. He had the picture of her standing close to him on the sidewalk, asking him to take her where they could talk and be alone with each other. He was uncertain of his ability consistently to please her: which of his qualities had the stronger appeal? How should he present himself to her? What was her desire?

They turned a corner and stopped in front of his apartment house. He stopped the engine, jumped out, and

helped her to descend. They went indoors, ascended in the elevator cage and paused outside his door whilst he fitted his key into the lock. He entered first and turned the switch-button on the wall. They were in his living room. Julia stood near the door, surveying the place.

She smelt a reminiscent odour of cigars, and at once she conceived the picture of him seated near the table in the room, the table-lamp lighting his face with a warm glow. She smiled at the intimacy of her fancy. In her picture he was alone; hereafter she would be with him. She crossed to the table and lighted the lamp. She found the photograph of a pretty woman propped up against a small rack of books. She took it in her hands and examined it. He had crossed to her side and was close to her.

"Who is this?" she asked.

"A girl I used to know. . . ."

"Did you know her well?"

"Oh—pretty well."

"Did you make love to her? Did you kiss her?"

He smiled; he laughed a little with surprise and embarrassment.

"Well—" he began.

"I suppose you did!" she said.

For a moment she held the photograph as before, her head bent, looking at it. His eyes caught on the curve of her cheek, white with allure. Her brown hair lay over her head like innumerable threads of a miraculous spinning. He saw her slim, motionless fingers holding the picture.

Then she gripped the edges tightly and swiftly tore the cardboard once crosswise, once downward. She dropped the four pieces from her fingers and turning over and over they fell to the floor like grotesque squares of forlorn snow.

She looked up at him; her cheeks were coloured, her eyes, glinting emerald among their browns, seemed immensely larger. A smile that had something more than the quality of a smile was shaped on her lips.

"You won't make love to her any

more!" she exclaimed. "You won't give her any more of your kisses! There is only one person you can kiss now!"

She paused, she met his eyes, she appeared to wait for some fulfillment. There was invitation in her upturned face, in her singularly smiling lips, her warm throat, her drooping shoulders. And still he was puzzled; he was not sure of her desire. He regarded her a moment, speechless and motionless. Then he put out his hands, touching her arms. At once her arms were about him, her slender body was pressing close to him. He kissed her; her lips responded with an eager pressure; her hands reached upward and buried themselves in his dark hair.

For a moment he wondered, he could not understand the miracle of her fondness for him. Then he accepted the fact itself joyfully, ceasing to search for its explication. He kissed her cheeks and her eyes, the tips of her ears; with his fingers he caressed the round whiteness of her neck, the curve of her shoulders, her soft, small hands. He felt that his senses could never tire of touching her.

"What do you think of me?" she murmured. "How much can you care for me so soon?"

"More than I ever cared for anyone," he answered.

"Did you think, when you went out for a walk in the park last night, that you'd find a little sweetheart?"

"It was the dearest surprise of my life!"

"Are you really so fond of me, dear? Do you really want me?"

Like a Circean magic her words evoked a sudden vision. Life as he had been living it was inconsequent, without significance, a succession of trivialities; she was the ferment of new experiences. Everything seemed possible with her; he could scarcely conceive the measure of her potentialities. He wanted her always as she was now; close in his arms, near and fragrant, a flower to his touch.

"I don't want you just for today," he

said. "Sweetheart, I want you every day. I'm tired of being alone; you can make me happy. I'll do everything to bring about your own happiness. Will you marry me, dear?"

As his sentences entered her listening ears she had a swift picture of the remote life she had abandoned: her mother, her sister, the sordid street, the sordid days; how swiftly she had conquered! How fully she had come to her desire! She felt the fine assurance of a near and unseen genius, guiding her fortunes, shaping the wonder of her days. She was unassailable and strong. She paused only a moment, a moment to think of the past, a moment to dream, before she told him yes.

CHAPTER IX

IN those days that followed, they had many pleasant, practical things to plan. They decided, for the present, to keep the little flat in which he had been living, but Julia revolutionized its interior. There were many things she had always wanted; her ideas were voluptuous.

She haunted the stores each day, purchasing for their home. She bought pictures, lamps, cushions, vases, a big piece of blue silk brocaded with gold for the sofa, a blue screen painted with figures like a tapestry, an old Kurdistan rug with soft reds and yellows. She bought with the pleasure of a child, with a buoyant naiveté, enjoying the simple delight of spending money.

Although they were together nearly every evening, they advanced very little in intimate acquaintance with each other; they were too occupied with their immediate plans. Julia found her lover acquiescent to all her wishes, and it pleased her to play this dominant rôle. His word was "yes" to all her desires.

Sometimes, after a day in the stores, she came into his office, usually late in the afternoon. It delighted her to observe the pride with which he received her; she was introduced as his fiancée. Occasionally, when she called and he was out, she sat at his desk in the inner office, toying with his papers, draw-

ing little figures on his correspondence, talking, in the interval of waiting for him, to his secretary.

This young man was always effusive in his pleasure at her visits. He was a blond fellow, big, vital, laughing: Julia always thought of him as the specimen of a healthy animal. Sometimes when she came in she found him talking very confidentially on the telephone; she knew he was the sort to have many girls; she could picture quite easily how he spent his evenings. His vivacity, his ease of speech was a foil to the quiet, almost diffident manner of Walter; she always found her lover closer to her desire after she had talked for a time to this assistant. And now she was growing impatient for the day of their marriage.

His eagerness was commensurate with her own and they determined that further waiting was unnecessary. There was now the question of their honeymoon trip. For several days Julia pondered this, her wishes fluctuant. She thought of the seashore, the mountains, a tour in their car, a sea trip—but the life of the city drew her more strongly than any of these things.

"Let us stay right here, dear," she said. "For a whole month you'll do nothing but be with me; we'll go to all the restaurants, all the theatres; we'll drive out in the country and have picnics together; we'll have late suppers in our own flat, just you and me!"

He consented with his customary pleased yielding, and they determined to wait no longer. One autumn twilight, gold with the departing sun, they got in their car and drove to a minister's house, who was prepared to receive them. His wife and daughter, a tow-haired young girl with an inclination to giggle, were present as witnesses. The ceremony was performed in a cubical little parlour. The pair stood near an ancient what-not, gaudy with ugliness; the divine was in front of them, reading the service from a little book with pale lavender covers. Julia was relieved when it was over.

"What a dreadful place!" she exclaimed as they emerged.

Her husband pressed her arm close to his side. He helped her into the car with a sublimated tenderness.

"Now you're really mine!" he said.

"Yes! Do you want me just as much, now that I am yours, dear?"

"No one was ever more dearly wanted!" he replied.

They drove away together, going straight to their flat. It was dusk when they entered. Inside the door he took her in his arms, he touched her lightly, he kissed her gently. She clung to him closely; he softly caressed the strands of her hair. Then, suddenly, she clasped her hands tensely about his neck, she pressed his face tight against her own.

"Give me real kisses!" she exclaimed. "I'm your woman!"

There was a disappointing interval, a second, a moment, before he responded.

CHAPTER X

Now, when she awakened in the morning, she had the pleasant emotion of content. She often remembered the other mornings, the bleak hour of arising, the dreary prospect of a day in the store, the vision of nothing better for tomorrow. It was agreeable to revive these memories, for the sake of contrast. Instead of the hurry, the clatter, the ill-humour of that other breakfast table she sat down now with Walter, talked to him quietly, was aware of the tenderness in his eyes. Sometimes he talked to her about the business he planned for the day, and she listened to him in silence, only half hearing, content, a little indulgent, like a mother attending the schemes of her child.

Toward him she had quickly acquired this feeling of maternity. She found him a simple man, whose tenderness found a response in her compassion. He did not love her with a complex fire; his love was a gentle thing, that sought to serve her and achieve her

happiness by granting each one of her spoken wishes.

Sometimes, as she sat looking at him, she wondered at the divergence of their souls and keenly appreciated his child-like faith in her. It was a touching faith, because he understood her so little. He placed in her hands the simplicity of his happiness with the innocence of a mariner consigning his fortunes to an unfathomed and uncomprehending sea. Often she laughed quietly as she recollected her first impressions of him.

He had come to her then as a mystery. She recalled the night in the park when he emerged from the dusk of the path like a knight of high adventure. His slender person, his manner that marked him off so distinctly from the other men she had known, seemed then to presage a thousand potentialities and the fulfillment of her vague dreams. She smiled at the naiveté of her imagination. She had in no way seen him, but only one with his externalities, whom she had clothed in the investiture of her fancy. Sometimes she sighed as she remembered.

One after another, her days went by quietly. Usually she spent her mornings indoors, languorous, inactive. In the afternoon she often visited the stores; the years of deprivations still served to make buying a unique pleasure. Occasionally she stopped at Walter's office and spent a few moments with him. That healthy animal, the blond secretary, was still on hand.

Julia found that she disliked him. She resented his smiling politeness, his easy tongue, his suavity, his eagerness to talk with her. Often she greeted him with an aloofness that was almost without courtesy. Yet, in pondering her dislike, she found herself somewhat unreasonable.

One afternoon, emerging from a tea-room, she heard her name exclaimed suddenly in a woman's voice. She turned, surprised, and found her sister Bertha staring at her.

"For the love of God!" cried Bertha. "Julie!"

Julia, very much embarrassed, was speechless for a moment.

"Where in the name of heaven have you been, Julia?" went on her sister. "You disappeared like a shot. Mom was half crazy. I told her she could bet it was some man. Lord, kid, I never thought you'd do anything like that! And you always telling me to be careful and all that!"

Julia smiled at Bertha's suppositions. The child could never understand the motives of her abrupt departure. Julia felt it quite useless to endeavor any explanations.

"Bertha," she said, "I'm married now . . ."

Bertha's eyes gleamed, her face became cunning, she smiled with a turn of her lips that was half a grimace.

"You're lucky," she said. "You always got off easy in everything; I remember that. What's the idea of keeping under cover then, like a ground-hog?"

Julia vouchsafed no answer to this question. Instead she took Bertha's arm and walked her a few steps along the pavement.

"Would you like to come and see my flat?" she asked. "Have you time?"

"Sure, I've got time. You don't ask why I'm out this hour in the day, instead of at work. Well, I don't have to work."

Julia realized now that in the commonplace of her own leisure she had quite forgotten her sister's position, and wondered nothing about her presence on the street. She turned her face in surprised inquiry.

"What do you mean, Bertha?"

"Well, you're not the only one that can get married!"

"You, Bertha?"

"Absolutely! Just two weeks ago. You remember that John I said I met? Well—I got him! We're going to have a place of our own in a couple of months. Say, there's nothing like this life, is there, kid?"

She squeezed Julia's arm, she grimaced, she winked one eye rapidly several times. Julia was half afraid that

she would jump up and down as she had often done, in her exuberance, when they shared the little room together.

Bertha was unchanged. Her abounding vitality displayed itself in the nervous quickness of her speech, her gestures, her walk. The almost obscene sophistication of her soul, mingled with a sardonic naïveté, was revealed in her speech. Julia had the car near and they drove away together to visit her apartment. She was silent while her sister, with a flood of volubility, commented on her luck.

The cascade of her observations was accentuated when they reached the flat. She examined everything, fingered everything, asked the prices, whistled, exclaimed.

"Lord, you're lucky!" she said. "You took an awful chance, kid, but I don't blame you; you had *luck!*"

There could be no question of Bertha's approval, Bertha's entire conviction of her sister's good fortune. Her voluble approbation brought Julia a curious enlightenment, a train of thought assayed only vaguely heretofore. These things in her home, purchased by the generosity of her husband, were, plainly enough, Bertha's estimate of entire success; they were the measure of Bertha's aspirations. What she had achieved—leisure in which to do nothing and a clutter acquired from the stores—was the desideratum of which the younger girl dreamed. And suddenly she was completely aware that having attained Bertha's ideal, by some sardonic miscarriage of her fortunes, she had failed most completely in her own! Gifts inconsequent and trivial had come to her, whilst the glittering hours of her fancy, her brave imaginings, were most completely denied! She grew silent; when her sister said good-bye she was almost too abstracted to answer.

CHAPTER XI

SHE sat in her room, motionless, like one taking breath after a great exertion. Somehow, it puzzled her deeply

in contemplation, life had tricked and deceived her, and like a sinister manganist, caused her to accept the base metal of a counterfeit for gold. She thought of Walter and his tepidities—why was she here with him, in his house, accepting placidly the meagerness of his gifts? He could not move nor stir her, he could not bring the quickening of her breath, the colour to her cheeks, the light of a fire within her eyes. Then, with her brows contracted, she profoundly resented his blind presumption of her happiness. In that instant she viewed him with a deep contempt.

It was already dark; her room, faintly illumined by the lights from the street, seemed in a suspended twilight malign and unreal. She heard the maid, in the kitchen, moving about in the preparation of dinner. The noises of the outdoors came in to her in a softened harshness. Presently the door from the hall opened; her husband came in. He walked past her room, looking for her. His step returned; he opened her door; she did not turn to look at him.

"All alone? Dreaming?" he asked.

His voice was gentle and tender, his abominable gentleness, his undesired tenderness. She did not answer him.

He quickly approached her chair; he bent down and peered into her face.

"Dear!" he exclaimed. "What is the matter?"

"I don't want to talk," she said.

She knew that he was staring at her, she imagined his widened eyes, the consternation of his features.

"Tell me!" he cried. "What is the matter, sweetheart? Are you sick? What can I do for you?"

"You can let me alone!" she said.

Her mood astonished him. He stood near her chair, looking down at her, seeing the shadowed outline of her head, the dusk mist of her hair, deeply troubled, uncertain, hesitant. Finding her so, it was as if he had come upon a new phenomenon, not in the compass of his understanding, to disquiet and disturb him. But at last his normal ac-

quiescence prevailed over his hesitation; moving on tiptoes, he softly left the room. Julia remained as before, motionless and alone.

When she did not appear at dinner he made another effort to probe her strangeness. She repelled him again, with listless words conveying an immense decision. With a distracting emotion of futility, he retired to the living room and spent the evening walking about between the table and the chairs like one lost in a labyrinthine maze.

Julia did not come out from her room. Presently she took off her dress and lay down on her bed, her white arms stretched out on either side of her, her opened eyes looking up at the ceiling.

Her mind was inactive, her thoughts vague, like those of one in a trance. She did not move; her supine body, indolent, careless, suggested the supreme indifference of death. After a time she went to sleep, passing out of the state of consciousness almost imperceptibly.

It was late in the morning when she awakened. Glancing at the little clock on the bureau, she saw the time and experienced a sense of relief: he must have gone to work; she would not have to talk to him.

She got up and spent a languorous hour at her toilet. Her mind felt dull, she seemed to lack the power of consecutive thought. Her body was flexed, as if all the muscles were relaxed after a supreme activity. The morning passed and after lunch she dressed to go out.

She had no goal. For a time she drove about in her car, choosing the most crowded streets in order that the purely physical abstraction of manipulating the machine might be most complete. Later she stopped in front of a moving-picture theater and went in. She did not look at the pictures; the place served as a stop-gap for a time. The afternoon was nearly passed; she stood up and left the theater. Coming out, abstracted, unobservant, she nearly collided with a man.

"Mrs. Hastings!" he exclaimed.

She looked up. It was her husband's blond secretary.

"Hello!" she said. "Where are you going?"

"Nowhere in particular. Mr. Hastings left early this afternoon—said he was going home. I thought I'd take a stroll before I had dinner."

Then he had gone home to look for her! What a turmoil he must be in by this time! At once she resolved not to go home; she did not want to see him. She smiled at the tall fellow at her side.

"Who are you having dinner with?" she asked.

"No one at all. I'm deserted by everyone tonight."

"Then suppose you let me have it with you? I don't feel like going home."

For an instant he looked at her with widened eyes; he regarded her as one might a swiftly presented problem.

Then he laughed and took her arm.

"Nothing could be better! Do you know, I've always been interested in you! I've often wondered if—"

"If what?"

"If we'd ever go out together. If we'd—ever know each other. . . ."

She lifted her brows; she met his eyes, that regarded her with the light of a freshly aroused expectation.

"Did you think that was possible?" she asked. "What made you think so?"

"Well—I imagined—Hastings is a good fellow, you know, but—"

"You imagined he wasn't exactly the man for me?"

"You've said it for me!" he laughed.

"And what makes you think *you* are? Do you think you are?"

He pressed his fingers against her arm. He inclined his head close to her face.

"Are you willing to find out?" he asked.

She shrugged her shoulders; she drew him with her toward the curb. The innuendos of their conversation gave her a certain pleasure. She was indifferent to what might happen.

"Here is my car," she said. "I can't

leave it here; we might as well make use of it. Do you know what I want for dinner?"

They got into the car; he looked at her in inquiry.

"Some spaghetti and some red wine. We'll go to one of those Italian places. You can get a private room where we can be alone and talk."

The car pulled away from the curb. It was dusk and the arc-lights flared into being. The streets were crowded with hurrying men and women, going to their innumerable homes, their homes in which they found all the manifold possibilities of life, content and love, deception and hate, the voluptuousness of expensive possessions, the meagerness of poverty. Now, shrilling her horn in the traffic, Julia was vibrant with the desire of life, the desire of experience, the wanting of unseen events.

She tilted back her head and a light shone in her eyes like a veil of fire.

CHAPTER XII

THE little room in which they ate their dinner was decorated with several lurid oils representing Italian composers; the artist was a brave colourist and his subjects had an intense, boiled expression. The waiter was low-voiced; he came and went with a quiet tread, he knocked at the door before he entered; there was a furtiveness about this place. Julia sat opposite her companion, finding a pleasure in her escapade.

She liked his vivacity, his exuberance, his frank animality. He ate and drank with an obvious relish; he talked to her about foods and displayed a very considerable technical knowledge.

"Tell me," she said, "what do you do with your time away from the office? Do you know many women?"

"A few!" He looked into her eyes, laughing. "I like women!"

"I know you do! And have you any special preference? Do you like women like me?"

He sipped a little of his wine, re-

garding her for a moment as if in speculation.

"I don't know anyone just like you," he said. "You puzzle me a little."

"How? In what way?"

He paused again, still looking at her. Then he smiled with his frank simplicity.

"Well, then, again, perhaps you don't! I suppose you saw me and liked me and thought you would like to spend an evening with me. What's the use of making problems out of things? I take everything that comes!"

She was amused at his naive assurance, his effervescent conceit. She examined his face, looking at his blue eyes, his thick, yellow hair, his full lips. She liked him; she wondered how much ardour he would display should he make love to her. She felt that she wanted him to kiss her and speak his easy insincerities in her ears. She stretched out her hand and closed her fingers over his own.

"Then if I don't puzzle you any more," she said, "tell me just why I came here with you tonight?"

He responded to her touch; he pressed her fingers with his. Standing up, still retaining her hand, he arose and came around the table. He drew her to her feet, he took her cheeks between his palms. With her head thrown back she saw for a moment his smiling lips; her eyes closed; she waited for his kiss. His lips touched her own and for a moment they were immobile in this silent embrace.

She drew herself out of his arms; she looked at him a second; she laughed. It had not thrilled her—it had been no more than the caress of a boy. He had no emotions to give her; she had no response for him. She continued to laugh.

"I must go!" she said. "Am I not foolish?"

She picked up her wraps from the chair, ran around the table, and whilst he stood in motionless astonishment she hurried from the room. The waiter was ascending the stairs as she went

down. He turned to look after her in wide-eyed surprise.

She came out to the street, climbed into her car and started the engine with an explosive clatter. She pulled away swiftly. Her face was frowning, her eyes were set straight in front of her, her hands gripped the wheel with a savage tightness. Life seemed to her a sardonic antagonist that thwarted her with a malignant subtlety, a duelist whose scoring thrusts were swift and unforeseen. She was futile and weak, a thistledown in the wind, a cockle-shell on the sea, a bubble blown for the sport of the indifferent gods. She was angry at her impotence; she hated the emptiness of her searching hands.

Without a specific intent, she drove the car home. Outside the apartment she stopped, shut off the engine and hurried indoors. The elevator took her upstairs. She opened the door and entered her flat. At her step, her husband came hurrying through the hall and when he saw her he stopped and

stared, as at an apparition. She knew then the emotions he must have experienced during her absence—his wonder, his astonishment, his despair. She envied him these emotions—he had no power to stir her own wonder, to arouse her own astonishment, to move her to a personal despair. On his lips she saw words struggling for expression.

She did not wait for his speech, she did not wait for his questions. She ran toward him laughing, laughing in an hysteria of disappointment, of wanting, of dreams unfulfilled. She threw her arms about him and he staggered back with the impetuosity of her embrace; between the convulsion of her laughing she kissed him. She would make him give her something, she would seize *something* from her life with him! She would make him unhappy, she would bring him disaster and humiliation—yet she was not sorry.

As with a flame, she burned with the desire of life, even its sting and its defeat!



I HAVE MADE SONGS

By David Morton

Though I have made you many a golden song,
 Hymning your loveliness in artful rhyme,
 No one of these but does your beauty wrong,
 And stands a libel for all listening time.
 Dusks, I have said, are clouding through your hair,
 And Earth's old twilights linger where you are,
 Dreams, I have said, have made your eyes a lair
 For largess brought from some old ruined star.

Yet, all of this is but a faltering art
 Of futile words that strain beyond their reach:
 And still about your image in my heart,
 Trembles the cloistered silence closed to speech,—
 A templed shrine, a dim and holy place,
 Where no least word profanes your lifted face.



THE MAN WHO FOOLED THE GODS

By Oscar C. Williams

IN the whole world there was only one man who lived his life as the gods had conceived it. And the gods communed among themselves and said, "We should reward him. He is not like other men in whose hearts Passion rules and Will is huddled in a corner. He is not like other men in whose hearts some trembling, conscience-spurred Resolve creeps forth timidly, but flees at the sight of Temptation. No, he is not like other men. We should reward him."

And the man was summoned before the sapphire thrones. And the head-god spoke to the kneeling man and said,

"For the good that you have done, for the upright life that you have led, we shall grant you anything that you

may wish. Think! Let all your years of righteousness culminate grandly in one spoken desire!"

And the man answered and said, "All my life have I seen other men live deep in the joys of sin, but their hours fled away, and I thought that this was punishment enough for them. But often I wondered why my hours, too, should go way,—I, who filled them with righteousness. All my life have I yearned for one hour that will not go away, one hour that is not mortal. Grant me, therefore, only one such hour."

And the gods granted the man's wish immediately without question. And the man is living an eternity of debauchery in that one hour that will not go away.



SOUVENIR

By Muna Lee

I REMEMBER you because of a little hill
Where the violets grew thicker than the grass,
And through my memory flames and whistles still
A flock of red-winged blackbirds we saw pass.

Because of a rain-filled night I remember you,
And a tree we came on suddenly in the fall
And a vague horizon that broke and foamed in blue
—But I do not remember any words of yours at all.



MOTHER

By Lawrence Rendel

I

THEY had lain there long in silence, chewing at meditative grass-stems, looking out over the self-consciously picturesque Swiss landscape.

Two young men, leanly trim in uniforms, radiant with that recovered luxury of cleanliness, of which it seemed to them they could never get enough. Two every-day fellows, the kind one sees in offices, barbers' chairs or on street-cars, who had been suddenly uprooted from all the accustomed decencies and safeties of civilization, dragged through the obscene paranoia of war and then, by sheer chance, it almost seemed, dropped down into the quietude of this Swiss internment.

How they had come there is of little concern, they themselves accepted it without question. Nor did they question why they should choose to be so much together. That was the way of all camps; each to his liking, pair by pair, side by side, lying for hours in mutual silences. To Manning, the elder of the two, it had lately occurred that perhaps those silences were really more dangerous to the world than even the material destruction of the war. He could see them, lying out over a large portion of the map of Europe: pair by pair, stretched out without speaking, their young eyes turning backwards with a certain deadly clarity of vision.

It was Carter who spoke first, spreading on the turf before him an American newspaper, some three weeks old, at which, in unconscious rejection of all the conventional emotions, he had merely glanced and then dropped without further notice.

"The fellows who put up this bunk make me sick."

It was said without rancor, just a flat statement of frank fact. Without troubling to turn his head, Manning swept the end of his eye across the page.

The editorial sheet, bearing the usual war cartoon, a sentimental one, this time; one of those sure-fire stock-in-trades which cartoonists keep tagged away on the shelves of their minds against the drouth of an idealess day. A little woman, pathetically frail and black-clad, her face wan beneath a coronal of white hair, but her eyes tremendously shining as she gazed from a window at a very large star on a very black-ink night.

She must have been over sixty, at least, as women go in these days, but on the wall behind her a service flag, with one star, hung above the photograph of a uniformed youth of apparently about nineteen, carefully inscribed "My Son." Beneath it all ran the legend, "The Star that Shines on Him"; and as further aid to the intelligence of the reader there hovered, near the ceiling of that pictured room, a wraithlike vision of cheerful carnage.

"Bunk," Carter remarked again.

"Good policy, though," Manning murmured indifferently. "It is emotions that rule in these days, not reason."

"The dear, old, conventional, American mother," he went on. "The idol of the press, the job-saver of the third-rate cabaret 'artist.' Always about seventy, always leaking at the eyes or bending over a wash-tub, always gazing out into the night from poverty-stricken windows. And yet, with such a hor-

rible warning kept constantly before the people, they wonder and howl at race suicide. But then, to suggest that a mother could possibly be any other way would probably seem sheer anarchy to the man in the Tube. All the same, my mother—”

Manning's tone grew amusedly reminiscent and a grin tugged at the corners of his mouth.

“I'm thirty, but after three o'clock in the afternoon my mother would pass for thirty-eight at most. While as for watching at windows, torn with anxiety for her wandering boy . . . I wish I had ten dollars for every hour I have spent dozing on smoking-room sofas, waiting until she has had enough dancing at about four g.m. That type you have there doesn't exist, that's all.”

There was silence again, lasting long, while a chime of bells stole up on the breeze from a steeple in the toy village down below. Faintly it came, thrillingly sweet, almost elfin, bringing with it a queer little ache that this life about them might be really as picture-bookish as it looked.

Then Carter spoke, casually picking up the thread again as though only an instant had elapsed.

“Yes, it does exist. . . . I knew one, once.”

Manning's silence, though it could not be deepened, took on a subtly different quality, as if the ears behind it had been emptied of the stream of his own thoughts, leaving only a void of listening. He had expected that Carter would speak, some day. The safety-valve of twenty-four is that, sooner or later, it must talk.

Looking quietly off at a snow peak across the valley, avoiding any glance at the other, he waited.

II

“THE Brays were the people I knew the best of all—that is, next to my own family, of course,” Carter hastily amended.

“It must have been before I was born that they came to that big, old house

on the Ocean front. A great rambling barn of a place, half a mile from the little beach town and ten miles from everywhere else, but rather jolly in its way. Sand-dunes and cedars back of it, in front nothing but the beach and sea, with the highest tides breaking only twenty feet from its front door.

“It was a bit inconvenient for the old man, though; his office was in the city, twenty miles inland, and he'd run in and out on the cars every day. He was of a kind which is dying out now, the regular old-school American of the seventies, all white hair, black string tie and mild courtesy. You could never have taken him for anything but what he was. He could have stepped straight on to the stage of any theater, and the moment he entered you would have known that he was the faithful old family lawyer, bringing the will to be stolen. And, curiously enough, that was just the sort of thing which was always happening to him in his practise. Somehow you knew that, too, the first time you looked at him. There are some people who just seem put up to bear with things in a gentle, puzzled sort of way.

“The fact is that ‘dear old Mr. Bray,’ as everybody called him, was still trying to live in a world which had disappeared some thirty years before, only he hadn't found that out yet. But it was beginning to wear him down, together with that forty miles in the cars every day; but Mrs. Bray would not hear of moving to the city.

“She had bought that house on the Ocean front especially for the children, you see. Her whole life was devoted to them, she said, and you couldn't be with her half an hour without seeing it was so.

“‘A little inconvenient, so far from the town and the cars,’ she would apologise to visitors, ‘but it is so good for the children. In the city—you understand—the—the *influences!*’

“There were four of those children; Fred, Beatrice, Theo and Sydney—he was just a kid of my own age, we were

always together, and that is how I know about it all so well.

"The elder ones were a handsome lot, though Syd was ordinary enough to look at, and their appearance was at once their mother's pride and an added anxiety; hence that house, half a mile from everywhere, for their protection from 'influences.' What those might have been she never explained, but then she didn't have to, she had a way of putting things over without explanation.

"She would mention those 'influences' at least once a day, and always with such a look, so appealing, so brave, and with such a quivering tremor of mother love that one felt like kissing her feet for it—or, if one didn't, one felt like a brute not to.

"At least, you knew she was right. There was probably never an instant in her whole life that Mrs. Bray hadn't been exactly right. How old she was I can't quite say, but it couldn't have been so very much, for I remember Syd when we were both of us hardly out of our baby-buggies, but it seems as though even then Mrs. Bray was already grey and faded and pathetic—and brave.

"She was just a wisp of a woman, always in black, with white lace at her throat and wrists, and a little stringless bonnet of lilac flowers when she went out. I can see it now, perched on her wavy white hair like a little crown, its very shabbiness its jewel.

"A handy little woman, too; always patching, darning and mending; painting a floor or fixing a lock, keeping the big old place in perfect order; but always with time to greet everyone, as they came in at the door, with a smile, a kiss and a cheery:

"'Back at last, dear. And what has my son—or my daughter—been doing today?'

"At least it should have been cheery; it sounded so—deliberately so—tremendously so—and yet—"

"It was when Syd was about ten or eleven that he first really noticed that greeting. Up till then he had merely

taken it as an ordinary phenomena of daily life, like breakfast and evening. It was summer and vacation; he had been down the beach all the morning and had barely got home in time for dinner, but his mother met him at the door all the same, running from the kitchen to open it, flushed from the stove, with her smile, her kiss and that inevitable:

"'Almost late, dear—but never mind. And now, what has my boy been doing all the morning?'

"As an actual fact the kid hadn't been doing anything. It was, perhaps, the first time in his life he hadn't anything to say to her, for usually he was full of kid stuff, as boys are at that age. He must have been dreaming down there on the beach—he had just begun to find out that he could do such a thing—for all at once the morning was gone and he had to race to get home.

"He had not thought of it until she spoke, then that direct question made him feel rather foolish as he realized how the hour had slid away. It even half scared him with a sense of some incomprehensible change in himself. All he seemed able to do was to stand there, get red and blurt out:

"'Why—I haven't done anything, Ma.'

"I guess that must have been the first time that Syd Bray ever saw his mother's eyes; or, perhaps it was the first time he had given her such an answer, or perhaps, again, it was the first time of a number of things, for him. At least, he saw them then. They were very large and light, really brilliant, but with a hint of darkness in them, too, as though that light were but a reflection and sometimes that which was behind it came through. It did so at that moment as her hands tightened on his shoulders in a gay half-reproach:

"'Oh—but I hoped that my boy would always tell his mother everything that he did. I shouldn't like to think that one of my sons had done anything he couldn't tell me.'

"The trouble was that the poor kid had nothing to tell, you see; and yet

he wriggled under her gaze, feeling half guilty about it, and half angry at feeling so, all of which simply made him turn red and sullen.

"Why Ma—I've told you, haven't I?" he mumbled.

"He had a glimpse of her face as she turned away. It had paled, quiveringly so, even as that of one who has received a hurt and conceals it for the sake of the one who dealt the blow. All through dinner Syd looked at his plate, unable to meet her eyes, but he could feel them upon him, not reproachful, but loving; bravely filled with the hope of one who fears the worst but determinedly will not see it—and who sees it all the more for that rejection. It should have made him sorry, melted him, but all he could feel was that half cold, half hot sense of mingled guilt and anger.

"It all passed off, of course. He forgot it, as boys do, but almost unconsciously, from that time, he never came home without some story to tell his mother. If he really had none to tell then he would make one up, automatically beginning the moment he came in sight of the house.

"It was some time after that before Syd discovered that the others were doing the very same thing. There was no intent of concealment about it; they had no reasons for concealment and but little opportunity for such. There were no 'influences' in that little beach town. School—Grade or High, according to their ages—tennis, a swim, perhaps an ice-cream soda and a moving picture in the evening, an occasional picnic, such was the round of their lives. They went to school and came back; they went out and came back; always back to that opened door and that smile and cheery 'And what have my chicks been doing today?'

"Except for the same round, so usual that the telling of it had become wearisome, the only logical answer was 'Nothing.' But 'nothing' was the one thing that Mrs. Bray could never accept.

"They even consulted each other about it as, strolling back along the

board walk, the great chimney of the house began to loom above the wind-blown cedars of the dunes. Beatrice and Theo, sixteen and seventeen, always in white, it seems now, with big bows in their hair, and arms full of books. Fred, long legged, silent footed in tennis shoes, peering out from under the down-turned rim of his white beach hat with a slightly puzzled gaze. Mechanically, with the cool acceptance of youth of what they knew to be inevitable, one of them would exclaim:

"Oh—what are we going to tell mother today?"

III

SILENCE again, a tinkle of cow-bells from an upland pasture as Carter paused, lying there on his stomach, chin propped on hands, looking out across the Thal. Serene, unemotional, really seeing not that snow peak dominating the range, but those inner pictures, the tinted flickerings of his mental cinema screen, from which he spoke and to whose meanings his eyes were piercing with such an almost blasting clarity.

"So it went," he nodded. "Went on for several years more; but, of course, it couldn't last for ever—nothing does.

"It was when Syd was about fifteen that the first break came. It was through Fred that it happened—and to Fred, as well, poor chap. He was twenty-three then, one of those quiet chaps of whom one can never be sure just what he is up to, or if he is really up to anything at all. Kid as I was, I couldn't understand it at the time, but one of the things I best remember about Fred, and which somehow sort of sized him up for me, was a glance I once surprised him casting at his mother. Even at the time it made me feel queer, it was so half affectionate, so half hard, so wholly hungry—and so puzzled.

"Fred always gave one an impression that he was a bit puzzled by things. He was rather like his father in that; more modern, of course, and with more of the modern rebellion, but secretly baffled by the world in which he found himself.

It drove him back into his shell when what he really needed was drawing out of it. A girl could have done that, but he was shy of them. That was largely owing to Mrs. Bray. She had a way of saying, oh, so gaily, but with such a bravely concealed little shake in her laugh, that, of course, one of these days, her boys would marry and quite forget their poor little mother. But looking from now I can see how, when any girls had been about, she would contrive to speak of them; so sweetly, so understandingly, but with a sort of unquenchable hope—and why hope unless there is first fear? I can't explain it, it wasn't what she said, nor even how she said it, but let Fred look twice at any girl and in a few days there was an impression about the house that that girl was rather to be avoided—that she was, in fact, pretty much of an 'influence.'

"Fred was in a real-estate, stock-and-bond office in the city then. The McGowan & Strang company, the kind of office which owns its own twelve-story building and in which everybody is either prominent or the son of prominence. The Brays, you see, were quite 'folks' in their way and tremendously well thought of. People always spoke of them with that peculiar sort of admiration which has no intention, nor wish, to be in the least like what it admires.

"It was one night that it came—so many things seem to come at night. Fred arrived home in the middle of the week. That alone was surprising for, as a rule, it was only week ends that he spent at the beach now; so unexpected was it that for once he entered without Mrs. Bray's opened door and welcoming flutter of hands and kiss. So he just walked right into the living room, a picture of unbreakable peace with its shaded lamp, a glimpse of moonlit breakers through the range of ocean windows. Syd at his lessons, Beatrice doing some fancy work, Theo reading, Mr. Bray in his study, the door between half open: Mrs. Bray in her black and white lace, a wreath of lilac flowers on

her grey hair, her thin hands busy with mending. She might have been cut from a cameo exactly as she sat there.

"Then the door opened and there was Fred, stripping off his gloves, throwing his hat on a settee. How little we know what enters with people through opened doors. He nodded to the girls and Syd, kissed his mother quietly as ever, but there was that in his atmosphere which brought her to her feet. Syd had never seen her quite so brave as at just that instant. How does that song go—?

"'E is for her eyes with lovelight shining.'

"That was it, exactly; and—

"'T is for the tears were shed to sa-ave me.'

"Not that she shed them, but you knew they were there. Inner tears of silent sacrificial heart-blood, dripping prayers for her boy—her *erring* boy; you knew that he was that from just seeing her. Fred saw it and it was then he gave that look I told you of. But he said nothing, just passed on into his father's study and shut the door, while Mrs. Bray sat bravely down again to her mending.

"That was all Syd knew of it that evening. He went to bed, in his alcove off the big room which was Fred's. He heard the girls come upstairs, quietly, instead of chattering as they usually did, then a steady murmur of voices from downstairs. He knew that something was up, but it is hard to disturb a boy of fifteen and he soon slept. Much later he was awakened again by voices in the same room with him, Mrs. Bray and Fred, speaking softly evidently so as not to arouse him, but every now and then a tone, though subdued, cut through the curtain of the alcove into his ears.

"He heard the word 'money,' Fred seemed to be in some trouble over it. His syllables, though indistinct, came with a wearily dogged persistence as if he were repeating a story already many times told.

"Then his mother's voice, all the more poignant for its careful repression:

"My boy—if you would but speak."

"But mother, I *have*. That is all there is to it. I tell you I never even saw that money."

"Fred was losing a little of his self-control; Mrs. Bray must have given a warning glance at the curtain, for he went on:

"Syd is asleep. I looked in at him. Even if he isn't it makes no difference, he'll have to know some time.' A little pause; then came a significant: 'He might even believe me.'

"Then Mrs. Bray again,

"My boy, if you would but soften your heart to me. Do you think that I would not stand by my sons through anything?"

"No I don't. You have stood by for twenty-three years—every minute of the time. The trouble is that you won't stand by through nothing."

"But Fred—that money they found in your desk?"

"I have told you that was my own."

"Oh, my boy—six hundred dollars?"

"If you must know, I won it on the races."

"The races."

"If I could give you Mrs. Bray's voice as she said that. Had she said 'on the steps of very hell' it would not have meant so much, for that is so abstract, while she made of that word 'races' an actual, present, cankering evil. In it you read her whole life, her years of desperate prayer and striving to guard her children from 'influences'; her agonized realization of how futile that struggle had been, then the anguished bravery of her appeal.

"My son—my boy—can you not trust your own mother?"

"I *have* trusted you.' Fred almost shouted. 'The trouble is that you can't trust me. Can't you understand that people do win on the races sometimes? But there—what's the use? You never have believed in any of us. We have all been forced to lie to you all our lives and now you are incapable of even hearing the truth.'

"I am certainly incapable of believing it the truth that one of my sons is

speaking to his mother in this way. I will see you in the morning.'

"That was all, for she left at once. Hidden though she was by the curtains Syd could almost see her going. The indomitable courage that kept her erect despite her load of sorrow; the love-light still bravely shining from her stricken eyes; the certainty that there would be only prayer instead of sleep for her that night—oh, the whole, general, damnable rightness of the woman.

"There was a long silence after she left; not that of an empty room but a full sort of silence which told Syd that Fred was standing there without moving. It was rather disquieting and Syd had a vague feeling of wanting to get up and go to him, but his fear of seeming foolish was stronger. After a while he heard Fred undressing and the light went out. He was glad of that, it was the usual, normal proceeding, bringing a comforting sense that things were going on in the proper routine.

"Then the curtains were pulled aside and he saw Fred standing by his bed looking down at him.

"Awake?" he asked; and as Syd grunted he went on. 'I guess you heard, then?'

"He sat down and Syd saw he was in his bathing suit, a meagre affair of red and yellow stripes, his shoulders and limbs a sort of marble white in the wispy moonlight falling through the window.

"You going swimming this time of night?" Syd asked and Fred nodded gloomily.

"I feel like I need something after—God, you'd think a fellow's own mother would believe—but, hell, what's the use of grouching about it? It's always been that way. But you listen to me, kid, when your turn comes you get out of this, any way you can."

"Syd squirmed under the bedclothes in a boy's uneasy self-consciousness at anything serious. Through the window he could see the ocean, deceivingly calm on the surface but with a heavy ground swell that sent the breakers rolling almost up to the boardwalk, making

the whole house quiver with their ceaseless force.

"As Fred rose to go, Syd grabbed at his arm.

"Say, look out for rip tides, the beach was full of them this afternoon."

"I was swimming on this beach before you could walk."

"That was true, and Fred's daring in the surf was almost a legend in the town. He was at the curtain now and Syd, on an impulse, sat up and growled:

"See here, Fred—I believe what you told mother, anyhow."

"He was half sorry he had said it the next instant, for the result was so strange, yet he was as strangely glad, too. Fred's arm was about his neck, cheek pressed to cheek. Only a moment, an awkward, fumbling sort of moment at that, but in it Syd had a sense of nearness such as he had never before experienced. His father's hand, his mother's kiss had never brought such a feeling of an inner union of complete understanding, which needed no words.

"Fred was gone. His cheek still hot Syd listened to the creak of the stairs under bare feet, felt the rush of salt air below up through the house at the opening of the front door.

"He never saw Fred again. Days later something was drawn from the surf and buried in his name, because of some clinging shreds of red and yellow. But Syd's last memory of his was that warm arm about his neck; his constant wonder, just what might have happened out that stretch of deserted beach, white and indigo under the moon, always with something unexpected about it in spite of its life-long familiarity. Had that really been a cry which had caught his ears, coming faintly through the roll of the surf, bringing him up half awake and half out of bed? He listened long, but the only sound was the hoarse night croak of a wandering pelican, and, reassured, sleep had claimed him again.

"Or had there really been no cry, and no intention of one? In spite of the wondering shivers which accompanied

it, that thought rather haunted him, for it brought with it a certain avidness of curiosity.

"It all soon rolled off him, though, as things do at that age. Mrs. Bray was wonderful in the days which followed; they might almost have been specially designed as a chance for her to show her mettle, like that of some finely tempered blade which can bend and quiver, but never quite breaks. Hints of scandal began to leak out concerning Fred, rumors of suicide, whispers that the Bray sons were not all that they should be to be worthy of such a wonderful little mother.

"But Fred had told the plain truth that night. Even before that battered thing was given up by the surf, the son of the firm, young McGowan, had come, contrite and appalled, to say that the payment had been traced to another. In that hour Mrs. Bray was even more wonderful than before; her forgiveness, her submission, her constant faith and restored certainty in her lost son were almost superhuman. Young McGowan seemed to find them so, at least—with a side glance at Beatrice, who was just twenty then and had blossomed into a beauty.

"Within a year the two were married."

IV

WITH a nod which seemed to relegate the affair to inevitability, Carter paused once more, selecting a juicy grass stem to thrust between his teeth, then turning his gaze to that distant glacier.

He looked serene as the sky overhead, but under the steady flow of his sentences Manning had felt things withering in himself. Unsuspected shreds of sentiment, lingering webs of conventional emotional reactions to conventional emotional symbols, shrivelling and falling as leaves on a morning of flawless frost.

"Beatrice's part of it all is soon told," Carter went on. "She died at the birth of her first child. Died in her mother's arms.

"McGowan had tried to keep Mrs. Bray away; I think he was beginning to suspect things by then; but what husband could forbid his wife's mother at such an hour?"

"That was Mrs. Bray's own expression. She had promised Beatrice that she would 'go with her through her hour'; and she began that 'hour' weeks before, never allowing Beatrice out of her sight. She was always sitting by, her face shining with such courage, such hope, that one could almost see, by contrast, that shadow of death which she was so bravely fighting away from her child.

"The doctor actually ordered her away, but it couldn't be done. She met him with such dignity, such a waving aside of the implied insult to herself, such a smile of tolerance for masculine non-comprehension of a daughter's natural feelings at such a time. So she sat on, keeping up Beatrice's spirits, but in spite of it all, as 'her hour' approached Beatrice went to pieces.

"She shrieked, they whispered afterwards, throwing herself about, clinging to her mother, crying out that she couldn't face it, screaming to the doctor to stop it somehow—anyhow.

"That leaked out, too, and people talked again about the Bray children and how terrible it must be for that marvelous little mother. Such a terrible end after all her unsparing efforts.

"So that was the end of that.

"Theo's turn came next. She was nineteen then, not as pretty as Beatrice, but by way of being a genius on the violin. Somebody heard her play and offered a year in Paris, and Mrs. Bray consented. You could see what it cost her to do so, but she was so bright, so tender and self-sacrificing over it, with never a tear, only joy that Theo should have her opportunity; but as she bent over that eternal mending her hands shook so that she could hardly draw the needle. Never would she let her own feelings stand in the way of any of her children. Not that she said it, but then she did not have to say it—she *was* it.

"All through the hectic weeks of

Theo's preparations she sat by, shining again with that luminous spirit while Theo chattered excitedly of her plans. Mrs. Bray never entered into those plans, merely sat, whitening a little but smiling through it all with a smile such as a mother might give as one of her daughters thrust a blade into her heart.

"Even so it was not until the very last evening, with her trunks all packed, that Theo was finally worn down. Her fire of potential genius wasn't quite enough to stand that perpetual picture of a forsaken mother bravely bearing her loneliness. Enthusiasm, rebellion and longing alike collapsed against that example of shining fortitude. There was a scene in which Theo blew up, finally, and forever, all her fire going off in screams and hysteria, dying down to a slobbering mess of reconciliation.

"She never went to Paris, of course. In a week she looked five years older; in a year she was a settled spinster, her mother's inseparable companion, her violin a mass of dust in an upstairs closet, her only reward the patting on the head sort of way in which people spoke of her.

"'Poor Theo, she might have amounted to something with her music, but she gave it all up to stay with that wonderful little mother of hers.'

"It is queer about people, isn't it? If you do, or if you don't, they don't like it either way.

"So that was the end of her."

"And Syd?" Manning asked, as Carter's silence took on a disquieting air of finality. "Don't you know what became of him?"

"Oh—Syd?" Carter's tone was half questioning, as of one recollecting something half forgotten. "Sure I know about him. Didn't I tell you he was the one I knew best of all?"

"It was about five years ago that Syd's turn came—that turn which poor Fred had foreseen on that last night of his. Syd was eighteen then, just finishing High School. He had a chum, Mark, a wild sort of boy, nothing mean though, only too much vitality, but

it kept him in constant hot water and gave him a hard name in the town.

"One day Mark 'borrowed' a neighbor's automobile and he and Syd went off for a harum-scarum, cross-country sort of ride. It ended in a wreck, and the neighbor, it seemed, had not been consulted about that borrowing and had the motor-cops out after them. Both boys were taken at once to the local Juvenile Court; the sensation of the town that day, for they were perhaps the most important young ruffians ever brought before that bar. It looked cloudy for Mark, with his reputation against him, but Syd, in one of those impulses that boys sometimes have, tried to take the blame on himself.

"They tangled his story all up in three minutes, once they began to question him, of course. But the judge was a semi-human sort and he called the boys into his room for a private talk. His decision was that if Mark could make another boy like him well enough to try and take his blame, then he was too good for the Reform School, and should be put upon probation. As for Syd, the judge lectured him on the crime of perjury and its possible consequences, then sent him off, with a clap on the shoulder, in a 'don't do it again, but I kind of like you for having done it' fashion.

"Mark's mother was in court and she took them home and fed them. Such a feed. She was a big, vital, high colored woman, the image of what Mark himself would be in twenty years. To Syd's astonishment she treated it all as a huge joke, but a joke of which they themselves were the funniest feature. Under the twinkle in her eyes and her openly sly digs, they writhed far worse than in the court itself, for they could feel no antagonism to her. They stuffed, writhed, reddened and laughed all at the same moment, the laughter taking all the sting from her thrusts, while still leaving a clean, open sort of a-shamedness at having acted so like a couple of silly kids.

"All the way home Syd thought of her, especially of one last instant alone

which she had contrived with him. Laughter still, but coming through tears, a choking, scrambling hug, a kiss, a murmured—'To try and do that for Mark—you dear, foolish, blessed boy.'

"He knew that all the town was aware of his arrest; he could guess what awaited him if he passed through it. The condemnation of the respectable; the leering acceptance of the semi-disreputable, gathered on their special corner before the pool room, as though, in passing through that court, he had received a sort of reverse accolade which made him one of them. But he no longer cared, that scrambling, messy hug had wiped all that away and he went boldly down the street with high head; not cocky, but quiet; not ashamed, but sorry.

"It was at the Bank corner that he saw his mother coming down the street. She had not been in court, the thing had been rushed through so quickly that there had been no time for her to get there. Otherwise she would have been there, be sure of that; it was, perhaps, the one thing lacking in her life, to sit bravely by and support a son publicly accused of crime.

"She was doing so now, in the best way she could; not hiding in her home, but courageously walking the town, her little shopping bag on her arm. Syd could imagine her at the meat market, her face shining, composed, without a tremor, as she asked for 'Some chops, please, and I want them especially nice—tonight.' And all around her, in the eyes of the customers and in the manner of the man who served her, a glow of admiration for this brave little mother who hid her riven heart and planned only the feast for the prodigal.

"For some reason that he could never explain Syd drew into a doorway and let her pass without seeing him. He never quite knew why he did that, unless it was a sudden sort of—of boredom with what he knew he must inevitably go through.

"He stood there in the shadow of that doorway, watching her pass; probably the first time he had ever seen his

mother when she was unconscious of his presence. Then he stumbled back to the stairs which led up to some dubious offices above. He will always remember those stairs, barren, dusty, with worn rubber treads; stairs of a certain ghastly, down at heels publicity, reft of all reserves, open to the tread of any feet. Luckily none came up or down in the half hour that Syd spent there. He had it out alone in the gathering gloom of the dusk.

"Not that he really saw it all then. It took years, and the shock of the war—the shock of its silences more than of its guns—to show him what he had seen. All he knew was that he came out of that doorway a different fellow, and with one only sentence ringing in his ears. Poor Fred's last words to him on that night:

"Remember this, kid, when your turn comes you get out—any way you can."

"He got out, then and there. He seemed to know that it was the only moment in which he would be able to; that, if he went back to that house on the ocean front, he would go just the same as Fred and Beatrice and Theo. Differently, of course, as each of them had gone in their own way, but just as surely. That dingy doorway to the street could lead two ways; back to all that, or on to another world, and he walked down the stairs and out of it to the onward path.

"He never went home that night, nor ever afterwards, just walked right out through that doorway into another life. He met vicissitudes, of course, knew

something of want and hunger and loneliness, but all that was as nothing to the sense of freedom which was upon him; a feeling as of an escape from some net drawing ever closer.

"What was it he had seen? He hardly knows even now. Pride—that was his first impression as he watched his mother go by. An adamant, cameo-like determination to be 'right,' at no matter what cost. A passion to be within a narrow circle, in which everything was set in order, with all the great rest of life kept rigidly at bay. And behind her a sort of invisible darkness, not to be seen though it could be vaguely felt. That same darkness which he had once surprised underlying that mother light in her eyes.

"A peopled darkness, as though all the little frailties and humanities which she so rigorously rejected for herself, hung hungry in her wake, magnified a thousand-fold by her horror of them, waiting to leap and satisfy themselves on any who came sufficiently under her atmosphere.

"So—that was the end of that."

V

SILENCE again until the western sun cast shadows of peaks across the pasture, and around them the gentians shivered and folded their petals against the chill which would creep down from the high snows to meet the night stealing upwards from the Thal.

Then Manning rose, tapping the ashes from his pipe.

"Time to get back to camp—Syd."



MAN is surrounded by three types of women. Those who are trying to marry him, those who are trying to keep those who are trying to marry him from marrying him, and those who ignore him. He marries one of the latter.



THE ETERNAL MASCULINE

By Leonora Speyer

PAUL STURGIS looked long and plaintively at the little pile of manuscript which drifted over his nice old Sheraton writing-table.

There lay the unfinished story on which he had been more or less spasmodically working all the week—his best story, too, he considered—and visions of its appearance in one of the more pretentious and self-conscious magazines, beyond whose Alpine heights his panting ambitions sought not to climb, gleamed like a fair landscape before him.

Paul was a lawyer by profession, one of the many quietly successful ones. The little circle of devoted women-friends, enclosing him like a setting around some rare and greatly prized gem, knew nothing of him as a lawyer—for although Paul was always gaily loquacious, the "setting" suspected that it did not know much about *anything* that concerned him really—but Sybil told Anne "that a man had told Jack that he had heard Paul passionately pleading the cause of a New Jersey plumber one day in the courts, while, he, the man, was waiting for his case to come on, and that it was 'some performance.'"

They knew, too, that Paul wrote for the magazines. Occasionally they came across a short story of his, in which they sometimes recognized themselves, more or less fantastically garbed, or some little elaborated incident in Paul's life—and not very well told, to their surprise, for he was an unusually good raconteur and they wondered what happened when he began to write.

Anne brought home a sonnet one day, which she had found—and surrepti-

tiously taken possession of—among the inevitable pile of back-numbers on the inevitable table of her dentist's waiting-room. It was a good sonnet, too,—“as good as gold,” Anne said—and the “setting” decided that they liked it very much, and told Paul so.

But on the whole they did not think much of his writing, and as Paul himself seemed to prefer not talking about it, the subject was easily avoided.

He hated criticism of any kind. It hurt him horribly, made him coldly angry, and in that little group of joyously, mercilessly critical young minds, he passed unmolested.

For they had all learned, at one time or another, what “hurting” Paul meant—and how he had been missed as they ate of the bitter fruit of that tree of knowledge and sat alone under its dark branches.

For on these occasions Paul simply disappeared—and it was very difficult to find him again. Anything was better than these vanishings, the setting decided, and so they adapted themselves as well as they could to his debonair self-absorption, his ruthless lack of consideration, his “will-o’-the-wispness,” as Anne called it. Paul was “pure pagan,” Anne explained—the setting always came to her when in “Paul-troubles,”—again Anne’s way of putting it—she *interpreted* him the best, they said.

And they suffered him gladly! They did all the inviting, the telephoning, the ordering of theater-tickets, of supper-tables and taxis. Anne interpreted that it wasn’t that Paul was *stingy*, he simply didn’t want the *bother*, and he was too busy to be worried with the details;

it was enough that he *came*. And they all agreed that no party was in the least what they called worth while, if Paul were not there to make it gloriously, supremely worth while.

Once Sybil "struck," as she announced to her husband hotly. Paul had chucked her at the last minute, *once too often*, she would not stand for it, she was *not* going to ask him to the house again, she was *not* going to Anne to have him explained, she was through, etc., etc.—

"Don't quarrel with Paul; we'll both miss him so," Jack had called to her from the hall, on his way to the office. But she *had* quarreled with him—and Paul had disappeared as usual. It took months to get him back! Always glad to see her when they met, gaily, buoyantly glad, but always just leaving town "on a case" or oppressed with some work that "had to be finished" at home, and a typist coming to help him at eight o'clock.

"I'm sorry, Sybil, but I can't manage it"—and he never could. And perhaps she would meet him that same evening at the theater with Anne; that maddening Anne who had warned her, or with Periwinkle or Madeleine, or worst of all with Mrs. "Gussie" Mainwaring, whom Sybil loathed. And Paul would beam and be so glad to see her, make no excuses and Sybil, no reproach—she wanted him back too much, and as for Jack, he was positively sulking for him!

And one day he returned. She had found his new felt hat, whose untimely loss he had loudly lamented all winter, upon her return to the cottage in the country the following spring. And she had expressed it to him with a neatly-written label tied securely to its immaculate ribbon. It eventually reached him, battered but recognizable, and he wore it, label and all, when he walked in upon them one lovely Sunday morning, remarking that it was hot as Hades in town. Sybil was so glad to see him that she nearly wept, and Jack fell upon his neck and then made three of his wickedest cocktails, which they drank

to the strains of "Ridi, Pagliacci" on the gramophone.

Once Anne rang him up at his office to tell him he simply *must* take her to the Russian ballet, as arranged weeks before; Anne had procured the tickets—such good ones, too—after great difficulties, and now Paul announced some work at home that simply had to be finished!

Anne suspected another short story; the last time she had seen him he had told her of an extraordinary scene he had just witnessed in the subway, between two infuriated men and a sobbing woman, evidently the wife of neither, but "something dearer," as Paul described her. He had remarked what a good story it would make and Anne had replied, apropos of nothing at all, "Don't forget we're going to Scheherazade on Thursday!" And they had both roared with laughter.

But Anne didn't laugh as she telephoned him about it. And Paul had suddenly interrupted her to say, "Listen! There's a band in the street! I'm going to hang the telephone out of the window for you to hear!"

There was a pause and then Anne heard the faint, rhythmic strains of a Sousa march. And after a while Paul's voice, excitedly, "Did you get it? We ought to be dancing this minute! Isn't life hell, Anne! Don't be cross with me, my dear!"

And Anne wasn't. She thought of Sybil's bitter experience and of her own sage advice to her at the time, and so she turned with a very real little pain in her heart, to the next-best companion with whom to share the exotic joys of "Scheherazade."

"I know I'm silly to mind," she whispered to herself as she looked up the telephone numbers of the next-bests, "but there it is—I *do* mind!"

And added as she wrote down the numbers,

"God help the woman that falls in love with Paul Sturgis!"

II

AND NOW he sat looking at the scattered sheets on his writing-table.

"I could have finished it tonight," he said suddenly in a loud, firm voice. Paul gathered up the manuscript almost tenderly and put it in the drawer of the table. He looked at the clock, and his heart gave a queer little leap. Why had he asked Periwinkle to tea? He hardly knew. Sometimes he wondered if he were falling in love with her. "In love with a girl?— God forbid!" and he touched wood hastily.

At any rate, Periwinkle was coming to tea. Her name was Pervenche, because of a French grandmother, but Paul, not liking his French accent, called her Periwinkle "for short," and called her that, by the way, the first time they met; Anne said once that nobody minded *what* Paul did the first time and if they minded afterwards it was too late.

The setting had demurred a little over Periwinkle. Paul had told Anne she must ask her to dinner.

"But I hardly know her," Anne had weakly objected.

"That doesn't matter," declared Paul, "I've told her about you. She'll love you, Anne. And she's a peach! Thursday and Monday suit her best. Whom shall we ask?"

Poor Anne! She was just convalescing from an acute attack of what she called "bookitis," which meant going seriously into the question of the tradesmen's books, prior to drastic reform, and she had resolved not to have a dinner-party for a month at least. But what could she do?

And the party was certainly a huge success. Periwinkle proved a great addition to the setting, even Madeleine admitted that, as she said good night to Anne.

"What's Paul doing with a *girl*, anyway?" she had disapproved on the telephone when asked to the dinner. "We're all married!"

"Paul says she isn't a bit like a girl,"

Anne answered happily. "He says she's as young and innocent as we are."

So Madeleine came. And Paul got her to ask them all down to her house on Long Island over Sunday.

He wondered if Periwinkle would mind there being no tea. She never seemed to care much about it herself, although her hands fluttered about her mother's tea table like two expert, administering, bejeweled white birds, every Wednesday from four to six.

He hoped she would not miss her tea, but nothing would have induced him to buy a tea-set and kettle, and all the rest of the paraphernalia! He hated food or the suggestion of food, in his rooms; he did not even breakfast there and certainly never entertained friends, preferring his club, a good restaurant, or better still, their own houses. This he admitted with an engaging frankness when pressed by the setting for an invitation.

"What do you want to come to my squalid little flat for? It's much nicer here!"

His flat wasn't squalid at all and he knew it; he had taken immense pains and spent a good deal of money over it, and the result was thoroughly satisfactory; but that is how he warded off all possible parties in his rooms.

Not one of Paul's women-friends had ever seen them, but rumors of old prints, Queen Anne furniture and a lacquer cabinet filled with Waterford glass reached them from various reliable sources. It was exasperating.

And then he asked Periwinkle to tea; and she accepted joyfully.

"Oh, Paul, what fun! Of course I'll come! Whom shall we ask? It's *my* party, remember; they're all to understand that!"

"No one's to be asked," he answered. "It's *our* party, just yours and mine."

"Oh," she said, and turned a lovely pink which Paul adored. Then she laughed.

"How disgustingly selfish of us! When we both know how that beloved Anne and Sybil and Madeleine—to say nothing of Mrs. Gussie—are dying to

come! No, no, we must certainly have them, Paul, especially Anne."

"I don't want them," he replied serenely. "I love them but I don't want them, Periwinkle. I only want you. Will you come?"

"I—I'll think about it," she answered.

"Tuesday's a good day," he continued affably, "there's nothing in the courts for me on Tuesday."

"If there were, you'd chuck me, I suppose," she said. And he answered simply, "I'd have to, my dear."

"Or a new story coming," she went on. "I actually believe you'd put me off—provided I said I'd come, which I haven't, *nota bene*—for a new story!"

"There is one coming, *nota bene*; what's more, I'm *harassed* about it, I ought not to be thinking about anything else. I'm stuck in the big love-scene, Periwinkle! And I don't care a damn! All I care about is your coming to tea on Tuesday."

"Mother'd be so shocked, Paul. Do let's have Anne!"

"Next time, perhaps," he answered quite firmly. "This time, no! Will you come, Winkle?"

"Yes, Paul," said Periwinkle meekly. There was a funny little chirp in her voice as she spoke, she wondered if he had noticed it.

III

SHE came in quickly, a little shyly and stood in the middle of the room looking about. Paul suddenly remembered he had meant to get some flowers. Her first words broke the thin skim of atmospheric ice with true Periwinkle dash.

"Well, of all the pigs! *What* a sweet place!"

She looked at Paul severely.

"Anne shall know of this!" she announced.

She moved towards the Waterford glass, aloof and sparkling on its shelves.

"And you never wanted us—never missed us!"

"I know now how I've missed you,"

he answered, "it's wonderful having you here."

He pushed a big chair towards the fire.

"Sit down, you darling Winkle."

"Paul, you *are* the most artistically selfish human being I ever dreamed of! I'm going to take off my hat so that I can lean back and tell you what I really think of you."

"Isn't it a new hat?" he asked with reverent interest.

"*New?*" she echoed. "Why, Paul, I saw that bird of Paradise hatch out of its little French hat-box one hour ago! It's just arrived from Paris! I bought it on my way here! It gave me a great courage, Paul, which Heaven knows I needed when that sinister elevator-girl asked me which floor."

They both contemplated the hat solemnly.

"Bon jour!" said Paul, and placed it respectfully on a fat black satin cushion trimmed with purple chenille and a large bunch of turquoise-blue pears.

"How well my cushion looks, doesn't it?" remarked Periwinkle. "Are the pears very uncomfortable?"

"They haven't complained about anything," said Paul and drew up a little stool close to her chair.

He sat down and laid his head upon her knees simply and naturally. She let him, of course. One always let Paul do these things. Anne had been dropped from the visiting lists of three old friends of her father's because Paul had put his head on her shoulder at a dinner-party. But Anne didn't mind in the least.

"They don't know Paul," was her only comment, and their dinners were a pain anyway."

"Do you think Mr. Sturgis will ever marry?" she had been asked meaningly, after this particular dinner, by one of the shocked ladies who had seen Paul's head, and Paul always claimed that her answer was what caused her name to be erased from the three lists, much more than what he had done to her shoulder! "If one of our husbands dies, he may," Anne said calmly.

Paul's head felt very nice on Periwinkle's knees. His hair was turning gray at the temples, she noticed. How thick it was, how good it smelled. Periwinkle had a curious desire to stroke it. She began to talk lightly of his old prints and the green and white Wedgwood plates running about the room on a little shelf.

"If mother divorces me for coming here today, I think I'll marry you for the sake of those darling old plates," she reflected.

"I wish you would; and I'll give you the plates for a wedding present. Will you marry me, Winkle?"

"No, Paul," said Periwinkle.

"How unkind," he sighed in relieved tones and put his head on her knees again.

"And as I see no signs of tea," she continued, "I'm going to ask for a cigarette to deaden the pangs of hunger."

Paul rose with evident reluctance.

"I was *so* comfortable!" he grumbled, "I wish you wouldn't be so restless!"

He gave her a cigarette and lit one for himself.

"How's the big love-scene?" she asked and blew an expert little ring towards him. "There's a wedding-ring for it!"

Paul groaned.

"They're still floundering about!" he said. "Such a good situation, too! I don't know what's the matter with those two people—I simply *can't* make them kiss! They just stand there staring at each other like two fools!"

"*Must* they kiss?" she asked with interest.

"Of course they must!" he cried, looking at her with reproachful eyes.

"But they *won't*! They go on making page after page of ridiculous conversation; I'm sick of them both!"

She looked at him.

"Perhaps if isn't their fault," she said gently, "poor things!"

Paul thought deeply for quite half a minute.

"You mean it's mine," he answered. "Perhaps you're right. I—I have a horror of the melodramatic

and lovers are always so melodramatic!"

"And if they are not—they 'stick!' " remarked Periwinkle. "You've read too much Henry James, my friend."

Paul crossed over to the writing table. He opened the drawer and took out his manuscript with great deliberation.

"I think I'll read it to you, Winkle. It's a thing I never do—I hate doing! I don't like criticism—it depresses me! And I certainly never court it. But I'm going to read you the whole darned story—as far as I've gotten. Be as patient—and as kind—as you can!"

There was a glint of two big steel buckles as she crossed her feet comfortably on the stool.

"Read on, Macduff!" she said gaily. "I'm *so* happy, dear Macduff! Oh, Paul, I'm having a divine time, and I love being read to!"

IV

It was an involved little story and Periwinkle found it difficult to concentrate upon the plot that seemed to drift like smoke about the characters. Her ear kept wandering to Paul's voice, which took on curious tones and undertones as he read; she liked his intent gray eyes, the whimsical lift of his upper lip, the slim brown hands. Her mind darted in and out of the flow of words like an uneasy humming-bird.

Paul read steadily on. Oh, it wasn't good, it wasn't *any* good, the story! Periwinkle was filled with a kind of panic as she listened. He had told her quite frankly that he didn't like criticism—and she knew what happened when Paul didn't like anything—she was sure, too, that he would see through any forced praise—that dear, dear, over-sensitive Paul! And she began to realize just how dear he was to her.

What should she do? What should she say to him?

"Mother would pronounce this a divine judgment on me for having come," she thought. And now Paul was reading the "big love-scene."

It flashed across her suddenly that she could write this story herself—and much better—she saw so plainly what was wrong, just how she would have built up that toppling structure into swift, sure words!

"And that's all," said Paul, and put the manuscript back into the drawer of the writing-table.

Periwinkle noticed that there was a clock somewhere very near; she had never heard a clock breathe in such a strident, noisy, insistent way, she wondered how Paul could stand it—And the next minute she was in his arms.

She was in his arms and strangely, wonderfully glad to be there; they closed around her like two great gates, shutting out the world of little things that she never wanted to play with any more.

And through the divine unreality of what she knew was a truth still more divine, she listened to a voice against her cheek, Paul's voice that she had always loved so, telling her of his love for her, in abrupt, tender absurd little words that made her even more utterly his.

"Oh, Winkle, darling—we love each other! And we didn't know it! We've fooled about all this time! And we love each other! *Don't we?*"

"Yes, Paul, we love each other."

"Put your arms around me, dear. We adore each other—and we *didn't know it!* Say we adore each other, Winkle!"

"Yes, Paul—we adore each other."

And at last they grew braver and looked into each other's faces, and there they found the light that led them groping, blinded by its brightness, to each other's lips.

Then, as swiftly as she was lifted to the stars, was Periwinkle dashed to earth again.

"The big scene!" said Paul, "I've got it, Winkle! I know how to write it now! Those blessed lovers—I know just what was wrong with them!"

V

SHE had forgotten all about the story. The foolish, badly-written little story! *But Paul had not!* And he was going to write about this miracle—their miracle that they had found together—he was going to publish it in a magazine, for anyone to read! Visions of news-stands at the Grand Central Station, at the Ritz-Carlton, at Lexington Avenue and Forty-second Street, rows and rows of magazines all telling of their love, of hers and Paul's great love, rose like a hideous mirage in the stretching desert in which she stood, a mournful traveler, alone. He still held her close.

"How wonderful everything is going to be!" he was saying, and she thought, "I'm dead, broken into little pieces—and he doesn't even know it."

"You see, you darling Winkle, I've always loafed through life, everything was a joke. But now—I love you—kiss me, kiss me— And then we'll ring up Anne and ask her to the wedding!"

What happened after that was always unclear, she could never visualize it in her thoughts. She remembered laughing a high-pitched, ghastly little laugh that seemed to do something to his face, she remembered pushing him away, both hands against his breast, on which she lay no longer; *somebody* said—was it she—it *must* have been, obviously, but what had happened to her voice? "Our honeymoon will make a lovely storm, won't it? *Any* magazine would publish it, I should think!" Again that horrid cackling laugh. "*No, Paul!* You've got the 'big scene'—for one silly little story—they know *how to kiss now*, those blessed lovers! That's enough, I guess—"

She never knew how she found her way to the street—she had a curious recollection of throwing her Paradise-bird hat out of the taxi window and thinking that he would probably have put that into a story, too—

He had called to her as she slipped through the door, "If you leave me like

this, I swear I'll never forgive you!"

And she had answered, "That's a good line for a parting scene!"

VI

THE setting saw little of Paul during the next weeks. And then he telephoned to Anne that he was coming to tea, and arrived with a book of somebody's new poems which he read very beautifully and made brilliant fun of, after a formidable "stinger," Anne-mixed, four large slices of chocolate-cake and countless cigarettes.

He played with the baby, inquiring anxiously why it didn't walk yet, and was Anne *sure* it wasn't paralyzed, which worried her a little for hours afterwards—passionate mother that she was—although she knew it was nonsense; and he insisted upon taking a goldfish out of the Japanese garden, in order to prove that the fluff on top of the baby's head was exactly the same shade of pink-gold, winning his point triumphantly, although at the expense of Anne's best goldfish.

He also made a bet with Sybil, who had been hastily summoned by telephone, to the effect that she would never get her cook back from her sister, to whom she was lent for a dinner-party, the bet consisting of Sybil's platinum and diamond wedding-ring against his dyeing his hair any color she chose.

"Paul was great today," said Anne after he had gone, "but I don't think he's looking well. And he's drinking too many cocktails—although I love him to have them *here* if he *must* have them at all! What a pity Periwinkle is in Atlantic City! Did I tell you I got a handsome post-card of the board-walk from her the other day?"

"I wonder if Paul is in love with anybody?" remarked Sybil thoughtfully. "He looked just like that when he was running about with Annabel Azore two winters ago—you remember Annabel, and her wonderful trained seals, don't you, Anne?"

"Of course I do; that's the only story of Paul's I ever really liked."

"I wonder if Annabel did?" Sybil rose as she spoke and picked up her muff and gloves. "I do think he ought to buy you a new goldfish. The Japanese garden looks like Asbury Park without it!"

"But he won't," sighed Anne ruefully, "and it cost me five dollars! What color do you intend dyeing his hair? *Do* let me dye it for you, Sybil! You know what a success I made of the baby's winter coat, and I've got heaps of green left over."

VII

AND then it came!

"You have sent us a very unusual story," wrote the sub-editor of the *Best Monthly*, "and one that gives us much pleasure in publishing. We are including it in our April number. Trusting that you will give us an early opportunity," etc., etc.

Paul read the sub-editor's letter three times. It was an immense comfort to him. A very unusual story!

"It ought to be!" he thought to himself grimly.

Periwinkle—Periwinkle! He had laid his face across the pages of the "big scene" as he re-wrote it—he wasn't sure, but he believed he had wept a little—it was so like her!

He had lost her; she would never come back, he knew; and his face wore the aloof look the setting dreaded so, as he reflected that he *did not want her back*. "You silly little story!" Well, he had the sub-editor's letter to apply to the smart of that, and he was grateful to her in a way, for it was thanks to those ever-remembered words, and to what had come before—remembered, too—that he had had the energy to re-write the whole story, a thing he had never troubled to do in all his life, and which had certainly improved it enormously.

Still, he did not want her back! She had hurt him too much. He had been intensely relieved to hear that she had left town and he had not seen her since that miserable day. Something of her

lingered for weeks about the room. It was not her perfume—he did not know *what* it was—but it drove him to the club-bar too often. He thanked God, he reflected whimsically, that he had not bought a tea-set to remind him of her all his life!

"We wouldn't have been happy together," he kept saying to himself, until it became a kind of parrot-cry squawking at him comfortingly, when the pain for her throbbed through his cold resentment. "Girls aren't human, anyway."

He used to lie awake in the dark repeating over and over to himself, "We wouldn't have been happy together!"

He wondered if she would see the story. Oh, hell—he didn't care!

VIII

THE April number of the *Best Monthly* arrived the last days of March. It had a wonderful cover, all daffodils, and a girl in a blue sweater standing among them, daffodil-colored hair flying in a vividly depicted spring breeze.

Paul's heart beat more quickly as his fingers stumbled over the crisp pages. There it was, "The Big Scene"—yes, he had called it that. He read his name with the unfailing accompanying thrill, he read the story straight through, almost solemnly, an anxious eye on the outlook for possible typographical errors.

When he had finished he smiled, a little wanly. It was an "unusual story," the editor of the *Best* was right. God, how sweet Periwinkle was in print!

And suddenly a great longing for her surged through him. He remembered how she had clung, all the warmth of her body glowed against him again, thawing the frozen misery that had chilled his heart all those long weeks. He seemed to hear her voice, the breathless, happy little voice: "Yes, Paul, we adore each other!"

He got up from his chair, something capitulated unconditionally within him; he would go to her, kneel to her, implore her to be as she had been when

she said, "Yes, Paul, we adore each other!"

What if she refused to see him, what if she were not at home?

He decided that he would telephone. He hated being told that people were not at home; it irritated him; he felt snubbed as he turned away from their closing doors. He couldn't bear Periwinkle not being at home! He must be sure, too, that she would be glad to see him.

He felt a little dizzy as he waited at the telephone. "I'm telephoning Fate," he thought. "I'm telephoning the gods. I'm telephoning Periwinkle!" What a good poem that would make, free-verse of course!

Yes, she was at home. Could he speak to her—never mind about the name; a friend wanted to speak to her.

There was a pause, he heard somebody talking a long way off, somebody whistling, beating a carpet—no, that was his own ridiculous heart—

"Hello! Who is it? This is Miss Middleton, yes—"

And then a strange thing happened. The four walls of his cosy room seemed to topple apart, the earth swung clear of him, and Paul hung in mid-air, clutching the telephone as one would cling to a swaying, creaking branch over an abyss. And something seemed to call from the depths, "Hang up the receiver, you fool! Or jump!"

"Hello—hello—this is 2624—" It was Periwinkle's voice—and the little chirp was in it—but Paul hung up the receiver.

In one flashing moment of complete self-revelation he realized that he didn't want to speak to her, didn't dare to speak to her. He was afraid of her and all that it would mean if he spoke! He was afraid for his comfortable, self-centered life, his happy-go-lucky, perfectly irresponsible life in the little flat that he had made exactly what he wanted it to be. He didn't want to give it up, to give *anything* up—not even for the bliss of Periwinkle—he didn't want to change, to share—*he didn't want to marry!*

"Your silly little story!" And her face as she said it! He put his hand up to his forehead; it felt wet and he felt faint and sick. With an effort he got up and crossed over to the writing-table, pulled a brandy-flask out of a drawer, put it to his lips, drained it.

"Good God!" he said aloud. A great loneliness came over him all of a sudden and with the loneliness a great longing for Anne.

He would go to her, put his head onto her knee, smoke a thousand cigarettes, drink a thousand stingers! Perhaps he would read her "The Big Scene." He realized perfectly that Anne didn't think much of his stories, but she'd have to like "The Big Scene." It was the best thing he had done and Anne would be the first to see that—dear, clever Anne! He would buy her the biggest bunch of daffodils he could carry and

lay them, together with the daffodil-covered *Best*, in her lap, without a word.

"She'll probably drop dead," he thought as he reached for his coat. "I've never done such a thing to Anne, but it's a nice little gesture. Besides, I owe her something for the goldfish. I believe Anne was fond of that goldfish—and I'm fond of Anne."

As he opened the outer door of his flat the telephone rang, long and insistently. Without looking round, he passed out and closed the door behind him.

"We wouldn't have been happy together," he announced to anyone who chose to hear as he ran down the long flights of stairs to the street. He wouldn't ring for the elevator, the new girl got on his nerves; she *would* talk to him. He wished George, the pleasant colored boy who stole things, hadn't been sent away.



THE INTOLERABLE SOLICITUDE

By Peter Macklin

HER tedious adherence to method killed him. She wrecked his life with her methodical attention to detail, her insistence that nothing should ever be out of place. Even in death he could not escape her. She put moth balls in his coffin.



THERE are two kinds of girls: pretty girls and those who stand in crowded street cars.



TWO men after a woman, tragedy; two women after a man, melodrama.



COVENTRY

By John Hamilton

I WONDERED why she had been sent to Coventry.

She did not drink sparkling wines that brightened her eyes or flushed her cheeks or made her giggle.

She did not blow faint circles of cigarette smoke through her soft carmine lips.

She did not swear like the foreman

of a printing office when her maid pricked her with a pin.

She did not narrow her amethyst eyes when she looked at men.

She did not tell shadowy stories that left one breathless.

She did not pawn her pearls and sapphires to pay bridge losses.

But all her friends did.



BETRAYAL

By Louis Untermeyer

IT was cold that night by the lake,
Something, I knew, was wrong
Though I whistled and tried to make
The ends of a broken song.

Our footsteps crunched like a bite
On leaves where the frost was strewn
There was something false in the light
Of that tarnished disk of a moon.

Like a rusty shield it hung
Over a freezing abyss,
Cold as my heart when you clung
And wounded me there with a kiss.

Then it grew light. I saw ships
Huddling with frozen spars,
Your tell-tale eyes and your lips,
And a sky that was stabbed with stars.



RÉPÉTITION GÉNÉRALE

By H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan

§ 1

A *RISTOTELIAN* *Obsequies*.—I take the following from the *Boston Herald* of May 1, 1882:

A beautiful floral book stood at the left of the pulpit, being spread out on a stand. . . . Its last page was composed of white carnations, white daisies and light-colored immortelles. On the leaf was displayed, in neat letters of purple immortelles, the word "Finis." This device was about two feet square, and its border was composed of different colored tea-roses. The other portion of the book was composed of dark and light-colored flowers. . . . The front of the large pulpit was covered with a mass of white pine boughs laid on loosely. In the center of this mass of boughs appeared a large harp composed of yellow jonquils. . . . Above this harp was a handsome bouquet of dark pansies. On each side appeared large clusters of calla lilies.

Well, what have we here? The funeral of a Grand Exalted Pishposh of the Odd Fellows, of an East Side Tammany leader, of an aged and much-respected brothel-keeper? Nay. What we have here is the funeral of Ralph Waldo Emerson. It was thus that New England lavished the loveliest fruits of the Puritan æsthetic upon the bier of her greatest son. It was thus that Puritan *kultur* mourned a philosopher.

§ 2

The Uses of Adversity.—Adversity, after all, is not without its good fortune. With the advent of prohibition there will no longer be imported by Americans from Switzerland—and there will thus disappear from the United States forever—the musical beer mug.

S.S.—May—4

§ 3

Rosemaries.—A man, looking back over the bridge of the years, always sentimentalizes his first love affair. A woman always gives hers the laugh.

§ 4

The Romantic.—There is a variety of man whose eye inevitably exaggerates, whose ear inevitably hears more than the band plays, whose imagination inevitably doubles and triples the news brought in by his five senses. He is the enthusiast, the believer, the romantic. He is the sort of fellow who, if he were a bacteriologist, would report the streptococcus pyogenes to be as large as a Newfoundland dog, as intelligent as Socrates, as beautiful as Mont B'anc, and as respectable as a Yale professor.

§ 5

The Eternal Skeptic.—No man ever quite believes in any other man. One may believe in an idea absolutely, but not in a man. In the highest confidence there is always a flavour of doubt—a feeling, half instinctive and half logical, that, after all, the scoundrel *may* have something up his sleeve. This doubt, it must be obvious, is always more than justified, for no man is worthy of unlimited reliance—his treason, at best, only waits for sufficient temptation. The trouble with the world is not that men are too suspicious, but that they are too confiding—that they still trust themselves too far to other men, even after bitter experience. Women, I believe, are measurably less sentimental,

in this as in other things. No married woman ever trusts her husband absolutely, nor does she ever act as if she *did* trust him. Her utmost confidence is as wary as a pickpocket's confidence that the policeman on the beat will stay bought.

§ 6

The Bald-Headed Man.—The man with a bald head, however eminent his position, always feels slightly ill at ease in the presence of a man whose dome is still well thatched. He feels, however much he may try not to, just a trifle handicapped and inferior. In the presence of a pretty woman, he feels himself called upon to exercise twice the pains of the fellow with hair. The man whose head looks like a freshly laid egg is, in society, ever either Malvolio or Yorick.

§ 7

Femina.—Woman is most lovable when there has just occurred in her life something that saddens her. No man has ever loved a woman passionately at that moment in her life when she was happiest.

§ 8

Strange Enthusiasms.—Who has not marvelled, among artists, at the curious fascination of the absolutely unlike? Think of the violent enthusiasm of the Socialist platitudinizer, Robert Blatchford, for Henry James. Of that of Brahms for Johann Strauss. Of that of Richard Strauss for Mozart. Of that of Mark Twain for William Dean Howells. To his dying day Mark viewed the achievement of Howells with frank envy; he stood almost in awe of it. And, thus venerating Howells, he regarded his own "Huckleberry Finn" with a half-ashamed disdain, and once spoke of his "Joan of Arc" as a pot-boiler! . . . Eheu, man is ever tortured by vain hopes, impossible desires. In the midst of the most colossal

attainment his ego dwells wistfully upon the unattainable.

§ 9

The Great Illusion.—Hope may be defined as an illogical belief in the occurrence of the improbable. Or, psychoanalytically, as a wish neurose. There is thus a flavor of the pathological in it; it transcends the normal intellectual process and passes into the murky domain of faith. A man habitually hopeful is one who has lost (or never had) the capacity for clear and orderly thought. An optimist is not thus a mere ass: he is sick. Worse, he is incurable, for disappointment, being an objective phenomenon, cannot affect his subjective obliquity. His faith in the improbable takes on the passionate virulence of a pious devotion. What he says, in substance, is this: "Let us trust in God, *who has always fooled us in the past.*"

§ 10

Æsthetic Dancing.—The numerous schools and cults of æsthetic dancing, interior and al fresco, are doubtless grounded less on the honest desire to make a beautiful art of the dance than on the Freudian desire of unwanted vestals to play indirectly, yet satisfactorily, with the masculine passions. A bevy of women running half naked around Central Park are not nearly so intent upon enthroning Terpsichore in her niche in the temple of the *beaux arts* as upon watching the effect on the park policeman out of the corners of their eyes. The unloved woman with legs gnarled and knotted like a rustic bench, galloping across the grass plots in a sheet and a diaper, thus takes out her sinister revenge. No women half-way admired by men, desired by men, and loved by men, go in for undressing in public, whatever the artistic purport of their intentions, save possibly upon the stage. The moment a woman runs around Pelham in the daylight clad only in a bed sheet, under the

dubious impression that she is Psyche in the Arcadian Wood, that moment is it certain that she has reached the conclusion that her charms are unavailing against the fortress that is man. The schools and cults of æsthetic dancing are filled with left-overs, wall-flowers. These schools and cults are to art what a Japanese punk stick is to an old maid's tea-room.

§ 11

Add Webster.—Criticism is the art of appraising that which isn't in terms of what it should be, and that which should be in terms of what it isn't.

§ 12

On Duty.—The loosest and most imbecile thinking in ethics revolves around the matter of duty. Practically all writers on morals agree that the individual owes certain unescapable duties to the race, for example, the duty of engaging in productive labor, and that of marrying and begetting offspring. And in support of this position it is almost always argued that, if *all men* neglected such duties, the race would perish. This logic is hollow enough to be worthy of the college professors who write such books. It confuses the inclination, the willingness, the regimentation of the *average* man with the duty of *all men*—two very different things. The average man is willing to accept docilely the government he is born under, to obey its laws, to support its theory—but is this the duty of *all men*? The affirmative answer comes, not from those who render the highest and most intelligent services to human progress, but precisely from those who stand most opposed to human progress.

There are, in point of fact, no duties *per se*. There is no such thing as duty-in-itself. The race is helped along, not by conformity, but by aberration. The very concept of duty is thus a function of inferiority; it belongs naturally only to timorous and incompetent men. Even on such levels it remains largely a self-

delusion, a soothing apparition. When a man succumbs to duty he merely succumbs to the habit and inclination of other men. Their interests pull against his own interests. Some of us can resist a pretty strong pull—the pull, perhaps, of thousands. But it is only the miraculous man who can withstand the pull of a whole nation.

§ 13

On Charm.—A thing is charming in the degree that it is not true. The truth, nine times in ten, is ugly; but a lie, nine times in ten, is beautiful—or, at least, the flower of a beautiful gesture. The charming woman is not the woman who tells the truth beautifully, yet unconvincingly, but the one who tells a lie prettily and impressively. The charming man is the man who believes that she is lying when she is telling the truth and that she is telling the truth when she is lying.

What in all the world could be at once more charming, and less true, than "Der Rosenkavalier," or the Paris of Mürger, or the landscapes of Corot, or the memory of one's first sweetheart?

§ 14

A Nether Classic.—Considered as a piece of writing, probably the worst book in the world, at least among those of decent repute, is William H. Prescott's "History of the Conquest of Peru." Here was a stupendous story, and moreover it was virgin: no one else, not even a Spaniard, had ever told it. Well, how did Prescott manage the telling? Simply by reducing the whole thing to the commonplace level of a moral tale in a second-rate newspaper. It would be almost impossible to imagine worse writing. From cover to cover there is not a single original phrase. Everywhere he uses the ancient rubber stamps of the school-master turned artist—the old, old similes, the automatic adjectives, the stale and fly-blown verbs, the idioms of a dolt's armamentarium. Moving through page after

page of such flaccid commonplace, one falls in the end into a sort of stupid trance—the sheer badness of the thing acts as a narcotic. . . . In his preface Prescott makes acknowledgments to one Charles Folsom, librarian of the Boston Athenæum, “whose minute acquaintance with the grammatical structure and the true idiom of our English tongue has enabled me to correct many inaccuracies.” One wonders about those inaccuracies. They were, perhaps, the gipsy phrases that might have made a great work of “The Conquest of Peru.” Their “correction,” it may be, converted it into the dullest, the prosiest, the soggiest, the most depressing history in history.

§ 15

On the Critical Digestion.—The common accusation against the dramatic critic by the present day theatrical manager when the critic writes adversely of the manager’s production is that the critic suffers sorely from indigestion. Just where the connection lies I can’t exactly say, but the fact remains that Daniel Frohman’s famous old Lyceum Stock Company, which no critic of that day dispraised, was backed by the man who owned Carter’s Little Liver Pills.

§ 16

Prohibition.—A doctrine based upon the theory that what *I* drink ruins *your* kidneys.

§ 17

Pro Patria.—Despite the sneers of the European for the American, one will never find him belonging, as the European belongs, to a race of waiters. The tables in the hotels and restaurants and cafés of the world are servilely waited on by Englishmen, Irishmen, Frenchmen and Germans, with the Greeks and Armenians for bus boys, but one is at pains to find an American wearing an apron, with a napkin upon his arm, bending to serve fodder. The

American may be, as the European jeers, a mere tradesman—but you will never find him like the Englishman, a butler; or like the Italian, a bootblack; or like the Frenchman, a head-garçon with his palm out.

The American is never a headwaiter. But nothing flatters him half so much as a headwaiter’s speaking to him and addressing him by name—after he has bribed the headwaiter to the condescension with a five-dollar bill.

§ 18

The Cerebral Mime.—Of all actors, the most offensive to the higher cerebral centers is the one who pretends to intellectuality. His alleged intelligence, of course, is always purely imaginary: no man of genuinely superior intelligence has ever been an actor. Even supposing a young man of appreciable mental powers to be lured upon the stage, as philosophers are occasionally lured into bordellos, his mind would be inevitably and almost immediately destroyed by the gaudy nonsense issuing from his mouth every night. This gaudy nonsense enters into the very fibre of the actor. He becomes a grotesque boiling down of all the preposterous characters he has to impersonate. Their stigmata are seen in his manner, in his reaction to stimuli, in his point of view. He becomes a walking artificiality, a strutting dummy, a thematic catalogue of imbecilities.

There are, of course, plays that are not wholly nonsense, and now and then one encounters an actor who aspires to appear in them. This aspiration almost always overtakes the so-called actor-manager—that is to say, the actor who has got rich and is thus ambitious to appear as a gentleman. Such aspirants commonly tackle Shakespeare, and if not Shakespeare, then Shaw, or Hauptmann, or Rostand, or some other apparently intellectual dramatist. But this is seldom more than a passing madness. The actor-manager may do that sort of thing once in a while, but in the main he sticks to his pishposh. Con-

sider, for example, the late Henry Irving. He posed as an intellectual and was forever gabbling about his high services to the stage, and yet he appeared constantly in such puerile things as "The Bells," beside which the average newspaper editorial or college yell was literature. So with the late Mansfield. His pretension, deftly circulated by press-agents, was that he was a man of brilliant and polished mind. Nevertheless, he spent two-thirds of his life in the theater playing such abominable garbage as "A Parisian Romance" and "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde."

It is commonly urged in defense of certain actors that they are forced to appear in such balderdash by the public demand for it—that appearing in it painfully violates their secret pruderies. This defense is unsound and dishonest. An actor never disdains anything that gets him applause and money; he is almost completely devoid of that æsthetic conscience which is the chief mark of the genuine artist. If there were a large public willing to pay handsomely to hear him recite limericks, or to blow a cornet, or to strip off his underwear and dance a polonaise stark naked, he would do it without hesitation—and then convince himself that such buffooning constituted a difficult and elevated art, fully comparable to Wagner's or Dante's. In brief, the one essential, in his sight, is the chance to shine, the fat part, the applause. Whoever heard of an actor declining a fat part on the ground that it invaded his intellectual integrity? The thing is simply unimaginable.

§ 19

The Blue-Nose.—All the histories of American literature, with perhaps one exception, devote a good deal of space to the lofty idealism of the snuffling pre-Methodists who settled New England. Reading such books, one somehow gets the notion that these bilious theologians were, in some strange way, noble fellows, and that, in particular, they cherished the fruits of the intellect, and so laid the foundations of whatever

culture now exists in the United States. But what is the actual fact? The actual fact is that the fruits of the intellect were held in about as much esteem, in Puritan New England, as the fruits of the vines of Burgundy now get at a banquet of Presbyterians. The Puritans not only tried their darndest to shut out every vestige of sound information, of clean reasoning, of ordinary intellectual self-respect and integrity; they absolutely *succeeded* in shutting these things out. The gigantic play of ideas that went on in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had no effect upon them whatsoever; it was not until foreign influences, slowly percolating into the country on the heels of commerce, gave a start to Transcendentalism that New England could show so much as a single third-rate college, a single readable journal or a single genuinely educated man. And even Transcendentalism was moony, hollow and sterile. Its highest product was a puerile confusion of European ideas, as in Emerson and Thoreau. It produced no art that is alive today—only poor school-boys, abominably forced to the business by idiot pedagogues, read its masterpieces. And it produced no civilization, but only a tawdry pseudo-civilization—a codfish civilization. Even in politics it has always been stupid and imitative. What! Even in politics? Then what of abolition? Answer: abolition was no more a New England invention than the affected broad *a* was a New England invention: both were borrowed from the English middle classes toward the end of the eighteenth century. And business? Here we let down the last bar: it requires a racking stretch of the imagination to put a talent for business among the evidences of culture. But even so, New England fails again. Can you think of a conspicuous captain of industry who was born there? Finally, there is war. Of the twenty-seven general officers who stood at the head of the Army List at the close of the Civil War exactly three were New Englanders.

§ 20

Pensée.—Every woman, when she marries, fondly believes that she has married but one man: her lover-husband. It is only after a few years, upon looking one day wistfully out of the window, that she suddenly realizes that she committed bigamy.

§ 21

Art and Sex.—One of the favourite notions of the Puritan mullahs who specialize in moral pornography is that the sex instinct, if suitably repressed, may be "sublimated" into the higher sorts of idealism, and especially into æsthetic idealism. This notion is to be found in all their books, pamphlets and tracts; upon it they ground the theory that the enforcement of chastity by a huge force of spies, stool pigeons and police would convert the republic into a nation of incomparable uplifters, forward-lookers and artists. All this, of course, is simply pious flapdoodle. If the notion were actually sound, then all the great artists of the world would come from the ranks of the hermetically repressed, *i.e.*, from the ranks of Puritan old maids, male and female. But the truth is, as everyone knows, that the great artists of the world are never Puritans, and seldom even ordinarily respectable. No virtuous man—that is, virtuous in the Y. M. C. A. sense—has ever painted a picture worth looking at, or written a symphony worth hearing, or a book worth reading, and it is highly improbable that the thing has ever been done by a virtuous woman. The actual effect of repression, lamentable though it may be, is to destroy idealism altogether. The Puritan, for all his pretensions, is the worst of materialists. Passed through his sordid and unimaginative mind, even the stupendous romance of sex is reduced to a disgusting transaction in physiology. As artist he is thus hopeless; as well expect an auctioneer to qualify for the Sistine Chapel choir. All he ever achieves, taking pen or brush in hand, is a feeble burlesque of

his betters, all of whom, by his hog-theology, are doomed to hell.

§ 22

The Incomparable Buzzsaw.—The chief (and perhaps the only genuine) charm of women is seldom mentioned by poets, romancers, vice-crusaders, fashionable clergymen and the other professors of the sex. I refer to the charm that lies in the dangers they present. The allurements that they hold out to men is precisely the allurements that Cape Hatteras holds out to sailors—they are enormously dangerous and hence enormously fascinating. To the average man, doomed to some banal and sordid drudgery all his life long, they offer the only grand hazard that he ever encounters. Take them away, and his existence would be as flat and secure as that of a milch-cow. Even to the unusual man, the adventurous man, the imaginative and romantic man, they offer the adventure of adventures. Civilization tends to dilute and cheapen all other hazards. War itself, once an enterprise stupendously thrilling, has been reduced to mere caution and calculation; already, indeed, it employs as many press-agents, letter-openers, card-index experts and chautauqua orators as soldiers. On some not distant tomorrow its salient personality may be Potash, and if not Potash, then Perlmutter. But the duel of sex continues to be fought in the Berserker manner. Who so approaches women still faces the immemorial dangers. Civilization has not made them a bit more safe than they were in Solomon's time; they are still inordinately barbarous and menacing, and hence inordinately provocative, and hence inordinately charming and romantic.

§ 23

Codicil to a Last Will and Testament.—When I die, as die someday I must, I pray to God that it shall be on a warm, lazy late afternoon in the early Spring-time of the year, and that my best

friend among men shall sit himself down quietly and alone in Sherry's and order two of our old cocktails, and that my best friend among women shall be waiting, as always, near her telephone and that when, the minutes passing, it fails to ring, she may at last for one small fleeting moment doubt that I am up to some devilry with another girl.



THE GOOD CITIZEN

By Vincent Starrett

WHAT shall we say of Avondale,
 But lately of our planet?—
 Save that he carried on a tale
 When someone else began it;
 Save that he voted nearly right
 On every proposition;
 Save that he stayed at home at night,
 And held a fair position;
 Save that his fervor was derived
 From other people's thinking;
 Save that his seven children thrived;
 And none inclined to drinking;
 Save that he played a steady hand
 At bridge, and bowled not badly;
 Save that he loved his native land,
 His wife and children, madly;
 Save—'Tis a simple, poignant tale;
 A most affecting story:
 But, O, from such as Avondale,
 Deliverance, Saints in Glory!



WOMEN have no head for figures. That is why you can't make them understand that they are ten years older than they were ten years ago.



AFTER all, what is beauty? Soon or late all women grow homely. And even the homeliest may then say that she was once beautiful.



SALVATION

By June Gibson

IT was at a revival meeting.
A lank, cadaverous, frock-coated
ecclesiastic of the Methodist rite
was saving souls from hell.

In strident, *sforzando* tones he luridly
pictured the eternal torments.

He cajoled, he cackled, he tempted,
he coaxed.

With deluding description he spoke
of halos and wings and milk and honey.

He fell on his spare knees and
snuffled.

Next to me sat a greasy-skinned

woman of thin soles and soiled blouse,
with rye-scented breath.

During his pleading her face
twitched spasmodically, her nostrils di-
lated, and her lips moved convulsively,
and she beat her hands against her
breast nervously and swayed back
and forth on the uncomfortable
bench.

"I think one Sister is saved," simp-
ered the holy man. "Let us pray. . . ."

"My God," confided the woman to
me, "I almost sneezed!"



DUET

By Robert Merkle

I AM a peddler of dreams and song:
I do nothing my life long
But dabble in dreams and light fancy.
Am I a stranger in your countrie?"

"Your dreams are futile: your songs are vain.
We grant ye nothing but our disdain.
No Wiltshire moon-rakers, lad, be we!
You are a stranger in our countrie."



LET us respect our enemies. However much they may wish us ill, they at
least never deceive us.



SPRING

By G. Ranger Wormser

I

HE was all in; horribly tired. Not that being tired was anything peculiarly new to him. He found he was tired most of the time. He could not get away from the draining, obtruding insinuation of the stupor.

In the early morning when he first awoke he was conscious of an overwhelming fatigue, of a lethargic dullness, of a deadening weighted sense of druggedness. When he went to bed at night he was worn out: completely, sickeningly exhausted. During the day he forgot about the thing in the monotonous habitual concentration on his work. Still, if there were a sudden need arising unexpectedly for an unaccustomed exertion, he knew quite irrevocably before he attempted it that he was too utterly done up even to try. He hated shirking. But he could not combat the strained, prostrating lassitude which kept on catching at him. Of late he had wondered; speculating in contemptuous listlessness as to the other men in the office. He did not altogether understand how they could fail to realize what was breaking him, shattering him, smothering him. He was terribly, ashamedly afraid of their discovery.

He did not particularly care for these men who worked with him day in and day out the year around. He had no actual interest in any one of them. His attitude toward them all was unvaryingly of phlegmatic unconcern. He felt they existed. He spoke to them when he had to. He knew nothing of them. He did not want to know anything about them. They were shadows to

him, shadows which had always been outside of him, shadows whose reality ended for him in their bodily substance. The power of an individual mind, of a live consciousness was obliterated, smeared ruthlessly from his possible recognition in that hypnotic, vicarious fatigue.

He had a vague unvisualized idea of the distribution of the office furniture. He had practically the same conception of the men. There was a desk directly in front of his desk. Tirard sat at that desk. At the further end of the long room were the three great windows. Parsons had his own corner under those windows. When he looked out of the uncurtained panes of glass at the flat blue sky, at the ridges of the red, gray-cindered roofs of the tall buildings huddling unevenly on one another with their black tin funnelled chimneys and their rounded rising water tanks, he had got a fleeting impression of Parsons. His eyes rested on Parsons when they come back from the cliff-like sheerness of the edifices below him and beyond him; from the thin etched outlines of the bridges swinging taut and sharp on the horizon; from the monstrous haze-softened gas towers and the wreathing volumes of the spreading smoke. For a long time now he had thought dimly, indefinitely that Parsons had seemed very tired. He had thought it with a latent cunning.

He supposed rather indifferently that the work itself was tediously wearing. He had never done any work other than this same office routine. He had spent his whole life stolidly perfecting himself in the systematized, careful schedules of his employment. He had al-

ways known he was best fitted for that sort of business. He would have lacked the energetic initiative for anything else. He knew it in a stupid, uncaring way. He had got so that he could not conceive a vitalized impulse. It hurt the dense stagnation of him to try to conceive it. It made him ill to imagine an active, rousing impetus. The stilled, dumbed mind of him balked at the thought of a spontaneous, voluntary decision.

If he had ever had an ambition to be more successful than he was, if he had held a positive appreciation of achievement before he had become steeped in the pressing heaviness of the exhaustion, he had long ago denied it. He prided himself primarily on his clearheadedness. He had realized years before that it took a big man to fill a big position. He had never for a moment thought of himself as a big man.

His head ached fearfully. He had been wanting for quite a while to go to an oculist. He had not found the opportunity. Sundays were the only days he had to himself. He would not give up his Sundays. He liked to lie in bed Sundays. He liked to doze all day in a light, undreaming unconsciousness. He encouraged the inert stupefaction the paralyzing insensibility, the dulled, suspended sense of not having to feel how tired he was.

Walking along the side street, he tried to think back over his day at the office. He was not capable of the effort of thought. The formative faculty essential to establish a relative concreteness had decayed completely. No one thought of his could stand by itself. Without ever attaining a quality of distinctness it dwindled off into grotesquely unintelligible confusion. His brain was perplexedly crowded with incomprehensible vagueness. His process of thinking was peculiarly unassembled. He groped perpetually in innumerable blinded directions; without tangible reasoning, without the power to subconsciously plant a thought to develop its own culmination.

There was never anything to stimu-

late his mind. His mind was flaccidly numb, unresponding in its ponderous stupor, blunted in its enervating quiescence. He could not think. There was nothing sufficiently impressed on the laxed surface of his brain; nothing to which he could hang his thoughts. That day had been the same as countless other days. Had he wanted to remember he could not have managed it. There was nothing to stick out from the blank, unmeaning rotation. Nothing which could escape the enveloping saturation of the stifling weariness.

II

HE went down the steps of the area-way which led him into the Italian restaurant where he took his dinner every night.

Luigi met him in the narrow, badly-lighted hall. Luigi met him each evening at exactly the same spot.

Through the open doorway he could see the closely packed room with the small, jammed-in tables. He had an unregistered apprehension of a large mass of heads. The glow from the scant electric bulbs trickled down on to numberless faces. There was the rushing clatter of hurriedly handled china. A hum of conversation droned undistinguishably, unabating in its protracted drumming. An opaque cloud of tobacco smoke coiled itself spirally upward, to hang motionlessly against the low ceiling.

He had told himself several times that he must find some other place to dine. He did not like the throngs of people. He did not like the incessant noise, the thick smell of food which nauseated him, the impatient skurrying which never stopped. He kept on coming. It was quite involuntary. He had not the necessary resolution to look about for another place.

"Meester Shannan, I am sorry!" Luigi took his hat and coat from him. "If you will not mind, Meester Shannan, I can give you your table as usual.—But with two others there already.—*Mio Dio!*—That fool of a Gio-

vanni!—He did not think it was *your* table.—I am desolate, Meester Shannan!—The restaurant it is full.—You will not mind for tonight, Meester Shannan?”

He was conscious of a sudden irritation. He felt Luigi knew quite well that he did mind. He could not understand why Luigi should take it upon himself to suppose he would not mind having others at his table. He resented that. He was thoroughly offended at Luigi for taking advantage of his tiredness.

“It doesn’t matter”; he heard his own voice saying it stupidly. “I’ll stay.”

He watched Luigi drape his hat and coat among the many hats and coats festooning the rack.

He had known right along he would stay. He rather thought Luigi knew he would stay. He could not help suspecting every one of knowing his secret. He would not have been at all astonished to learn that Luigi banked cannily on the fact of his being too fagged out to go to another place to eat.

He followed Luigi through the crooking way between the chairs and tables.

When Luigi stopped he stopped.

He heard a woman’s voice:

“Now, really, Johnnie, you don’t have to tell *me!*—With half an eye—”

He sank wearily into the chair which Luigi pulled out for him. His shoulders sagged. His legs sprawled nervelessly under the table. His hands lay palms upwards on his knees. His chin went down to his chest.

The woman’s voice was broken off abruptly.

Luigi filled his glass with water.

He sat looking at the glass. Very slowly, very gradually he reached for it. He swallowed a lot of the water gratefully. His throat was burning. The room was hot; stuffy. Out in the street he had felt confusedly that it was growing warm.

“Didn’t know”; the man spoke gruffly. “Didn’t know you couldn’t have a table to yourself.”

“Hush, Johnnie!—He’ll hear you!”

“I should worry!—He looks dopey, anyway!”

“Hush, Johnnie!”

He was too worn out to care. What people thought of him was of little importance. He was not surprised that the man had seen his irking exhaustion. He never thought he could hide it.

He pulled a newspaper from his pocket. He began to read. He stifled a yawn with the back of his hand. A sharp pain stabbed itself through his eyeballs. The print jumbled together in thin, hairy, black-spotted lines. He closed his eyes for a second. He opened them. He looked up. He saw the man and the girl sitting opposite him.

His glance wavered apathetically over the girl’s face. She was young. He had seen hundreds of the same type of woman in the streets and the cars and the subway. He did not try to make out what she looked like. He had never known any women well. He had never wanted to know any women. She was smiling at the man. The whiteness of her teeth showed between the red edges of her lips. He lowered his eyes. He had scant concern for any one.

He became aware of the waiter standing at his side.

“You can bring me the regular dinner,” he said.

He made an elaborate pretense of reading his newspaper. He carefully avoided glancing at the man and the woman opposite. They did not interest him. No one ever interested him. To become interested in any one meant the making of a definite exertion; doing away with that sapping tiredness. He could not do that. He was too entirely suffocated by the throttling, strangling weariness that gripped him potently.

The waiter brought his loaded tray.

He ate slowly; mechanically.

Now and again he caught a fragment of the conversation of those two people across the table.

“Johnnie, dear—”

“I wouldn’t have asked her, Honey-girl.—I wouldn’t ever want to run

around with her.—I'll take you every time.—All you've got to do is say the word, Hon—"

"D'ye mean it, Johnnie?"

He tried not to hear. He chewed hard at his food. He could not understand how people could talk and eat at the same time. He pushed his plate back. He motioned to the waiter.

"I'm silly about you, Honey.—You know that; don't you?"

"I like to hear you say it, Johnnie.—You can guess the way I feel."

"The way I do?"

"Well—"

Their words kept on going around and around him. The sound of their words beat on his eardrums. Their talk was to him a part of the loud noise of the restaurant, a part which vibrated a bit nearer to him than the rest of the racket.

"It's good to be alive, Honey!"

"Good, Johnnie?— It's glorious!— That's what it is!"

He was not hungry.

While the waiter changed his plate he stared straight before him.

The man's hand was lying close on the girl's fingers.

He looked away; his gaze going consciously about the room.

"Meester Shannan, is everything all right?"

His eyes turned to meet Luigi's.

"I'll have my check," he said wearily.

"But, Meester Shannan!—Your cheese—"

He protested feebly:

"I don't want it, Luigi."

"You shall have it, Meester Shannan!—You *must* have it, Meester Shannan!—Santa Maria!—I will not listen for one little moment that you do not take your cheese, Meester Shannan!"

He let Luigi put the cheese in front of him. He toyed at it with his fork. His brows drew themselves together in a faint wrinkling frown. The fork was heavy.

"Is it not good, Meester Shannan?"

He ate some of it indifferently. He ate it because Luigi stood there watch-

ing. It was easier to eat than to find an excuse for not eating. He saw Luigi go off to another table smiling broadly.

The waiter brought him his check. He paid it. He sat stolidly waiting for his change. When it came he automatically counted it, tipping the waiter the usual amount and pocketing the rest.

In the hall he took his hat and coat from the rack.

III

OUT in the street he wandered aimlessly up town. It was growing dark. The asphalt stretched grayly under the brilliant, high-swung corner lamps. Through the curtained windows of the houses spotted the yellow glowing lights; gleaming, evened patches squaring themselves regularly on the gloom darkened walls. The thick vacancy of the deserted shops ranged on either side of the avenue. And now and again a glittering display burst unhidden on the shrouding evening; its splendor splashing vividly into the neutral dimness.

He always went about purposelessly before going to his room. He thought the air did him good. He thought bewilderedly that his room was crammed with the tiredness which stayed on him. He liked to imagine in that unreasoning ineffectual manner of his that the wideness of the night held more space for him and for the burden of his weariness.

It was a part of his regulated program to walk around for an hour after his dinner. He never got very far. And he never reached home later than ten o'clock. His fatigue, dogging his footsteps, drove him finally forcibly into the compressing confines of his four walls, compelling him inexorably to the small, unescapable room. He never got back without the shackling sense of defeat; the imprisoned feeling of the weariness coming together and harrying him; of it plaguing him torturingly as it contracted on him from

the walls and the ceiling with all its relentless power.

He turned in at the entrance of the park.

There was a still, brooding hush blocking itself hugely between the earth and the sky. A languid immobility had fastened on to the profound layers of shadows. An unexpected warmth emanated drowsily out of the deep blue gloom. An intangible softness slurred itself, spreading smoothly on the quieted atmosphere.

His footsteps slackened unconsciously. He unbuttoned his coat. His shoes were suddenly heavy.

He found an unoccupied bench well away from the light.

He sank down on it.

Quite hazedly he began to wonder if the thing were actually getting worse. He had not thought of it as growing. The idea of it growing, of it becoming even more virulent was ghastly, staggering. There was no denying that tonight he was terribly, horribly tired.

He sat on the bench motionless. There was a strained fixity to his attitude, a rigidity that was wooden.

Overhead the slanting reach of the dark skies. All about him the bluish shadows massed in stillness. A languidness was tangled in the air. The night was full, trembling with a yearning intensity, a lurking wistfulness. It welled over him.

For no reason at all he felt his eyes blinded by a hot rush of tears. He tried to think what would happen when he became too tired. He was afraid of being too tired. If he became too tired he would not be able to go on with his work. There was nothing in his life but his work. There had never been anything else in his life. He had not thought the lack of anything else mattered. He wondered if death could be pulled on him by that terrible weariness. He wondered if death would mean rest. He could not create the thought of rest. Rest to him was nothingness. Life to him was nothingness. The only live thing which he could recognize was the oppressive

fatigue which had seared itself into him.

All through the night that throbbing, attacking sense of a desperate want!

A woman had come and had sat down on his bench. He became gradually conscious that he was no longer by himself. He realized that a woman was sitting at the further end of the bench. He did not look at her. He had wished to be alone.

For a second he thought of getting up and walking off. He uncrossed his legs. His feet felt as if they were weighted. He did not move.

A faint, sweet tang of perfume came to him.

His nostrils dilated. His eyes, staring straight before him, went darting fearfully into the darkness on all sides of him. His gaze strove frenziedly to penetrate the thick, loose blackness. There was panic in his rapid glances; an extraordinary panic had flashed itself on to the unquicken mind of him.

The scent crept across his face. He sniffed at it. His eyes, straining at the filmy obscurity, were seeking the source of that which he had sensed. The intangible longing, the pulsing breathlessness, the inexplicable restlessness. The anxious keen hankering that kept on coming stealthily, surreptitiously at him!

He glanced at the woman out of the corners of his eyes.

She sat there an undefined figure, blurred over by the grayness of the shadows.

He cleared his throat.

He crouched himself tightly at his end of the bench.

He realized then that he had almost spoken.

He had never spoken to a woman without an introduction. He never expected to speak to a woman without being properly introduced. It was not the sort of thing he did. It was not the sort of thing he ever meant to do.

His eyes went involuntarily to that quiet form. The mysterious, gloom-soaked body of her. He peered intently, trying to bring together the outlines

that had been softly obliterated by the smudging darkness. His eyes sought the invisible, shadow-smirched spot of her face. He wanted to see her face. He wanted that quite frantically.

A quick excitement flared to him. A rising, stirring wroughtness seethed in him.

It was idiotic to think of speaking to her. But he could not get the thought out of his head. It raced on sensuously; uncontrolled and clamorous. It would not do any harm. Just to say a word to her. Anything would really do. He could not understand what he was thinking of.

It was warm. He pulled his eyes away from the woman. He made himself look about him.

A clump of trees traced the spread of their branches on the low sky. The faint smell of the earth rose up mistily from the ground. The darkness, the expectant hush, the enveloping, seductive yearning.

A tumultuous nostalgia shook him. A wave of desire crept out of the night; worming itself distractingly, deliriously into his brain. His stupefied senses palpitated; reeling crazedly into alertness. He found that he was trembling.

His gaze crept back wistfully to the silent movement of the woman's two hands. He could see the ungloved white patches of them closing palely on to each other. He did not know until he felt the painted surface of the bench planks under his fingers that his hands had gone fumbling toward her.

He slumped rigidly against the back of the bench. His fists clinched themselves in his pockets.

Far off in the sky he could see flaring electric lights. The stream of them shot scintillating, quivering luridly into the high black smoothed horizon.

He could not realize what was happening to him. He felt the blood pouring over his cheeks, stinging up into his forehead. His heartbeats were hammering loudly, thumping in his temples. The deafening noise of them filled his ears. His lips were dry, burning. He closed his eyes in a sudden

fainting dizziness. Against the background of their lids he saw the gray mass of that quiet, shadow-blurred figure. He felt his hands growing hot.

He wondered if she were tired. He wondered if she would understand what it meant to be tired. He wondered if she knew that he was there. If she could know that strange, compelling longing which had come so stunningly to him.

The night was throbbing with that incomprehensible need. The soft insistent impulse of it swept to him and over him and came on again. The poignant, thrilling beat of it rising and descending from the mat of the thickened shadows. The famished craving that vibrated furiously in the blackness.

He stared at her. He wanted to see her face. He was desperately eager for the sight of it.

He saw her get to her feet.

He rose from the bench, swaying for a moment, straightening himself tensely.

He watched her moving off down the ghostly line of the asphalt walk.

He followed her at a short distance.

Once she paused. He stopped, thinking that she knew he was there after her. Thinking that she might perhaps turn her head. Thinking that he would catch a glimpse of her face. She did not seem conscious of him. And then she went on and his footsteps echoed the tapping of hers.

At the entrance of the park she turned downtown.

He followed her.

The fear of missing her came on him cruelly. His breathing was harsh, hurting him. Sweat stood out on his brow, trickling down into his wide, fixed eyes.

The stream of the lights after the dusk of the park bewildered him.

He thought she had gone when, crossing a street, a taxi came tearing between them. He hurried to come upon her heels a moment later.

He never took his gaze from the thin, moving form of her.

People passed him on all sides. He did not see them. Voices came to him,

disembodied. He hardly heard. Words floated at his eardrums, disconnected, drifting on by him.

He wanted to see her face.

A man jostled him.

"What time—?"

"Eleven—"

He stood stock still.

"Eleven—"

He had had no idea that it was so late. He could not conceive how he had so forgotten the hour. He felt suddenly tired, nauseatingly wearied. His whole body ached with the fatigue.

He remained there motionless.

His eyes, going hungrily before him, followed after that thin, mysterious moving figure.

He saw then that she had stopped. He saw her turn quickly, glancing behind her. He felt her unseen eyes. He thought that through the vague night he glimpsed the white oval of her face.

He watched her walk on. He watched the form of her dwindling away from him. He stood there seeing her go bodily, completely into the absorbing dimness that shut together after her.

He went back to his room.

He lay awake in his bed all that night, tossing, wondering. He could not understand. He knew he would never understand. He was too utterly tired to think. The weariness drenched thickly on to him, smothering him.

He was wide awake when morning

came. He was conscious of the overwhelming fatigue, of the dulness of the deadening, weighted sense of druggedness.

IV

At his usual time he was in the office.

Sitting at his desk he looked out of the three great windows at the further end of the room, at the flat blue sky, at the ridges of the red, gray cindered roofs of the tall buildings huddling unevenly on one another, with their black, tin-funnelled chimneys and their rounded rising water-tanks. His eyes rested on Parsons when they came back from the cliff-like sheerness of the edifices below and beyond him; from the thin etched outlines of the bridges swinging taut and sharp on the horizon; from the monstrous, haze-softened gas-towers and the wreathing volumes of the spreading smoke.

Staring at Parsons, the pallid white oval of a face came hauntingly before him and was gone.

He could not see Parsons distinctly.

His eyes went stupidly, vaguely to Parsons' desk.

Parsons had filled a glass with water. Parsons had placed the glass in front of him.

In the glass were six long brown twigs that were winged on their slender stems with a faint sprouting greenness.



JEALOUSY is merely a woman's dislike that some other woman should have the pleasure of making the man she loves miserable.



THE extent of a wife's affections depends on the number of her husband's eligible friends.



HAWAIIAN MELODY

By Carl Glick

FROM far off came the drumming of the surf, and above was the music of the midnight stars. Under the palm trees, indistinct and faint in the moon's glow he stood, singing. The melancholy strains of his ukelele beat a faint harmony with the tide.

Jeanette stole from the house—hesitant and timid. She paused by the balustrade of the garden. The singer came closer. . . .

She took the rose from her hair and threw it down to him. He grew bolder.

The poetry of romance and the longing for undefined mystery tempted Jeanette. . . .

"Who are you?" she whispered.

His reply was a love song. She still could not see him . . . but his music stirred in her forgotten memories.

Spellbound . . . entrapped by the beauty of his passion and the night, she said . . . "It seems as if we have met before. . . . Perhaps it was in ancient Egypt. I a Princess and you my soldier lover. . . . Or maybe from Troy you carried me back to Greece. . . . Or on a gondola in Venice we floated with the stars. . . . I know we have loved before." Her voice grew low and dreamy.

The music stopped abruptly. "Yes . . . You know me. But I ain't never been in Egypt, or Troy, or Venice, miss. I'm the cook."



FINALITY

By May Greenwood

I BID you go, flinging the door of dreams
Wide to the night, where one low plant gleams.
Night's passion calls you, calls you to return.
My heart's door sways ajar, her tapers burn
To light you, stranger from her loveliness.
What stars they might have been you cannot guess,
But I shall mourn you, and through all my years.
Yet am I brave to live my life, to hold
That memory close, to robe me with its gold
And drain the chalice of its future tears.



THE SHOW-DOWN

By Martha Van Doren

SHE had said all the proper things and she had said them well. Not as well, he suspected, as she would later imagine herself having said them. Later she would incorporate into her portion of the conversation all manner of beautiful sentiments, beautifully expressed, and she would go over and over the scene pretending to herself to have said them all. She was always going over things: the more disagreeable they were the more she went over them. He had an idea that she would want to say good-bye to him many times, rising on each successive occasion to greater heights of emotion and finer finish of effect. Well, he would forestall that: once this was nicely over he would go away, as far away as possible, and stay until time for the final legal arrangements. Letters he thought he could endure.

She would be out of the room for a few minutes: she would want, she had said, that much time in which to prepare herself for their final parting. She wished it to be dignified, in keeping with their eight years of companionship. Then she had left the room with gently bent head and a tender mournfulness of dragging skirt and floating kimono sleeve which reminded him of the dignified restraint of a funeral procession on a Greek vase.

He hoped she wouldn't consider it necessary to kiss him. He felt that he couldn't quite stand one of her kisses. They had a certain ritualistic quality which he couldn't quite incorporate into his present state of mind. The ritualistic element wasn't less definite because it was mental—or, she would probably have said, spiritual. They

were always the same, the kisses: they hadn't varied in eight years. Always they were tender, always virginal, always consecrated. And they were always moist. He didn't know why they were moist. He had observed carefully: he could see no cause for it. Possibly soggy was the physical corollary of spiritual consecration. They weren't the kind of kisses one could reciprocate or even participate in: they were offered meekly and must be accepted reverently. He tried, tentatively, to compare them to Joyce's full-lipped passionate caresses and turned a little ill, as he had expected that he would.

Having determined to be very chivalrous, to follow all her cues, meet her at every point, he felt a sudden reaction which manifested itself in growing irritation with her. He commenced to resent the eight years of what he mentally termed their mutual endurance, and which she had referred to as a wonderful experience in perfect companionship. He tried to think of all her good qualities and all the disagreeable and irritating ones were thrust naked to the surface.

The breakfast table with the dried fruit and coarse wafers always put near her plate made him a little furious. Her unique dietary necessities had been thrust at him for eight years. One of the most amusing things about her had been the strange paradox of her pose of spirituality accompanied by this absorption in her physical needs: the careful selection of her foods and the periodical medicaments:—always fully discussed.

He wondered why she hadn't ordered

the breakfast things taken away: he could look unmoved on the grounds in the bottom of his own cup of black coffee but the gathering scum of amber cream on her half-empty cup disgusted him. With her genius for arrangement she should have realized that slices of toast with congealing butter on the surface and soiled plates and egg cups were not appropriate accompaniments to such a scene as this.

Almost and quite unreasonably it seemed that she should have managed a different setting entirely for the whole thing; that she should not have received and opened the letter just at this time. In so supremely well-ordered an existence as hers it was ridiculous that such a crisis should have arrived—at the breakfast table.

That she had been so beautifully prepared for it was no source of surprise. He was convinced that she was equally ready for any conceivable occurrence. Undoubtedly she had a neat and appropriate little speech all nicely rehearsed for use in the event of his own death. She not only rehearsed but she undoubtedly revised such speeches.

He reminded himself sharply that such thoughts were petty and unworthy of himself or her. He tried to force himself to think admiringly of her: he knew that she would expect him to think of her admiringly. After all, she had risen to this circumstance as well as any one could possibly expect. There would be no scandal; he knew that. The self-absorption that passes for good-breeding she had in a superlative degree; she would be too much interested in her own pose to trouble herself to be disagreeable to Joyce. She might even be kind to her in indirect ways. She would be if it seemed to her a becoming part to play. She would play her part perfectly and, with a little thrill of appreciation he realized that she would play it out, uncomplainingly, to one spectator: herself. There was a tremendous dignity in such exalted *egotism*.

II

HE knew, he had always known, that he could have had his liberty at any time to find out. She was that kind of woman: she conceived herself to have unalterable convictions regarding the sanctity of the home and a single standard of conduct, and he knew quite well that she had always longed for an opportunity to immolate herself. He knew her so well: he was convinced that, except for certain restraints that he had deliberately imposed on himself out of intellectual delicacy, he could read her every thought. Sometimes, for his own amusement, he had allowed himself to go farther into her mind than other times, and he knew that in many ways she would welcome this opportunity for martyrdom: that she would have welcomed it any time these eight years.

He had known it and he had been decent. Not even for Joyce's happiness and his own, which would be a natural consequence of Joyce's, had he relaxed his vigilance of deception. His conscience commended him on this score and did not condemn him in the matter of the necessity for deception. He had not harmed her; she had come to him chaste, so far as any reality was concerned she would leave him as she had come; her soul or what she conceived to be her soul was militantly sexless. He had never touched it.

She opened the door and stood framed in the opening for an instant, just long enough for him to see that she was pale and self-possessed. He knew that she wanted him to see that she was pale and self-possessed. Then she came in and closed the door behind her. There was an expression of exaltation on her well-cut, good-looking face; her delicate nose, her thin, mobile lips, her rather dull blue eyes.

Suddenly a sense of her unusualness came to him. Was it not just possible that, on the whole, she was of an immense superiority? Possibly he had been diabolically gifted with perceptions that picked out just those particular flaws that marred her particular

perfection. He had the feeling of one who has leaned too hard against a grated window which has seemed to restrict and scarify his outlook so that it gives way when he suddenly discovers that it was his only protection from precipitation into endless and nightmare space.

Possibly after all she had been the best woman for him; maybe it was better that his somewhat temperamental nature, with its slightly abnormal sensibility to other people's mental attitudes, should be linked with this particularly simple because wholly artificial personality. It was the artificiality of a high degree of adaptation to civilized conditions. How would he re-order his life without her formal steadying influence? He had a momentary sense of panic, then the daring and gallantry and romance of it seized him; a wild exhilaration of danger, of mad flight without compass or signal; with nothing but a more or less steady port; Joyce's lips. Then she spoke.

"Harry."

"Yes." He answered gravely; he would play up to her but he hoped that she would make this part of it short.

"We have been very happy together."
"You have been a wonderful wife to me, Edna," he replied non-committally.

"You—you will miss me—our companionship, I mean."

"Yes, yes." He buried his face in his hands with strangely confused emotions. He was conscious of a desire to rise to certain expectations which he knew she was entertaining; he was conscious of an innate element of tragedy in the situation which imposed in spite of himself rules of its own and, quite overwhelmingly, he was conscious of an hysterical inclination to laugh. He *was* laughing; he could feel his shoulders shaking.

"Harry!"

"Yes." He was choking.

"I have thought of everything; of our life together, of the great wrong you have done me, of your repentance—"

He gave a little strangled ejaculation.

"—and—and, Harry, I have decided to forgive you."

With a cry of relief he snatched her to him:

"Oh! Edna, Edna, dear, thank God!" he sobbed.



THE TERROR

By Dennison Varr

HE walked into the shooting gallery, picked up an automatic pistol, snuffed out eight lighted candles in quick succession, played a double octave on the bell targets, pulverized a dollar and sixty-nine cents worth of clay pipes, and then meekly allowed the attendant to overcharge him.



FAITH is at the heart of happiness. How much every man's happiness depends upon his faith that the luck of his friends won't last!



THE SAILOR

By Henry Anderson

I HAVE a love in every port.

* * *

I am a sailor.

When I was a child I heard some-
one say: "A sailor has a love in every
port."

I wished many beautiful women to
love me.

I craved the love of a dainty maid
from Burma.

I longed for a slim maiden of Galli-
poli to smile at me.

I desire the broad smile of an Ethio-
pian woman.

I yearned for the touch of a fair-
skinned lady of Helsingland.

My blood tingled for the caress of
a vivacious Parisienne.

I wished many beautiful women to
love me, so I became a sailor.

One day I married a thin haired,
big hipped woman from Schenectady
named Nellie.

* * *

I have a love in every port. . . .
Nellie follows me.



SHADOW-BOUND

By Hazel Hall

YOU whom the shadows beckoned
Long—so long ago
That the litanies you taught me
Now tremblingly and low
Fade on the lips that loved them
Long—O long ago

Why have you stirred the silence
That flowered from my pain?
*Just now your anxious footstep
Sounded above the rain;
Just now your eyes, beseeching,
Shadowed my window-pane!*



ENCHANTERS OF MEN

VI

The Tailor's Daughter Who Enslaved Three Dukes

By Thornton Hall

THE sixteenth of April, 1768, was a red-letter day in the annals of London's Theatre Royal, for it was crowded from pit to gallery with the world of rank and fashion, gathered to witness the first performance of Piccini's opera, "La Schiava," fresh from its triumphs on the Continent. where it had created a furore of enthusiasm and delight unrivalled in the memory of the oldest playgoer.

But two years earlier, Foote's "little playhouse" had blossomed into the dignity of the King's Own Theatre, thanks to the good offices of his friend and patron, the Duke of York; and to-night, in its new splendour of stately columns, gilded cornices and sumptuous furnishing, its kaleidoscope of colour illuminated by the flashing of jewels, it was calculated to make the shades of Fielding and Cibber gasp with amazement, if they could have revisited the transfigured scene of their own modest activities.

But it was not to the stage that the eyes of the most brilliant crowd ever seen in a London theatre were drawn; it was to one of the boxes, in which a handsome young nobleman was chatting gaily to a beautiful woman, "with the face of a Madonna and large, soulful eyes," both as indifferent to the battery of critical glances as if they were alone in the lady's own boudoir. The nobleman, with the strong clear-cut, good-looking face, was none other than the Duke of Grafton, Prime Minister of England and great-grandson of the "Merrie Monarch"; his rair companion

was known to most Londoners as Nancy Parsons, a lady whom Horace Walpole dubbed a "Circe well known by many a buck and blood."

It was common knowledge that for some time the pleasure-loving Premier and the tailor's beautiful daughter had been on terms of intimacy; but hitherto a decent veil had been drawn over their peccadilloes. That the veil should be withdrawn, and that England's chief statesman should thus flaunt his amour in the face of his own world and in the very eyes of the Queen, was nothing less than an outrage.

Queen Charlotte, after a glance of startled recognition and cold disapproval, kept her eyes steadily turned from the audacious couple; in a neighboring box the Duke's wife held her head disdainfully; his sister, my Lady Harrington, chatted and laughed with her companions with an occasional amused glance at her brother; while throughout the theatre lips curled in contempt or broadened in smiles, and there was an unbroken ripple of whispers and subdued laughter.

The sentiment of all who witnessed this extraordinary scene was well expressed by "Junius" when he wrote later:

"The Prime Minister of Great Britain, in a rural retirement and in the arms of beauty, has lost all memory of his Sovereign, his country and himself. Did not the Duke of Grafton frequently lead his mistress into public and even place her at the head of his table, as if he had pulled down an ancient

temple of Venus, and could bury all decency and shame under its ruins? It is not that he kept a mistress at home, but that he constantly attended her abroad. It is not the private indulgence, but the public insult of which I complain. The name of Miss Parsons would hardly have been known if the First Lord of the Treasury had not led her in triumph through the Opera House, even in the presence of the Queen. When we see a man act in this manner we may admit the shameless depravity of his heart; but what are we to think of his understanding?"

And yet there were many who made plausible excuses for the Prime Minister. Twelve years earlier, as a boy of twenty, he had married Lord Ravensworth's only daughter, a lady of great ambition and social gifts, who promised to make a Duchess worthy of him. It was not long, however, before there came a "rift within the lute"; for the Duchess proved that she had no taste in common with her husband. She cared nothing for the Turf, the hunting, and politics which filled the Duke's life. One passion absorbed her, that of gambling; and her days and nights were spent at the card-table, where she lost heavily and consistently.

Often, it is said, "when he came home from the House of Lords he found a great many servants in the hall, and on enquiry learnt from the porter that her Grace had a card-party upstairs. On which occasions he would call roughly for his *valet de chambre*, and take candles and go into his library; or he would quit the house in a passion."

Again and again he was called on to pay her gaming debts, which during a single night often mounted to thousands of guineas; until he vowed that he could not and would not pay them any more. To all his pleadings and protests she turned a deaf ear and a smiling, defiant face. Remonstrance gave place to anger, and fierce quarrels became of daily occurrence; for her Grace had a temper as inflammable as his own.

It was at this stage, when life with

his Duchess had become almost impossible, that the Duke first met the "adorable Nancy" and succumbed to her Madonna-like beauty, her sweetness and gentleness, recognizing in her the one woman who could make him happy. The pathos of her story, too, made a strong appeal to a man of his tender heart.

When little more than a child, Nancy — "the daughter of a master-tailor in Bond Street, who, though not rich, lived comfortably" — had been wooed and wedded by a Mr. Haughton, a merchant, who had carried his girl-bride off to the West Indies, where his business was. Here he had treated her so cruelly that she had, in despair, run away from him, and made her way back to England, which she reached penniless. "With poverty knocking at the door, she soon fell into evil ways; and finding that her face was her fortune, she passed from one patron to another until finally the Duke of Grafton came to her rescue."

Such was the pathetic story that touched the Duke's heart, as Nancy's beauty and charm inflamed it. He had found a refuge from his gambling, hot-tempered wife in the sweet, soothing company of his Madonna.

It was in the summer of 1764 that the Duke's liaison first became known to the world through a misadventure which caused much amusement in the clubs and drawing-rooms of London. He had invited Nancy to be his guest for a few days at his beautiful country seat, Wakefield Lodge; and, anxious to make as impressive an appearance as possible, the tailor's daughter made the journey in an elegant new post-chaise, with the Haughton arms blazing on the panels in all the glory of new paint. As ill-luck would have it, however, the paint was not dry by the day fixed for her journey; but Nancy, smiling at the warnings of the coach-builder, set out light-heartedly on her long drive to Northamptonshire.

Halting for the night at the Bull, in Dunstable, the tired, hungry lady hurried indoors for supper, while the

ostlers set to work to clean her chaise in the darkness, with a thoroughness which proved disastrous; for when Nancy emerged radiant the next morning to continue her journey she saw to her horror that the beautiful coats of arms had disappeared and that the painted splendours of her carriage had equally vanished in many-hued smudges and zebra-like stripes. It was thus a tearful and pathetically miserable Nancy who alighted at her host's door, to the ill-concealed amusement of the Duke and his satellites; and it was not until her tears had been kissed away and she had been sufficiently comforted in the Duke's arms that smiles came to chase her miseries away.

The Duke's one desire, now that he had found the consolation he yearned for, was to escape from the matrimonial fetters which he found so galling. This proved no very difficult matter; for the Duchess, further incensed by his infidelity, vowed that she hated him; and, so far from wishing to hold him to his marriage vows, would be glad to be rid of him. Terms of separation were satisfactorily arranged; the Duchess departed with an allowance of £3,000 a year and the custody of her two younger children; and the Duke had all the solace he desired in the amiable Miss Parsons.

II

DURING the next few years Nancy was ideally happy with her exalted lover. He was her shadow and her slave everywhere. She was to be seen leaning proudly on his arm at Ranelagh and Vauxhall, or chatting gaily to him as he drove his coach to Ascot and Newmarket. At his town houses in Grosvenor Square and Bond Street she presided at his table and entertained his friends with a dignity and charm any Duchess might have envied; for, in spite of her obscure birth, Miss Nancy (or Mrs. Haughton, as she still styled herself) was a woman of refinement and culture, with a clever tongue and a rare gift of conversation. She was, too,

strange as it may seem, very religious; and so sensitive that she shrank from coarseness as from a blow. Whenever the Duke gave vent to a lusty oath she would at once reprove him, and reduce him to penitence by a mild word or a gentle look.

A lady so gentle, so sweet, and so charming could scarcely fail to disarm opposition; and it was not long before many of the men and women who had looked on her with shocked and disapproving eyes were counted among her admirers. So speedy was her conquest that, when she appeared in the Duke's company at a fancy-dress ball at the King's Theatre, but four months after her first sensational appearance there, "men of all ranks vied with each other in paying court to her. All the evening she was surrounded by a mob of flatterers. It was allowed that she was queen of the ball; and there can be no doubt that at this moment she was one of the most powerful ladies in the land."

It was inevitable, however, that a woman thus favoured by a man as exalted as the Prime Minister of England should have enemies. The discarded Duchess naturally hated her; Lord Temple refused to see any good in her, and is suspected of inspiring some of the malicious pamphlets circulated at the time—such as the "Female Jockey Club," which dragged into the light all that was discreditable—and much that was not true—in her past. And "Junius" directed some of his most venomous shafts against her and her noble admirer.

Reams of scurrilous rhymes were published for the delectation of Court gossips and tavern-loungers. Thus, in Almon's "Political Register," in June, 1768, we find half-a-dozen spiteful stanzas, the first of which runs thus (the rest are now unprintable):

*"Can Apollo resist, or a poet refuse,
When Harry and Nance solicit the
Muse?"*

*A statesman who makes the whole na-
tion his care,*

*And a nymph who is almost as chaste
as she's fair."*

There were others who did not scruple to declare that Nancy was waxing rich from bribes received in exchange for pensions or fat posts under the Government; and no politician received advancement without the whisper going round that Miss Parsons' bank balance was the larger for it. She was openly accused of procuring lucrative posts for her relatives and her former admirers, and of diverting large sums from the Exchequer into her own purse, to feed her extravagance. There was in fact no tale too wildly improbable, too monstrous, to tell at the expense of the woman who had caught England's Prime Minister in the toils of her seductions.

Such scandalmongering, however, was powerless to disturb either the Duke or his favourite. Even the disparaging references to her age only provoked an amused smile. That her influence over the Prime Minister was exercised for his good is beyond doubt. Her sound counsel smoothed many of the difficulties which began to make his position perilous and burdensome; she weaned him from his passion for the Turf to a closer attention to affairs of State; and when at last he was obliged to surrender his office, in response to the popular clamour for his resignation, her consolation made his sense of failure and defeat less bitter.

When the Duke's marriage was dissolved by Act of Parliament in March, 1769, there were many who confidently predicted that Nancy would soon succeed to the strawberry-leafed coronet.

"Nancy is the happiest of her sex," wrote one of her champions at this time, "attached to the most amiable man of the age, whose rank and influence raise her, in point of power, beyond many Queens of the Earth. Caressed by the highest, courted and adulated by all, her merit and shining abilities receive that applause that is justly due to them."

A few days after this enthusiastic notice appeared, the world read with amazement that the Prime Minister and his friend had parted. The news seemed incredible—but it was true. Whatever had been the reason—motives of policy, his growing bias to religion, or the fact that he had met a lady whom he wished to make his wife—the Duke had finally severed himself from his "adorable Nancy." Her day of splendour and power was over; and her only compensation was a small annuity, and an offer of her ex-admirer's friendship—purely platonic—which she rejected with scorn.

Less than three months later the Duke was standing at the altar, for the second time, with a daughter of the Dean of Worcester for bride; three days earlier his discarded Duchess was wearing a second wedding-ring, for Lord Upper Ossory, who was now free to exchange the rôle of lover for that of husband.

III

It was a sorely wounded, almost broken-hearted Nancy who, abandoned by the man she had really loved, once more faced the world, seeking solace and distraction in a feverish pursuit of pleasure.

A woman so charming could, however, never lack homage; and before many weeks had passed gossip was linking her name with those of some of the first gallants of the town. Now it was my Lord March, one of the famous figures of the day, who had long besieged her in vain and whose pertinacity was at last rewarded. Now it was Sir George Savile, a Nottingham baronet, a man of learning and a reputed misogynist, who was drawn to Nancy's eyes as a moth is lured by a candle-flame; and, when she wearied of the baronet's gentle and diffident wooing, she soon found a successor in that rollicking, hard-drinking Lothario, Tom Panton, brother of the Duchess of Ancaster and hero of more adventures than any other buck in town, who found

her "too much of a saint" to please him long. Thus one admirer succeeded another in Nancy's favour, until her fickle heart found a more abiding refuge in the second of the Dukes who played such a dominant part in her life.

Nancy's new ducal lover was his Grace of Dorset, a young man of twenty-five, dark-eyed, handsome, athletic, famous for his prowess on the cricket-field, "where his raven locks and milk-white vest had begun to allure a crowd of feminine spectators to the new pastime."

The Duke, who, youthful as he was, was by no means ignorant of the arts of conquest, succumbed at the first sight of Nancy's Madonna face, much to the surprise of his friends: if not to that of Frederick Barlow, who wrote: "This nobleman, who possesses very distinguished virtues, is nevertheless not entirely exempt from those frailties to which human flesh is heir. However, his conduct, even in his foibles, admits of almost an entire palliation; for being a bachelor, it is but natural to suppose that a young peer of his Grace's warmth of affection must find some solace in the arms of beauty; especially when it takes such a seductive form as that of Miss P——ns."

This second conquest of a Duke once more set the tongues of scandal and malice wagging. "All the cheap sneers which 'Junius' had employed so savagely were repeated over again, and it was prophesied that she would need the help of crutches before her return to England." Lady Mary Coke declared, "The woman must be forty at least, if she is a day, old enough to be the Duke's mother."

But Nancy and her admirer could afford to laugh at such vapourings of jealousy as reached them on the Continent.

"We are so ideally happy," she wrote to a friend, "that the whole world can wag its spiteful and envious tongue at us; and we shall only smile at it. The Duke idolizes me and I—well, I almost worship him."

For three years the Duke remained loyal to her, roaming with her over Europe, and showing such devotion that more than once it was reported that he had made her his wife. And she was equally devoted to him; for, although high-placed suitors were at her feet in every capital, she would listen to no words of love from any but her "dear Duke."

On one occasion while in Rome, it is said, "a plot was hatched by a Venetian noble, who had failed to persuade Nancy to listen to his avowals of love, to carry her off from a masked ball; and she was only rescued by her protector in the nick of time, when her abductors were forcing her into a carriage."

It is perhaps small wonder that before long it was rumoured in London that the Duke had actually placed a wedding-ring on the finger of the tailor's daughter—a report which caused Lady Mary Coke to exclaim scornfully:

"He deserves no pity, but for his family I really grieve."

After the return of the romantic pair to London, Nancy was installed as chatelaine of the Duke's establishment, and entertained his friends with the grace and dignity she always exhibited. But once more she was fated to learn the inconstancy of man. She saw herself gradually supplanted by another charmer, more beautiful even than herself—a tall, elegant woman known as Mrs. Armistead, who was said to be the daughter of a Methodist shoemaker; and in June, 1773, Lady Mary Coke was gleefully writing to a friend, "The Duke of Dorset has certainly parted with his Nancy."

It was at least some satisfaction to her that her recreant Duke did not long remain true to her supplanter; for it was not long before he replaced her by the young and beautiful Countess of Derby, a sweetheart of his boyhood, whose husband dramatically found compensation in the discarded Mrs. Armistead.

IV

THUS abandoned by her second Duke, Nancy was once again reduced to the ranks, but it was not long before Londoners were reading in the *Morning Post* the startling announcement:

"It is said Lord Viscount M——d was married on Monday last to Mrs. H——n, the late very celebrated Nancy P——s."

Nor was the news any less true than sensational, for the tailor's daughter had actually been led at last to the altar by Charles, second Viscount Maynard, a noble of twenty-five, almost young enough to be her son, and whose only accomplishment was, it is said, that "he could draw a horse quite cleverly." But youthful as the Viscount was, he had a record of conquest which many a middle-aged roué could scarcely rival. As a cynic remarked at the time, "A youth who has corrupted so much innocence will be very properly employed in leading Nancy Parsons back to the paths of virtue."

Here, indeed, was a delicious morsel of news for those who had no love for the new Viscountess; and from Horace Walpole to Lady Mary Coke, they made the most of the folly of the young lord who had given his name to a woman older than his mother. The explanation of this strangely assorted union was perhaps best given in a couplet written at the time:

"'Tis not her charms, 'tis her ingenious
mind,
That did a Grafton and a Dorset
bind."

Nancy was much too wise a woman to make her home at Easton Lodge, her husband's stately Essex seat. She preferred to return to the Continent, where at least she could escape the voice of envy and malice. Thus, in the summer of 1775 we find her repeating her ducal honeymoon with the empty-headed but devoted Viscount whom she was able to call "husband." But although she now wore a wedding-ring and was a British Peeress, she found

little welcome awaiting her across the Channel.

At Naples, the King point-blank refused, in spite of her husband's pleadings, to receive her at his Court; and Sir William Hamilton, English Ambassador there, wrote to his nephew, Charles Greville, "Nobody visits her." A few large-minded and sympathetic friends she was able to draw to her; but when one of them, Lord Tylney, invited her to a ball at his house she was left to sit in solitude in a corner of the room, the focus of cold and disdainful glances, to which she presented a smiling, unperturbed face.

When she attended the Royal wild-boar hunt at Astoni, we learn, while all the rest of the company formed a merry group around the gracious Queen, the ostracised Nancy sat apart with her husband and a few kind friends; and, though shunned by everybody else, "appeared wholly unconcerned by the contemptuous looks that were cast upon her."

On her return to Naples in the following year, however, her experiences were happier. Lord Maynard, by a very simple exercise of medical skill, had been able to restore to health the King's son, reduced to the point of death by fever; and Ferdinand's gratitude was so great, thanks to the efficacy of "James's Powders," that he took the lord and his lady almost literally to his arms. The Queen invited Nancy to pay her a long visit, and showed her such affection and attention that soon the nobility were almost tumbling over each other in their rivalry to shower invitations on her and her husband. But in her success, as in her failure, Nancy exhibited the same quiet dignity, accepting homage as indifferently as she had received slights.

When at last Lord and Lady Maynard returned to London she found the doors of the fashionable world still closed against her.

"Naturally, her sister-Peeresses could not forget," to quote Walpole, "that she had been the Duke of Grafton's Mrs. Haughton, the Duke of Dorset's

Mrs. Haughton, Everybody's Mrs. Haughton."

Before many months had passed her ladyship furnished more food for gossip. She had bewitched a third Duke—this time His Grace of Bedford, a boy of eighteen, who was her shadow everywhere. In vain Nancy protested that the relation was purely platonic; that the Duke was to her a son (a very proper relationship, considering that she was thirty years his senior)—a boy whose shyness and helplessness appealed strongly to her.

"The Duke is so shy," she told an acquaintance, "that he appears unhappy in Society. He is so reserved that he used to get into a corner. There is no doubt that but for me he would have fallen into low company, who would have taught him to game and drink, and would have kept him among themselves. Now he is at his ease, and his behaviour is suitable to his rank."

In spite of the laughter of Society and the ridicule of the newspapers, the friendship, which was probably quite innocent, lasted for some years. The young Duke was Lady Maynard's constant companion at home and on her Continental tours; and no doubt, as Lord Maynard's fortune had come to a low ebb, the Duke's money was helpful.

"It is a convenience to us," she confessed, "for we are enabled to appear more suitable to our situation than we could otherwise do."

V

In 1779 Nancy's sun began at last to set. The Duke was lured from her by the seductions of a clever and charming lady, Madame de Buffon, ex-

mistress of the Duc d'Orléans. Her husband grew weary of her faded beauty and transferred his affections to Madame Derville, a figurante of the French Opera; and, thus doubly deserted, Nancy left England to spend the remainder of her days in a Paris suburb. Here she devoted herself, like so many other penitent, Magdalenes, to piety and good works, ministering to the poor and the sick, and reaping a harvest of gratitude and devotion from the simple peasantry who were her neighbours.

The end came "at long last" in the winter of 1814, when she had passed her eightieth year. Catholics and Protestants alike mingled their prayers and tears over her bier.

"The Bishop of the Diocese," we are told, "had ordered that all due honor should be rendered to the piety and good works of the deceased. The funeral sermon was preached by the Protestant president, in the pulpit of a Catholic church, to a numerous Catholic auditory, the Catholic clergy attending the service. The corpse was laid in the tomb with mingled rites—the lighted tapers and the Catholic dirge, the prayers of the Genevan Church, and the tears of the mourning peasantry."

Thus after life's "fretful fever," its triumphs and its tears, was Nancy Parsons laid to her rest. She had sinned; she had suffered and repented. And who shall say that the tears of the poor which moistened her grave were not efficacious to wash away the sins of the Magdalene with the face of a Madonna?

The seventh article in this series, entitled "A Belle of the Regency," will appear in the next number of THE SMART SET.



THE OSTRACIZED VIRTUE

By M. A. Brooks

A MINISTER'S daughter ran away with a man whom her father disliked.

When it became known, her father raged in a high fury. His patient wife, in tears, begged for forgiveness for their daughter.

"Remember," she said, "the text of your last Sunday's sermon, 'Faith, Hope, and Charity, and the greatest of these is Charity!'"

The minister thought for a moment, then lifted his head slowly with a noble smile softening his harsh features.

"You are right, mother," he faltered. "The Magdalene was forgiven. Even so shall I forgive our Myrtle." And in great joy the mother hastened from the room.

"Myrtle," began the minister impressively, as she returned with the girl,

"you have sinned, but you are forgiven. You may return to my house on condition that you never see that man again. I shall cut down your allowance as a matter of precaution, but with all the charity of my soul, my child, I forgive you."

Having uttered these magnanimous words, he was about to clasp his daughter to his heart, but she drew back.

"But, papa," she said with dignity, "I have not sinned. I am married. In justice you must admit—"

"Justice," shrieked her father, waving his arms and growing purple, "what have I to do with justice? If you are married to that man, leave this room, leave this house, never let me see your face again! Justice, indeed!" And he swore several times.



THE SINGER

By Margaret Leroy

I MADE songs yesterday—
Today I cannot sing.
There is not in all the world more gray
And crushed and dumb a thing.

Yet these dull and slow folk know
That I am not as they—
However pale and quiet I go,
I made songs yesterday!



THE QUEEN'S CHARIOT

By Mifflin Crane

I

IN her Latin-American country she was the subject of controversy and condemnation. Before she was sixteen, in the convent school, she disgraced herself by reading the books of Zola, of Voltaire, of Theophile Gautier. When liberated from this prison-house her infractious spirit seemed to blossom like a malign flower. She would not conform to the conventions of a woman's conduct. This was very unfortunate for her family, and for one of her position.

Especially, it hurt the aspirations of her father, who, from his position as Minister of War, was intriguing for the Presidency. She should have been his formidable ally; with a carmine flower in her midnight hair, with a jet fan to cover and uncover the allure of her smile, with a moment of suggestion in the glance of her unfathomable eyes, she could have won this man and that man to the paternal interest. But she quickly rejected the social life he planned for her. She would not dance, she would not sit in the box at the opera, she would not remain through the long dinners that began early in the evening and were not over until after midnight. People quickly ceased to include her in their invitations, partly through the discourtesy of her persistent refusals, partly because she was already scandalously breaking the rigidity of all their conventions.

She was seen walking with men on the streets, men of the Bohemia—the writers, the artists, the suspected revolutionists. Worse, she attended the government University, the only woman

student in its history. Those in authority attempted to stop her studies, but they could find no law with which to thwart her; no lawmaker had ever dreamed this contingency. Even the students were outraged and rebelled against her presence, but they did not fathom the measure of her strength, of her will, of her determination; she ignored their jeers and once she frightened a small mob of them by pointing at them, held in an unwavering little hand, a small, gleaming revolver that she drew out from the concealment of her dress. She was unconquerable, as secure as an Olympian.

Yet there was no serenity in her spirit, for the restrictions of her environment, however much she defied them, ceaselessly irritated her, like the descending drop of maddening water in a chamber of antique torture. Sometimes, walking out alone in the early morning, she would draw in a deep breath of the early air—and feel then a tightness in her throat, in her chest, as if the muscles of respiration were restrained in some constricting garment. Here the air was not free, she could not breathe it with abandon. She was forever engaged in a trivial battling, an opposing whose triumphs were meagre and unworthy her concern.

She wrested from the denials of her environment the right to know men freely, but they were never the men of her dreams; there was in them an insufficiency and a wanting that kept her heart unthrilled and unyielding and kisses the strangers of her lips. It almost seemed to her at last that no reality could show itself in the fine measure of her fancies; the real came

to her in shoddy clothing, whilst the garments of her dreams were engauded with colour and gold.

"My dreams," she said, speaking one day to a poet of her country, "are my best experiences. You tell me of this thrill and that thrill, and write about many pleasant things—but they are poor when I meet them; do you understand? My fancies are better than the most pleasant facts!"

Impelled by her dissatisfactions, she had long considered going to some place where the conditions of life would be more generous to her. Sometimes she thought of Paris, at other times of New York, and the freedom of both places delighted her imagination. She did not know, on the day she confessed the limitations of her realities to the poet Lameda how close she was drawing to her desire.

Her good fortune came about through the disgrace of Lameda himself. He was a decadent poet, a South American Baudelaire, with a pathological mind and morbid impulses. Moreover, he was no friend of the government. When the police discovered him in a certain obscene dereliction they joyfully put him away in a prison of a medieval character, fed him very scantily, did their utmost to degrade his spirit, that was like a fabric of subtle and numerous threads, whilst the government parade his disgrace like a palpable trophy. Of course, they accomplished their purpose; they broke his pride and destroyed his health, and it was much too late when he was removed to the prison hospital and given the attention of a physician.

She heard that he was dying, and the news shocked her and stirred her with the utmost compassion. With a fine impulsiveness, she hurried to the infirmary, and at first the authorities were desirous of excluding her, but her connections made them fear an absolute refusal.

In company with a Charity Sister, white-robed and speechless, they finally let her see the dying poet. She found him gaunt, a pathetic ruin, a pallid, un-

resting face, set with two burning eyes against a white pillow. She was the first of all his former friends to come to him.

For a moment he stared at her in tragic surprise. She dropped to the bedside and took one of his nerveless hands in her own; she pressed his fingers tightly. Her touch dissolved all his restraint and he began to weep, soundlessly, in a last despair, in an acknowledgment of utter defeat that no barbaric cruelty had forced him to own; her pity was the instant solvent of his shell of concealment.

His tears brought her own and they dropped from her eyes and like a chrism touched his hands. The Charity Sister stooped and drew her away. Two internes stood near and gaped.

The news of this episode was carried to her father's ears; he waited until the next day and then, after finishing his afternoon *siesta*, he sent one of the servants to call her to his study. She understood the summons, she guessed his purpose, and she went to him defiantly.

He was standing in front of a long, littered table when she entered the room. His smooth, yellow forehead glistened dully, his great, jetty moustache hung ponderously from his upper lips, concealing his mouth. His sleepy eyes glowed ominously beneath their drooping lids, like the premonitory and sinister glow within a dead crater.

For a moment they looked at each other without speaking.

"Pereira," he said, "perhaps you have some motive that I am unable to understand"—he spoke with a soft and intense sarcasm. "As I see it now, your purpose is simply to discredit and ruin me. The man was an enemy of the government, a dangerous fellow, an impudent cuckold that we were able, very fortunately, to put out of the way of all mischief. Moreover, he deserved his punishment."

"Ay!"

She hissed the exclamation at him bitterly, a sardonic, monosyllabic prod to the memory of his own sins. His eyes

opened a little, the lids dropped back again, he continued:

"It may be impossible for you to understand, *Señorita*, but my position toward all such people must be unequivocal. Know this: I feel no sympathy for them, but even if I did, it would be impossible for me to show it. Suspicion is almost the primary theme of our politics. By very trivial acts I could quickly lose the confidence of certain men who are quite necessary to me now."

His quiet manner vanished, like a light suddenly eclipsed. His eyes opened, he glared at her, he leaned forward and grimaced ferociously.

"What do you mean by it, *Señorita*?" he demanded. "What impudence! What folly! What disregard of your duty! My daughter visits the man for whose punishment I am responsible, a man whose name is unmentionable! What is to be supposed about me; what sort of an individual will this make me appear? What do you mean?"

She met his glare with her black brows lifted, her dark face contemptuous. She did not move; her hands were held in front of her, clasped tightly together.

"Yes, then I am undutiful," she said. "I'm anything you want to call me, *Señor*; that is now understood between us. What it pleases me to do doesn't please you; I am one person and you are another. I understand: I am a disgrace to you. Well, then, let me go away; send me away!"

"I'd be very pleased never to see you again," he replied, his voice once more quiet.

"That is an agreement, then," she instantly returned. "I shall go to New York. You make me very happy, *Señor*!"

They stood opposite each other, like a pair of diabolically courteous and eternal enemies. She experienced a thrill of immense gladness, like the emotions of one released from an intolerable confinement. She could be free at last; she had brought it about by her own act. A medley of possibilities, sensed

only in glittering glimpses, passed before her eyes like a sudden lantern slide run swiftly across a screen. Her emotions sparkled like the scintillations of a rocket of a thousand swift fires. Now she was liberated!

II

SHE came to New York as one into a city of enchantment and wonder. Her meagre acquaintance with the language made its intoning about her the agent of an immense suggestiveness, accentuated her aloofness, gave her the sense of an antique wanderer come into a strange, unvisited land, barbaric and colourful, fresh with allure. She loved the streets, and now she was free to wander through them with all the unrestraint of a spirit without body. To her, this had the freshness of a new life. The comedy of crowds enticed her with an appeal as to the spectacle of a gargantuan theater.

Finally, when the physical appearance of the city became less new to her, she found herself more largely interested in the girls on the thoroughfares and the men who were their companions. She made a thousand conjectures as to their relations. She wondered if these fair-skinned girls, with their transparent eyes and hair that was seldom darker than brown, had any deep potentiality of emotion; that seemed doubtful to her. The men did not entice her; she could not vision them in the rôle of fine companions or ardent lovers.

Nevertheless, the fact that they were men, their simple masculinity, gave her the desire to be with them; she became lonesome; she wanted companionship.

She had a little apartment in the studio quarter in West Sixty-seventh Street and to a certain extent she had visitors there. In the city there were usually a few travelers from her country, and those of any position who knew of her presence came to see her. She was perfunctorily hospitable, but none of these people interested her; chiefly

she enjoyed their visits for the sake of speaking her own language again.

One day she received a copy of a little local magazine, a miscellaneous and characterless journal, published in Spanish. It would be pleasant, she thought immediately, to write something for this. She memorized the address of the office and decided to call on the editor. She took with her the manuscript of four or five essays that she called "Souls of Women"—authentic confessions made to her by her married friends. She was certain the paper would be glad to use them. With the manuscript in her hand she waited one morning in a dirty little outer office whilst a dark-eyed boy took in her card through a swinging door.

After a very short interval he returned and told her to go in. She passed through the door and discovered another little room, somewhat smaller and dirtier than the first. A large man was seated at a disordered desk; he did not rise at her entrance. His hair was the jet to which she was accustomed, his eyes were dark like her own and the lids were heavy, reminding her of her father, the droop of satiety and disillusion. His cheeks were fat from an immense amount of eating and drinking. After a moment he stood up, smiling, and she gave him her hand.

"Is this Señor Palález?" she asked.

He assented; he expressed his great satisfaction that she had come in to see him; his voice proceeded from deep in his throat with an effortless ease of speech. She regretted now that she had come and she resented his manner of immediate intimacy. Still, she showed him her manuscripts and he fingered them smiling, turning back over the pages again and again. He meanwhile asked her questions about herself and she answered him briefly.

"Yes, Señorita," he said. "I'm sure we can use these. Yes; I'm very glad to get them. This is a fortunate day. You write very well. Tell me why you wrote these? Who taught you to write?"

He queried her with the palpable pur-

pose of prolonging the interview. The conversation irked her, and seemed without end. Finally she stood up resolutely, determined to go. He arose also and stood at her side. He talked into her face, insinuatingly close. In her anger at his abominable nearness the dusky skin of her cheeks deepened in colour.

"Well, thank you, Señor," she said. "Good-bye. . . ."

He captured her hand and pressed it close in his large palm. She drew back her arm in a swift resentment, but his clutch retained her little hand like the tentacle of an octopus.

"Señor!" she exclaimed.

His smile persisted, fixed and abominable. With a swift movement of his large arm he circled her shoulders. He drew her against him and like the effluvia from a poison she smelt the odour of stale tobacco in his clothes.

For an instant her surprise kept her limp, and then each muscle of her small body seemed to contract as from the stimulus of an immense urgency, a profound danger. With an impetuous violence she thrust him away from her. He tripped back against the chair in which she had been seated, it toppled to the side, he clutched the air vainly, like a wildly animated and dropsical sack he tumbled into a complexity of chair-rungs: they snapped with sharp little reports and a piece of wood flew up into the air and struck the ceiling.

In the moment of his disaster, she ran through the door and slammed it furiously behind her. She hurried down the steps of the building, tucking up the loosed, dusky strands of her disordered hair.

In the street her shoulders flexed and drooped and her cheeks were coloured carmine with an inner sense of shame. Suddenly the glamour of her freedom was gone and with it her expectations and her dreams. For months she had been away from her home and all these days had gone by in trivial hours, with never the flame of any fine emotion. She had escaped from one prison to pass through the portals of another, an

empty prison, peopled with a host of phantoms, not of her flesh and blood, not of her heart and desire. She was alone in an unreality.

Now she remembered that her manuscripts were lying on the desk of the abominable editor. She would never go back for them. She recalled her last glimpse of him, sprawled in a chaos of splintered wood, like a grotesque tumble-bug immeshed in an extravagant web. She began to laugh in hysterical gasps. Men and women, passing in the street, turned to look after her.

III

BUT whatever might have been this editor's opinion of her, he was not deterred from using her material, and two or three months later she was surprised to find it in print in the magazine. She had passed these months in a lethargic ennui, sleeping as much as possible, reading very little, interested in nothing. She had pondered many times the advisability of returning home—but there was no advantage in that maneuver; life anywhere seemed emptied of possibilities, nor was there any place where events, shaping themselves to her desire, would light a flame within her and give her with intensity the desiderate consciousness of transcendent living.

Then, after her essays had been in print a week or a little more, a letter came to her, forwarded from the office of the magazine; it was written in Spanish and she vaguely remembered the name of the writer, a young revolutionary and refugee from her country. She read his letter more than once, surprised that he should have written to her, interested, wondering, endeavoring to conceive his appearance. He said:

"Your stories transport the emotions of real life to the printed page; for me to find them was a great discovery. Are you living in New York? I remember your name very well. In our country you knew most of my friends and frequently you were mentioned by them. Curiously enough, I do not believe we ever met. I have the greatest wish to

meet you now and if you will tell me where you live, and send me your permission, I will come at once to see you. . . . César Vegas."

Bit by bit she recalled more of him, from the remembered talk of her friends. It was true: she had never met him. He belonged to a very radical revolutionary group. While she knew most of these men, it was not their doctrines that attracted her; she was drawn solely to their freedom, their unconventionality, their insurgent spirit. She remembered now that Vegas, with two or three others, had been forced to escape from the country overnight.

Of course she determined to see him. She wrote to him, granting his request and setting a day for his appearance. Again she was interested, her thoughts vivacious, her fancies aroused. She wondered if she would please him; she sat in front of her mirror smoothing out her hair that passed through the comb like the black ripples of an inky stream, looking into her eyes, shaping her lips into the curves of smiles, of pouts, of scorn, of pleasure—wondering if a man would find her lovely. Once she paused and laughed at the vivacity of her spirits, realizing then her isolation and her loneliness during the months that had just gone by.

On the evening set for his coming she put on a dress of thick plush that would be soft to a tender touch. She heaped up her hair in the Spanish fashion with a great jet knot at the back of her head and she stuck a red flower, a crimson symbol of her charm, at one side. She waited for him seated at her piano languorously fingering chords, playing snatches of native dances, recalling for some reason, the days when she was a little girl, and the sunlight, glistening like a golden garment on the tropical fields of her country home, used to take her breath with its magic suggestiveness. . . . She heard the bell of the apartment-ring, and she went to the door to open it.

He was standing in the corridor and she stepped aside to let him come in. For a moment they remained motion-

less, appraising each other earnestly. Then he spoke to her, shaping his sentences through an illuminating smile.

"Isn't it strange," he said, "that we should meet here! I can remember your name for a long time—isn't it curious that we never came together at home? I'm delighted to see you; I'm delighted you let me come."

She took his hat and coat, turning to lay them over a chair, and deeply pleased, meanwhile, in her first impression of him. His manner, the atmosphere he created, was vastly different from that of the members of the revolutionary group she had known; physically he was different. The others had been, for the most part, robustous fellows, with far less suavity in their speech. For one of her country he was unusually pale, and his pallor was made more manifest by the contrasting black of his glistening hair. His nose was modeled straight and slender, flexible at the nostrils, that dilated faintly as he spoke. When he had given her his hand she had noticed the long slimmness of his fingers.

His manner gave no-impression of weakness, yet contradictorily, from his pallid face, from the glow of his dark eyes, from the sensitive nostrils and finely fashioned lips she was conscious of a sense of frailty that stirred her strength and her abundant vitality with the tenderness of protection. In the ardent swiftness of her emotions she was already deeply pleased with him, aware of a contenting intimacy.

They seated themselves and she began to question him.

"Tell me about yourself, Señor," she said. "Why are you here? What did you do?"

He laughed frankly.

"I was the least serious of all our group," he said. "It's very ironical that I should be a fugitive and not some of the others. I was an *insurrecto* for the excitement. They accused me of Manuel Ayala's death, which was a very inaccurate supposition. But the government must fix on somebody—isn't that so? It was my bad fortune!"

She smiled at him warmly, showing, like suddenly revealed jewels, her nacre teeth between her crimson lips.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "I'm very glad you weren't serious! I knew so many of the revolutionaries, and, do you know, I have to tell you that when I didn't suspect their sincerity I found them great fools. What I had in sympathy with them was that they were living life—do you understand? They took a hazard, they braved an excitement, they were not content with safety!"

An animation possessed her features as if from the warmth of a lighted flame within her. Her hands moved in graceful, swift gesticulation. Her eyes, looking straight at his own, seemed to see beyond him, seemed to witness, as if he were a medium of revealing transparency, a glamour behind him: the colour of ardent life and the passions of living, the loves, the hates, the hopes, the tragedies.

Swiftly she questioned him, causing him to reveal all the facts of his life, his aspirations and his expectations, his beliefs and his more intimate wantings. She found a full sympathy for him: he had courage and the flame of adventure.

Then she began to talk of herself. Sentence by sentence, luminously exposed in her swift and eager speech, he came to the acquaintance of her insurgent spirit, her defiances, her vehement love of life. To her emotions he felt a keen response; she touched his spirit like deft fingers playing upon an instrument subtle and difficult. Finally she told him of her adventure with the poet Lameda—he had known Lameda—and the scene with her father. She was leaning close to him, and as she spoke of the dead man her eyes were tender with sympathy. With a simple movement he took her hands and pressed her fingers against his own.

"Ah, you are brave!" he whispered. "You are courageous!"

His touch tingled in her fingers, his words caressed her ears. She ceased speaking; leaning toward him, she met his eyes; he still retained her hands.

An expectancy, like a presence, like a spirit, hung over these two.

Then, moving nearer, his arms circled her slender shoulders. She let her head fall back to receive his kiss that came to her lips with a sudden intensity. In that moment she could not breathe, and even her heart, although she heard the beating of it in her breast, seemed paradoxically stilled. For her, his kiss suspended her life, drew it out of her, stopped all the living processes, made her lifeless with emotion. Their lips separated and she drew in a breath, with the conviction that in another second of that suffocation she would have died. She tried to smile at him, but her lips would not take the contour of a smile.

"*Bienamado!*" she murmured. "How suddenly you have come to me! You are the lover I have looked for all my life! I shall bring you everything of love. You are a harmonium of many notes; other women have played some of them, the little *grisettes* you have known, but I shall touch them all! I will make you happy; I will make you suffer—you don't believe that I will make you suffer? Yes, you will: I think, in the life, everything is at a balance, everything is compensated. But, *bienamado*, we do not have to think of that. Tell me if you love me; tell me what I mean to you."

Her quick fire did not surprise him, for he was of her own temperament. He could respond to her words fully, and, like her touch, find them lovely in his ears.

IV

WHEN he left that night he promised to return the next evening, and all the following day she recalled the memory of his face, of his touch, of his encircling arms. Waiting for him, she dreamed fantastic dreams of him, as if she had taken a drug into her veins. From the simple theme of her affection, she constructed elaborate variations, like the modulations of a symphony.

Once she imagined him, in some more

gracious country, giving a dinner to a group of distinguished men, artists of all kinds. When the banquet was finished he stood up and told his guests that he had lately acquired a little Abyssinian slave whom he would be glad now to show them. The company left the table and went into another chamber, a large room, curiously illuminated with a glow of dull ruby. There were no furnishings in this room and the guests stood about at one end. Near the other extremity were long curtains of a deep crimson plush and in front of the curtains was found, spread out on the floor, a huge black bear's skin. On either side of the skin, held upright in some obscure manner, were two immense fans made from the tail-feathers of peacocks.

The guests fastened their eyes upon the crimson curtains, and presently these parted and the little Abyssinian slave entered. She was nude, save for a gold collar about her neck, two gold bands around her wrists and similar golden bands circling her ankles; the collar at her throat was connected by slender aurine chains to the bands about her wrists. She was brown and smooth, with the immature contours of a child. She entered with her eyes downcast, embarrassed and afraid, and approached the bear's skin, upon which she reclined at last. Then the two fans of peacocks' tails, heretofore upright on either side of her, descended slowly, until they engulfed her whole small body, hiding her from the watching eyes of the guests. The ruby lights commenced to dim and the company slowly left the room in silence. And Pereira dreamed that the little Abyssinian slave was hers.

In the evening she sat waiting for him, expectant any moment of his coming, that again and again, hearing it in her imagination, she conceived as the summons to high adventure. She heard the moments passing in the ticks of a small clock and she was jealous of each one of them that went to make the hours without his presence. Then suddenly she realized that it was late, that he had not come, that he was not com-

ing. The night passed for her in torturing speculations.

The next morning a letter arrived, signed with a strange name, an address at the top of the sheet. It said:

"Señor Vegas has contracted a sudden sickness. He asks me to write to you and make this explanation and also to ask you to be kind enough to come and see him."

She was immediately possessed of terrifying presentiments; she imagined him in grave danger, dying, perhaps already dead. She hurried to the telephone, and in an agitation that almost deprived her of her use of English, she called a taxicab. An immense period of time, she believed, passed before it arrived, and seated within it, the passage through the streets was cruelly slow.

They stopped at the address given in the letter; she handed the taxi-driver a bill and without waiting, hurried up the steps of the house. A coloured maid answered her ring.

"How is Mr. Vegas?" she asked—and then she found that her throat hurt her in speaking. "I want to see him!"

She was taken upstairs and shown the door of a room in the corridor. She opened it and entered. He was lying on a large bed, with his eyes closed.

She ran to the bed and touched her hands to his cheeks; his eyes opened and he looked into her face.

"*Querida mia!*" she exclaimed.

He smiled at her slightly, drew out his hand from the bed-covers and touched her arm, closed his eyes again. She saw now that her fears had a foundation: he was very ill.

Later she talked to the doctor when he came and he told her that Vegas had contracted pneumonia.

"What is the danger?" she asked. "We do not have this sickness in our country."

The physician, an abrupt, thick-bodied man, shrugged his shoulders clumsily.

"We'll do the best possible," he said.

"This is a very dangerous disease for anybody; you might as well know that

it's especially dangerous for anyone who has always lived in a tropical climate. If we can bring about his recovery, he must go back to his own country. This morning I'll call in a nurse for him."

Her cheeks reddened angrily.

"No!" she exclaimed. "Do you imagine anyone will nurse him but myself?"

She took a room in the house, the room next to his own, and tended him day and night with an extravagant faithfulness. She seemed never to sleep, nor, sustained by the power of her devotion, to require sleep. She sat by his side during the hours of his delirium; he spoke incoherently of other women he had known; she hated his fevered memories of them. The crisis came. All one night she remained at the bed, watching his pulse, listening to his heart, waiting in a suspension of all her dreams, of her most precious hopes, for the outcome. . . . In the morning his fever had gone down and his breathing was easier.

Now her fears passed; she was assured and confident. She remembered the words of the doctor: "If we can bring about his recovery, he must go back to his own country."

That was now, she knew, an immense necessity. No compromise of another tropical place seemed possible to her, any variation appealed to her mind as a gamble with his life. She knew well enough his position; under existing circumstances he could not return; he was a fugitive, under an absurd and unjust sentence. But this fact did not appall her.

Doubtless it had been her own father who had made his flight necessary; her father could secure his pardon. She began to compose a letter to her father and she told him of her lover, of her love and her desire.

"Perhaps I have not been to you what I should have been?" she said. "Forgive me now! Life has granted me at last my dearest aspirations and I cannot bring you any more trouble; I will try to help you all I can. Let us come

back home; I will never let you regret your dear kindness."

The letter was mailed and now she spent the days, happy and assured, with her convalescent lover.

She found him all she had believed, all she had hoped, all she had known in the sure perceptions of her intuition. They talked endlessly, planning their life together, the people they would know, the places they would visit, the scenes they would witness. It would be, they knew, a noble companionship, a thrilling intimacy.

Then one day, as she had been certain in her fine confidence it would, a reply came from her father, the Minister of War in the Presidential cabinet.

"You are pardoned everything, Pereira," he said. "You can both come home."

V

As soon as she believed him strong enough to make the trip they embarked in a slim white steamer for the south. The trip down took several days longer than the one from their country to the States, for now they were retarded by the Gulf current. Yet the time did not pass slowly for them; they had their visions. Neither knew a doubt, both were assured; the abounding sea through which they moved with a steel throb and pulsation brought them no sense of inscrutable destiny, no shadow of fear; the sun shone on the sea and it was never too vast for the compass of their dreams.

The ship laid by in the harbour at Havana for one day and they went ashore, walking through the streets arm in arm. They laughed at the curious Cuban songs of the street-boys; each moment was the little minister of their content. The voyage was resumed, and now they knew that in a little while they would be home.

They entered the roadstead before the coast city of their country early one morning. An official launch came out; presently they were taken off with a small group who were disembarking

there, and carried in the launch to the quay.

Pereira, in her returning, was filled with the memories of her departure, of her impatience with these people and this land, of her vague, undefined desires that she believed would have their fulfillment in another country; of the gradual failure of her hopes—and now, of their splendid recrudescence. They touched the wooden sides of the wharf and a uniformed official helped them out of the launch. A group of soldiers were standing at the landing place and as Vegas and Pereira set foot on the wooden planks they came forward.

"Señor César Vegas?" asked the one in command.

"Yes," answered Vegas.

"I regret," he said, "that you are under arrest for the assassination of Manuel Ayala."

The soldiers surrounded him and he was pulled hurriedly down the quay.

The woman remained on the spot, spelled with astonishment. The event had deprived her, in those seconds, of her resolution and her perceptions. Finally, the conviction of some absurd mistake, some bizarre official error, entered her mind. She looked about her on the wharf. Two or three men were lounging near, grinning at her. She saw no one whom she knew.

Now she was aware of the necessity of going to her father at once. She hurried into the street and secured a cab; she gave the driver the street-number of her home. They proceeded with abominable leisure, whilst she sat in the cab with contracted brows, a rising anger in her spirits. She wondered who had been responsible for this indignity; she determined on the punishment of the offender.

At home she found no one but the servants; her little maid, whom she had left behind, kissed her, fondled her, but Pereira was insensible to any welcome.

"Where is my father?" she asked.

They told her that he had gone to the Presidential palace.

She ordered one of the servants to

drive her there. Here she was recognized and admitted with the greatest courtesy. She demanded her father; there was a wait of more than half an hour and word was then sent to her that it was impossible for him to see her at that time. She perceived nothing for her to do save to return home.

She spent the day in her room, sending her maid out every few minutes to find whether or not her father had come in. He did not return all day. Her anger grew with every hour and with it, admixed like a sinister shadow, the beginning of a clutching fear that closed about her heart like a suffocating hand. The night passed in sleepless agitation.

In the morning she dressed very early and went out into the streets. She was determined now to see her lover wherever he might be, to find him and secure his release without the passing of another torturing hour. She discovered the buildings along the streets decorated with flags and there was a stir of expectant people. Now she remembered that this was a national holiday, celebrating the birth of Bolivar, the liberator. In the Calle de Riviera a crowd was collecting, waiting for a parade which would include the President, his cabinet and the soldiery. She hurried along this thoroughfare, oblivious to the crowds, as if their individuals were phantoms, without substance; she was concentrated on visiting the state prison, where she now imagined Vegas might be confined.

She approached the gates of the prison, passed through, and the commandant, in his elaborate office, recognized her. He gave her a bow of great consideration.

"I have come to see Señor Vegas," she said. "Has he been brought here? Let me see him at once!"

"Señorita," he said, "you have my utmost regrets. That is impossible!"

"I must see him at once!" she reiterated. "Don't talk to me of impossibilities!"

"But Señorita," he insisted, "a *thousand pardons*; your request is be-

yond my power to grant. The Señor cannot be seen."

"What do you mean?" she demanded.

"It is very unfortunate," he answered. "You are too late, Señorita. The Señor Vegas was executed something over an hour ago. . . ."

VI

SHE went home and her senses were numb, as if a narcotic drug had stilled her sensations, depriving her of all emotion, all pain, all hope, all desire. Her brows were contracted, her face was colorless, her movements were precise as if under the impulse of a single dominating purpose, a purpose clear and direct, a purpose almost sublime in its simplicity. She went to her room and searched in the drawers of her bureau that had been untouched since her departure many months before. She found the object of her search and returned to the streets.

Along the Calle de Riviera the crowd had increased largely and Pereira stationed herself at a point near the kerb, waiting for the presidential party. A platoon of cavalry approached and passed on sleek horses; the crowd cheered. A band went by with a blare of brass. Another cavalry platoon drew near and behind it, mounted on white horses, were the president and his ministers. Now she saw her father, erect, cold, cynical, sardonic. She saw him riding toward her on his white horse, the slave of his ambition, the destroying master of her dreams, making the sacrifice of her most precious aims to serve the purpose of his aspirations. Her head was tilted back in an emotion of flaming pride; she saw herself as the Egyptian queen, whose courage was adequate to her tragedy, whose chariot was never to be drawn in the triumph of a conqueror.

Now he was opposite her; from her dress she drew out the revolver she had secured from the drawer at home, and holding it straight in her white, slender hands, she fired it at the erect man on the white horse. The horse

reared up; the man, as if clutched by some invisible hands, seemed suspended for a magic instant in the air; the spell passed and he tumbled to the street.

About her the crowd drew back in panic fear; she heard the din of shouting and the screams of women. She saw a dozen soldiers dismount from their horses and run toward her.

Then, in an instant of time, she had the vision of her hopes, and life was before her eyes in its enchantment and its promise. There it was, beckoning and appealing, the glamorous life of her dreams. The instant passed, and before the running men could reach her, she turned the faintly smoking weapon on herself.



STARS

By Jeannette Marks

I

WHEN joys were vivid I did sit
 Within a golden field,
 And there I pulled the whitest stars
 Green earth can yield.

II

For Bethlehem those stars were named,
 The Lord Christ sat with me;
 And I was little and I leaned
 Upon His knee.

III

Now I am old and joys are gone,
 Christ in this room I find,
 Who brings from distant Bethlehem
 Stars for His blind.



IT is so much easier for a woman to tell about the trouble her husband causes her than to reveal the reasons that induce her to continue living with him.



WOMEN do not care for timid, sentimental men. Fishing is no fun unless the trout is game.



A SUCCESSFUL marriage merely means a difficult divorce.

FURTHER JOHNSONIANA

By Edna A. Collamore

RACE: a contest in speed.
Racy: over-eager in the speed contest.

Reverie: dreaminess.
Reverend: one who induces dreaminess.

Rid: to destroy with violence.
Ridicule: to destroy without violence.

Litter: scattered rubbish.
Literature: collected rubbish.

Surge: a swell, a great roll.
Surgeon: a medical swell, skilled in removing great rolls.

Fin: part of a fish.
Affinity: a fishy relationship.

Both: the two.
Bother: the third.

Flue: a passage for hot air.
Fluency: the passage of hot air.



THE PROCRASTINATOR

By T. F. Mitchell

SHE winked at me. I stood amazed for a moment, ignorant as I was of the wiles and ways of womenkind. I did not know just what procedure to follow. It took me some time to decide to approach her. Alas, I was too late! She had, meanwhile, winked at one of the initiated.



THE DARING OF RICHARD DOLBY

By William Francis Barnard

I

WHAT an interminable luncheon it had been, with its reminiscent soup, a roast (probably mutton), the salad lacking that edge which only a good vinegar could give, and the dessert a dole made of doubts. And as for companionship. . . . What flaccid fogies Mr. and Mrs. Balcome were!

The two had sat there at table like figures carved in dough, alternately digging out of their graves the débris of their early married life and putting its petty fragments together piece by piece. They only varied this by asking him how his health was, what had become of Arthur, his forgotten chum, and if he were going to Florida to avoid the winter cold. All the while they urged the food upon him as if it were a solemn duty, like reading prayers in the morning, or telling John twice a day to shake down the furnace.

He shivered as he thought of the gravy, cold and of the consistency of paste. It had typified for him the whole of that life there, running thick and obstinate, as if weary of its own pouring.

"All that comes of growing old," he said, confiding in himself for a moment.

He threw his shoes into a corner in true irritated abandonment, hung his coat upon a chair back, and, toeing his way into his slippers, dived into a smoking jacket. Then he lighted a cigar, and sat down heavily before the grate, smoking with short, hungry inhalations.

"Yes, we *do* grow old."

He writhed up suddenly, sitting very straight. That "we," where had it pushed in from? He had not intentionally uttered it. In truth, for the

past ten years, since wrinkles had crowded into their places at the corners of his eyes, and posted themselves dispassionately where they could just mock the smile of youth, on one subject he had been marble. Since his thirty-fifth birthday he had absolutely refrained from all conversation upon age, grey hair, and that vague disquiet which comes to all men when, after forty-seven, they see Autumn giving up its leaves and hear the doleful wind that says "November."

What had drawn out of him that "We"? Had he not been in more arduous health this summer than for many years past? Did he not sleep better now? Was he not taking longer walks every forenoon? Could he not . . . everything?

He, "Old"!

Preposterous!

It had all resulted from that dismal luncheon which he had eaten with those superannuated memories in clothes. He might have anticipated some banality after two hours in such an atmosphere.

He jerked his cigar from his mouth, looked at it critically, placed it between his jaws again, rolled it, and gripped it firmly. Then he said "No, sir," several times, settling down farther into his seat with each eruption. "Old" was no fit brand to mark him with.

Could he not recall that great triumph of adolescence, accomplished in his thirty-fifth year, when he had topped in the pole vault every competing man who had been in his class, the class of '89? And had he not lifted most on that day, though they had come together, thirty of them, from all the

States, or nearly all, and gone through their dizzy paces under the old elms? He remembered eagerly that he had stretched all their mouths by winning the two-hundred-yard dash in a tumultuous rally, putting three lengths between himself and his nearest panting competitor.

It was a poor joke to call him old.

And he chewed with warm glows and throbs of returning complacency upon the remarks of his friends that day. "Dolby, you are not an hour older than you were when we matriculated. You must have led a twenty-two-carat life." This and other tributes they had proffered, willingly or grudgingly, according to temperament and honesty, acknowledging his impeccable freshness, his untarnished vitality. He hummed to himself, happy, smoothing out the cloth of his trousers just above the knees with flattering palms.

He moved into the very thick of returning expansiveness as he rose and surveyed himself in the long mirror which made the door of his wardrobe. He saw a man of, say, thirty-two, just grey enough to look strong; erect, clear-eyed, firm-fleshed, with even a trace of galloping blood in the not-too-plump cheeks. He turned sideways to dare fate in a critical appraisal of that slight, very slight, adipose detritus which caused his waistcoat to wrinkle just perceptibly at the second button from the bottom.

He beat his chest emphatically with his right hand as he turned about; and laying aside his half-smoked cigar and luxuriously lighting another one, he began to puff anew, filling the room with the clouds of his importance.

"I could walk, or jump, or climb, or run, or box, or wrestle with many a good one now," he muttered through tight teeth.

"Yes, and I could marry, if I wanted to."

The thought held him, prompted him.

That was it: marry! Yes.

Marriage would settle it.

He could marry!

A pause.

He would marry: he had been long weighing that matter in his mind.

Marriage. . . . A final victory!

He decided.

To telephone to Kate then and there, while the project burned! It was (he looked at his watch) only five o'clock. That would give her three hours to dress. He would ask her to the theater to see some heart-shaking play; and then, after he had sat in state beside her during the whole evening, he would take her to Paradise Inn, and there . . . at supper . . . he would call for the truth, the happy truth. He would say grandly, "Kate, will you marry me?"

Kate would answer yes, astonished and delighted at his carrying things with such compelling verve; admiring his strength, his confidence, his vital youth.

And he would marry her soon, very soon; at once; in a month.

He mused, lingerly tenderly upon his first great love struggle with this Kate Adams, a girl of the approved New England type; fair, a little distant, resolute, calm. She, it was said, always had an answer for every question asked her; one that hung on her lip waiting that sure clash of events which should shake it to its fall.

But he had mastered there, too, he felt sure. It had all evolved when he tried to kiss her the first time, after a discreet six months of calculated devotion. The cab was nearing Kate's home; it had but two blocks to go. She had said as he reached for her left cheek, trying to persuade her keen lips in the direction of his own, "Isn't it rather late for your springtime?"

Feeling truly then that delays are damnable, he had clasped those slender and writhing hands, and bending her head back, while her fluttering breathing intoxicated him, he had kissed her emphatically upon both mouth and eyes; kissed her again and again. And as she struggled and begged him to release her after a tumultuously successful raid upon her mouth, she had whispered wickedly, "Aren't you tired?"

From that time a sort of ringless engagement, punctuated by half-hearted quarrels, had existed between them; and they saw each other at least once a week.

And all that had happened only four years before this hour; this hour in which suddenly, full of the juices of youth, looking the sun in the face, he had determined to put his effervescence to the proof, and marry her.

"Old, indeed!" He would shake up those broken Balcomes. And their house, where his father before him had been a guest, should never know Kate or him after the wedding! There was something stale-biscuity about the place and all its belongings!

He rose and turned to the telephone with a light step, securing, as was the prerogative of a preferred suitor of nearly five years' standing, postponement of sundry engagements, a needed somnolence, and other feminine duties and superfluities; and Kate Adams gave her word to be dressed and downstairs at precisely 7.45 that evening to accompany her destiny to the opera.

He thereupon telephoned to a broker whom he knew, and got, after some unkind exchanges, two good seats for the opera, paying twenty dollars. But what were twenty dollars to a presence like his, just ripening to the great career!

Bethinking himself, he turned again to the telephone, and ordered flowers.

He would demonstrate. He would be the blinding light, taking first place once for all.

"Old." The baboons!

He whirled around to dress, volubly approving his evening clothes as he laid them out on the bed. Then he looked at his store of white bows.

II

Two hours later, that is, to be precise, at six o'clock, Mr. Richard Dolby, bachelor, with love in his eyes, not having to pinch a single pinch to live, emerged from his house. He sauntered

across the park toward his club, where he meant to settle down to confessional with a solemn sandwich or two and a bottle of ale, and prepare those fine fateful words which should close the slight furrow between him and the woman of his picking.

The westering sun, painting rose and gold the waters of the lake, arrested him for a moment, and he sat down on a bench to linger and absorb the poetry of the scene, a very Tacoma on the plains of passionate devotion.

In a moment, out of a crowd of children sailing boats on those perilous seas, destruction approached him in the shape of a miss of five or six years. She hesitated a moment, a tiny boat in one hand, her doll in another, and then bent on free hands for voyaging, she pleaded:

"Hold my doll, Grandpa."

The shock, as of lightning, struck him with unerring force, as she repeated:

"Hold my doll, Grandpa!"

He felt his heartbeat drag as though loaded with chains.

He would have risen and fled wildly, but with the confidence of immaturity the tot placed her doll at once in his clenched gloved hands, which opened, he knew not why, to receive the appalling burden.

"Grandpa's holding my doll; and I'm going to sail my boat to China!" the child screamed with triumphant shrilling, jumping up and down.

In a moment he was surrounded by children, who exclaimed in turn, as the tiny girl proudly eyed him and pointed to his nursing hands:

"Is he your grandpa?"

"He's a nice grandpa."

"His hair is white."

"Be my grandpa?"

"I have a grandpa, too."

In emulation they crowded about him, commenting upon his looks, his probable age, his possible wealth, till one completed the debacle by climbing up beside him and snuggling down between his arm and his body, having separated

the one from the other deftly to make herself a snug nest, and saying in prattling speech:

"Now he's my grandpa, too."

III

A TROUBLED and floundering figure, immaculately clothed, dragged across the park, aiming at its club. It had almost ruthlessly brushed aside several tiny torturers as it rose hastily, and without a word fled.

"Good night, Grandpa," from the lit-

tle girl whose doll had fallen from his dead hands, elicited no reply, as with set teeth and earthward face he turned away.

That night Miss Kate Adams, with admirable indirection and self-disparagement, gave Mr. Richard Dolby his answer. They were sitting at a little round table in the Paradise Inn. Mr. Dolby had been oracular. His courage stood in a half-emptied bottle before him.

Miss Adams' words were:

"I am too old to marry, my friend."



FROM A HIGH WINDOW

By Jean Allen

I WOULD be free
 As fine white smoke
 That buffeted by quick winds
 Blows and swirls about
 The tops of tall thin buildings:
 As smoke that juts
 In clean white puffs
 From ferry boats and tugs
 That ply along the river
 Beneath my window.

I would be free, only
 As clean bright smoke
 That blows and circles
 With the wind's desire.
 So would I be
 Free from you
 Till you should feel
 The need and want of me,
 And catch me suddenly
 To your heart.



EXPERIENCE teaches a man two things: first, that there are certain things he ought to avoid, and second, that there is not much chance of *his* avoiding them.

ONE BY ONE

A MORALITY PLAY, MORE OR LESS

By Harlan Thompson

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

JACK
BILL
MAME
BESS

THE MORALITY PART

PRUDENCE
INTUITION

S ELECT some unpretentious flat building, say one of three or four stories, of the kind with a Pullman car name in front and an arrangement of latticed steps and scaffolding at the back, which permits the third floor refrigerators to drip upon the second floor washings. Having picked the nearest specimen, begin by tearing off the galvanized gingerbread coping across the front of the roof. Work down the wall, tossing the bricks into the street, until the entire top floor is exposed. Now we have our scene.

In the center of the cross section, of course, will be the hall, bare except for the banisters around the stairs. Doors from it on either side lead into the two front rooms on that floor. These rooms are identical, not only with each other, but with the corresponding rooms in any of the other buildings we might have chosen to decorate. That is one and perhaps the only beauty of the setting; you have it so convenient, no matter where you happen to live.

As mentioned, the rooms are identical, if we are willing to overlook a few less than trifling details. For instance, the square, black mantel clock with streaky white marble columns in one room is indicating that it is seven minutes to eight o'clock. Its counterpart is pointing to eight exactly and striking seven with much grinding of wheels between strikes, but what can you expect from square, black mantel clocks with streaky white marble columns?

Then, too, there is the matter of the pictures. They are all alike except the ones over the mantels. The room to the left is as it should be. There is the picture of the two horses, one snow white, one jet black, with the large, kindly, protuberant eyes and the marvelously long, utterly straight necks and the cute little fork of lightning sticking out of the chunk of scalloped clouds in the upper right-hand corner. It is different in the other room. The picture there is of three horses, whose heads and nostrils take up all the room, and the frame is round and gilt and bumpy instead of rectangular and gilt and bumpy.

The furniture, though, betrays no further straying from the established order.

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It might have been bought at the same clearance sale, if we can judge by the accumulated scratches on the table legs and the color of the pantasote.

The two girls, on their respective golden oak davenports, fit perfectly into the stereoscopic effect. Each wears a tiny lace apron and is filing away at her finger-nails. From time to time they glance up in unison at their particular clocks.

Up the stairs come two men—young men, they turn out to be as they stop in the hall. They are the sort of young men who wear brown derby hats and go to see the girls who are filing their finger-nails on the other sides of the doors.

FIRST YOUNG MAN

What do you say we go to the movies after a while?

SECOND YOUNG MAN

Might do that.

FIRST YOUNG MAN

The girls'll want to go all right. What time do you say?

SECOND YOUNG MAN

I don't know. You call me up if you want to go.

FIRST YOUNG MAN

(Lowering his voice.) Listen, Bill, I ain't very strong for this staying home-all evening. The conversation always gets too darn serious.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

How's that?

FIRST YOUNG MAN

Well, you know Mame's a mighty nice girl and all that, but it seems we always get to talking about love . . . and marriage . . . and things, and . . . well, things get too serious when you stay home all evening.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

That's because you let 'em get that way. You ain't got the right system, Jack. You ought to know girls are going to pull that marriage stuff if they can get away with it, but you got to kid 'em along and not let 'em get serious.

FIRST YOUNG MAN

Pretty hard to do that sometimes, Bill.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

Sure it is. But that's the game.

FIRST YOUNG MAN

I guess I don't understand it.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

Nothing hard about it. All you got to do is beat 'em to it. Every girl you kiss would make you think she expected you to marry her, if she could. That's *their* game. You got to have a system that'll beat their game, that's all. See?

FIRST YOUNG MAN

I'm afraid I don't, Bill. What time you got?

SECOND YOUNG MAN

Eight fifteen.

(They turn and press opposite push buttons. Two bells ring. Two girls rise quickly, take off their aprons, wrap the nail files and other things in them and stuff them in the drawers of the center tables. They look in the mirrors in the mantels. Each pats her hair and comes to the door.)

FIRST YOUNG MAN

I'll call you up about the movies.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

All right.

FIRST YOUNG WOMAN AND SECOND YOUNG WOMAN

(Opening the doors.) Hello!

FIRST YOUNG MAN AND SECOND YOUNG MAN

Hello.

FIRST YOUNG WOMAN

(Calling across the hall.) Hello, Bill.

SECOND YOUNG WOMAN

(Calling across the hall.) Hello, Jack.

FIRST YOUNG MAN AND SECOND YOUNG MAN

Hello.

(They enter. Their hats are taken by the girls.)

BILL

How are you, Bess?

BESS

I'm fine. How are you?

BILL

Fine and dandy.

BESS

You're late. I thought maybe you wouldn't come.

BILL

What do you mean I wouldn't come?
(He takes her by the hand.)

JACK

How are you, Mame?

MAME

I'm fine. How are you?

JACK

Fine and dandy.

MAME

You're late. I thought maybe you wouldn't come.

JACK

You did?

MAME

Yes, it's a quarter after eight.

BILL

(Still with the hand.) You don't think I'm breaking any dates with the prettiest girl in town, do you, kid?

JACK

Did I keep you waiting long?

MAME

Quite a while. But it's all right. Wait a minute, Jack, won't you. *(She goes through the portières into the next room.)* I'll be right back.

JACK

Sure. . . . *(He starts to wander about the room.)*

BILL

(Retaining the hand, which has begun to struggle.) I was just telling Jack that a kiss from your lips would make me happy for life.

BESS

(Pulling away from him and retreating in parily assumed confusion to the davenport.) Bill, how can you say such things?

BILL

Why shouldn't I say it if it's true?

BESS

But I've only known you such a little while.

BILL

That's not my fault, it's my misfortune. . . . *(He smiles proudly at this, as he has had to wait several visits for the cue.)*

BESS

You're such a silly boy. . . . *(A pause while she looks about for something to make conversation.)* . . . Oh, I forgot, you haven't seen the snapshots we took that Sunday at the lake, have you?

BILL

(Uninterested.) Oh, you got them, did you?

BESS

Yes, and they're the funniest looking things. . . . *(She goes and gets them, and begins showing them to BILL.)*

[JACK has rambled over to the clock, which he looks at, then compares with his watch. He is setting the clock

back seven minutes as MAME returns.]

MAME

Now what are you doing?

JACK

(Turning.) I knew this thing was too fast.

MAME

(Coyly.) You're sure you aren't turning it back too far?

JACK

No. Why?

MAME

I believe you did. Let me see your watch.

JACK

(Holding it out to her.) See?

MAME

(Taking hold of the watch and fumbling with the case.) And what's in the back of it?

JACK

(Staunchly.) Nothing.

MAME

Honest?

JACK

Honest. I know—you think there's somebody's picture in there, don't you? Well, there isn't.

MAME

Let me see.

JACK

I can't get it open, but there isn't. I haven't got any girl.

MAME

Not a single one? . . . *(She pouts up into his eyes.)*

JACK

Well, not any . . . except you.

MAME

Why, Jack!

JACK

(Looking about as if locating the nearest exit and then trying to be mat-

ter-of-fact.) Got any new records, Mame?

MAME

No, we're going to get some next week. Want to hear some of the others?

JACK

I don't mind.
[MAME goes to the machine.]

BILL

Let me see that other one.

BESS

Which one?

BILL

The one you're hiding behind you.
Let me see it.

BESS

No, you mustn't see this one.

BILL

Let me see it.

BESS

No, I promised the girls I wouldn't show it to anybody.

BILL

Let's see.

BESS

(As he reaches toward her.) No, now, Bill, you mustn't. . . . *(There is a short struggle and BILL holds her in his arms.)* . . . Let me go now. Bill, let me go.

BILL

Let me see it.
[To release herself she gives up the picture, retiring with some blushes to the phonograph. BILL looks at the picture and laughs loudly.]

BESS

It's downright mean of you.

BILL

Some picture! Who's the one up on the raft?

BESS

That's me. What do you want me to play?

BILL

You know the one I like.

[He still looks at the picture, smiling.

BESS winds the machine and puts on a record, which turns out to be "Just a Little Love, a Little Kiss." She comes back to BILL.]

[MAME, having looked through the records, selects one, which grates a while and then develops into "Just a Little Love, a Little Kiss." She goes over and sits by JACK.]

BILL

(Switching on the pink silk shaded lights in the floor lamp beside him and flicking off the others with the wall switch.) That's better. They hurt my eyes.

(Under the spell of the music the two couples sit silently, BESS and JACK toward the end of the davenport, BILL and MAME toward the same ends, though nearer the centers. As neither their silences nor their words would be worth wasting fathers' electricity for, the lights fade away and Time speeds through the darkness. First one of the mantel clocks is heard striking ten, then the other striking eight. There is no change when the floor lamps resume, except that the clocks agree on half-past nine and that MAME and BILL have progressed nearer their goals. Any listeners have escaped a lot of silly, boring talk.)

MAME

(Going through the same procedure on her side.) How is that, Jack? Papa says we're wasting too much electricity.

MAME

(Leaning toward JACK.) And what proof have I got, Jack, that you do really . . . really love me? How do you know that you really feel the things you say?

JACK

Why, Mame, you don't think I'd tell you a lie about anything, do you?

MAME

No, I don't mean that, Jack. But you know that sometimes men tell a girl things just for a joke and she believes them . . . (Bowing her head.) . . . and sometimes it breaks her heart when she finds out it was just a joke. So you see . . .

JACK

You don't think I'm that kind of a fellow, do you, Mame? You wouldn't feel that way about it, would you, if I was to tell you that I . . .

[A tall, hooded figure in heavy, gray robes has slowly appeared between the portières from the obscurity of

the room behind. It stands half revealed in the half darkness away from the lamp. JACK'S catching sight of it is the reason for his abrupt halt.]

THE FIGURE

(In a hollow voice.) Stop it, I tell you. Think of what you were just going to say. You're always doing something like that if I don't tell you about it.

JACK

But . . .

THE FIGURE

Why are you so quick to forget Prudence? How often have I told you not to do things without considering the results?

JACK

I was . . .

THE FIGURE

You were just about to make the damnedest fool of yourself possible. You don't want to marry this girl. What in the name of common sense are you thinking about when you start to tell her that you do? . . . *(THE FIGURE fades into the darkness.)*

JACK

I . . .

MAME

What is it, Jack?

JACK

I . . . I was going to say that I had never told you anything that I didn't mean and that I thought you trusted me more than you seem to.

[As he puts his head in his hands to regain his composure, another robed figure rises from behind the davenport and leans over MAME'S shoulder.]

THE SECOND FIGURE

(In an audible whisper.) You're losing him, I tell you. Let Intuition guide you. He was very near to saying it, and you let the chance slip by. . . . *(MAME makes a despairing movement*

with her shoulders.) . . . You can still get him. You haven't used the best weapon of all. Come close to him. Let him feel the yielding softness of your body. Make him kiss you. Let him know the warm pressure of your lips. Then he will forget Prudence altogether. He will forget everything for a time except your body and he will say what you want him to say. . . . (THE FIGURE *vanishes as it came.*)

MAME

What's the matter Jack?

JACK

Nothing.

MAME

But you're acting so funny.

JACK

Nothing's the matter.

MAME

(Coming close to him.) I believe there is, Jack. You're not like yourself.

JACK

What have you noticed?

MAME

Then there is something the matter. . . . *(Impulsively she puts her arm about his shoulder.)* . . . Jack, is it something I've done? If it is, tell me, please, Jack. . . . I wouldn't have done it for anything if I had known. . . . Can't you see I didn't mean to do anything that would hurt you? . . . *(She is looking up into his face, as soulfully as she can do it, which is soulfully enough for the purpose, and her fingers are beginning to play in his back hair.)* . . . Jack, you will tell me.

[JACK'S newly composed nerves grow restive after a few moments of this. It is not long before his resistance snaps. He takes her quickly in his arms and kisses her.]

MAME

(When the first one is over.) Why, Jack!

[*He kisses her again. She nestles*

against him conventionally. She nestles rather well, if JACK were only aware of it, for one of her alleged inexperience.]

BILL

(Who has been patiently waiting for BESS to get over doing her own interpretation of Mae Marsh in distress.)
Still angry?

BESS

Yes, I am.

BILL

What about?

BESS

You know what about.

BILL

What harm's a little kiss?

BESS

Lots of harm.

BILL

What?

BESS

I'll have you understand I'm not in the habit of being treated that way.

BILL

(Not to be impressed.) Well, don't you like it as sort of a change?

BESS

I bet Jack never acts that way with Mame. He's got too much respect for her. You won't have any respect for me now.

BILL

How's that?

BESS

Boys never have any respect for girls that let them kiss them.

BILL

How do you know that?

BESS

Everybody says it. Isn't it so?

BILL

Yes, it is.

BESS

Well, then . . .

BILL

Of course, boys don't have any respect for girls that let themselves be kissed. I know I haven't. The girl I've got respect for is the girl that does some of the kissing herself. . . . Now a girl like that I could think a whole lot of and I'd be willing to . . .

[*The figure in gray appears in the doorway.*]

THE FIGURE

Beware!

BILL

(*Taking his arm from around BESS.*)
What's the idea?

THE FIGURE

Beware!

BILL

Are you Mr. Higgins?

THE FIGURE

I am Prudence. I . . .

BILL

That's different. I thought you might be the old man. Prudence, you say? That's a girl's name.

THE FIGURE

But a man's protection. I am your guardian. I have come to warn you against yourself.

BESS

Why did you stop talking? I wanted to hear the rest.

BILL

(*To THE FIGURE.*) Just a minute, will you? . . . (*Replacing his arm.*)
. . . I didn't get that, Bess.

BESS

You started to say something and then stopped.

BILL

That's right, I did. I was going to tell you that . . .

THE FIGURE

Beware!

BILL

Where do you get this beware stuff?
 . . . (To BESS.) . . . Let me think.
 . . . (To THE FIGURE.) . . . Now
 hurry up while she's quiet.

THE FIGURE

Beware of what you are about to say.
 Prudence warns you to be careful of
 your tongue.

BILL

I see, you thought I was going to
 take the fatal plunge, eh? Not a
 chance. I'm on to this game. I'm
 much obliged, but you don't . . .

BESS

You haven't told me yet.

BILL

(Hurrying on.) You don't need to
 stick around on my account. . . . (He
 draws BESS over upon his shoulder.
 She stays put.) . . . Look! Perfect
 control. But listen, if you're looking
 for something to do, go over in the next
 flat and see a guy named Jack Dunwell.
 He might need you. . . . (THE FIGURE
 vanishes. BILL turns to BESS.) . . .
 I was saying, kid, that I could think a
 whole lot of a girl that's a good sport
 and I could sure show her a mighty
 good time.

BESS

(Sitting up.) . . . Oh!

BILL

(To break the pause.) Do you mind
 if I smoke?

BESS

No.

[As he lights a cigarette THE SECOND
 FIGURE rises behind BESS.]

THE SECOND FIGURE

(Whispering as before.) Better
 take what you can get. You can't land
 this one with any injured innocence
 bait. He's too wise. He'll take you
 around a lot, if you work it right. You
 like to kiss him, don't you? Go ahead,
 then. Remember, he's a long way from
 being the first one.

[THE FIGURE goes. BILL offers BESS a puff from his cigarette. Not having heard the latest bit of advice, his bantering smile changes to bewilderment when she keeps it and smokes away calmly. He lights another, trying to figure it out.]

MAME

I never imagined you were like this, Jack.

JACK

Neither did I.

MAME

You were always so reserved and even a little bit timid, I thought. It must be love that makes you so masterful.

[At the word "love" JACK's eyes begin to search the room. They find the figure in gray again at the door. It is fainter than before, however, and when it moves its lips no sound can be heard. At last it manages to raise one arm and point feebly to the telephone before collapsing into nothingness.]

JACK

By George, I forgot to call up Bill like I promised. He wanted us all to go to the movies tonight. . . . What's that number. . . . (Goes to the telephone.) Four-three-four-four, ain't it? . . . South 4344 . . . Yes.

[In a few moments the bell rings.]

BESS

Who do you suppose that is?

BILL

Probably Jack.

BESS

(Answering the 'phone.) Hello.

BESS

Yes.

JACK

Hello, is that you, Bess?

JACK

This is Jack. Is Bill there?

BESS

Yes, where did you think he'd be?

BESS

Oh, Bill. Jack . . . (To JACK.)
. . . Just a minute.

BILL

I thought so. . . . (In the 'phone.)
. . . Hello.

BILL

Who said *I* wanted to go? You're
the one that talked about it.

BILL

Listen, I'm not crazy about going and
neither is Bess. . . . (To her.) . . .
You don't care anything about it, do
you?

BESS

No, I guess not.

BILL

What's the matter with you, Jack?
You talk like a nut.

BILL

Say, you poor simp, don't you know
it's pretty near ten o'clock? The sec-
ond show's about over now.

BILL

You're a nut. I tell you I'm not go-
ing to no movies. . . .

JACK

Let me talk to him, will you?

JACK

Still want to go to the movies, Bill?

JACK

We're willing to go if you folks want
to. What's on tonight?

JACK

Oh, it is. . . . And it's a good bill,
you think?

JACK

(Desperately.) How long before
you'll be ready then? . . . About ten
minutes? . . . All right, we'll be with
you.

JACK

(More desperately.) But listen, Bill.
. . . You know—well, you know, how
it is . . . and everything. You know,
don't you, Bill? Don't you remember,
Bill, what I . . . what I said when you
asked me to go with you tonight?

[*He hangs up the receiver and rejoins
BESS.*]

JACK

All right, we'll be ready then. . . .
Hello . . . Hello! . . . (*He jiggles
the hook.*) . . . Hello, I thought we
were cut off. . . . It's what? . . .
Too late? . . . Well, I thought so, too,
but if you folks wanted to go. . . .
All right then. . . . Good-bye. . . .
(*He comes slowly back to the daven-
port, as if drawn there by a resistless
force.*)

MAME

They're not going then?

JACK

No, it turned out mighty lucky, after
all. At first, I thought we'd have to
go, because I had promised Bill. . . .
But they changed their mind when Bill
saw the time and decided it was too
late for the second show. So we . . .
can just stay here by ourselves. . . .
Pretty lucky, wasn't it? (*He kisses
MAME.*)

[THE PLAY IS ENDED]



THE PASSING OF JERRY

By Patience Trask

NO longer will I tingle at your touch, Jerry.

No more will I thrill when you tell me my cheek is the delicate
pink of cherry bud.

Soon the gifts you lavish upon me will leave me cold and phlegmatic,
Jerry.

No longer will I weep with pain when a beautiful woman crosses your
path.

I will not hasten across the Persian rugs when I hear you approach. . . .
We are to be married today, Jerry.



THE WEB OF DREAMS

By Charles Glendon

SHE calls me Pierrot.
I call her Pierrette.

Sometimes I bring her a rose.

I enter the house on tiptoe.

She is hiding from me.

"Has Harlequin been here, and carried my Pierrette away?" I exclaim in a loud voice.

Then she comes from behind the cupboard . . . smiles . . . and gives me a kiss.

It is a little game we play with each other.

And that is why she calls me Pierrott, and I call her Pierrette.

It is our romance.

She is sixty, and I am sixty-four.



LYRIC

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

ON what strange tree of heaven hung
The drifting blossoms of the moon,
Leaning, where winds forget to come,
Above what dark lagoon?

And what pale lover of the skies,
Wrapped in a cloak of mist and fire,
Tossed to the night with trembling hands
This token of desire?

There is a fragrance on the earth;
And Beauty, like a woman's face,
Haunts us with tenderness and dreams
In many a shadowed place.

A MAN OF FORETHOUGHT

By Kenneth Burke

CARTER admitted it to himself: his hand was trembling. For after all, there was no reason why he shouldn't admit it; and there was no reason why his hand shouldn't tremble. He was to decide a woman's destiny today, and the woman was atrociously good-looking.

As he stood with his eyes fastened on the dull little penny that lay in his quivering palm, Carter mused poetically on the idea that a mere penny would decide his fate. Any number of people had thrown caution to the various winds when tempted by an obese wallet; he even remembered having read a touching tale of a girl's having gone astray for a pair of shoes; but here he was, the prince of all lost souls, following the dictates of a penny.

Perhaps he had better make it the best out of three tosses. After all, one lone final toss was too sudden, too brutal almost. It was like having the electric light switched on when one had been dozing in the dark. It was like trying to step up one more step than there was, and getting oneself disturbingly jolted. The little penny, as it lay head upright before him, shouted its commands at him, and he resented it. By heavens, he *would* make it the best out of three tosses!

Still, that was unfair, both to himself and the penny. He had sworn on the Blue Book that it would be one toss, and only one. Very well, he would compromise.

He opened the second drawer of his desk and took out a pack of cards. If an ace turned up within the first eleven cards he would take three tosses instead of one.

He shuffled the cards nervously; in his excitement he dropped a couple. They fell face up on the floor, and he saw that one was an ace. He had a sneaking temptation to put it on the top of the deck and begin dealing, but one last spark of manhood held out, and he shuffled the ace out of knowledge into the pack. Then he began dealing.

The fifth card was an ace. He breathed easier. Now he was entitled to two more tosses of the coin.

He took a glance at himself in the mirror and decided that the pallor caused by this excitement made him very handsome. He gave his hair an unnecessary stroke or two. Then he steeled himself for the second toss.

"As before, heads—yes, tails—no; get ready, get set, one, two, three, go!"

The penny sailed high into the air, clinked against the ceiling, fell promptly and rolled under the piano. Carter strained himself to get it out without bagging his trousers. Good—it was tails.

He had earned an intermission. He poured himself a generous drink of his favorite cognac. He paused a bit. Then, made more courageous by the alcohol, he picked up the coin and threw it on his little mahogany *guéridon* with a magnificent carelessness.

Done!

"In God we trust . . . Liberty . . . 1916 . . ." and the serene profile of Abraham Lincoln with his eyes seeking the decanter of cognac.

John Carter cursed *pianissimo*. But his fate was decided—absolutely. Destiny had spoken; and poor dear Clarisse must pay the penalty. For it is the woman who pays; it is not the tempting

man but the tempted woman who must suffer. Carter was decidedly comforted by repeating to himself this beautiful commonplace.

But he must act immediately. He knew only too well his deucedly cautious nature. He rushed to the 'phone and told the operator in the corridor of the apartment hotel to call a taxi. Then he added a few feverish touches to his toilet.

He reflected with a certain relief that this half-affair between himself and Clarisse was to be settled at last. It had hung on for years now, ever since long before her marriage. Of course, it was a miserable thing to do to Dick. But he had had too much consideration for Dick already. Beginning with the days he had pulled Dick through his Latin at prep school, and ending with his noble stupidity of coming all the way from Italy to be best man at their wedding, Carter's life had been one long list of self-sacrifices for Dick.

Bosom friend or no bosom friend, Carter had at last decided to obey the commands of the tossed penny. He was desperately in love with Clarisse, so much so that he had taken all his other women off the mantelpiece. And such an absorbing love, that might some day spoil his appetite, deserved expression.

The 'phone rang. Carter swung around with a frightened jerk, and overturned a pile of music. He snatched the receiver.

"Taxi? Yes, be right down. What? No? Oh, pshaw! Tell him I'm not at home." He slapped down the receiver and began picking up the music. He was shaking all over.

"Damn it, I'm too nervous," he muttered. "I'll force myself to be quiet. I'll play something, something of my own, something very gentle. But I have nothing very gentle. I don't turn out things like that. Let's see, there is a soft little thing of Debussy's. But all the little girls play that now after they're through with the 'Dance of the Witches' and 'Snowy Dewdrops.' *Grade 3A.* The devil. There is a love-

ly little minuet in one of Beethoven's sonatas. The old masters, something with good solid harmonies . . . that's what I want. Perhaps a good-humored bit of Haydn. Perhaps. . . ."

The 'phone rang. It was the taxi. He rushed out of the room. What luck, what divinely auspicious luck. . . . he just caught the elevator. Evidently everything was going to go well. He tumbled hastily into the cab and almost whispered the address to the driver. The man looked at him sharply, as though he understood. The insolence! Carter felt himself getting angry. What was the ass waiting for?

"Hurry. I am in a dreadful hurry. I will make it worth your while."

"East or West?" the driver asked.

Oh, so that was the trouble? In his precipitancy he had merely neglected to say which side of Fifth Avenue. How ridiculous of him to get angry when it was all his fault.

"East," and the taxi was off.

As he was jolted about in the capricious taxi, he tried to form some definite plan of action. For decidedly he was a man of forethought. It wouldn't do to stumble in abruptly, drop on his knees, and blubber out "I love you." Yet, on the other hand, this very suddenness might be effective; women are often highly susceptible to that sort of technique. Still, if he began immediately with these sudden tactics, it might lead to something embarrassing. He had better delay until he had made sure no one was there besides Clarisse. It would be just as well, after a mysterious silence, after five minutes of vague and absent-minded conversation, to be *then* transformed into a passionate whirlwind.

But about this "I love you." Here was a problem which always kept turning up, and for which he had never found a solution. Does a phrase, when applied to these ultimate issues, gain by being so hopelessly banal, or does it lose? Women aren't so particular about the brand-newness of a sentence as men are. They are more taken with the impetus of it, and an "I love you,"

said quiveringly enough, was probably the best one could do. They like to think one is speaking the eternal sentence; it lends a certain cosmic air to their love. Just as the little birdies and grasshoppers have chirped the same love-chirp for centuries and centuries, so this poor man, prostrate before them under the heavy burden of this ultimate issue, must make the same noise as his ancestors, the same meager succession of syllables must trill from his love-thick tongue.

II

THE taxi, getting suddenly clear of all traffic impediments, took a short spurt, and the realization that he was nearing Clarisse so swiftly stirred up a little panic in Carter. When he had calmed down a bit, he resolved to be less practical in his meditations; he grew ashamed of their cold-bloodedness. He huddled himself into an amorphous jostled mass, and let his mind wander back to the more idyllic phases of their attachment.

The various attitudes he had gone through had purified him, he decided. For the first few months after their marriage he had refused loyally even to lift his eyes to her; he had tried to get her out of his thoughts. What a noble time that had been!

First, in the vain effort to forget her, he had written, and published at his own expense, a book of essays on his travels in Italy, but only to spoil it all by the pregnant dedication, "To C."

Then he had become more desperate, and more noble, and sought distraction among the vulgar beauties of the stage. He was nearly succeeding when his funds threatened to give out, and he was thrown more inexorably than ever into the clutches of his dolorous love for Clarisse.

Then Dick had got it into his good-natured stupid old head that Clarisse and Carter should see more of each other. Carter told him outright that Clarisse troubled him—*intrigued* him, as the Café de la Paix would put it—

but the man had simply laughed, and felt a little flattered. Carter thought him a charming ass, but he said no more about it.

Then came the day when Carter saw her with a headache, a neat little white cloth tied about her temples. He had tightened his jaw with the sudden realization of how inevitable she was to him. He was proud of the feelings he had had towards her then, for there had been a note of decided Christian cleanliness. He had simply wanted to kiss her on the forehead, to advise her, to smoke big cigars and tell her things. It was a period of uprightness, during which he had maintained the most loyal of attitudes towards her and Dick. And most important, it was an excuse for everything that might follow.

But alas, it had only been a period of transition. Slight touches of her skirt as she whisked by him, her smile, the way she said "no," the night she hurt her ankle and leaned against him—these things had contrived to change him. He wished he could have remained the big brother he had once felt himself to be. But things had turned otherwise, until now . . . he noticed with a shock that the taxi had turned into her street.

Another three minutes! Why did he breathe so? There was no danger. Dick was sure to be away, and even if he were at home there were excuses enough. Another two minutes!

The vividness of the prospective scene renewed his zeal. He saw himself drop down before her, and take her hands, and kiss them . . . kiss them. For once in his life he would be wild, incautious. Perhaps it would stir him into a different sort of life, a careless, vicious existence with a maximum of dash, far from his neat apartment with its cut glass, its quiet rugs and mahogany. Perhaps he could write a novel about it. Perhaps . . . another minute!

He saw himself there on his knees, pleading. It was a delightful morsel to dwell upon. But had she been prepared to love him? Had she gone

through a period of resolute indifference, then brave sisterhood, then metamorphosed gently into a woman ripe for the love of him? Perhaps she would feel a monstrous disgust at his advances, and turn away from him with scorn, as from something evil and filthy. Or perhaps she would be wounded, deeply wounded, at the insult he offered her, and would run away from him, frightened and whimpering. She was a good girl, and faithful to her husband. He had no right to expect such unworthy things of her.

There was the house now, the one with the colonial portico. What he had been thinking of was impossible. She was not the sort of woman who yields to other men. The calm, smooth life she led permitted of nothing irregular, nothing out of the way. . . . The taxi stopped.

"Drive through Central Park."

"Yes, sir." The driver's voice was puzzling, as though he took a personal interest in all these numerous scandals which he drove people up to and away from. The taxi leapt ahead.

Crushed! Eternally a man of forethought! Carter was thoroughly sick of himself, as if he were a disagreeable food in his own stomach. He would get drunk. Drunk, laugh! What right did he have to get drunk? Drink is for those whose lives are of sharp edges and deafening crashes. The souls that are impelled to drink climb craggy mountains and topple into abysses that are dizzy, very dizzy. For Carter there was nothing; he was ever a man of careful, deliberate, painstaking forethought. He had had the forethought to see that Clarisse was unattainable; he must pay the penalty with his endless mediocrity of action. . . .

Two days afterwards Dick came rushing into Carter's room, savagely drunk.

"She's gone!" he screamed. "The harlot! She deserted me; she's run off with a movie actor!"

Carter promptly left his room, bought a revolver and some cartridges, loaded the revolver, put it to his head and, being a man of forethought, didn't shoot himself.



THE VISIONARY

By Carter Holliday

I WAS cold.

Snow was falling and the air was harsh.

I longed for the soft, warm arms of a beautiful woman.

I thought how pleasing the touch of a powdery cheek would be.

I wanted lips on mine.

"How warm and soothing they would feel," I murmured.

"Yes," replied my wife, "I will give them to you." . . .

But my horror as I became aware that I had spoken aloud was checked by the realization that she was referring to my woolen underwear.



THE MINOTAUR

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

MEN seldom write their autobiographies until, like Chesterfield, they are dead but have not yet seen fit to announce the melancholy fact; perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say that published memoirs are a sort of polite notice of decease. The spectacular, or dignified career comes to an end; the story of it, destined for a limited and expensive edition, begins. Celebrities shut the book of life in sad resignation and strive to call up a thrill or two out of the past by scribbling. That, at least, is the attitude with which the world accepts "Recollections."

But when John Sedley's publishers announced that they were about to bring forth a volume by him entitled "Confessions: an Autobiography," people gasped. How could a man meet the problems of a vivid present, look to a future that boded much and, besides, take the time to retire into the labyrinth of his memory and, for the benefit of the public, brush away enough cobwebs to present a readable account of his past? Nobody for a moment believed that Sedley had ceased living; he was still a young man, not yet forty, in fact, and still a peril to be reckoned with by all women who were fashionable, beautiful and impressionable—that is, still a peril to those women who had not yet succumbed to his fascination. Even the ladies who had given way and had shared unforgettable moments with him ("affaires" with Sedley had always been made up of moments, violent but fleeting, like fashionable diseases) were made anxious by the publishers' announcement; for might he not be too frank, in the account of his most charming lapses?

Might he not throw caution to the winds?

One thing could not be denied—that the eccentric business was going to succeed financially. Nobody considered exorbitant the price of the first uniform edition of Sedley's novels, published some months before the "Confessions" were due on the book-stands. The "set" sold in miraculous fashion; and people were already prophesying the whirlwind of gold the autobiography would reap. Meanwhile Sedley had sailed for America for a short stay. He had assured his friends that he would return in time to get his pen out of his pocket and autograph the first copy without causing its owner any grumbling at his dilatoriness.

In New York, Sedley spent much of his time with Ernest Peyton and his wife. Peyton stood for the best in literary tradition in the States. Although he never read books (he would, however, read "Confessions,") he was a collector of priceless first editions. Mrs. Peyton's position was not an easy one. It was her duty to see that her husband's hobby should not bore her guests. Even so succulent a prey as Sedley she managed to free after one lengthy session with Mr. Peyton.

Mrs. Peyton won Sedley's admiration after five minutes' acquaintance. She had remarked to him, "I hear you are a beast straight out of a story-book, with fifty maidens a year your steady diet."

"That implies unwilling sacrifice. Call me a Pied Piper and I shall like it better," he had replied. "The Hamelin children had a wonderful time, you know; they never regretted it."

She laughed, "Are you piping me a tune already?"

From that moment they had been friends.

At the end of a fortnight Sedley and Mrs. Peyton had progressed to that stage of cordial good-fellowship that is yet not quite unequivocal. He had singled her out for brief snatches of talk at dances; he had sat behind her chair during two acts of "Tristan"; he had been one of a small dinner-company at her house.

From the beginning he had felt that New York would loom large in the second volume of "Confessions." At the opera, while Brangaene sent forth her warning, he was formulating phrases about this charming American, phrases that would look well in print—"not beautiful, capricious in the play of feature," "something of the nymph in her, but not more akin to dells, after all, than she of Fragonard's 'Swing'; the sylvan quality a contribution of her dressmaker," "warmly seductive but cool as from a stroll barefoot in the dew," and so on. Too exuberant by half, of course! But his famous descriptions of women always were like that at first; it was his practice to jot down such fancies in the dawning time of passion and to set about revising and tempering in the interval when, ardour spent, he was waiting for a new clarion-call to his senses. He had once dashed off in the heat, "Ah, Actæon! Most blissful of men! Willingly would I accept thy lot, could I but once be present at the unveiling of my Diana." In "Confession," readers would find, not that effusion, but this nonchalant statement: "Lady Diana's beauty was compelling, but not to be examined closely; alas! the kneecaps protruded and the feet bore witness to the daily struggle with slippers too small!"

At Mrs. Peyton's dinner, Sedley had found opportunity to plead for a few moments alone with her.

"Of course, that will be nice," she had answered casually. "Come to see me tomorrow afternoon at five. Nobody will disturb us."

He was punctual. When he entered the drawing-room his hostess flashed him a gay smile; he artfully clouded his answering glance, giving it a quality he would have dubbed "smouldering." She ignored this challenge.

"I have wanted, ever since I met you, to give you a serious talking-to," she began.

"Call it a scolding and be done with it," he responded.

"Very well—if you wish. You are quick at getting the point of what one says; it's about your 'Confessions' I want to talk."

"Ah, my 'Confessions,'" he vaguely sighed. "People are going to be bored with them before ever they see the light."

"You mean by that, don't you, that I am going to bore *you* with them? You see, I'm your equal in getting the point of what others say."

They laughed.

"But this isn't going to be the usual scolding," she went on. "I shan't simper at you, to show you I don't mean a word of it. I *do* mean it, every word." She was in earnest; that much he could glimpse.

"No," he shook his head, "I shan't be bored."

"Before I pitch into you," she proceeded, "I shall tell you something for your comfort—I like you, you know."

He leaned forward, expectant. "What is it—this comfort?"

"Why, I've already told you," she returned, "that I like you. That's it."

"Oh, I see." He showed his chagrin. "I hoped for a more powerful anæsthetic."

She adopted the admonitory tone, to let him know she had done with her preamble and was giving him his lesson.

"Naturally you think a good deal of your reputation, as an author and a gentleman. Well, when you look at the matter clear-headedly, doesn't it strike you that to give up the idea of printing these memoirs would help your career? They will be a sensation, I grant; but you'll find in another year you will be

out of date. People will realize they have made a fad of you; and what fad ever lasted out a twelvemonth? Don't make yourself the fashion of the day; you sign your own death-warrant when you put yourself in a class with the latest cravats. This book will go off like a rocket; there will be a big fuss. And then—you will find yourself quite in the dark. Your 'Confessions' will be a burnt stick. You will be done for."

She paused.

"There, now! Haven't I given voice to your own foreboding? Isn't it true that everyone dotes on gentlemen with vague, wicked pasts; and isn't it equally true that there's a certain etiquette making these gentlemen keep the past vague? I learned so, in my convent days."

He nodded his head at her and pursed his lips, almost as if he were treating himself to an inaudible whistle.

"My respect for you is immense, after that," he told her. "I shan't attempt to argue; you are dead right. Need I add that I shan't pay the slightest attention to your advice?"

He had not taken his eyes off her for several moments. There was a long silence while their gaze held.

He was the first to speak. "Don't you know that we writers do good work until we are thirty-five and then admit we are beaten? What we want is adulation, even if it's only for a little while. We all cheapen ourselves in those critical years between thirty-five and forty. We can't stand reaching middle-age with our heads still unturned. It is tragic to see clearly at forty; one doesn't when one's head is turned."

"Very pretty," she commented, "but it doesn't apply to you. You have had your adulation before this; you would continue to have it if you worked out your destiny fairly, legitimately."

"Fairly, legitimately," he mocked. "I'm afraid you haven't read my novels. I've always pandered, more or less, but I haven't pandered enough to

give me the big *flair* I crave. Now I mean to have my hour."

"I give you up then," she said. "I see you are beyond recall."

She got up and moved about vaguely for a time, before adopting the inevitable graceful pose in front of the mantel. He followed her and stood beside her, one elbow on the shelf.

"Since you refuse to listen to my warnings," she announced, "tell me a little about the dreadful book. Do you keep nothing back?"

"Nothing."

"What do you call the ladies? Do you invent fetching, symbolic titles for them?"

"No, I call them by their own first names. I leave last names out of account."

"That is thoughtful." She mused a bit. "But surely some of the poor creatures have had unique names. Would it be fair to print them unaltered?"

"I don't know; I've done so, however. The first chapter immortalizes the loveliest lady of them all, one Hyacinth."

"Hyacinth!" she exclaimed. "It's a silly, saccharine name."

"It's quite the sweetest name," he protested.

"Hyacinth," she repeated. She shook her head. "All sweet-scented things are insipid."

Before she quite realized what was happening he had caught her to him and kissed her. Flushed and tremulous, she drew away.

"Tell me your name and forgive me," he pleaded as she moved towards the door.

On the threshold she turned.

"Mary Ann," she said and smiled with him. Pointedly she avoided answering the other half of his request; but it was evident that forgiveness was in the air.

II

It was but natural, after the first intimate talk, that Sedley should come often of an afternoon to see the de-

lightful Mary Ann Peyton. One thing alone marred his serenity: she kept him smouldering, as it were; one flash of real ardour from him led every time to a gentle but firm dismissal. He did not quite give up hope, but he began to suffer from an altogether novel if vague sense of discouragement. To gentle caresses and light hand-clasps she would submit; she was like a cat that invites stroking but flashes out of reach when one tries to take it upon one's lap.

One day she announced with a smile, "I don't propose to wait until your book comes out. I must have a peep right off."

He shook his head. "I don't approve of dress-rehearsals."

"Very well." She was incisive. "Then I shan't be at home the next time you call."

"I don't believe you; you wouldn't take such a mean revenge. That would be petty, when you know I am acting on principle."

"You!" She held up her hands in deprecation. "You admit you prostitute your muse; and then you talk of principle. That won't do."

"I assure you I am in earnest," he pursued. "I haven't ever shown my wares myself."

"I am obdurate." She gave him a glance of challenge.

He wavered. "Come, then,—a compromise!"

"Well, tell me your plan. I can't promise you yet how I shall take it."

"I shall show you one chapter—no more." There was decision in his tone.

"One chapter!" She thought it over for a moment. "All right," she said at last. "But it must be the best chapter of all. I count on you as a man of honour not to fool me."

"That is easy to pick," he said. "The first outdistances all the others. It sings of Dame Hyacinth, lovely lady of sweet-scented name. I shall bring it along with me tomorrow."

"Thank you." She let her eyes droop from his. "She was the first?"

He nodded. "She was all my young

dreams bursting into flower—quite like Prince Arthur and the Færie Queene."

"Poor Hyacinth. You know, I'm getting fond of the name, after all. Where is she now? What is she now? Of course, she is the mother of a large family, with sons at Oxford or Cambridge. For all that, she is a tragic figure. First loves always are. It's too bad girls like that don't pine away and die exquisitely at eighteen. Sentimental novelists have a sense of values; isn't it so?"

"You must wait and read what was the end of my Hyacinth," he responded, with a sigh.

"Unfortunately, I am sophisticated. If I find her wilting on my hands tomorrow, I shall feel that you have let dreams intrude on the facts. Memoirs shouldn't do that."

"Every word of the story is true," he persisted. "In this case dreams and fact were of a piece, deliciously blended."

She, too, sighed. "There is no romance in me! 'Deliciously blended' sounded to me at once like the tobacco in a new brand of cigarettes."

"If you read my chapter in that spirit, I shall never forgive you," he let her know. "It is a bit of high romance, medieval in its spirit; it is also the record of genuine feeling."

"Don't be alarmed," she replied. "I shan't be vulgar. I even feel that I shall succumb to the spell." She leaned slightly forward. "You will read it to me, please."

"The spell!" he said softly. "*La Belle Dame sans merci* hath me in thrall." He cupped her chin with one hand and kissed her. This time there was no resistance for a perceptible space. She turned away at last with the words, "Tomorrow! Sweet, silly Hyacinth."

III

He began his reading at a moment perfectly attuned to the note of reverie he put into his voice. It was late in the afternoon; the steady usurping of

daylight by dusk was almost visible. It was as if one could watch the subtle mingling, as if one were looking on at a sort of cosmic experiment of pouring one drop of a strong chemical substance into a vast vessel filled with clear liquid. The light of the late winter day had this quality of a thin, scintillant fluid that in an instant becomes clouded. Sedley, near a window, focused the pale radiance on the page before him; Mrs. Peyton, a few feet from him, was in shadow.

"I like the custom our grandmothers had of keeping all that was precious locked away, of unwrapping the silver paper from their treasures on a great occasion and displaying them with reverence to the chosen, while the odour of lavender permeated the air; such times were in a sense ritualistic, with the odour from the altar of a purity and sanctity unknown to heathen deities. Cythera of the Roses knew it not; lavender is the essence of maidenhood, austere and Puritan-like. I trust that my readers, opening this book at the first chapter, will find their senses charmed as by the fragrance from the wardrobe containing the wedding-dress of some sedate ancestor. For my Hyacinth has for me to-day the value of a priceless possession which I unwrap from its silver-paper for the chosen. Let those who scorn sentiment begin their reading at the second chapter; they are not the chosen."

Sedley looked up from his reading. Mrs. Peyton, with eyes half-closed in the twilight, did not notice his action. Well content, he returned to his page and went on to the end without attempting again to draw her attention away from the table.

"Late one summer day, I lounged under an ilex tree at Florac. My gaze was not on the villas around me nor on the winding road before me; nor was it on the middle distance. It soared without a drop over the steep precipice where I was perched, soared past the hoary olive trees and fields below and

came to rest, like a gull, on the distant sea. Imagine, if you can, lapis-lazuli translucent and lit with a sunbeam's sheen and you will have in mind something of the beauty of the far-away sea. It was almost evening; day was getting weary; the wings were closing over the feathery breast. It was the hour for memory to assert her sway; but then I did not know it, for I was twenty-one.

"I was annoyed to hear a trap approaching. Why are we always annoyed by the sound of an oncoming happiness? At the end of an hour I had christened the horse Pegasus! Fifty feet away, the vehicle stopped; a girl stepped out and sauntered lazily towards me. I got all this out of the tail of my eye, for I still strove to ignore everything but the view. Before I knew it, however, my gaze had begun to dip back, with a certain limpness, from the water where it had come to rest; it alighted on the top of a eucalyptus tree, half-swooped and half-scrampered up the rocks and scurried along the road until it stopped, for all the world like a lame robin, at the feet of the girl, now very near. Ankles slender as a young birch! But what an ass I was, to let them interfere with my high flight of musing and my beautiful similes.

"I got to my feet, as she came to a full stop just outside the shelter of my ilex bower.

"'I beg your pardon,' I exclaimed. 'I'm afraid I've blundered on your post for the evening watch.'

"'Not at all,' she assured me. 'I've never been here before. It is beautiful. It was stupid of me not to discover it till now.'

"Her glance over her shoulder was but a cursory one; it disappointed me. Could it be she was satisfied with one look at the glories around her? Besides, I could not examine her with sufficient care if she did not let her imagination wander beyond our casual conversation. It would be rude to take in all her points unless her attention were distracted; but alas! her mind was

not for the landscape. She wanted to chat.

"I gave up my higher purpose. It was not discouraging after all. I found I could be voluble and still swiftly-appraising. She was charming. Very tall and thin, she was saved from lankness by the fluent plasticity of her limbs. It was patent that she would boast well-oiled sockets! Thank God, the frame was small; she was not the raw-boned type that must in after years 'fill out' to be presentable. Her head was small and set with exquisite precision on her long neck. And that neck was beyond measure lovely, full and with a delicate swell towards the center, like a perfect column. She was a sketch, daring, incomplete; in the poise of her maturity, one would miss the broad strokes, would sigh in presence of subtle modulations and wish again for the cruder promise.

"I learned that she was lonely, that her parents were in London and had left her behind with her old governess, Miss Willoughby. Of course, she would be delighted to see me at any time.

"That was all. I think we both felt, when we had done our chattering, that somehow we were on a dream-threshold. We two in Florac, with only an old governess between us! There was a peculiar skip, a dizzy swing to my heart when I helped her into her trap and said good-night.

"Just a week later, we sat under the same ilex tree and talked in delicious, low-thrilling tones of our love for each other. I have never known anything like her response when she felt a kiss imminent. She would sway slightly, the free curve of her neck accentuated, and would await the descent of my lips upon hers; the effect was compelling, and the motion, I'm sure, like that of Narcissus's image yearning up to the surface of the pool. The surprising thing was that she acted in all simplicity. She was artless, ardent, unafraid."

So the narrative went. It by no

means lived up to the promise of the first page. Even the day-spring of love in Hyacinth and John Sedley was a far cry from lavender and grandmothers' wedding-gowns. The author had failed; from the vantage-ground of thirty-five, he was looking back on a pure idyll. He was unable to escape from his cynicism, powerless to get himself under the skin of his young prime. The atmosphere was all of delightful, unscrupulous intrigue. The peculiar thing about it was that readers of "Confessions" would understand Hyacinth, in spite of Sedley, and would know he was being unfair to her.

No one could deny, however, the entertaining audacity of the story; it was of a frankness to make publication out of the question for anyone but a man of extraordinary fame. Occasionally there would be a clear note of sincerity, but not often. The savour was of "Mademoiselle de Maupin" for the most part. It was matter for conjecture whether the stress at the start on simplicity and innocence were fine irony or whether Sedley had actually hoodwinked himself into believing what he said.

The end was abrupt, conventional. Hyacinth's parents had returned, "a rich suitor in tow." In mournful resignation, the lovers had watched the party from London, jouncing up the steep hill towards them. Then they had parted.

"Marriage had been out of the question from the beginning," the chapter wound up. "My prospects were like a cloud-rack, rich in pictorial suggestiveness, but vapory and ever-shifting. Throughout our month of fulfilment the future had meant nothing to us. We had shrugged it away. At the moment of our first kiss, we had known what the end would be. I suspect, though, that my pride was hurt at the dénouement; I had been planning an exit more graceful! One *does* wish the credit of taking the decisive step oneself.

"Hyacinth remains for me the sweet, evocative creature of old. My Para-

dise would be a green wood, full of lispng rills and numerous solitudes, with, just beyond my reach, Hyacinth fleeing away, not to be rid of me, but to arrive before me at the deepest grotto of all, there to make my reception a perfect one.

"I returned to Florac some years later. Tidings of her I did not expect. I learned that she was dead. It was with a heavy heart I returned to Plessy. During tea with Lady Virginia (of whom, more anon) Hyacinth at eighteen filled my thoughts."

IV

"THAT is charming," came Mrs. Peyton's voice from the deepening gloom, "She had married the suitor, I suppose?"

"Yes, poor child; but she was a true heroine after all. She could not breathe on the earth, once she had tasted the wine of the heights. She must have panted her life away."

As he spoke he weighed his words and decided to jot them down directly he got home. They merited publication.

"And you really feel that you meant so much to her. May not chagrin have killed her? She must have felt the slight, must have known you had only played with her."

"No, no," he said, "you do not understand."

"True," she admitted. "I don't wish to offend you; but wasn't her taste of this wine just a sip, not enough to hurt?"

"Aren't you forgetting," he reminded her, "that in a month's time she experienced everything, to put, baldly?"

"Do you call one kiss, under a governess's very nose, everything?"

"What can you mean,—one kiss?" He was stupefied.

"How silly of me!" she exclaimed. "I did forget the story; I was thinking of—something quite different."

"What *can* you mean?" he repeated. "What were you thinking of?"

"Of the truth behind the affected

tale—Confess! You saw her twice; you kissed her once and frightened her away. Am I right?"

Indignation and a baffling sense of insecurity before her left him powerless to meet the question.

"Your readers will suspect you've lied to them; there's a false ring to it all. I should have doubted at once, if I hadn't known."

Still he gazed and was speechless.

"A man does not forget a sweetheart or a mistress—even after ten years," she said. "The proof of your story's falsity is that you have not, do not yet, recognize *me*." That brought him to his feet.

"You—you are my Hyacinth!" There was furious protest in his tone. Piti- lessly she had called him out of the world of beauty, had driven him back to dreary reality.

Mrs. Peyton got up and switched on the lights. The situation should have struck him as comic; but it bewildered him, angered him too much for that.

"Good sense has altered my looks," she said, "besides thirty pounds' gain in weight and a more competent maid."

She took in with composure his air of fiery petulance.

"I shan't be stern, because you've given me a jolly time this-afternoon," she went on. "And you *do* look ashamed of yourself. You recall now, don't you, that we saw each other just twice? To think our one and only kiss, under Miss Willoughby's very nose, too should be the foundation of that scandalous chapter! I like your description of me as a girl; but I wasn't so charming. I was too thin; I *was* the type that must fill out to pass muster. Don't you remember? I sprawled over more space in those days than I should have."

It was true. Fiction and sophisticated romanticism had so wrought upon Sedley that he had for years been thrusting aside the true details of his idyll. He had shut his eyes to fact and had constructed a tale of young love as experience and worldliness had taught him such a thing should be.

For a decade he had been turning it over in his mind. He had come to believe the fabric of exquisite lies; he had grown to know intensely his Hyacinth of well-oiled sockets, to live with her scenes out of his imagination.

Until the moment when Mrs. Peyton destroyed the whole dream, he had believed the story and had loved his unconscionable ingenue. It was indeed annoying to be brought up short like this. For the moment, he suffered bitter disillusionment; then his sense of the ridiculous began to struggle up to the surface. The real Hyacinth had been rather a dauby sketch, after all; yes, she had been awkward and absurdly shy. She was so vague in his mind that he gave up trying to bring her back out of the misty past. His lady of dreams had been so captivating! It was small wonder Mrs. Peyton had failed to set his memory working. He had never been really awake to his lovely heroine until he had forgotten the silly girl of Florac. He would have to give weeks to the most careful examination of Mrs. Peyton before he should have a clear picture of the school-miss he had kissed but once.

She gave way to uncontrollable laughter; in a moment he had himself sufficiently in hand to join in without too jarring a note.

"I have been so curious to hear what you'd written of me," she announced at last. "I felt I must get at your Hyacinth hymn before it was printed. Well, I managed it; I've even, with that in view, let you kiss me; but I

never suspected the thing would be like that." She waved a hand at his manuscript.

"You must go now," she went on. "I shan't be at home to you any more. That much I owe my pride. But do come and talk to me in public—at dances and so on. It will do you good to drop your mask once in a while."

There was no trace of embarrassment in her rambling sentences. It was evident that she was enjoying her "coup."

"By the way," she turned on the threshold. "You have my permission to print the chapter. My name is Mary Ann; Hyacinth was one of my nonsensical fads at eighteen. My husband, too, knows nothing of Florac; he isn't 'the rich suitor in tow.'"

When he was alone Sedley remarked, "I'll be damned!" Then he smiled. Ever since Mrs. Peyton had switched on the lights, he had been mutely comparing the woman with his young girl. Mary Ann had suffered by juxtaposition with the Hyacinth of "Confessions." That in itself was revenge enough. He preferred young romance and excessive slenderness. And he had another month of New York and its women before him.

It is but fair to Sedley to add this, that Lady Virginia and the rest of the damsels celebrated in "Confessions" could pick no flaws in the accounts he had given of them. Beginning with chapter the second, the scandalous chronicles were all without a filipp of fiction.



THE average woman knows all there is to be known about her husband before she has been married three months. The average man may celebrate his golden wedding without understanding his wife better than the day he married her.



TEMPO DE PANTALOON

By Ben Hecht

I

THE conspiracy against Alfred Reymblinger assumed its most malevolent aspects toward the close of his twenty-fourth year. He perceived then that to entertain any longer theories concerning the natural manifestations of chance or mischance was to expose himself to the ridicule and mockery of his higher instincts. Sitting alone in his room three flights above Mr. Protopopolis' abominable *café*, this curious and malignant conspiracy, of which it was now evident he was the victim, struck at the hardest fibers of his ego and caused him to turn pale, to quiver, and to frown upon the city's night.

Well enough to prate of hope and perseverance so long as a man's destiny lay within his own hands. But the time was passed when one might, without compromising one's reason, nourish illusions.

For three years had he, Alfred Reymblinger, toiled faithfully in the creation of a work desired neither by Man nor his world. Three nights each week of these three years had he sat in his room above Mr. Protopopolis' abominable *café*, transmitting to paper the graces and curious disturbances of his soul. Daily had he sent forth the strange and delicate rhythms, the vibrating, tenuous stanzas conceived on these nights, to be rewarded only with the monotonous proof of the stupidity which sat enthroned in the editorial sanctums of the nation.

There were moments during this embattled period when Reymblinger had sensed the truth, when into his brain

had drifted the staggering explanation of his oblivion. A conspiracy launched and fostered by his enemies, an organized traffic to humiliate and ostracize him! He had thrust the notion aside. He had, with an ironical eye cocked upon what he deemed the careless though inevitable justice of the gods, persevered and continued with a grim and ominous insistence to pen those stanzas which, in the notebook containing the strange chroniclings of his days, he observed to be "the neglected wreaths of my immortality."

With similar fortitude this Reymblinger announced in his notebook during this time that "beauty is the eternal exile, moving through the world like some mysterious stranger who holds converse with the gods and who waits, drolly patient, for some tired business man to honor her with the offer of a seat."

On the whole he had, during this beautified flight of time, placed no faith in the idea of a conspiracy. The intricate despairs he had suffered then, the subtle doubtings and angers, had been but the fugitive moods of creating genius.

But tonight in his room there was nothing fugitive or subtle about his state of mind. With an eye no longer enslaved by illusion, with a spirit no longer the handmaid of hallucination, he confronted life in its coarse and incontrovertible logic.

He faced the fact of the conspiracy.

It was three weeks this night since his book of poems called "Dust" had appeared in the public market-places, and not a single volume had been sold, or a single word written in recognition

of its presence in the world. Reymblinger had, during the first week, been inclined to regard this curious discrimination in the light of a coincidence. With what it coincided he could not say. It was, undoubtedly, one of those slight phenomena which appear now and then to disturb the natural predilections of destiny.

During the second week of sustained indifference, however, he had applied himself more zealously to determining the cause. The fanatical silence on the part of the literary mouthpieces of the public, combined with the almost grotesque immunity suffered by the volume at the hands of the public itself, aroused forebodings.

Thumbing the gazette spread out on the stationery counters, Reymblinger stared bewilderedly at column upon column of literary chatter concerned with past and contemporary publications. Each new periodical be pounced upon with the still urgent promptings of hope. This hope, however, curled up upon itself, consumed its own head and expired in a knot. It was as if "Dust" did not exist, as if its exquisite particles were one with the interstellar atoms, one with the component parts of chaos. The absence of his name and his work from the chronicles of all other names and all other works assumed for him a sinister significance. He passed through the period of amazed and snorting comparisons. He entered a state of resignation. In this state he rehearsed the various aspects of the business.

That there was a conspiracy was no longer to be doubted by a brain which clung to the pretensions of reason or logic. He had squandered the \$20 advance royalties received from the local and ambitious pamphleteer who had, in an unguarded moment, brought forth "Dust," upon a clipping bureau. Five frenzied letters despatched by Reymblinger to this bureau demanding action had finally brought the convincing response that, despite the untiring activities of its accomplished staff, the *clipping bureau* had, to date, been un-

able to locate any mention in the country's public prints of Mr. Reymblinger's name or of his work.

The communication cleared the fog of illusion which had clouded the operations of his brain. His resignation, for several days the ample reservoir of his rages and despairs, began to ebb from him.

The telephone poles, like huge music notes, thrust themselves out of the darkness of the alley below, and stretched away before his eyes on a level with his window. There were no trees in the backyards, dimly outlined. Their contents lay in the merciful oblivion of night. A dog, privy to the possibilities lurking in the rear of Mr. Protopopolis' abominable *café*, howled his yearning in the gloom.

Alfred Reymblinger rehearsed the facts. During his three years of labor his work had seen the light of magazine print four times. The *Embalmer's National Review* had purchased, for a trifling sum, his strange hymn to Death. The *Presbyterian Organists' Monthly* had likewise invested weakly in his "Mazurka to God." And twice had *Poetry—A Magazine of Verse* flaunted his name on its title page.

Nevertheless during this period of unrequited effort, Reymblinger had toiled with a sardonic optimism which batted upon hunger and grew sturdy upon defeat. Exercising himself briefly in the scullery of Mr. Protopopolis' abominable *café*, he had insured for himself two meals a day and a bed.

And, all the while, he had bided the time when his volume "Dust" should appear. He had visioned himself looming abruptly out of his oblivion, a figure by Rodin and Debussy, a torch of letters by Scriabine and Zvonatoffsky. And, during this period, he had also achieved a certain content through viewing with a contemptuous eye the literary stars which shot across the heavens of his day. Whimsically he had marveled over the unflagging stupidity which inspired the productions of his contemporaries and insured their spontaneous success.

Nevertheless, he had frequented the cliques of the city wherein were to be found many of these contemporaries, together with the sputtering and uncrowned aristocracy of letters—creatures clothing a multitude of inanities in a breech cloth of genius.

Upon these harlequins who capered desperately before each other in the absence of a more discriminating audience Reymblinger had lavished his most concentrated contempt. Concerning their work he had no illusions. Inured to their windy forums, none the less, by a hunger for whatever audience could be found, a hunger which his most aloof exaltations seemed mysteriously to demand, he had devoted himself enthusiastically to grim and malicious utterance, he had progressed from studio to studio, hurling himself into furious debates and proving to his somewhat bored satisfaction the inherent vapidity of whosoever assailed his work.

There were some of these envious creatures now in the conspiracy. Mitlover, perhaps, or Trumkin—asses both of them, obsessed with the amazing notion that they could write. But they were not all. It was wider spread than that. It had ramifications. It reached into the crevices of life. It worked, like some Rosicrucian poison, from mouth to mouth, undermining the integrity of hitherto honest men, striking at the noblest as well as the basest, in its conscienceless course. Explaining it carefully to himself, Reymblinger likened it to an inverted or intro-hysteria, a psychopathic inertia, disseminated by the adroit efforts of his enemies, and paralyzing the ethics of the nation.

Outside his room, beyond the cavernous alley, moved the five-and-ten-cent night life of the part of the city in which he lived. His eyes rested for moments upon the drab excitement in the street—the hoarsely eloquent vender, gesticulating under a naphtha light, the syn-copated press of men and women at the corners. He became gradually conscious of external event. On the floor above sounded the anxious thumpings of a family of clog dancers out of em-

ployment for the past two months. Reymblinger cursed the automatic piano which the ambitious Mr. Protopopolis had installed in his abominable *café*. The strains of the thing, filtering dolorously through the night, had once been to him an obligato out of Avaloñ. To the lonely, tin reverberations of "Poet and Peasant" he had written some of his most tenuous and exquisite lines. "The Livery Stable Blues" had assisted him in the production of not less than four masterpieces celebrating the opalescent moonlight on a Chinese lake.

But now the diabolical instrument had become a ray of hope and inspiration to the family of indomitable clog dancers overhead. To its hiccougking tempos they arranged their nightly practise. By its tireless allegros they guided their pernicious thumpings. The floor rattled. The walls quivered. The chandelier, extending its single dusty light, jumped and creaked. Reymblinger groaned. The conspiracy balked at nothing. Reasoning clearly, he perceived that the family of clog dancers, which he had once believed a purely accidental and extraneous affliction, was no more, no less, than another tentacle.

It was at this moment in Alfred Reymblinger's life, born between a curse and a sigh, that the inspiration which was to change his entire existence arrived.

Silently, ominously, Reymblinger moved to his table.

Sharpening a pencil, he sat himself down and wrote.

II

THE family of clog dancers had long retired to a well-earned rest, the automatic piano below had likewise long removed its melody from the night, when Reymblinger finished his writing. He sat with a peculiar gleam in his eye, his wide, pale lips twisted into a delicate snarl.

He had written a review of his book of poems, "Dust." He had attacked it.

Patiently, with a great and furious uncoiling of phrases, he had pointed out the puerile absurdities of the thing. Mockingly, venomously, he had set forth the preposterous buncombe which it, with the rest of the modern *vers librests*, was inflicting upon a too tolerant public in the name of art.

With a scintillation uncanny even for him used to the epigrammatic condensations of thought, he had pounced upon the author of "Dust," hailing him as "an egomaniac parading vaingloriously in his diapers," dismembering him, tearing asunder the inanities which comprised his poems and holding each of them up to the devastating light of reason. Irony and satire sparkled in the pages of the review. Shrewd and pregnant comment filled its sentences.

The conceit of creation urged him on. Assuming without apparent effort this curious attitude towards a production which he deemed of transcendent merits, he labored with a sincerity and consistency to be found only in the effort of the truly noble intellect. As he wrote he derived a furious impetus by summoning to his mind the diabolic machinations which had achieved the conspiracy against him. He was writing to annihilate the deliberate and combined work of his enemies. Thus, as he hurled himself upon Alfred Reymblinger, it was the thick-hided throat of another which yielded under his fingers, from which he would force a cry of recognition.

Reymblinger signed a name under the title of his latest work. The name he signed, after fantastic meditations, was Rene D'Or. Having signed this name, having folded the ten pages of his review, determining to typewrite them on the morrow, Reymblinger retreated to his bed. Through his brain whirled thoughts. He spoke aloud to the dark, dingy room.

"I'll show them," he said. "Maybe they think they can keep up this pusillanimous conspiracy. I'll start something!"

He closed his eyes and to his mind came visions of critics, aroused from

their psychopathic lethargy, leaping to his defense, hurling at the mythical Rene D'Or tirades and jeremiads. He visioned further, a battle royal. He chuckled. The notion of attacking himself while the nation's hired mouth-pieces rallied heroically to his defense brought a guffaw from his pale lips.

A sudden misgiving came to him. Viewed personally, the article he had written assumed a strangely convincing tone. What if it did convince? He smiled abruptly at the thought. It would, if printed, merely direct attention to his book. And, attention once directed, ah! The world, driven to spiritual dyspepsia by the blithering effusions of those who called themselves poets, would embrace him. A figure by Rodin and Debussy! A torch-bearer by Scriabine and Zinatoffsky!

"I should have written something praising it," he murmured sleepily. But experience was not without its wisdom, even for Alfred Reymblinger.

"They'd never print it," he concluded and fell asleep.

III

THE appearance of the article Alfred Reymblinger had written under the name of Rene D'Or in the columns of the Wednesday literary section of the Chicago *Daily News* created a mild stir among the readers of that enterprising gazette. Those of them aware of the existence of Reymblinger read with unconcealed corroboration the tidings flashed upon the world. Never had they dreamed to encounter so poignantly phrased an insight into the productions of this Reymblinger. Its piquant phraseology likewise riveted the attention of a more general class of readers. Its epigrams were quoted during the day, and for days succeeding, as adroit epitomizations of the popular emotion against the *vers librests*.

When, on the following Friday, it was repeated by another and more violently couched effusion in the columns of the Friday Literary Supplement of the *Evening Post*, the attention of a

scattered literary public in the city became, for the time, delightedly focused. The appearance in the *Dial*, that week, of a third feuilleton concerning itself with the bizarre and astounding vapid-ity of a volume of poems called "Dust" and its parent, Alfred Reymblinger, carried the business outside the precinct limits of Chicago.

Furious attacks, fashioned as before, in the fascinating diction peculiar to this new and vigorous critic, Rene D'Or, attracted still more general observation in the *New Republic*, *The Nation*, *Reedy's Mirror*, the *Little Review*, the *Touchstone*, and *Poetry—A Magazine of Verse*.

Wherever read, these merciless assaults were enthusiastically hailed, were pronounced the shrewdest, most penetrating and inspired criticism of the year. There was about them a convincing grace, a passionate and yet droll excitement. Their text, although confined now and then to whimsically vicious thrusts at the now absurd creature, Alfred Reymblinger, blossomed chiefly into bewitching paradoxes concerning life, concerning poetry, concerning beauty, concerning, in brief, the absurdities of those clownish followers of art who painted sighs upon their lips, who shrieked and whimpered, stuttered and snarled, gurgled and biathered forth the modern mockeries of art.

The name of Rene D'Or began to be quoted in periodicals addicted to the zodiac measurement of the native genius. His sallies began to illumine the after-dinner conversations of the idle and appreciative rich.

"Rene d'Or," chanted the staff critic of one of the more pretentious literary monthlies, "has become the founder of a new school of American criticism. His work, in addition to a sparkling and poetic style reminiscent, though not dangerously so, of Baudelaire and Wilde, is still fraught with a restraint and balance, whose absence renders the contemporary fulminations of our juvenile hobby-horse artists puerile indeed. His masterly expositions of the jejune egomania current among the

word mongers of the New Poetry movement, his keen, ironical searchings into the souls of these petty scribblers, show him to be a man of profound judgment as well as cunning verbal ability. His selection of one of the lesser of the modern minor poets, Alfred Reymblinger, as a critical example, while perhaps unfair to the more aspiring of the cult, can readily be forgiven because of the opportunities it affords his wit and salient perceptions."

Thus the ball once started, rolled on. In his room above Mr. Protopopolis' thrice abominable *café*, Alfred Reymblinger toiled with a bewildered light in his eyes. A strange confusion stamped his gestures. His pallor had increased. He wore the air of a man lost in the impenetrable chaos of a deranged mind. And yet he toiled on, almost mechanically, almost lifelessly. From his pencil rolled phrases which somehow put themselves together into whimsies and sallies. Requests for contributions from the *Atlantic Monthly* and gazettes of a similar stripe lay stacked before him. Letters from readers, forwarded to him by the magazines in which Rene D'Or's work had appeared, were strewn about.

It was night, past the hour of the clog dancers and the automatic piano. It was Spring. Alfred Reymblinger stretched his cramped fingers and laid down his pencil. He picked up a heap of clippings and detached magazine pages forwarded to him by his bureau. Nearly all of them were signed by the all too familiar name, Rene D'Or.

As he sat thus, contemplating with blurred eyes the pages before him, a chilly fear crept through Reymblinger's heart. Something had gone askew! There had been no defense of Alfred Reymblinger. No Quixote had rallied to the praise of "Dust." Where was the figure of Rodin and Debussy? Where the torch by Scriabine and Zinatoffsky?

Something had collided with the workings of destiny. "Dust," the beloved of his heart, the object of his brain's infatuation, stood condemned in

the eyes of the world as the stupid vapourings of an uninteresting charlatan. He had done that. He had brilliantly convinced the present and its posterity of the fact. In his last Rene D'Or article the editor had taken the liberty of striking out even four pungent paragraphs devoted to further devastations of Alfred Reymblinger.

"Never mind this fool," the editor had jocosely written back to him. "He's done for. You've said the first and last word about him. Try somebody else."

Try somebody else! By the seven thousand Gods of stupidity, what had he done? Reymblinger clutched his brow as the memory of this letter returned to shock and nausea. He, Reymblinger, had killed Reymblinger for all time.

IV

As he sat, now empty-handed at his desk, he wept. Alfred Reymblinger was to him a poet of divine dimensions. "Dust" was to him a volume containing the most exquisite verbal harmonies and color images of the age. Drying his eyes, he contemplated with a stunned incredulity the unbelievable.

There had been a conspiracy, an almost psychic entente designed to crush and ostracize him from the position to which he was entitled. But the fanatical silence which had greeted the appearance of his book of poems was, after all, preferable to this. With a keener and more poignant shudder than ever before, Reymblinger realized that he had destroyed himself, that he had given the massive inertia which was his original enemy a soul and a tongue and a brain from which there was no appeal. In a storm of laughter and derision aroused by his too clever attacks, Alfred Reymblinger, the poet, had died an ignominious and unmourned death, and Rene D'Or, the critic, had risen like some treacherous Phoenix from his remains.

For six hours Reymblinger wrestled with the problem. Strange plans un-

folded themselves in his brain. With disgusted gestures he tore up the letters from magazine editors demanding further work of Rene D'Or. He cursed them. He lavished involved and passionate imprecations upon himself. Toward morning he fell asleep. When he awoke the plans of the night had crystallized into one process of action.

Alfred Reymblinger moved out of his quarters into a new room in a new section of the city. He would start over. If he had killed Alfred Reymblinger he would likewise annihilate Rene D'Or. In his new quarters the real Reymblinger fell to work. He labored feverishly copying and editing several hundred of his poems which had not been included in "Dust." On the whole they were superior to the contents of that volume. As he worked upon them the glow of his old-time adulation came to him, the sense of his supreme values overwhelmed his bruised spirit.

He would publish this second volume and then, as Rene D'Or, he would come forth celebrating the amazing change in the work of Alfred Reymblinger, chanting the astonishing, the unbelievable revelation of genius which this much-berated poet now offered the world in his maturer work.

He, Rene D'Or, would recant, would humble himself before him, Alfred Reymblinger. He, Rene D'Or, had a following, readers and critics who hung upon his slightest pronouncements. He would bring them, awed and reverent, to the feet of Alfred Reymblinger. They would follow his, Rene D'Or's lead, and chime in with valorous incantations. His, Alfred Reymblinger's, worth, his surpassing talents, would receive, by this cunning ruse, their true valuation.

Desperately, Reymblinger worked upon his copy. He thought of recalling five Rene D'Or articles scheduled for publication the following two months in as many periodicals. In these articles, although devoted to broad poetical principles, Rene D'Or

had found opportunity to slip in some of his inimitable thrusts at the now hapless and ridiculous poet, Alfred Reymblinger. During the entire activity a strange psychology had urged him on, the sadistic intensity of one who flays the thing he loves. The transition from the unbridled admiration which he held towards his work, to the venomous contempt which flashed in the critiques of Rene D'Or, had been a curiously simple one. He had, in a manner, merely transferred his self passion from one set of phrases to another. Behind the inditing of the Rene D'Or assaults burned the same egoistic preoccupation which was the body of his more normal conceit.

But that was of the past. No need of recalling the outstanding articles. The evil had been wrought. There was but one way to undo it. He completed his editing of his second volume and wrote on its title page the word "Flames." That was its name. He sent it forth to the pamphleteer who had originally published him.

The manuscript returned within four days, unread, and accompanied by a caustic letter. The pamphleteer in question took occasion to heap the bitterness of long harrowed emotions upon the head of the man with whom his name had been coupled in ridicule. Enclosed in the letter was a clipping from the *New Republic*. The clipping was signed Rene D'Or.

This new situation somewhat staggered Reymblinger. A new fear took up timorous residence in his heart. But girding himself to the task, he made seven copies of his manuscript and sent them to as many publishers simultaneously.

Waiting for their return, he kept aloof from his fellow men. Certain of his more intimate acquaintances calling at his old address, sought him in vain. To the few people in his vicinity whom he found it necessary to meet he presented the name of Rene D'Or.

Three weeks witnessed the final proof of the havoc wrought by Rene D'Or, of the grotesque success that un-

flagging idiot had achieved. Alfred Reymblinger had with much joy, much hope, much enthusiasm, hurled a boomerang at himself. The seven manuscripts came back. Three of them were accompanied by coarse and ribald comment. The remaining received the more humiliating rebuke of a stereotyped rejection.

Of this period in Reymblinger's life it is well to speak hurriedly. It contained the ingredients which can no more be distinguished from tragedy than they can be exiled from humor. "Flames" traveled far and wide, returning with the monotonous regularity which modern mail systems insure. Although he had not written as Rene D'Or for more than a month, his work under that name was still appearing in belated publication, and it was with emotions more vastly complicated than any he had heretofore experienced that he read one morning a letter from a New York publishing house. The letter contained a request by the publisher to collect the various Rene D'Or critiques in more permanent form, to bring them out in the enduring guise of a book entitled "D'Oresques."

Gleaming-eyed and hollow-cheeked, Reymblinger reviewed swiftly the contents of his various attacks, recalled with a feeling of nausea the choleric lashings he had administered to "Dust," to Reymblinger, and the adroit manner in which he had proved this worthy a mountebank and identified him with the obnoxious attitudinizers of the modern schools of poetry.

Overcome by the weight of his confusion, Reymblinger wrote a reply, forbidding the publication of such a volume and venting his despair in cryptic and melodramatic phrases.

The seven manuscripts returned for the fourth time. Two publishers pointed out with ironical consideration that they did not care to be responsible for his further humiliation and referred him to the opinions of one Rene D'Or.

The burlesque which fate had assumed for Reymblinger undermined his last and tottering support. Feebly

he sought other and unknown houses of publication. Into the offices of catalogue printers and pamphlet typesetters his manuscripts found their way, accompanied by whimpering supplications.

V

It was summer. Alfred Reymblinger walked the amiable streets of the district in which he lived. People, occupied with gentle and expanding thoughts, passed him. He had not eaten since morning. It was now night. He laughed abruptly. There was money in his pocket. But there was in him no desire for food. More important matters attracted his thought. He had become clear. His brain no longer circled in the fantasies of paradox. He saw himself as a creature who, goaded on by inane conceits, had killed the thing he loved.

"Some men do it with a word," murmured Reymblinger. "I did it with fifty thousand words at a cent each."

He saw himself as a Judas who had led himself to the Cross for thirty shekels. He laughed. Alfred Reymblinger was a poet. Young and curious-minded, he was a man devoted, despite his vanity and the pinnacles of his stupidity, to the creation of poetry.

"Flames" lay, soiled with many mailings, in his room. Thither Alfred Reymblinger walked. There he sat down after carefully closing the door. He had achieved a decision, simple, direct, and embracing.

He removed from his pocket a little blue box. It contained white tablets. Moving about with the manner of a man intent upon a long-rehearsed work, he placed the tablets in a glass of water, and, by the light of the moon, watched them dissolve and shed a spiral of bubbles through the liquid; his mind was singularly clear. Because of his faith in the poetry he had written, Alfred Reymblinger had decided to end his life and give his genius an opportunity.

Once dead, Alfred Reymblinger would come into his own. He produced from his pocket a sheet of paper on

which was writing. He had written it a week ago. It was a brief statement. It informed the world that he, whose body would be found in this room, was none other than Alfred Reymblinger, who, in order to attract attention to himself, had assumed the name and manner of Rene D'Or. There would be a sensation. The world would marvel at the genius of a man who had been able to do what he had done.

Alfred Reymblinger laid the sheet of paper carefully on a table before him, and raising the glass of water in which the white tablets had now become quiet and invisible, he looked out of the window at the night. A smile came across his lips. He shut his eyes and drank.

A little wind rising from the street, capered into the silent room and wafted, with many whimsical twistings and turnings, the piece of paper which lay on the table in front of the drooping figure of Alfred Reymblinger. The piece of paper teetered for a moment on the window sill, and then went sailing gently out upon the night.

VI

ON the front pages of the several newspapers of Chicago, and of the many newspapers interested in such matters throughout the country, appeared the next morning the following distressful item:

Rene D'Or, the noted literary critic, was found dead in his rooms late last night. Overwork is believed to have resulted in his demise. Mr. D'Or was an orphan and unmarried and leaves no known relatives. He became famous a year ago through a series of brilliant literary articles attacking the new schools of poetry. His wit and irony, which he exhausted upon the heads of the struggling practitioners of these schools, earned him a swift reputation. He was considered one of the most promising of the younger men of letters in the country. A volume of his collected work under the title of "D'Oresques" will be posthumously published.

LE FORÇAT

By Edmond Labaye

UN sac sur l'épaule, il errait sur la route, en quête d'un mauvais coup à faire. Depuis qu'il s'était échappé du bagne, Pierre Matra n'avait pas mangé tous les jours à sa faim et, cette nuit-là, précisément, son estomac criait famine, n'ayant point reçu de nourriture depuis une quinzaine d'heures.

La lune blafarde, immobile derrière les nuages, masquée par eux à de rapides intervalles, éclairait le chemin par à-coups, tandis que les grands, arbres qui le bordaient, gémissaient sous la poussée du vent qui agitait bruyamment leurs feuilles et faisait craquer leurs branches.

Pas très loin, à deux cents mètres environ, se détachaient dans la pénombre, les tours d'un château. Pierre Matra se dirigea de ce côté et fut bientôt arrêté par l'enceinte qui les entourait. Il n'avait point encore de but bien défini ; cependant, il escalada le mur et se trouva dans le parc.

Tout de suite, il rencontra une pelouse dont l'herbe fine, douce au toucher, et comme élastique, semblait le convier à se reposer. Il s'assit donc et éprouva du plaisir à étendre ses jambes lasses, puis il se prit à réfléchir à ses malheurs présents et passés, se remémora ce qu'il avait souffert à Cayenne et pourquoi il avait été déporté là-bas.

Et d'abord, il se revit dans son chez lui de jadis, heureux, vivant paisible avec Maria, sa femme et son gentil bébé. Certes, il fallait travailler ferme tout le jour pour gagner le pain quotidien. Mais peu lui importait, n'était-il point largement payé de ses fatigues par le bonheur que lui réservait son intérieur au retour ? Mais, hélas ! tout

cela croula d'un seul coup, tel un château de cartes. Un jour il s'enivra. Qu'arriva-t-il après ? Il ne s'en était jamais souvenu au juste. Ce dont il se rappelait parfaitement, c'est qu'un matin, se réveillant au poste de police, il fut conduit devant un magistrat et apprit qu'il avait tué un homme, à la suite d'une discussion après boire.

Ce fut alors des longs jours en prison, dont la monotonie était interrompue seulement de temps en temps par les interrogatoires du juge d'instruction. Ce fut la terrible défense de voir sa femme et son enfant. Ce fut aussi la cour d'assises, sa condamnation à vingt ans de travaux forcés, enfin l'horrible départ pour le bagne, dans une cage, enchaîné comme une bête fauve, sur un bateau qui tanguait, en promiscuité de scélérats comme lui, sans doute, pourtant coupables de crimes plus odieux que le sien, ayant agi en pleine connaissance de cause.

Puis, arrivé au bagne, il avait fallu s'accoutumer aux manières des individus avec qui il était destiné à vivre. Mais, à force de hurler avec les loups, il était devenu loup lui-même. Les mauvais instincts de ses compagnons d'infortune l'avaient gagné. De bon, il était devenu mauvais ; d'honnête, il était devenu indélicat, le vol lui paraissait maintenant une action normale ; il sentait même qu'un nouveau crime ne lui répugnerait point, car, depuis longtemps, il s'était absent du premier. Il avait reconquis chèrement, au prix de mille souffrances, sa liberté ; — banni, il n'avait point de scrupules à avoir. D'ailleurs, quel secours pouvait-il espérer de ceux qui n'étaient pas de sa condition ? l'humanité ne se divise-t-elle

point en deux camps: les légaux et les illégaux?

Il était maintenant classé dans les illégaux; cependant, il voulait vivre, ayant une idée fixe: revoir, une fois seulement, sa femme et son enfant. Rebut de la société, il ne pouvait songer à solliciter du travail, en se montrant au grand jour il risquait de faire découvrir son identité, et de perdre, par ce fait, à nouveau, sa liberté. Pour parvenir à son but, il lui fallait de l'argent:

Or donc, il volerait, il tuerait encore s'il le fallait.

Pierre Matra se leva, bien décidé à agir. Lentement, presque en rampant, se dissimulant le plus possible, marchant sur l'herbe afin d'étouffer ses pas, il disparut dans l'ombre des feuillages. Après avoir escaladé un mur, forcé plusieurs serrures, brisé un carreau (et tout cela, avec tant d'adresse et si peu de bruit, que l'alarme n'avait point été donnée, soit par les chiens, soit par la domesticité. Pierre, nu-pieds, un cou-telas entre les dents, suivait, à tâtons, un couloir obscur du château. Son plan était arrêté; il allait s'introduire dans les appartements, s'emparerait de tout ce qui aurait une réelle valeur, puis s'enfuirait; s'il était surpris, tant pis pour ce qui se présenterait devant lui.

Le couloir tournant à angle droit, Pierre Matra se trouva soudain dans

une partie faiblement éclairée, la lumière venait d'une pièce dont la porte était entre-baillée. Avec des précautions infinies, afin de ne point faire de bruit, il arriva devant cette chambre et, doucement, poussa l'huis. Il fut alors sur le point de laisser échapper un cri de stupeur; qui heureusement s'arrêta dans sa gorge.

Tout au fond de la pièce, sa femme était couchée dans un lit de fer, simple, et, presque à côté d'elle, dans un grand berceau, dormait un bébé de trois ou quatre ans, son fils, son cher enfant!

Sur les chaises de paille, qui meublaient la chambre, des vêtements étaient placés. Un bonnet et un tablier blancs, posés sur une table, indiquaient clairement les fonctions que Maria devait occuper au château.

Le premier moment de stupeur passé, il examina curieusement le local et vit, accrochée au mur, dans un modeste petit cadre, une photographie. Doucement, il s'approcha et reconnut son portrait.

Alors, deux grosses larmes roulèrent sur ses joues, longuement il regarda sa femme et son enfant, leur envoya un baiser de la main, et disparut.

Le lendemain, à quelques kilomètres du château, on repêcha un cadavre dans la rivière:

C'était celui de Pierre Matra.



A MARRIED woman derives much of her pleasure from making her husband realize what a sacrifice she made in marrying him.



A MAN always wants to be first in a woman's life, but a woman prefers to be last in a man's. It's certainly safer.



SOME women only know what they want when they realize they can't get it.

S. S. May, 1919

THE FIFTH HORSEMAN OF THE APOCALYPSE

By George Jean Nathan

OF the numerous and fecund fallacies concerned with criticism, doubtless the most unremittingly *enceinte* is that which holds it a vastly more easy business to blame than to praise. "Any fool can find fault" has been the cornerstone of protestant retaliation to so-called destructive criticism for something over two centuries. Upon it have been reared the most sardonic animadversions of the Balzacs, Landors, Coleridges, Shelleys, Addisons, Lambs, Drydens and Disraelis, the very acuteness and hence longevity of whose destructive criticism of destructive criticism might possibly suggest to the more waggish logician that the exceptionally gifted disparagers in point—by proving both what they set out to prove and, automatically, the reverse—swung the punitive cowhide so far around their heads that it nipped their own ears.

That any fool can find fault is, of course, perfectly true. But that any fool can find fault accurately, soundly and searchingly is a horse of another colour. So to find fault calls upon and commands a decidedly uncommon talent. And so, above this, to find fault with such a fault finder calls upon and commands—as the history of destructive criticism emphatically proves—a downright genius. Any picturesque but empty dodo like the late Nat Goodwin can toss off a four-pound five-dollar book finding fault with everything from the criticism of Dr. Johnson to Edna Goodrich's mother, but it takes the talent of a William Archer to find searching fault even with a single

one of Brunetière's dramatic theories, and the genius of a Bernard Shaw to find sound fault with what seemed to be the searching fault which William Archer found.

The extraordinarily capricious quality of the mass of journalistic criticism in America is due, not as is generally maintained, to the desire of its writers to please by indiscriminate praise, but to the utter incapacity on the part of these writers to dispraise. In the theatrical criticism that appears in the native morning newspapers, the omnipresent note of eulogy is attributable less to the commentator's wish to eulogize than to the recognized fact that, given less than an hour in which to confect an estimate of a play, gush is immensely more simple of negotiation than diatribe. Every critical writer knows well the truth of this. When he is lazy, he writes praise; only when his mind is alert and eager does he feel himself capable of fault finding. The art of the careful, honest and demolishing *coup de grâce* is an art calling, firstly, for an exhaustive knowledge of the subject under the microscope, secondly, for an original and sharply inventive analytical turn of mind, and thirdly, for a wit and power over words that shall make them whiz through the printed page. The art of the equally careful and honest hip-hooray, even at its highest, on the other hand calls upon at least the first two of these attributes in considerably less degree.

That the art of penetrating fault finding—or "destructive criticism," as the jay misnomer has it—is a grant denied

the considerable majority of our journalistic luminaries may be clearly discerned not only in the lavish bravos and vivas already mentioned as constituting the bulk of the daily reviews, but—better still—in the retrospective and more carefully pondered weekly review of reviews published in the Sunday editions. In these latter reviews one regularly observes a brave effort at qualification of the morning-after doxologies and joss-burnings, a sincere and upright attempt to expose holes. But what the sum? Generally little more than a faint barking of amiable dachshunds suddenly disguised as ferocious bloodhounds—with Eliza already twenty miles away. The notion that this daily journalistic criticism is dishonest—a theory cherished by most playwrights who compose dramas in which the heroine, when the detective's back is turned, cleverly substitutes a railroad time-table for the warrant for her lover's arrest, and by most actors whose eyes have been alleged by the critic for the *Mercure de Hoboken* to be not quite so dreamy as Chauncey Olcott's, or Louis Mann's—this notion is absurd. The American journalistic criticism, whether morning or evening, is, save in a few notorious instances, not dishonest; it is, save in a few equally notorious instances, merely disqualified. It is disqualified because it honestly essays, when the occasion honestly presents itself, to write razor-keen destructive criticism and finds itself, because of the supreme difficulty of the job and its own dialectical shortcomings, sorely confounded. Its toe, eager, well-aimed and valiant, is poised trembling abaft the breeches, yet condemned by inhibitory tendons to lift gingerly and rest content merely to flick a bit of lint off the coat-tail.

Consider, for example, such a paper as the present New York *Globe*. The perspirations of this gazette to compose incisive destructive criticism when the occasion demands are typical of the perspirations of at least three-quarters of our American newspapers. And the result of these perspirations is destruct-

ive criticism that may be described as being approximately as destructive as the eruption of a Kiralfy card-board volcano. Even simple fault finding, fault finding that more or less accurately finds the fault, evades such journalistic enterprise. In concrete instance whereof, take some such review as this, culled from the columns of the journal named:

"'A Sleepless Night' is a farce comedy of the familiar Long Island bedroom type, but it achieves something farce it is not supposed to achieve. Jack Larric and Gustav Blum, who are responsible for the night of insomnia, have managed to write much that is satirical into their farce comedy, and that is inimical to the piece. Folks that go to see farces don't want to giggle; they want to laugh out loud, and blush." Etc., etc. . .

Here, indubitably, was a perfectly honest attempt to write honest destructive criticism that was honestly merited. Yet observe the result. The exhibit in point failed to provoke laughter and, since laughter is the chief end necessarily sought by such an exhibit, failed of effect. The *Globe* commentator appreciated this typically and accurately enough, yet when he tried to get at the reason for the failure—when he essayed even the simple business of getting whatever thoughts he had about the case onto paper—he became as one utterly bewildered and began metaphorically to chase himself 'round in circles. Thus, while in his very first sentence he says the piece is a farce comedy, he finds fault with the farce comedy because the farce comedy achieves something that farce is not supposed to achieve. Which, obviously, is not far removed from criticizing "A Wife Without a Smile" because it achieves something that "Charley's Aunt" is not supposed to achieve. Granting even that the *Globe* Olympiodorus had not here become somewhat twisted, what is the "something" which one observes him astutely figuring out as being inimical and alien to farce? One observes him astutely figuring that satire is inimical and alien to farce, thus sagaciously proving to the doubt-

less vastly embarrassed Shaw that his "Androcles" is a gloomy and ill-advised hybrid, and that such Continental satirical farces as "The Fat Cæsar," "Donatello" and the like are mournful affairs.

The fault finding which the gentleman now and eventually negotiates, to wit, that the particular farce with which he is concerned was not laughable because while satire may make "folks" giggle, it can not make these "folks" laugh or blush, shows even more clearly the blind and vain critical groping for the play's actual fault. That satire cannot make persons laugh aloud (as, for example, in the demonstrated case, among a hundred or more others, of de Caillavet's and de Fler's "The King") or blush (as, for example, in the maybe demonstrated case, among a hundred or more others, of the unexpurgated satirical farce on the French petty bureaucrat, "La Présidente") is by way of being what is known to newspapers as a "beat"—and may so be proudly regarded by the *Globe* Zimbabwe.

Is it any wonder, therefore, that appreciating the difficulty of achieving anything approaching destructive criticism, or even remotely sound fault finding, the majority of newspapers very frankly heave a sigh, throw up the sponge and cover their confusion by the simple expedient of shooting off very easily contrived volleys of Pollyanna oil? To be fair to the *Globe* Vesuvius, one must at least praise him for his effort to do the right thing, for his hard sweating to get at the faults of the play he was engaged to appraise, for his attempt, however ill-fated, to brew an appropriately destructive criticism. But for one *Globe* Dred Scott who succeeds even in getting so far with destructive criticism as this *Globe* Dred Scott has more or less brilliantly succeeded, one finds a multitude of *Evening Telegram* cupids who correctly appreciate the labyrinthine embarrassments of the job and genially pass them up with such facile constructive slow music as

"Mr. Glendinning's attempts to extricate himself from his sad predicament, into which he fell guiltlessly, thus seeming to bear out the contention that it is only the innocent who get caught, were screamingly funny, as explanations usually are to unfeeling auditors. It could not be otherwise. Any youth put under the necessity of clearing up the mystery and doubt aroused by the discovery of one pink-pajamaed beauty under the bedclothes in his apartment, would be funny just because of the foolishness of the idea that it could be done. But two! Oh, yes, the other one wasn't in pajamas. No, she sort of wrapped herself in a flowered kimono and looked self-conscious. As one of the other characters delivered the line, 'two was much too much'."

"A Sleepless Night" was written by Jack Larric and Gustav Blum. The dialogue is clever and there are times when it approaches the brilliant. There is a rapid-fire effect to it that helps in holding interest and bridges the gaps where the action lags a little. It also possesses the virtue of not appearing to have been written merely for the effect of being smart. The spoken words are all germane to the story. The play is ideally cast. The various actors did their roles to perfection. The production was staged under the capable direction of Oscar Eagle.

These assiduously sweet fellows who look invariably upon the theater as a June bride looks at a lily-bud are, however, comparatively not always so droll as they would seem. After all, the species of reviewing which they espouse is not a whit less trumpery than that practised by the equally assiduous journalistic Eumenides who would seem to look not infrequently upon the theater (save when it concerns itself with the works of Percy Mackaye and other representatives of the eighteenth century) as a ravenous bus boy looks upon the free lunch. The mock destructive criticism of this latter school is fully as jocund as the mock constructive criticism of the former. As an example, take on this particular occasion a single slice from the critical opus in the *Evening Post* anent the same farce, "A Sleepless Night." After a very fierce and savage preliminary charge upon the absurdly trivial little dingus with tanks, ten-ton pile drivers, iron shillelahs, large-bore cannon, dum-dum spears,

howitzers and assafœtida bombs, this mortal pot-shot:

"The story which it endeavours to tell is too silly and preposterous to come within even the elastic limits of farce."

This, the *Post* Garcilasso Vega's carefully calculated climacteric fetch and death wallop. But the story, alas, happens to be fundamentally much the same story as that of Mr. William Hurlbut's comedy, "Saturday to Monday," which, upon its presentation by Winthrop Ames a season ago, was—unless I am very greatly in error—highly praised as interesting and reasonable by this same forgetful commentator.

But to argue in defense and explanation of destructive criticism as a high form of art that its absence from the columns of our newspapers is often chiefly predicated on want of leisure wherein carefully to weigh, ponder and reflect, and wherein to interpret the findings pointedly and with skill and cunning, is plainly as droll as arguing that genius is merely a capacity for taking infinite time. The question is not one of lacking leisure, but one of lacking expertness. Turning from the newspapers to the American periodicals and books of dramatic criticism—all granted time and to spare for studious reflection—one encounters, with very few exceptions, a similar disability in the art of sound fault-finding. Apparently appreciating, as the newspaper commentators appreciate, that sharp destructive criticism is a rooster too difficult of winging, our critics of the drama for the more leisurely brochures take no chances, but sedulously devote themselves to an attempted concealment of their shortcomings in enthusiastic articles on such impressive and safe yokel-magnets as community theaters, Maeterlinck, the *esprit* of Yvette Guilbert, and the value of repertory companies. That these enthusiasms are often grounded infinitely less upon calm observation and sound deduction than upon an unacquaintance with the *topic in hand* so great that it makes

criticism—out of the question, is fairly obvious to anyone who casts an eye at these bland uplift professors and their essays. Take, for example, my friend Clayton Hamilton, Romeo perfecto to *Vogue*. And take, for example, his recent amorous critique of Henri Lavedan, a few illuminating passages from which I herewith make bold to quote:

"Throughout the last three decades, Henri Lavedan, of the French Academy, has been recognized as one of the foremost representatives of contemporary French dramatic authorship; and, though his work is intimately national, he has enjoyed a quite unusual success in the commercial theater of this country. The first of his plays to be presented in America was 'Catherine,' which was produced by Annie Russell in 1898. Otis Skinner produced 'The Duel' in 1906, and 'Sire' in 1911. In 1918, Mrs. Fiske presented 'Service'; and the latest item on the list, 'The Marquis de Priola,' has recently been added by Leo Ditrichstein. Of these five plays, three have run for not less than an entire season in this country, and the others have been played for many weeks. What is the reason for this remarkable success of M. Lavedan with a theater-going public that rejects so many European dramatists of even larger reputation on the ground that they are 'foreign,' and therefore not immediately comprehensible?

"The reason is that Henri Lavedan is to be admired mainly as a painter of portraits. . . . The American public is, no doubt, unconsciously attracted by the fact that M. Lavedan is more sincerely and emphatically moral in his work than any other of his French contemporaries, with the single exception of Eugène Brieux. . . . His method is similar to that of one of the most honourable authors of our recent English drama; and it would not be at all beside the mark to describe M. Lavedan as the French equivalent of Henry Arthur Jones." Etc., etc.

What have we here, gentlemen? We have—if you will forgive me the insuavity—slobbergobble. For what we read is something that should rightly have been destructive criticism but that has been instead shrewdly palmed off on the layman as "constructive" by a critic slick enough to understand that there is nothing like extravagant praise to cover up and hide inaccuracies. Examining the Hamilton composition even

inexactness progressing with a gay jazzy crescendo to a sweet-sour whack on the cowbell.

By no first-rate critic in or out of France has Lavedan ever been recognized as of the company of Rostand, de Curel, Hervieu, Donnay, Lemaitre—or even de Caillavet and de Flers. He belongs rather, as every first-rate critic without exception has agreed, to the second group containing such names as Bernstein and Bataille. (We will omit Brioux and Porto-Riche—and even Capus—for whatever one's personal regard for their eminence, their positions have been open to debate—and let us be fair to the *Vogue* philosopher.) Thus, to say that Lavedan is one of the foremost representatives of contemporary French dramatic authorship is relatively as exact as to say that Ludwig Fulda (though a very talented man) is one of the foremost representatives of contemporary German dramatic authorship. Furthermore, Lavedan's plays, contrary to M. Hamilton, have—with a single exception—not only *not* "enjoyed a quite unusual success in the commercial theater of this country" but—as M. Hamilton may learn if he will engage the records of the late Charles Frohman—have lost a fine pot of money. And the single exception, "Catherine," will be found from the same easily accessible records to have achieved a comparative success less on its own merits than by virtue of the excellent showmanship and sentimental hokum slyly practised in the casting of the play—a hokum whose adroit press-agenting will be unfolded to our *Vogue* sunbeam by any theatrical manager of the day. But the reliability of our impulsive critic is even more simply to be plumbed in his record that "The Marquis de Priola" "has been played for many weeks." "The Marquis de Priola"—as I write this—has long since been withdrawn from the Liberty Theater after a plainly forced run; and, whatever the prosperity of its future, the fact remains that when Hamilton wrote his piece it had been playing exactly *two* weeks.

Let us go on. We now find our *Vogue* nightingale contending that this quite unusual commercial success (sic) of Lavedan is due (1) to his ability as a painter of portraits, and (2) to his moral accent. Yet "Catherine," Lavedan's one American money-maker, will be admitted even by our *Vogue* Pollyanna to contain one of his very weakest portraits, not only not in any degree to be compared with the portraits painted by him in the instances of "Le Prince d'Aurec" and "Le Nouveau Jeu," but—more—not to be compared even with those exhibited by him in his commercial failures, "Le Duel" and "Sire"—and possibly "Servir." Again, to argue that "the American public is no doubt unconsciously attracted (and here, again, sic) by the fact that M. Lavedan is more sincerely and emphatically moral in his work than any other of his French contemporaries, with the single exception of Eugène Brioux" is (1) evidently to have contrived to read an esoteric lewdness into such a contemporary as Rostand, for instance, and (2) to believe that the American public was no doubt unconsciously attracted to so many enormously lucrative French plays of "The Girl from Rector's" order because of their sincere and emphatic Sunday School aspect. . . . The whimsey of the Henry Arthur Jones comparison, after the preliminary ecstatic cornet solo and cheek-kissing, I need scarcely expand upon.

* * *

I have stated that gush is ever immensely more simple of negotiation than diatribe; that every critical writer knows well the truth of this; that when such a writer is lazy he writes praise; and that only when his mind is alert and eager does he feel himself capable of fault finding. Observe the self-proved truth whereof. The day is a soft and warm day and in me is a drowsy touch of the Spring fever. I am unwontedly lazy and what do I do? I do what every critic does in a similar situation. I shrink from the arduous and perplexing task of finding fault and

resort to the simple and easy business of writing praise. Instead of writing destructive criticism of destructive criticism, I indulge in the ductile subterfuge of writing praise of destructive criticism!

II

No sooner did my recent article lavishly extolling the virtues of Mr. Arthur Hopkins appear on the newsstands than did the object of my admiration with a sardonic promptness make a bee-line for the Republic Theater and produce one of the worst plays I have seen in years. And not only one of the worst plays, but one of the weakest exhibitions of casting, direction and staging. Named "The Fortune Teller" and written by Leighton Graves Osmun, a genius of the movies, the play is so bad that it automatically provides its own destructive criticism. A callow assimilation of the most banal elements of such windmills as "East Lynne," "Madame X," "That Sort" and "The Rogue's Comedy," the exhibit reveals an utter lack of literary skill, dramatic skill or even mere theatrical skill—and not the faintest trace of character assaying, philosophy, humour or commentary on life. A "mother love" whiffle solo of the whinnying species common to the mob theater at its soapiest, the writing of destructive criticism of the affair were as gratuitous as the writing of destructive criticism of scapulodynia. And not only as gratuitous, but as difficult. As in all such cases, constructive criticism is very much more simple of execution. To indicate what may be done with a "mother love" theme by a writer who has observed mothers instead of stock companies—by even a novice with an eye that yet sees other philosophies than those obtaining in Los Angeles and Fort Lee—I may constructively point to a story by a Mr. Lawrence Rendel in the present number of this magazine.

Mr. Hopkins' casting of the Osmun masterpiece disclosed the irreclaimable *vaudeville diva*, Miss Marjorie Ram-

beau, in the leading rôle. Miss Rambeau's notion of playing an emotional rôle would seem to consist in drawing her lips into a hard straight line, gazing out into the auditorium until her eye lights upon Mr. Archie Selwyn, staring fixedly at that gentleman as if he owed her money, and then—after a loud gulp and snuffle—reading whatever speech she happens to have as if it were a telegram announcing the death of her mother. Mr. Hopkins' staging of the play was contrived with seedy scenery and his erstwhile sharp editorial eye failed to grasp the numerous absurd anti-climaxes with which the amateurish playwright had burdened his manuscript. All in all, a signal discredit to the record of a first-rate producer.

III

THE career of the actor-manager in the English-speaking theater has become so largely a matter of stencil that it may, almost without exception, be safely predicted in terms of three stages. The first stage finds the actor-manager—at fifty still vastly intrigued by his own beauty—given to presenting himself in sentimental drawing-room comedies wherein, by virtue of an elegant morning coat and a gift for polite repartee, he succeeds in winning the affections of the lovely ingénue from the juvenile. The second stage finds him—nearing sixty and now reluctantly intrigued somewhat less by his manly beauty than by his cosmic eminence—given to presenting himself in biographical plays wherein, by virtue of an illustrious historical name, a gray wig, a red plush suit, and alternately witty and heroic sentiments culled from the mouth of the dramatized deceased, he succeeds in winning for himself at second-hand all the plaudits withheld from the poor dead genius in his life-time. And the third stage finds him—beyond sixty and fat, and hence perforce brought to abjure his mirror and think of himself primarily as an actor—given, with but minor ex-

cursions for old times' sake, to Shakespeare.

That the second stage has been duly reached in the actor-manager career of Mr. Henry Miller is presently to be witnessed in his presentation of himself in the rôle of "Molière" in the biographical play of that name from the hand of Mr. Phillip Moeller. This Mr. Moeller has done his job with a measure of the same skill exhibited by him in his biographical comedy on George Sand; and if the new play carries with it the indubitable suggestion of much pencil-head munching, laborious annotations on the margins of reference books and like evidences of hard strain as opposed to easy inspiration, it is yet—as a piece of theatrical writing—considerably superior to the mass of hack Broadway stuff one is called upon annually to engage.

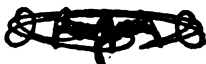
The biographical play is probably of all plays the easiest to write well, since the playwright's philosophy and wit, attack and resolution, characters and characterizations, lay already full-blown before him and require but the not difficult manipulation of theatrical wires to set them to dancing. Such dramatic composition, however, always impresses persons profoundly. Yet it is a more simple thing, I venture, to write a play like "Molière" (for all that it approaches to the first-rate in its field) than to write a tenth-rate play like "Turn to the Right."

The acting of the Moeller play is, save in one or two instances, of the droll accent customarily encountered in these biographical *opera*. In this par-

ticular case, the Molière of Mr. Miller is much less the father of French comedy than an amalgam of the Comte de Candale and Daddy Longlegs. As King Louis XIV, Mr. Holbrook Blinn suggests only a stockbroker dressed up for a fancy dress ball. Miss Blanche Bates is, as Montespan, effective; but Miss Estelle Winwood again comports herself as a wet tennis ball in the part of Armande. The minor rôles are handled with relatively greater dexterity.

IV

SHAW'S miniature vaudeville, "Augustus Does His Bit," briefly produced by Mr. Williams as a curtain raiser to John Taintor Foote's comedy, "Toby's Bow," contains in its one twenty-five minute act twenty-five times the measure of humour contained in Mr. Foote's three forty-five minute acts. If this humour is not always up to the Shaw mark, it is at least always many notches higher than the mark of the majority of writers whose labours the local stage is in the habit of uncovering. British pomp and complacency, Shaw's favourite topic, is here again the seat to which the satiric paddle is applied: in this instance, British pomp and complacency in khaki. And for all the fact that the paddle in good truth occasionally slips, the whacks when it reaches home are yet of a sufficiently robust jocosity to make amends. Any playwright who can uncork three loud laughs from me in less than half an hour has, as I see it, amply done his duty by me.



PROF. VEBLEN AND THE COW

By H. L. Mencken

I

TEN or twelve years ago, being engaged in a fatuous public discussion with what was then known as an intellectual Socialist (he has since, observing the proof of the pudding in Russia, renounced the red flag, taken down the wood-cut of Karl Marx from his wall, put up lithographs of Joseph Daniels, Elihu Root and Abraham Lincoln, and bought War Savings Stamps), I was constantly beguiled and assaulted by his long quotations from a certain Prof. Dr. Thorstein Veblen, then quite unknown to me. My antagonist seemed to attach a great deal of importance to these quotations and urged me to read them well, but the more I read them the less I could make out of them, and so, growing impatient, I denounced this Prof. Veblen as a hawk of pishposh, refused to waste any more time on his snarling polysyllables, and applied myself to the other Socialist witnesses in the case, seeking to set fire to their shirts. That old debate, which took place by mail (for the Socialist lived like a moving-picture actor on his country estate, and I was a wage-slave attached to a city newspaper), was afterward embalmed in a dull book, and the book is now as completely forgotten as Baxter's "Saint's Rest" or the Constitution of the United States. I myself have not looked into it for six or eight years, and all I remember of my opponent's argument (beyond the fact that he not only failed to convert me to the embryonic Bolshevism of the time, but even shook my native faith in democracy) is his curious respect for the aforesaid Prof. Dr. Thorstein Veblen, and his delight in the learned gentleman's long, tortuous and

(to me, at least) flapdoodlish phrases.

There was, indeed, a time when I forgot even this—when my mind was purged of the professor's very name. This was, say, from 1909 or thereabout to the middle of 1917. During that time, having lost interest in Socialism, even as an amateur psychiatrist, I ceased to read its literature, and thus lost track of all its Great Thinkers. The periodicals that I then gave an eye to, setting aside newspapers, were chiefly the familiar American imitations of the English weeklies of opinion, and in these the dominant Great Thinker was, first, the late Prof. Dr. William James, and, after his decease, Prof. Dr. John Dewey. The reign of James, as the illuminated will recall, was long and glorious. For three or four years running he was mentioned in every one of those warmed-over *Spectators* and *Saturday Reviews* at least once a week, and often a dozen times. Among the less sombre gazettes of the republic, to be sure, there were other heroes: Maeterlinck, Rabindranath Tagore, Judge Ben B. Lindsey, Arnold Bennett, the late Major-General Roosevelt, Tom Lawson and so on. Still further down the literary and intellectual scale there were yet others: Hall Caine, Eugene Brioux and Leonard Merrick among them, with paper-bag cookery and the twilight sleep, to dispute their popularity. But on the majestic level of the *Nation*, among the white and lavender peaks of professorial ratiocination, there was scarcely a serious rival to James. Now and then, perhaps, Jane Addams had a month of vogue, and during one winter there was a rage for Bergson, and for a short space German spies tried to set up Eucken (now damned with Wagner, Nietz-

sche and Ludendorff), but taking one day with another James held his own against the field. His ideas, immediately they were stated, became the ideas of every pedagogue from Harvard to Leland Stanford, and the pedagogues, laboring furiously at space rates, rammed them into the skulls of the lesser *intelligentsia*. To have called James an ass, during the year 1909, would have been as fatal as to have written a sentence like this one without so many *haves*. He died a year or so later, but his ghost went marching on: it took three or four years to interpret and pigeon-hole his philosophical remains and to take down and redact his messages (via Sir Oliver Lodge, Little Brighteyes, Wah-Wah the Indian Chief, and other gifted psychics) from the spirit world. But then, gradually, he achieved the whole irrevocable act of death, and there was a vacancy. To it Prof. Dr. Dewey was elected by the acclamation of all right-thinking and forward-looking men. He was an expert in pedagogics, metaphysics, psychology, ethics, logic, politics, pedagogical metaphysics, metaphysical psychology, psychological ethics, ethical logic, logical politics and political pedagogics. He was *Artium Magister*, *Philosophiæ Doctor* and twice *Legum Doctor*. He had written a book called "How to Think." He was a professor. *Ergo*, he was the ideal candidate, and so he was nominated, elected and inaugurated, and for three years, more or less, he enjoyed a peaceful reign in the groves of sapience, and the *intelligentsia* venerated him as they had once venerated James.

I myself enjoyed the discourses of this Prof. Dewey and was in hopes that he would last. Born so recently as 1859 and a man of sober habits, he seemed likely to peg along until 1935 or 1940, a gentle and charming geyser of correct thought. But it was not, alas, to be. Under cover of pragmatism, that serpent's metaphysic, there was unrest beneath the surface. Young college professors who seemed as harmless as so many convicts in the death-house were secretly *firting with new and red-hot*

ideas. Whole regiments and brigades of them yielded in stealthy privacy to rebellious and often incomprehensible yearnings. Now and then, as if to reveal what was brewing, a hell fire blazed and a Prof. Dr. Scott Nearing went sky-hooting through its smoke. One heard whispers of strange heresies—economic, sociological, even political. Gossip had it that pedagogy was hatching vipers, nay, was already brought to bed. But not much of this got into the jitney *Saturday Reviews* and grape-juice *Athenaums*—a hint or two, maybe, but no more. In the main they kept to their old resolute demands for a pure civil-service, the budget system in Congress, the abolition of hazing at the Naval Academy, an honest primary and justice to the Filipinos, with the overthrow of Prussian militarism added after August, 1914. And Dr. Dewey, on his remote Socratic Alp, pursued the calm reinforcement of the philosophical principles underlying these and all other lofty causes. . . .

Then, of a sudden, Siss! Boom! Ah! Then, overnight, the rising of the intellectual Bolsheviki, the headlong assault upon all the old axioms of pedagogical speculation, the nihilistic dethronement of Prof. Dewey—and rah, rah, rah for Prof. Dr. Thorstein Veblen! Veblen? Could it be—? Aye, it was! My old acquaintance! The *Doctor obscurus* of my half-forgotten bout with the intellectual Socialist! The Great Thinker *redivivus*! Here, indeed, he was again, and in a few months—almost it seemed a few days—he was all over the *Nation*, the *Dial*, the *New Republic* and the rest of them, and his books and pamphlets began to pour from the presses, and the newspapers reported his every wink and whisper, and everybody who was anybody began gabbling about him. The spectacle, I do not hesitate to say, somewhat distressed me. On the one hand, I was sorry to see so learned and interesting a man as Dr. Dewey sent back to Columbia, there to lecture in imperfect Yiddish to classes of Grand Street Platos. And on the other hand, I shrank supinely from

the appalling job, newly rearing itself before me, of re-reading the whole canon of the singularly laborious and muggy, the incomparably tangled and unintelligible works of Prof. Dr. Thorstein Veblen.

II

WELL, I have got through it nevertheless, and, after all, with rather less damage than I looked for. There are, first and last, six volumes on the eminent master's shelf, and I have read the whole half dozen. I rehearse their titles: "The Theory of the Leisure Class," "The Theory of Business Enterprise," "The Instinct of Workmanship," "Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution," "The Nature of Peace and the Terms of Its Perpetuation" and "The Higher Learning in America" (all *Huebsch*). But I do not recommend the complete course; a part will suffice for you, if you are naturally bright. Read the first book and the last, and you will pick up enough of Prof. Veblen's theory to outfit you acceptably. Read the first alone, and you will have a fairly good general acquaintance with his ideas. For those ideas, save in detail, are quite simple, and what is more, often very familiar. The only thing that is genuinely new about them is the astoundingly grandiose and rococo manner of their statement—the almost unbelievable tediousness and flatulence of the learned schoolmaster's prose. Tunnel under those great mounds and stalagmites of words, dig down into that vast kitchen-midden of discordant and irritating polysyllables, blow up that hard, thick shell of professorial bombast, and what you will find is chiefly a mass of platitudes—the self-evident made thunderous, the obvious in terms of the stupendous. Marx said a great deal of it, and what Marx overlooked has been said over and over again by his heirs and assigns. But Marx, at this business, labored under a handicap: he wrote in German, a language he actually understood. Prof. Veblen suffers no such disadvantage. Though

born, I believe, in These States, and resident here all his life, he achieves the effect, perhaps without employing the means, of thinking in some foreign language—say Latin, Sumerian or Old Church Slavic—and then painfully clawing his thoughts into English. The result is a style that affects the higher cerebral centers like a constant roll of subway expresses. The second result is a sort of bewildered numbness of the senses, as before some fabulous and unearthly marvel. And the third result, if I make no mistake, is the present celebrity of the professor as a Great Thinker. In brief, he states his hollow nothings in such high, astounding terms that they must inevitably arrest and blister the right-thinking mind. He makes them mysterious. He makes them shocking. He makes them portentous. And so he makes them stick and burn.

No doubt you think that I exaggerate—perhaps even that I lie. If so, then consider this specimen—the first paragraph of Chapter XIII of "The Theory of the Leisure Class":

In an increasing proportion as time goes on, the anthropomorphic cult, with its code of devout observances, suffers a progressive disintegration through the stress of economic exigencies and the decay of the system of status. As this disintegration proceeds, there come to be associated and blended with the devout attitude certain other motives and impulses that are not always of an anthropomorphic origin, nor traceable to the habit of personal subservience. Not all of these subsidiary impulses that blend with the bait of devoutness in the later devotional life are altogether congruous with the devout attitude or with the anthropomorphic apprehension of sequence of phenomena. Their origin being not the same, their action upon the scheme of devout life is also not in the same direction. In many ways they traverse the underlying norm of subservience or vicarious life to which the code of devout observances and the ecclesiastical and sacerdotal institutions are to be traced as their substantial basis. Through the presence of these alien motives the social and industrial régime of status gradually disintegrates, and the canon of personal subservience loses the support derived from an unbroken tradition. Extraneous habits and proclivities encroach upon the field of action occupied by this canon, and it presently

comes about that the ecclesiastical and sacerdotal structures are partially converted to other uses, in some measure alien to the purposes of the scheme of devout life as it stood in the days of the most vigorous and characteristic development of the priesthood.

Well, what have we here? What do all these harsh, cacophonous sentences mean? Simply that, in the course of time, the worship of God is corrupted by extraneous enterprises, and that the church, ceasing to be merely a temple, becomes the headquarters of these enterprises. In brief, that men try to serve God by serving other men. This bald platitude, which must be obvious to any child who has ever been to a church bazar or a parish house, is here tortured, worried and run through rollers until it is spread out to 241 words, of which fully 200 are unnecessary. The next paragraph is even worse. In it the gifted pundit undertakes to explain in his peculiar dialect "that non-reverent sense of æsthetic congruity with the environment which is left as a residue of the latter-day act of worship after elimination of its anthropomorphic content." Just what does he mean by this "non-reverent sense of æsthetic congruity"? I have studied the whole paragraph for three days, halting only for meals and sleep, and I have come to certain conclusions. I may be wrong, but nevertheless it is the best that I can do. What I conclude is this: he is trying to say that many people go to church, not because they are afraid of the devil, but because they enjoy the music, and like to look at the stained glass, the potted lilies and the rev. pastor. To get this profound and highly original observation upon paper, he wastes, not merely 241, but more than 300 words! To say what could be said on a postage stamp he takes more than a page in his book!

And so in the other five volumes. In "The Higher Learning in America," the last to be published, the writing reaches its worst. It is as if the practise of it were a relentless and incurable disease, a sort of progressive intellectual diabetes. Words are piled upon

words until all sense that there must be a meaning in them is lost. One wanders in a maze of nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, pronouns and participles, most of them swollen and nearly all of them unable to walk. It is almost impossible to imagine worse English, within the limits of correct grammar. It is clumsy, affected, obscure, bombastic, windy, empty. It is without grace or distinction and it is often almost without elemental sense. And yet this highfalutin rumble-bumble, with its roots half in platitude and half in nonsense, has been gravely accepted, for a year or two past, as revelation, and the author of it has been put into the front rank of national prophets. Nothing could more horribly reveal the essential childishness of all intellectual speculation in the United States. Nothing could offer a more depressing proof of the extent to which the game of ideas has been divested of all interest and vitality, and reduced to the estate of a formal combat with bladders between platitudinizing pedagogues.

III

I HAVE said that most of Prof. Veblen's notions are not only flabby, but also stale. This is true. Reading him, one never gets the thrill that goes with sharp and original thinking, dexterously put into words. His fundamental ideas, stripping them of their gaudy investiture, are always seen to be feeble and obvious. The concepts underlying "The Theory of the Leisure Class" are simply Socialism-and-water, and the concepts underlying "The Higher Learning in America" are so elemental that even the editorial writers of newspapers have often voiced them. But now and then, starting from this stock balderdash, the talented professor attempts flights of a more original character—and straightway comes tumbling down into absurdity. What the poor reader then has to struggle with is not only intolerably bad writing, but also loose, cocksure and preposterous thinking. In brief, what he then has to

struggle with is stuff so bad that it is almost impossible to imagine it much worse.

Now for an example or two. The first is from Chapter IV of "The Theory of the Leisure Class." The specific problem before the professor has to do with the social convention which frowns upon the consumption of alcohol by women, at least to the extent to which men may consume it. Well, then, what is his explanation of this convention? In brief, here is his process of reasoning:

1. The leisure class, which is the predatory class of feudal times, reserves all luxuries for itself, and disapproves their use by members of the lower classes, for this use takes away their charm by taking away their exclusive possession.

2. Women are chattels in the possession of the leisure class, and hence subject to the rules made for inferiors. "The patriarchal tradition . . . says that the woman, being a chattel, should consume only what is necessary to her sustenance, except so far as her further consumption contributes to the comfort or the good repute of her master."

3. The consumption of alcohol contributes nothing to the comfort or good repute of the woman's master, but "detracts sensibly from the comfort or pleasure" of her master. *Ergo*, she is forbidden to drink.

This, I believe, is a fair specimen of the professor's reasoning. Observe it well, for it is typical. That is to say, it starts off with a gratuitous and highly dubious assumption, proceeds to an equally dubious deduction, and then ends with a platitude which begs the whole question. What sound reason is there for believing that exclusive possession is the hall-mark of luxury? There is none that I can see. It may be true of a few luxuries, but it is certainly not true of the most familiar ones. Do I enjoy a decent bath because I know that John Smith cannot afford one—or because I delight in being clean? Do I admire Beethoven's Fifth Symphony because it is incomprehensible to bootblacks and Methodists—or *because I genuinely love music?* Do I

with the liver—or because the terrapin is intrinsically a more charming dose? Do I prefer kissing a pretty girl to kissing a charwoman because even a janitor may kiss a charwoman—or because the pretty girl looks better, smells better and kisses better? Now and then, to be sure, the idea of exclusive possession enters into the concept of luxury. I may, if I am an idiot, esteem a book because it is a unique first edition. I may, if I am fond, esteem a woman because she smiles on no one else. But even here, save in a very small minority of cases, other attractions plainly enter into the matter. It pleases me to have a unique first edition, but I wouldn't care anything for a unique first edition of Charles Garvice or Old Cap Collier: the author must have my respect, the book must be intrinsically valuable, there must be much more to it than its mere uniqueness. And if, being fond, I glory in the exclusive smiles of a certain Miss — or Mrs. —, then surely my satisfaction depends chiefly upon the lady herself, and not upon my mere monopoly. Would I delight in the fidelity of the charwoman? Would it give me any joy to learn that, through a sense of duty to me, she had ceased to kiss the janitor?

Confronted by such considerations it seems to me that Dr. Veblen is on wobbly ground when he sets up his twin theories of conspicuous consumption and conspicuous waste, and that he reduces them to utter absurdity by his long and tedious support of them. Nor is he a bit more persuasive when he deals with the specific position of women. That they are, in a limited sense, chattels is too obvious to need statement. A rich man adorns his wife with expensive clothes and jewels for the same reason, among others, that he adorns his own head with a plug-hat: to notify everybody that he can afford it—in brief, to excite the envy of Socialists. But he also does it, let us hope, for another and far better and more powerful reason. To wit that he

Socialist philosophers. In Russia, I am told, the Bolsheviki have actually repudiated it as insane. But, nevertheless it still appeals very forcibly to the majority of normal men in civilized countries, and I am convinced that it is a hundred times as potent as any other reason. The American husband dresses his wife like a circus horse, not primarily because he wants to display his wealth, but because he is a sentimental fellow and ever ready to yield to her desires. If any conception of her as a chattel were really in him, even unconsciously, he would be less her slave. As it is, her vicarious practise of conspicuous waste commonly reaches such a development that her master himself is forced into renunciations—which brings Dr. Veblen's theory to the verge of self-destruction.

His final conclusion is as unsound as his premisses. All it comes to is a plain begging of the question. Why does a man forbid his wife to drink all the alcohol that she can hold? Because it "detracts sensibly from his comfort or pleasure." In other words, it detracts from his comfort and pleasure because it detracts from his comfort and pleasure. Nothing could be feebler. Meanwhile, the real answer is so plain that even a college professor should know it. A man forbids his wife to drink too much because, deep in his secret archives, he has records of the behavior of other women who drank too much, and he is eager to safeguard his wife's self-respect and his own dignity against what he knows to be certain invasion. In brief, it is a commonplace of observation, familiar to all males beyond the age of twenty-one, that once a woman is drunk the rest is a mere matter of time and place: the girl is already there. A husband, viewing this prospect, perhaps shrinks from having his chattel damaged. But let us be soft enough to think that he may also shrink from seeing humiliation, ridicule and bitter regret inflicted upon one who is under his protection, and one whose dignity and happiness are precious to him, and one whom he regards with deep and (I

surely hope) lasting affection. A man's grandfather is surely not his chattel, even by the terms of the Veblen theory, and yet I am sure that no sane man would let the old gentleman go beyond a discreet cocktail or two if a bout of genuine lushing were certain to be followed by the complete destruction of his dignity, his chastity and (if a Presbyterian) his immortal soul.

IV

ONE more example of the estimable professor's logic. On page 135 of "The Theory of the Leisure Class" he turns his garish and buzzing searchlight upon a double problem. First, why do we have lawns around our country houses? Secondly, why don't we employ cows to keep them clipped, instead of importing sweating Italians, Croatians, Alabamans? The first is answered by an appeal to ethnology: we delight in lawns because we are the descendants of "a pastoral people inhabiting a region with a humid climate." True enough, there is in a well-kept lawn "an element of sensuous beauty," but that is secondary: the main thing is that our dolicho-blond ancestors had flocks, and thus took a keen professional interest in grass. (The Marx *motif!* The economic interpretation of history in E flat.) But why don't we keep flocks? Why do we renounce cows and hire Jugo-Slavs? Because "to the average popular apprehension a herd of cattle so pointedly suggests thrift and usefulness that their presence . . . would be intolerably cheap." With the highest respect, Pish! Plowing through a bad book from end to end, I can find nothing sillier than this. Here, indeed, the whole "theory of conspicuous waste" is exposed for precisely what it is: one percent. platitude and ninety-nine percent. bosh. Has the genial professor, pondering his great problems, ever taken a walk in the country? And has he, in the course of that walk, ever crossed a pasture inhabited by a cow (*Bos taurus*)? And has he, making that crossing, ever passed astern of the

cow herself? And has he, thus passing astern, ever stepped carelessly, and—

But this is not a medical journal, and so I had better haul up. The cow, to me, symbolizes the whole speculation of this laborious and humorless pedagogue. From end to end of his books you will find the same tedious torturing of plain facts, the same relentless piling up of thin and preposterous theory, the same flatulent bombast, the same intellectual strabismus. And always with an air of vast importance, always in vexed and formidable sentences, always in the longest words possible, always in the worst English that even a professor ever wrote. One visualizes him with his head thrown back, searching for cryptic answers in the firmament—and not seeing the overt and disconcerting cow—not watching his step. One sees him as the pundit *par excellence*, infinitely earnest and diligent, infinitely honest and patient, but also infinitely hollow and exasperating.

V

But the learned man himself is less interesting as a phenomenon than the lavish hospitality with which his muddled and highly dubious ideas have been received. They are greeted with the utmost gravity, and almost as if they were the revelations of an inspired sage. And so they contribute their mite to the intellectual befuddlement of the country. That befuddlement is constantly marked by foreign observers. There is, in America, no alert and thorough thinking out of the fundamental problems of our society; there is only, as one Englishman has said, a noisy battle over superficialities, a conflict of crazes. Every year sees another intellectual Munyon arise, with another sure cure for all the sorrows of the country. Sometimes this Great Thinker is imported—once he was Pastor Wagner, once he was Bergson, once he was Eucken, once he was a lady, by name *Ellen Key*—; but more often he is of native growth. I do not rank Dr.

Veblen among the worst of these prophets, save as a stylist; I am actually convinced that he belongs among the best. But that best is surely bad enough, comparing it to the best of other lands. Our trouble, in brief, is that we have so far failed to produce an intellectual aristocracy, and that we thus lack any machinery for testing ideas critically and in the light of a settled and well-tried philosophy. The general notion of democracy will not suffice; it is too loose, too vague and academic, and its terms change too often. The mob is credulous and inflammatory; the reigning plutocracy is ignorant to the verge of imbecility; in the middle ground there is nothing save an indistinct herd of professors, often quite as ignorant as the plutocracy and always in great fear of it.

Dr. Veblen describes this faction of scholastic *intelligentsia* very accurately in "The Higher Learning in America," albeit the thing has been done before and in vastly clearer English. It is responsible for what passes as the well-informed opinion of the country—for the sort of opinion one encounters in the aforesaid imitations of the English weeklies—for what later on leaks down, much diluted, into the few newspapers that are not frankly idiotic. But it is, in the main, timorous and futile, for it comes from a class of men of no definite and inassailable position, and hence a class that is but seldom recruited from men of courage and originality. Dr. Veblen exposes the characters of this class in the book I have mentioned: its supreme flower is the American college president, a professional sycophant and platitudinarian, engaged endlessly, not in the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge, but in the courting of rich donkeys and the entertainment of mobs. The book itself is proof of what this sycophancy at the top comes to in the end: it professes to expose abuses, and yet it discreetly refrains from describing them specifically, with names and dates. If so much prudence shows itself in a professor admittedly of su-

[More, perhaps, anon]



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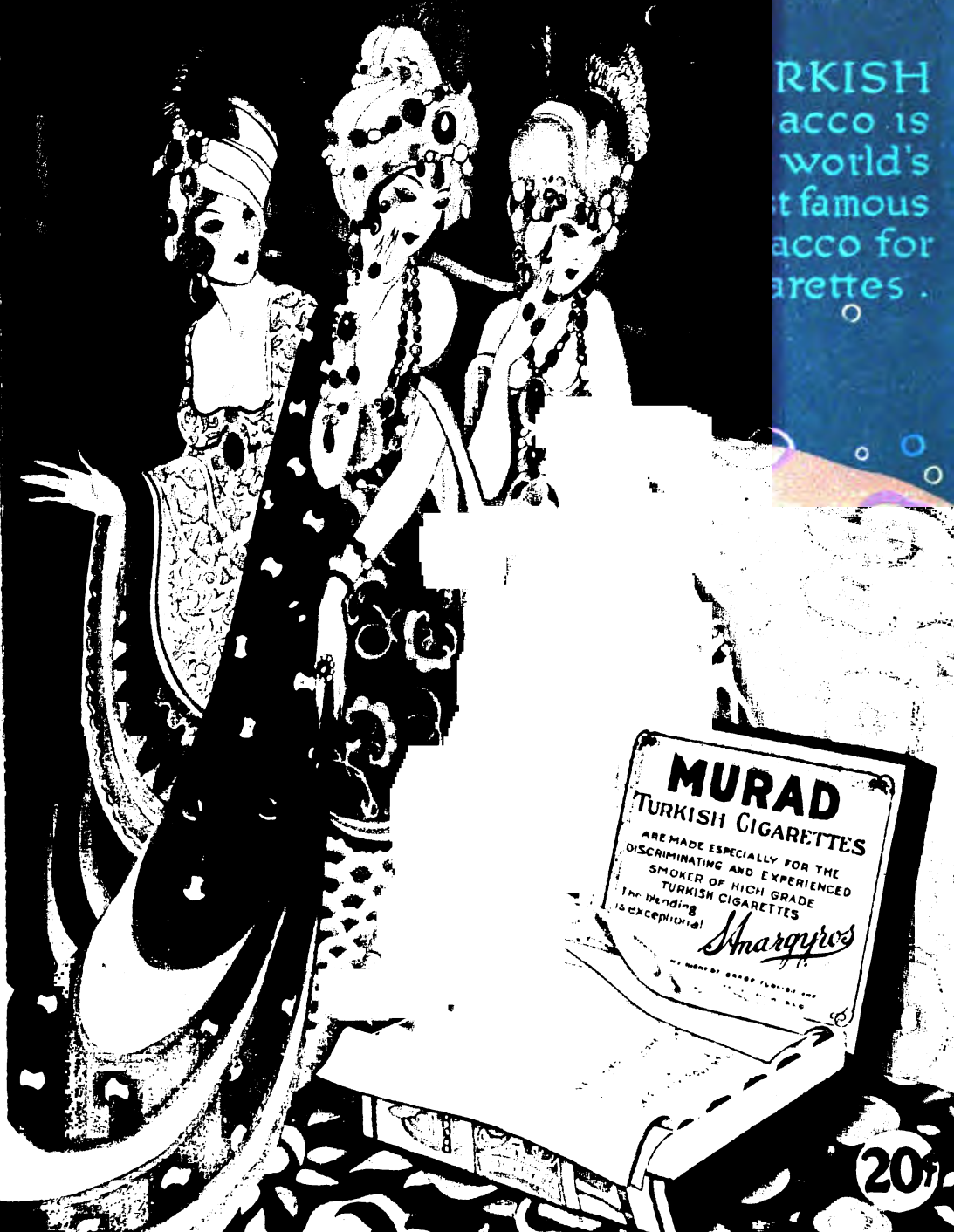
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"The Brookfield Mystery"

By Charles Stokes Wayne

A COMPLETE SHORT NOVEL



MU THE TURKI



Statement of the Ownership, Management, Circulation, Etc., Required by the Act of Congress of August 24, 1912, of Smart Set, published monthly at New York, N. Y., for April 1st, 1919. State of New York, County of New York, ss. Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Warner, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of The Smart Set, and the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true and correct statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24th, 1912, embodied in section 413, Post Office Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit: That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, manager, and business managers are: Publisher, Smart Set Company, 25 West 45th St., New York City; Editors, George Jean Nathan, H. L. Mencken, 25 West 45th St., New York City; Managers, George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, 25 West 45th St., New York City; Business Manager, E. F. Warner, 25 West 45th St., New York City. 2. That the owners are: Smart Set Company, Inc., 25 West 45th St., New York City; E. F. Warner, 25 West 45th St., New York City; George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken, 25 West 45th St., New York City. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: W. D. Mann, 45th St., New York City; Mrs. E. Mann-Vynne, 8 West 45th St., New York City; George Jean Nathan, H. L. Mencken, E. F. Warner, 25 West 45th St., New York City; E. F. Crowe, 33 West 45th St., New York City. 4. That the two paragraphs next above the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in case any stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, if any; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and that affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, partnership, or corporation has any interest, direct or indirect, in the stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him. (Signed) E. F. WARNER, Business Manager. Sworn to and subscribed before me this 29th day of March, 1919. [Seal] A. W. STURON, Notary Public, Westchester County. (My commission expires March 30, 1920)

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The SMART SET

Edited by
GEORGE JEAN NATHAN
and
H. L. MENOKEN



POETS

By Robert Merkle

I

PERCIVAL PEMBROKE, long-haired, wistful, ran his fingers through his wavy locks and listened to the shrill screaming of the north wind outside. His light was turned low. His table was piled with books. In his hand he held a dripping pen. By fits he wrote furiously. As the north wind shrieked outside he wrote verses—verses of love and adventure and high desire. He wrote of the meeting of Heloise and Abelard in the twilight, of the last wild rendezvous of Paolo and Francesca, of the first glad hour of Aucassin and Nicolette—of that mysterious meeting of Buridan, scholar of Paris, with the veiled lady in the shadow of Notre Dame—the veiled lady who was Queen of France. . . .

He was a poet.

II

ON that same night Bartholomew Judkins fidgeted in the chill wind at a corner of Seventeenth street. His coat collar was turned high against the elements. He was numbed to the bone. It was already late, and the night was fearful.

In his eyes was the glimmer of adventure and high desire. By the light from the show window of a drug-store he read for the sixteenth time the little note on scented pink paper which had been handed to him mysteriously that afternoon:

“Meet me at the corner of Seventeenth street and Second avenue, in front of Baumgartner’s Drug Store, to-night at ten. You will be able to recognize me by a green veil”

He was a bartender.



THE BROOKFIELD MYSTERY

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Charles Stokes Wayne

CHAPTER I

THERE is a proverb, of Dutch origin, to this effect: "Talk of the devil and he'll either send or come." It has as many versions as there are tongues. Hence, what happened that May night, out Morristown way, has proverbial authority, and is not to be classed under the head of coincidence.

The devil in the case was Brookfield. He was big enough, socially and financially, to have been a topic of conversation anywhere, seeing that a week rarely passed without his name appearing in the newspapers in one connection or another. But that he should have cropped up in the table-talk at the Burnham dinner was as natural as that brook trout should be served. They were all—host, hostess, and guests—more or less of the same set in which the Brookfields so elegantly—and in his own particular case, so conspicuously—flowered.

Yet, his mention—the mere injection of his name—was, indeed, most casual. The Chelmsfords, a young English couple, who had come to New York, well introduced, the preceding autumn, had let drop the fact that they were looking for a suburban place for the summer. Whereupon Van Ness volunteered that Brookfield might be persuaded to let his property on the Raritan—a charming spot, not far from Somerville.

It was not until later, though, that he was really talked of. Possibly the Chelmsfords may have talked of him, between themselves, and there is no

telling how the women may have grilled him during the temporary male absence following the dinner. But it was Nicholas Van Ness and Henry Burnham who were—if there be anything in proverbs—most to blame, probably, for calling forth that fulfillment.

The Burnhams were ostensibly of the all-year-round Morristown of hospitals, invalids, and bracing climate, since Burnham was an uncommonly skilled and successful physician with a large and highly remunerative practice, an office in the town and a villa of no little pretension on a side of one of the surrounding hills. Only ostensibly, however, for the reason that his wife and eldest daughter invariably went to New York for the season, retaining for that purpose a Park Avenue apartment. And even Burnham, himself, deserted every summer for a month of salmon fishing in Maine.

He was a rather dapper little chap, all bone and sinew, with pale mouse-colored hair that had once been a pallid flaxen, and the lightest, yet sharpest of blue eyes. No one had ever guessed within five years of his age. The majority thought him about forty, though his daughter—Annette, the eldest—was nearly nineteen. Actually, he was fifty-one.

Nick Van Ness looked the older, and was but forty-three. His hair had been nearly snow-white since he was thirty, and now it was getting thinner and thinner on the crown. He had shrewdly discerning gray eyes that were yet capable of a diversity of expressions, and a jutting, dominating chin. Most

women thought him handsome. He was tall, with broad but not too square shoulders, slender-waisted and lean-flanked, and appeared to best advantage in evening clothes. There was no more distinguished corporation lawyer than he at the New York bar. For eight years he had been a childless widower, striving to bring up a niece—his dead sister's daughter and a *débutante* of last season—in the way she should go.

And he was having his own troubles.

When the other dinner guests had gone their ways, Van Ness, who was stopping over night, lingered with Burnham on the terrace for a final cigar, but more especially for consultation. For Burnham had had paternal experience. And the very first word Van Ness uttered, just as if there had been no hiatus between the moment of his suggestion to the Chelmsfords and this one, was "Brookfield!"

He said it ruminatively, as though it had lingered with him all that while, and was now to be chewed over again. He said it and paused, bent forward a bit in his cane-chair, his elbow resting on the arm of it, and his hand gripping his smooth-shaved jutting chin.

Burnham, with whom the lighting of a cigar resembled somewhat a religious ceremony always performed in the same manner, a rite involving the production of a penknife, the amputation of the point by a double cut, the return of the penknife to his pocket, all precedent to the striking of the match, was at the moment in the act of applying the flame and drawing in the first breath of generated smoke.

Not until he had emitted this and examined the cigar-end to make sure that it was burning evenly, did Van Ness say more.

"Brookfield!" he repeated in the same tone. "Was there ever another just like him?"

"I dare say not," Burnham answered, settling low in his chair, now that the cigar was satisfactorily alight and drawing well. "Nature rarely duplicates exactly in man, though we all may be classified. What do you think, your-

self? You know him far better than I do."

"I'm not sure that I ever shall know him. That's the point. One can generalize, of course. Call him a perpetual contradiction; an anomalous combination; a fellow made up of good and bad. But such generalities are so infernally inadequate. They're only the old dual personality thing over again. And, of late, I've about concluded that Brookfield's personality is no more dual than yours or mine."

"I see. No more disintegrated, you mean."

"Yes. When he seems most at variance, he's still true to type. All three of the attributes of personality—consciousness, character and will—combine in him to one end. And that end is personal gratification. Over and above everything, yet including everything, he's a sensualist."

"I've heard stories, of course," returned the doctor.

"Naturally. And yet, in personal contact, how disarming he is! In that lies his power for evil. Apparently, there is no more faithful and devoted husband living than Brookfield. I've heard him called uxorious."

"Unusual, yes. Very. But not unique. A *lusus nature*, rather."

Van Ness bit hard on his cigar. "Which makes him all the more difficult to deal with. His magnetism is terrific. To be with him, means that he'll get you, every time. Away from him, you may hate, loathe him. But, once under the spell of his presence, you don't exactly forget, you just can't believe. Black becomes white. And, if he has that effect on me, what must be his power with a woman?"

"Are you trying to excuse—*some* woman?" asked Burnham quietly, his gaze lifted to the purple, star-flecked heavens.

May had borrowed the night from June. It was warm and breathless.

At intervals there came to them, low but ominous, the echo of distant thunder.

A long moment passed before the lit-

tle physician received his waited answer.

"I am praying God that I may not have to," was the way, tardily, that Van Ness put it.

Whatever Burnham may have interpreted that to mean, his next observation gave no hint of it.

"And—Mrs. Brookfield," he said, harking back to that "uxorious" of his friend, "is she conscious of her husband's derelictions?"

"That puzzles me. Sometimes, I have thought she was. At others, I am almost certain that she isn't. But, then, she's wonderful. No matter how assured she was, she'd never let the world know. There's that much of the Spartan in her."

"What a beautiful creature she is!"

"Isn't she?" Van Ness was almost enthusiastic. "And to think he merely pretends appreciation."

"But can you be sure of that? Men are differently constituted, as, of course, you know."

"If he appreciated her as she deserves he couldn't be the beast he is," Van Ness maintained, warmly. "For all his magnetism, he's conscienceless."

"It's a pity they haven't children. That might— Let me see! How long have they been married?"

"Nearly five years. He's thirty-eight, and Camilla was twenty on her wedding day. You knew her as a girl, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes. But I can't keep track of time, any more."

The spirit of the conversation slackened. They became reminiscent. But, presently, Burnham said:

"So they'll not be at the Somerville place, this year?"

"I understand not. Too near town, I fancy, for Brookfield's purposes. He's taken a place in the Berkshires to hide Camilla away in, until Newport comes to life."

"You're to go to them, I suppose?"

"Possibly. There's been no time set. But Hilda's asked for all June. Camilla's very fond of my elfin ward, you know."

"Ah! Yes. I remember. She's about Annette's age. Much admired, I assume."

Van Ness held up both hands. She's had six proposals and out only one season."

"And accepted none?"

"None. She bewitches them. Young and old alike, and considers it great fun. Even old Fetherly's been in the running, and he was philandering when I was a boy."

The storm broke before their cigars were finished, and drove them to the library, which, like the terrace, they had to themselves. And, though here the conversation veered to books, once more Brookfield came into it.

Burnham, who was something of a bibliophile, produced for his friend's inspection a newly-acquired and highly-prized old volume, dated 1633, entitled "The Purple Island; or the Isle of Man."

"Do you know it?" he asked, his light blue eyes twinkling. "By Phineas Fletcher. Most interesting, too. The island, you see, is the human body, fairly accurately described in not at all bad verse."

He began to turn the pages.

"Look at this. The poet adopted the Platonic idea of love—or affection, rather—abiding in the liver. But he qualifies it. Ah, here it is! Listen:

'Within, some say, Love hath his habitation;

Not Cupid's self, but Cupid's better brother;

For Cupid's self dwells with a lower nation.

But this, more sure much chaster than the other.'

How about that accounting for the two sides of Brookfield?"

And it was just at that moment that the telephone rang so stridently as to discourage Van Ness from attempting to answer. Burnham, putting the book into his hands, turned to the table by which they had been standing and took up the instrument.

To listen was neither the visitor's desire nor intention. He bent his eyes on "The Purple Island," but there was that in the feverishly quick staccato of his host's responses and questions which, after the first few seconds, compelled his interest.

There was no mistaking the vital urgency of the communication, whatever the cause. To Van Ness, the bits he got of it, sounded tragic. His first imagining was the lightning. Someone had been "struck." Then, a motor smash-up. But it was neither.

With an "I'll be there in ten minutes" Burnham had hung up and turned to him a grave visage.

"That's damned singular," he said, frowning, "coming at the very moment I spoke his name. He's been shot. Over at Labiche's. You know that little inn, don't you, kept by the Frenchman? A woman, they say, of course. He's alive. Asked that I be sent for. Come, Van! You'll go with me, won't you?"

So, there you are. "Talk of the devil and he'll either send or come." Brookfield had sent.

CHAPTER II

VAN NESS did know Labiche's. Or, rather, he knew of it. It was out towards Whippany—on the Whippany River, in fact—and many times he had passed its gates, driving, but never entered. It was at once famous, and, if not exactly infamous, at least notorious. There was nothing too good to say of its *cuisinerie*, and but little too bad to say of its license. From the road the inn was not visible, being completely hidden by a dense grove of oaks and chestnuts, and approached by a long and winding driveway. Nor was there any sign displayed either on the tall stone gate posts, to guide the uninitiate, or upon the inn when reached to confirm his conjecture should he penetrate that far. Not only had Labiche no need of such adventitious aids to a business so long and well established, but to do *without* them was infinitely safer. He

had his own clientèle, which, for the sake of self-preservation, could be depended upon to be discreet.

Burnham's chauffeur, impressed with the life-or-death necessity for speed, had got out of the big closed car everything, to the last notch, it was capable of. And they had flashed through the night and the storm as a dry leaf before a gale, and nearly come to grief in consequence.

Lightning, at the instant, revealed that other car as it slipped past without an inch to spare, and the little doctor started, breaking a tense silence, to swear a good round oath and to invoke curses on the heads of reckless dare-devils in general and those in that car of Juggernaut in particular.

"Women!" he cried. "Damn them! Three. Did you see? Going like hell. And their lights out."

But Van Ness hadn't seen. He was sitting on Burnham's right, with his eyes closed, thinking. Ethics! That was his subject. Wasn't there something wrong, somewhere? Here they were nearly breaking their necks—risking their lives, perhaps—to save a life that— Was it worth saving? Ah, that was the point, of course! How are we, fallible creatures, all of us, to judge? For his own part, he was prejudiced. He must admit that. If Brookfield should die his own problems would be solved. Certainly one of them, and probably both. But he'd be the last to wish him left unaided for that reason. That would be criminal. And yet— And, right here, Burnham's start and sudden profanity had caught him up, bringing his thought home. But for the grace of God they might now be dead as meat, while the other survived.

It had lacked five minutes of midnight when Burnham said over the telephone: "I'll be there in ten minutes." And by the same watch it was four minutes after as his motorcar skidded to a stop on the rain-soaked, rivuleted driveway, before the steps leading up to the veranda.

Labiche, himself, stood in the open doorway. He was the type of French-

man known as the Iberio-Celtic, low of stature, square-shouldered, and short-headed, with dark hair and eyes. He was, indeed, almost the exact counterpart of a groom that had been in Van Ness's service, who came from the Department of Basses Pyrenées, not far from Pau. There was something grim about his expression and his eyes were furtive. He was wearing a not-too-well-brushed suit of blue serge.

"Ah, *M'sieur le Docteur!* So kveek! Zat is *tres bon*. But I have ze great fear. Ze m'sieur ees *inconscient*. He no speek some more. If he breat' eet ees so leetle I cannot detec'."

He spoke hurriedly, excitedly, with many gestures, ending with a beckoning finger and moving off hurriedly across the dimly lighted entrance hall, and down a passage to the right beneath a curving stairway.

Burnham followed without a word, and Van Ness trailed at a little distance behind him. To the latter the atmosphere of this interior was oppressively lugubrious. He had expected something very different. Something garish, in fact. But even in the scant illumination he could see that it was shabby, dusty, colorless. The air was fetid, too, with stale odors of cooking and of soured wines and cigarette smoke. The effect, certainly, was one of evil, but by no means of an alluring evil.

The room into which Labiche led them was better lighted. Two electric lamps blazed overhead beneath shades of red tissue-paper, imparting to ceiling and upper walls a rufous glow. But the furniture was cheap and tawdry. A small, circular dining table, with the cloth still upon it, but from which all else had been removed, stood in one corner; probably pushed back there from the room's center. Facing the door by which they entered were two windows, evidently closed, as their long, faded, red-rep curtains were drawn across them, and the room was as hot as Tophet. A door, half open, in the middle of the left wall indicated an adjoining apartment, now in darkness.

Van Ness observed it, noting its sig-

nificance, as he turned with the others to where, on that side of the entrance, the long, familiar figure of Brookfield lay stretched on a crimson-plush-covered lounge, his left arm depending over the side, and the hand resting on the floor, palm-upward. His coat had been removed, his waistcoat was open and fallen back, and his collar and neckband unbuttoned.

To all appearance, he lay there sleeping. There was apparently no blood, no bleeding. And it struck Van Ness that there must be some mistake. He had been hurt, undoubtedly, though he didn't look it, the handsome, big beast, with color still in his cheeks, his lips slightly parted beneath his silky brown moustache, and only a single glossy lock of his black hair sufficiently disarranged as to fall over his white, unfurrowed brow. If one didn't know—hadn't heard, that is—it might naturally be assumed that Carey Brookfield, warm, and perhaps a little tired, had simply made himself comfortable and thrown himself down there to doze after a too hearty and too-intemperate dinner.

But Burnham was the last man to be so deceived. He lifted the right arm, which lay partly along the recumbent figure's side and partly resting on its thigh. There was blood enough there, at the waist. Clots of it, congealed, and darkening; staining, as with ink, the pale grey of the fine worsted waistcoat and trousers, and stiffening the soft fabric of the coral-pink shirt. Only for a moment he lifted it, and then placed the arm back where it had been, and kneeling down pressed his ear to the spot where the breast bulged on the left side, and so ready for him because of that depending left arm.

It was not, though, until from the pocket of his raincoat he had produced his stethoscope and confirmed the ear's unaided testimony that he spoke, standing up and exposing his palms in token of their inutility.

"I am too late," he said simply.

And the words were addressed more to his friend than to the anxiously

waiting and alarmed inn-keeper, who immediately seized the arm of the doctor that was nearest to him, and in a veritable torrent of French and broken English, pleaded hysterically to be spared the ruin which publicity would involve.

"But, my dear man," Burnham edged in when he could. "You are asking the impossible. A crime has been committed which demands investigation, and publicity is inescapable."

Labiche was starting afresh, but Van Ness, who did not have that prognathous chin for nothing, silenced him.

"Enough of that," he shouted. "Not another word, or I'll telephone for the police instantly. Calm yourself, and answer questions. Who did it?"

"Ah, *mon Dieu!*" cried the Frenchman. "Who can say? No one see. No one, M'sieur. I hear ze shoot, but I zink him—What you say?—Ze blow-out. Paul, who serve M'sieur, he zink like me. We bot' zink him ze blow-out."

"Was no one here in the room with him?"

Labiche lifted his square shoulders, and grimaced. "Only ze ladee."

"Then there was a lady?"

"*Certainement, m'sieur.*" It went without saying.

"And where is she now?"

Once again the Frenchman shrugged. She was gone, of course. She was gone when Paul entered with the champagne to see the M'sieur sitting on the lounge, bent over, and his face distorted with pain.

By dint of much more questioning and cross-questioning, Van Ness got at least the skeleton of the facts, while Burnham stood silently by and listened, and the horridly still thing, which such a little while before had been the chief actor in the drama narrated, grew by degrees colder and colder, and gradually rigid, under their eyes.

Labiche had known Brookfield for several years, but never by that name. To the Frenchman he had always been "M'sieur Ca-ree." He was a frequent and generous patron. Always it was a

late dinner or an early supper, ordered by telephone in advance; and always—except, as sometimes but rarely happened it was not available—this suite. The guests of M'sieur, however, were varied. Seldom did the same "ladee" accompany him more than once. The "ladee" of tonight was a stranger. Not only was the inn-keeper quite sure that he had never seen her before, but, even this night, he had seen her for but a moment. For these reasons it was difficult to describe her. She was young, she was beautiful, *charmante, ravissante*. But whether *blonde* or *brune* he could not say. Nor was the waiter, Paul, any more certain.

The supper had been ordered for eleven. But M'sieur had not been punctual. It was half an hour later when it was served. Very soon after that the bell from the suite had rung and rung. But both Labiche and Paul were otherwise engaged at the moment, and there had been some delay in answering it. When, eventually, Paul was about to respond, M'sieur Ca-ree presented himself in the kitchen, champagne bottle in hand.

The champagne, he complained, was not properly iced. He desired it *frappé*. He remained for some minutes, until he saw the work under way: a fresh bottle in the cooler, with ice and salt, and Paul vigorously twirling it, the neck between his palms.

It was in this way that Paul was engaged when the shot echoed: the shot that was mistaken for a "blow-out." It may have been five minutes—possibly ten—when Paul, tapping on the door, heard a muttered permission to enter, and went in to discover M'sieur Ca-ree wounded and his companion flown.

The waiter had at once summoned his employer, who hastened to the room; and, as together, they were assisting M'sieur to lie down, M'sieur had told Labiche that his name was Brookfield, and had instructed him to summon Dr. Burnham, from Morristown. Labiche had obeyed instantly. More than that, he had sent out all his available employes to search the

grounds for the "ladee," and had suggested to the only two other patrons of the inn at the time the advisability of speedy departure.

Such, in brief, was the Frenchman's statement, corroborated by the waiter, Paul, as to incidents within his knowledge.

At its conclusion Van Ness turned to his friend.

"A pretty thing, isn't it?" he said. "Yet I'm not surprised. Something of the kind was almost sure to happen, sooner or later. It was coming to him. My only anxiety is Camilla."

"She must be told at once," Burnham declared.

"Of course. But I've been thinking." He paused, looked about, and seeing Labiche still standing there, addressed him: "Do you mind leaving us here for a little?"

The squat proprietor bowed. "*Mais, non,*" he said. "If, perhaps, M'sieur can find ze way to—"

"Very well," Van Ness interrupted. "If I can."

When Labiche had gone he said: "It wouldn't be the first time such a tragedy has been hushed up. And what is to be gained by publicity? I daresay the woman, whoever she was, was within her rights."

"We can't be sure of that, though. The law demands—"

"More than it's entitled to, often. And I'm a member of the bar. However, that can be decided later. At present we have the wife to consider. Does she know? That is the question."

"Whether he was given to this sort of thing, you mean?"

"Yes. If I could be sure of it, I'd bring her here to see. It would be the best medicine."

"Wouldn't it be the best medicine either way?" asked Burnham. "And I'm a physician. A deceived wife, widowed, who goes through the rest of her life worshipping the memory of a libertine husband, is a pitiful object at best."

Van Ness pursed his lips and stood silent for a moment. Then:

"If she has never suspected, it will be a knock-out."

"Say, rather, an anæsthetic. For, sooner or later, she might learn and suffer. Better have it done and over with."

"I believe you're right, Henry," Van Ness concluded. "I'll get her by telephone at once."

But he had only his effort for his pains. He tried for twenty minutes, and the end was like the beginning. "Don't answer."

Then he got the telegraph office at Morristown, and dictated a message which he directed should be marked: "Rush. Urgent." It read:

"Carey seriously ill here. Come by first train. I will meet you at Morristown station."

And it was signed: "Nick."

CHAPTER III

ON returning to the room he found that Burnham had not been idle during his absence. For one thing he had obtained a sheet from the adjoining bed-chamber and the body of the murdered Brookfield no longer lay exposed to the revealing glare of those overhead electric lamps. But the little medical man had not stopped at this. He had made a search for objects, however small and apparently insignificant, that might be possible clues to the perpetrator of the crime. And it had not been by any means futile. He had found something, indeed, which he regarded as very much worth while, and far beyond what he had any reason to expect.

He had removed his raincoat for the task, and as Van Ness entered he drew his find from a pocket of his dress trousers.

"Look!" he said, with something of pride in his tone. "It was lying on the floor just under the edge of the dressing-table in the next room."

It was a gold vanity case, ornamented with a number of small rubies and diamonds.

Van Ness took it from his hand and examined it carefully, both outside and in. And, though there was nothing

about it, really, to distinguish it from hundreds of others—no initial, monogram, crest, or other device—it did, nevertheless, at first glance, impress him as in a way familiar. He felt that he had seen it before. Or, if not it, one very similar. And as he turned it over and over, opened it and closed it, he was all the while striving to remember where.

But he was not a man who was particularly observant of women's clothes or their jewels, and he ended by deciding that he had probably been mistaken.

"That was all?" he asked.

To which Burnham, taken aback by this apparent lack of appreciation, retorted:

"Nothing short of the woman's photograph would satisfy you, I assume." But Van Ness rejoined with:

"To be quite frank, Henry, that's just what I shouldn't care to see. I might recognize it and my duty would compel prosecution. It's only in not knowing that we would be justified in hushing the matter up. You don't think, by any chance, Labiche, himself, or that fellow Paul could have done it?"

But, without waiting for an answer, he went on:

"No, that is not conceivable. Labiche would never have sent for you if they had, either of them. And the woman wouldn't have run away. She had a hot storm to run in, by the way."

"Yes," Burnham agreed. "That's the most puzzling feature. Fancy her out in that, soaked to the skin, and no convenient train or even a trolley."

"The chances are they came by motor. In his own motor, driven by himself, in all probability. She might have gone in that."

"But she didn't. I asked Labiche, while you were telephoning. He says it's still in his garage."

"Then at this very minute she must be wandering about, or possibly hiding somewhere until dawn. To tell the truth, I'm sorry for her. It may not be right, but I can't help it. She was plucky, and pluck is always admirable."

"Still," said Burnham, "it's Mrs.

Brookfield that must be considered after all. I think this might be kept quiet. It's been done before, as you say. And I have some authority out this way. I could do it. And I would for her sake."

"How?"

"Take the body over to my place. Call it apoplexy. Give a certificate to that effect."

"But, wouldn't the undertaker—?"

"Not the one I'd employ."

"I see. You have affairs out this way in the hollow of your hand. But the removal should be made at once. And I'm opposed to that. For the tragedy to have the effect on Camilla we both deem advisable she must find him here; and I understand there's no train out of New York until four o'clock. That means six at Morristown. Broad daylight. I'm afraid it can't be done."

"You watch me," said Burnham.

Before leaving the inn they impressed upon Labiche—for his own sake, since he so desired secrecy—the importance of complete concealment. Could he be responsible for his employes? Wouldn't the itch to talk be too much for them? No one but Paul, he said, really knew. And Paul was "of a grand taciturnity."

Van Ness made a pretence of going to bed in the biggest of the Burnham guest chambers. But he never more than dozed. The event of the night and the promise of the morning crowded out sleep. His mind was endlessly engaged with them, and again and again the seeming familiarity of that vanity case, which he had retained, recurred to him. Yet with nothing nearer to a solution than in the moment when first he saw it.

Before five he was in his bath, and he was shaved and dressed by twenty after. Going down stairs, he found Burnham there ahead of him. Not another soul—no one of the servants even—was yet astir. But the doctor, himself, had prepared coffee.

There were two runabouts in the garage, in addition to the big car used the night before, and it was arranged

that while Van Ness employed one of these to fetch Mrs. Brookfield, Burnham should go ahead to Labiche's in the other. The morning was fine after the storm, but the roads were somewhat torn, and in spots soggy.

Not until he stood waiting on the platform at the railroad station did it once occur to Van Ness that Camilla might not come. He had not expected a reply to his telegram. It was hardly likely, in the stress of her emotion, Camilla would so much as think of responding. But the point was: Had his message reached her? Or, if so, had it reached her in time. Still, in spite of his failure to get anyone at the house by telephone, he could hardly believe that the town residence was entirely vacated. The Brookfields, as he so well knew, were not occupying the Somerville property this spring, and were not contemplating removal to the Berkshires until next month. Yet Camilla might have gone to anyone of a score of friends with country houses. And even the best servants had, apparently, a marvelous capacity for stupidity at times.

But in the midst of his misgivings Camilla arrived. She was among the first off the train, and he spotted her instantly, and dashed to her. His precipitancy, indeed, seemed rather to stun her. She gasped, and stood open-mouthed, her perfect short upper lip baring her equally perfect, small, white and even teeth.

She was within half a head of being as tall as himself, and there was no line of her figure that was not visibly, through her dark blue traveling suit, a line of beauty. He saw at once that she was unusually pale, and her long-lashed lids drooping a bit over those usually lustrous brown eyes, now almost lusterless, indicated, he thought, mental suffering, rather than weariness.

He caught her gloved right hand in both of his own, with a warm, friendly pressure, meant to stay her, as he said: "You did get my wire, then. I was so afraid you hadn't."

To this she nodded, and his hand-

clasp seemed to have done its work. She appeared less numbed, less blunted.

He led her away, out of the little cluster of persons to where the run-about waited, before saying more. And then it was she who invited, with:

"Is it good or had news you have for me?"

And he answered, his eyes fixed on hers: "In one way it couldn't be worse. Yet, in another—"

But she did not permit him to finish.

"You mean he's dead," she put it straight.

Nothing more was said by either until they were in the car and free of the town, when she asked simply:

"Where are you taking me?" And, somehow, he was impressed that she had forced herself to make the enquiry.

"To him," he told her. "I want you to see where and how he—met death."

When they reached Labiche's, Burnham, hat in hand, came down the steps to the car. He bowed, solemnly, to Mrs. Brookfield, and, as Van Ness alighted from the far side, and ran 'round to assist her, Burnham intercepted him to whisper:

"The town police are here. Our plan's smashed. They're in the room now. You'll have to wait a bit."

CHAPTER IV

THE presence of the police, of course, complicated matters very materially. It meant that there would be what is called "a rigid investigation." The coroner, to begin with, would hold an inquest, and his jury would determine how Carey Brookfield came to his death, and, if possible, at whose hands. But, while the "how" was already apparent, the "at whose hands" was very deeply veiled in mystery, and it would require, probably, not only the most painstaking, but the most cunning endeavors of detectives to penetrate that veil. Moreover, a pandering press, always avid for sensational tidbits from the heart of the so-called *noblesse*, would devote columns to the daily developments.

Whatever power or influence Dr. Henry Burnham possessed to throttle the facts before birth, he was devoid of once it had emerged from secrecy's womb. And Van Ness, realizing the opportunity missed, and, as not until now, all that the hideous bearing of ugly truth involved, not to speak of the added horrors of speculation and innuendo, regretted to his soul's depths his insistence on delaying the removal of the body until Camilla could get the effect as he, himself, had got it.

It was all very well for Burnham to endeavor to allay his self-reproach by arguing that since it was Paul, of the "grand taciturnity," who had let the cat out of the bag, it must have happened, whether or no. But Burnham knew as well as he that the word of a poor, ignorant French waiter would never have stood against that of so prominent and respected a townsman as the physician, had he chosen to raise the issue. After the discovery of the body and the pistol-shot wound in the side, however, there was no going back of the returns. The evidence stood for itself.

So, after all, the sinister aspect of the resort, on which he had counted so much for what Burnham had called its "anæsthetic" effect, was of small moment, compared with the bigger and more smashing things brought out later. For there was very little in Carey Brookfield's life, no matter how well he had guarded it, which did not become public property at that time.

And at Labiche's, that morning, Camilla had ended by declining to go to the room where her husband's body lay. First and last she had been accorded no privacy. On the contrary. For the coroner, arriving a few minutes after she and Van Ness, had actually seized the opportunity to question her, and had gone so far as to ask if she knew of any women—he thought she might be jealous—that her husband would have been likely to bring to such a resort as this. Adding: "You know, I suppose, it's a—brothel, a place of as-signation."

It was coarse, heartless, unpardonable, and Van Ness resented it. To gather all the information possible was, he knew, in the official's line of duty. But he blamed him for the brutal way in which he put the question and made the revelation.

Yet, at the same time, he had this very brutality to thank for setting his own doubts at rest on one point. For Camilla's reception of it—her almost stolid imperturbability, even more than her monosyllabic negative to the query and her simple nod to the concluding assumption—dissipated his last lingering uncertainty as to whether or not she had all along been conscious of Carey's grosser, carnal side, and the divers gallantries it involved.

Shocked, stunned indeed, she unquestionably was. But it was clearly apparent—had been from the moment of their meeting at the station—that she was not greatly surprised. He had softened his ugly tidings as best he could, and she had made the softening less difficult by a ready understanding and a marked abstinence from asking questions. These things had argued foreknowledge of her husband's habits, but it had required the incident with the coroner to supply the ultimate confirmation.

So far as the effort to find the malefactor went, the authorities were quite baffled. Never, probably, was there a case with fewer clues. For, determined from the first to do all in their power to minimize the scandal as far as possible for Camilla's sake, Van Ness and Burnham had made no mention of the vanity case which still remained in the possession of the former. And beyond that there was practically nothing to serve as a guide to the guilty one. No weapon had been found. The autopsy had revealed that death was caused by a bullet of .38 calibre, fired probably from an automatic; which was hardly of importance, in the absence of such a pistol. And whatever might have been gained by the identification of footprints in the neighborhood of the inn was lost by reason of the heavy rain at

the time making even the detection of footprints impossible.

Thus it happened that, after dragging a score or more of women into very questionable and embarrassing publicity—women of nearly all grades, from those of fashion and those of the higher half-world to stenographers, manicurists, and telephone operators—a much delayed verdict was finally rendered to the effect that Brookfield came to his death "at the hands of a person or persons unknown."

Meanwhile, however, Nick Van Ness, with no desire whatever to find a culprit, was to be tortured by having suspicion piled on suspicion until he was well-nigh appalled by the pointing of the finger thus conjured.

CHAPTER V

RETURNING to town with Camilla on the afternoon of that day of her visit to Labiche's, he noted a change in her. There, throughout her trying ordeal, he had marveled at her self-possession, her almost perfect calm in the face of everything. Not once had she lost her poise. But on the train she was visibly ill at ease. This he attributed, naturally, to the reaction. Alone with him, surrounded as they were by strangers, the strain had relaxed; and to control herself being no longer obligatory, her nerves were inclined to frolic over their sudden freedom.

Tactfully, he had, so far as conversation was concerned, left to her the initiative. To question her as to anything whatever, and especially regarding the matter with which their thoughts, were most engaged, was not even remotely his intention. During their drive to the station scarcely a word had been exchanged; but no sooner were they seated in the Pullman than Camilla asked:

"Why, on earth, Nick, didn't you telephone me?"

"I did," he answered. "Tried to, that is."

"You couldn't get the house?"

"Not in twenty minutes of it. Then

I wired. Where was every one, do you suppose? Where were you?"

Her brown eyes snapped. "What a silly question!" she exclaimed. "Where do you suppose?"

"In bed, I fancy."

"Naturally. And do you imagine, with the telephone right beside me, I wouldn't have heard it had it rung?"

"My dear Camilla! I'm sure you would. It was that that puzzled me. Still, you might, you know, have been at the Wilmerdings', or any one of a score of places."

"But I wasn't, you see. In that case I shouldn't have got the telegram, should I?"

"Certainly not."

"I suppose it never entered your mind that Central might all that time have been ringing the wrong number?"

"No. I confess it didn't."

"That's evidently what happened. For a bright man, Nick, you can be very stupid at times."

"I daresay," Van Ness admitted. And added: "It's of no consequence. There was no train until four."

"What has that to do with it? Couldn't I have driven out? It was after three when the telegram came."

"Still, it's just as well. Nothing would have been gained by getting there sooner. And the sleep you did get was the very best thing for you."

To this she offered no rejoinder, but turned her face to the window, and beneath lowered lids regarded, dreamily, for a space, the flying landscape. It was a very brief space, though. Then she started up suddenly, with:

"The Wilmerdings. I wish you hadn't mentioned them. Why did you? How they'll rake this over!"

"It was the first name that occurred to me."

"Of course. It had to be. Now I can't get them out of my mind. They're sure to blame me. They've always thought Carey a god. They'll say I drove him to this by my coldness."

"Camilla!" Van Ness strove, pacifically. "You only imagine it. I'm sure you'll have all their sympathy."

And she almost flew at him.

"I beg you not to contradict me," she commanded, rather than pleaded. "I know them better than you do."

"Oh, I daresay!" he agreed for peace sake. "But there's my Hilda. She thought him rather a god, too. Still, she won't after this."

But at that Camilla rose in haste and walked to the forward end of the car, where she stood for possibly half a minute gazing through the glass of the door.

And as the journey progressed she grew only more and more irritable and more restless.

On their arrival at the Grand Central Van Ness proposed accompanying her to her home, but she practically closed the door of the taxi in his face. Then, as he was turning away, she flung it open again and called to him.

"On second thoughts, you'd better," she retracted. "They'll want to know, of course. And they'll have to be told. But I can't tell them: You can see the state I'm in. Only, if you have any pity for me whatever, make it brief. You'd better give the barest facts to Simpson. He'll tell the rest of them."

It was not, though, until they were about to alight that she added:

"And, Nick! Don't answer any questions or ask any. Remember that."

When they were in the great hall she gave him her hand, with:

"Forgive me. I've been a wretch. And you're so good. I'm going straight to my own rooms and send for Dr. Vanderslice. My nerves are in rags."

As Van Ness turned, after she had left him, his eye fell upon the evening papers, lying together on the hall table, and was held by the staring headlines:

**CAREY BROOKFIELD KILLED
IN NEW JERSEY
MYSTERIOUS WOMAN SUP-
POSED MURDERESS**

To Simpson, the butler, summoned by the footman that had admitted them, he said, pointing to that typed commu-
nication:

"It's true. No one saw who did it. You'll read the accounts, I suppose, but remember that they're probably most inaccurate, and that surmise is never to be trusted."

"Yes, sir. I understand, sir. Most unfortunate, sir."

"Quite right, Simpson. I hope you'll tell the rest what I said."

"Very good, sir. But, if you'll pardon me, there was a telegram came for Mrs. Brookfield, early this morning, sir. I suppose—"

"Yes. That was it," Van Ness interrupted. "I sent it myself, Simpson."

Now that Camilla was back in her own home and would soon be under the care of the family physician Van Ness's thoughts turned again to his niece, Hilda. Throughout the day she had never been quite absent from his mind. But he had been able, until now, to convince himself that only by the most remote chance could tidings of the tragedy have reached her. The sight of those headlines in the evening papers, however, made him now keenly aware that, if she did not already know, she must very shortly learn; and, in spite of what he had told Camilla of her attitude, he was not altogether certain as to just how this emotional young ward of his might take it.

He had had more than one demonstration of her admiration for Carey Brookfield. In the immaculate purity of her girlish innocence she more than admired, she adored. He was to her like a big, elder brother whom she idolized. There had been times when Van Ness, knowing him for the hedonist that he was, had envied him this virginal affection. At such moments he had felt that he, himself, was but second in Hilda's regard, and he chafed under the compulsion of yielding first place to one so unworthy.

The Van Ness home was less than a dozen blocks from that of the Brookfields; and to reach it in the taxicab which he had kept waiting was a matter rather of seconds than minutes. To spare himself the possibility of an instant's detention he let himself in with

his latchkey, instead of, as was his habit, ringing. And, finding the hall deserted, he dropped his hat, gloves and stick, and turned into the smaller drawing-room, in the hope that he might surprise his little family—it consisted of Hilda and an elder, unmarried sister of his, Amelia—with possibly some callers, still lingering about the tea-table. But the room was no less unpeopled than the hall.

Halfway up the broad circling staircase, however, he met Amelia descending. Between her and himself there was more than the usual family likeness. She had the same spare figure, the same snowy hair, and much the same discerning grey eyes. Only her lips were thinner and more compressed and her chin less prominent.

It was she who spoke first.

"I tried to get you at your office," she said, and he knew by her tone as well as her look that she was anxious about something.

In sudden access of alarm he uttered the girl's name:

"Hilda!"

"Yes. She's not well. I've had Dr. Vanderslice. He was here this morning, and he's coming again."

"It's that serious?"

"I'd hardly say that. It's just that he's not sure. She has some temperature, and something might develop. It may be it's only a cold. If so, he's stayed it."

"I'll go to her at once," Van Ness proposed, but his sister lifted a deterring hand.

"No, Nick. Please don't. She's sleeping, poor dear."

He retreated a step and half turned, leaning against the balustrade, and looking a little crestfallen. Then he asked:

"You've heard about Carey?"

"Yes. Reggie Wilmerding telephoned about noon. He'd seen it in one of the early editions."

"I hope you didn't tell Hilda."

"Certainly not."

"I'm glad of that. I was afraid she might learn it in some way. But tell

me more about her. When was she taken?"

"If you'll wait for me in the library I'll tell you everything. But I must see Griggs for a moment first. I shan't be any time."

She passed him, continuing down the stairs, while he went on.

When, after a little, she rejoined him in the big room of book-lined walls and deep, restful chairs—the room of all rooms in the great house which he loved best—it was to relate a fairly succinct and well-connected story, not merely of what she knew for herself, but of what she had learned from Hilda, concerning all that had happened since his departure on the previous afternoon for the Burnhams.

"You knew, of course," she began, "that she was lunching at Summit, yesterday, with Helen Wilmerding. I expected her home for dinner. But while I was out, myself—it must have been about five o'clock—she called up from Helen's to say that a motor party had been arranged and that they were going to dine at a wonderful new place on Lake Hopatcong. She might stay at Helen's overnight. It depended on what time they got back. She told Griggs, though, that Teddy Winston was going and that it was possible he'd drive her back to the city. Only I was not to worry. So, under the circumstances, I didn't. But it seems that about everything that could possibly go wrong did so. At about four the telephone rang violently. It woke me out of a sound sleep, and, frightened half to death, I answered it. Teddy was speaking from the Savoy. They had been here, but could get no response to their assaults on the doorbell. They'd be back in a couple of minutes, and would I please see that someone opened the door for Hilda. Well, I opened it, myself. And that poor child!"

"What—what had happened?" Nick asked impatiently.

"Everything, as I've already told you. To begin with, the motor-party, it seems, originating with each enthusiasts, dwindled to three before it left the

Wilmerding house. There were suddenly remembered engagements, and there were flat refusals of consent from certain self-willed husbands. So, in the end, only Helen, Hilda and Teddy set out for the wonderful Lake Hopatcong resort. Then, no one of them having anything like an accurate knowledge of the road, they got lost, went miles and miles out of their way, and finally arrived too late to get anything but cold fish and weak tea. Returning, they were overtaken by a thunder storm, ran into a washout and were nearly all three killed. Hilda, of course, should have stopped at Helen's for the night. But Teddy was coming to the city. She was wet and bedraggled. Helen's things were all too small for her. And, as with any sort of luck at all they should have made the distance by two o'clock at the latest, Hilda risked it. And that's the whole thing in as few words as I'm able to cram it into."

"Good Lord!" cried Van Ness, his anxiety augmented. "Enough to give her her death. Do you suppose it's pneumonia? Did she have a chill?"

"It would be a miracle if she hadn't. But she didn't say so. And it's useless to suppose anything. We'll have to wait for Dr. Vanderslice's diagnosis."

CHAPTER VI

AND while they waited her brother told her of his own experience, dwelling on the more sombre phases and, out of respect for her spinsterhood, almost ignoring the other element of the tragic happening at Labiche's.

But, before he had quite finished, the appearance of Griggs on the threshold diverted them both. Believing that it was the physician he had come to announce, they started up with one accord, only to be checked by:

"Mr. Rutgers to see you, sir."

"Oh, very good, Griggs. Send him straight up."

"Then I'll leave you," said Amelia. "You're dining at home, I suppose?" And when Nick nodded, she added:

"Then you can tell me the rest at dinner."

Rutgers was the junior partner in the law firm of which Van Ness was the senior; a rather heavy-set young man of medium height and florid complexion. He knew the laws governing corporations backward as well as forward, but he was no less well versed in the intricacies of social relationships, legitimate and illegitimate, not only in the smart world, to which he was born, but in that half-sister world of Broadway and the white lights, of the theaters, the music halls, and the cabarets. And Van Ness was assured, even before his entrance, that his visit was attributable to the Brookfield affair rather than to any matter of mutual interest connected with the office.

"Well, Nick, old dear," he began with a smug smile. "I see you were in it up to your bridle-reins."

"If you mean by that that I was one of the first to see poor Carey after he had been done for, you're reasonably correct. May I offer you a cigarette?" And Nicholas pushed towards him a box of silver filigree which rested on the table by which they stood.

"Too bad, isn't it?" Rutgers continued, helping himself. "What do you make of it?"

"Oh, as for that, speculation, in a general way, is easy enough. For once in his life, I suppose, he picked the wrong woman. She defended her virtue. And Carey got his desserts."

But Rutgers drew in his lips and shook his sleek, sandy head.

"Won't do," he came back, dropping into one of the deep chairs, and extending his not-too-long legs until his heels just touched the floor. "When did you ever hear of innocence carrying a revolver to a dinner engagement?"

"Isn't innocence ever suspicious?"

"If she were really innocent, and that suspicious, she wouldn't have gone. No, Nickey, you're on the wrong lay. I've talked it over with a bunch of fellows, down town and for the last hour at the club, and they're all just about as bright as you are. Why? Because, like you,

they hit on what seems most obvious, whereas it's hardly possible."

"I suppose they've all ventured to name the lady in the case, too?"

"Every one, and every one gives her a different name."

"And you? You have the only correct theory, I assume, and likewise the only correct name. Is that it?"

"Not far from it, old thing. But, you see, I have an advantage, being, so to speak, on the inside. Carey and I, you know, poor boy, were rather pally. He was not the sort of a beat that kisses and tells; but he didn't take into account my constructive mind. Getting a bit here and there, today, next week, next month, and haying a memory like glue, the piecing together isn't so difficult."

"I suppose not." Van Ness, who had still been standing, relaxed into the springy softness of a leather-covered settee. "Are you going to take your conclusion to the police, or just tip off one of the newspaper boys?"

"My dear Nick! How can you so misjudge me? In strictest confidence, I'm going to give it to you, and you only."

"Ah, I see! You wish to ascertain how it will appeal to my judicial mind. Well, then! Out with it!"

Neely Rutgers disturbed himself sufficiently to peer around the side of his high chair-back to make sure that no one had come suddenly within ear-shot. Then, in a half-whisper, he said:

"I'm willing to bet—But no. That would be brutal. For, in fact, I'm no end sorry for her. It was evidently her only way out."

"I'm sorry for her if she did it, no matter who she was," was Van Ness's rejoinder.

"I'll tell you the facts first and perhaps you'll drop on the name. I suppose you know that Carey worked his inside knowledge of Wall Street to further his amorous enterprises. If you don't, I do. Well, in this particular case, he proved pretty thoroughly how good his tips were. She and her husband— Yes, she's married—made

money in bunches for awhile. They're none too well off, and she's always been devilishly extravagant. Brookfield imagined that she'd fall for him out of sheer gratitude, but she didn't. So, he took his second step. He got them both into Steel, big. It was to sky-rocket. In a week they were wiped out, clean. All they'd made, and a lot beside that they couldn't afford. Now, that much I know to be absolute fact."

"Yes? I'm beginning to get a glimmer."

"Of course she begged for a chance to recoup. But Carey held her off. I'm familiar with his method, I tell you. There's nothing particularly new about it. Hundreds have worked it. Hundreds are still working it. So, finally, he says, says Carey: 'Dine with me tonight at Labiche's and I'll make your everlasting fortune. Is it a go?' And she says it is, of course. But she's wise as to the price he may ask her to pay, so she goes armed. There you are! Neither of them got what they wanted, but Carey's done for and she's poor, but pure."

There was a moment of silence, and then Van Ness said:

"It isn't Helen Wilmerding you're talking about, by any chance, is it?"

"Who else could it be?"

"Then you're wrong. Dead, dead wrong."

"You may think so, Nick. But you can't be as sure as I am that I'm right."

"I'm surer, Neely. For Hilda, Teddy Winston and she dined together last night, somewhere on Lake Hopatcong."

"You mean that?"

"Certainly. Hilda was one of her guests at luncheon, and I'm safe in guaranteeing that they were hardly out of each other's sight up to midnight."

Rutgers's chin dropped.

"All my dope gone for nothing," he muttered.

And Nick laughed.

Then, suddenly, his hand went into his breast pocket.

"If you need any further conviction," he said, "I have a trifle here that may furnish it. Did you ever see your

friend, Mrs. Wilmerding, carry a vanity case of this pattern?"

And he held out to Neeley his find of the previous night.

The junior partner examined it closely, turned it over and over, his brow slightly wrinkled and his lips half-pursed.

"If you can say whom that belongs to you'll come pretty close to naming the woman who did it."

Van Ness, as he added this, regarded fixedly young Rutgers's rapt, yet bothered, expression. Then, abruptly, the latter lifted his gaze and their eyes met.

"You—you found it in the room?" he asked.

Nick nodded.

"It never occurred to you, I suppose, to preserve the finger-prints?"

"Oddly enough, it didn't. I was very remiss, wasn't I?"

"On the contrary, old chap."

The answer piqued Van Ness. More than that, it irritated him.

"What the devil do you mean to imply?" he snapped back.

His caller shrugged slightly. Then, evidently in fear that this might have been observed and would be resented, he said quickly:

"Don't misunderstand me. But I gather, merely, that you weren't, and aren't, particularly interested in having the thing sifted or you would have turned that over to the coroner or the police."

"You mean I don't want the poor creature punished?"

"Do you?"

"I admit my sympathy is with her, whoever she is. I've already admitted it. That may seem a terrible thing to say. But—"

"Oh, I don't know about that. If you've identified this case—and I suppose you have—I don't see how you could do otherwise."

"But I haven't identified it. I feel only, that I've seen it before—though I may be mistaken about that—and I shrink from involving, through any action of mine, one whom, did I actually know, I'd be more inclined to applaud."

Rutgers reached for the silver box and helped himself to another cigarette. With match blazing, he said:

"I always thought you had a practically infallible memory."

"I have for some things. But, curiously enough, not for jewels or jewelry. Do you mean that you've seen the thing before? And remember where?"

"I think so." As he spoke he rose; and rising, laid the vanity case on the table. "I must toddle," he added.

"You won't tell me?" Van Ness said. "Can you ask me? It's not the only one of the pattern, probably. And, there's too much involved, my dear Nick, to hazard a name. You must see that."

Van Ness walked to the end of the room with him. At the door, after they had shaken hands, Neely offered a suggestion:

"Hide that thing away. I would, if I were you."

CHAPTER VII

VAN NESS was more than ever disturbed by that final bit of advice from Neely Rutgers. If it meant anything it meant that someone he knew—and probably more than just casually—might reasonably be incriminated by connection with the vanity case which had so fortuitously come into his possession. Vainly he strove to cudgel his memory. And quite as vainly to think of any woman, friend or acquaintance, who, by any stretch of imagination, he could conceive of as having been Brookfield's companion and outraged slayer.

Had it not been for Hilda's experience of last night in company with Helen Wilmerding, he might, possibly, in view of Neely's argument, have been inclined to Neely's conclusion. But that, under the circumstances, was of course untenable. He could not doubt, though, that there were other women who might have actually played the rôle under like provocation and with equal justification. Women that he had no reason whatever to suspect, and possibly wom-

en that he knew very well indeed. But this only served to make the situation, coupled with Rutgers's innuendo, all the more irritatingly perplexing.

It was not until after dinner that Dr. Vanderslice made his second visit, and in the meantime Amelia, always with the pretext that Hilda was still sleeping, had barred him from his niece's room. He had intercepted the physician on his arrival, however, and had accompanied him to his patient, only to be shocked by the girl's flushed cheeks, bloodshot eyes, and inordinate restlessness; the latter reminding him, in a way, of Camilla's disquiet on the train.

There was, and had been for some time, to Van Ness, a growing resemblance between the woman and the girl. And in spite of the heightened color and unusual eye-suffusion, it seemed to him never more marked than now. They were of the same brunette type, with clear creamy white skin, untouched by a suggestion of the olive, hair of an almost jet black, and eyes of deepest, velvety brown.

Amelia rose from beside the bed as they entered, and after a quick, deprecatory glance at her brother, said to the doctor:

"I think she's better. But you must speak to her. I can't turn my back that she isn't out of bed. When I came up from dinner, a little while ago, she was in her dressing room. Yet I had told her maid, whom I had left with her, under no circumstance was she to let her get up."

For a moment Hilda appeared a trifle abashed. But Dr. Vanderslice promptly relieved her of any lasting embarrassment.

"I shouldn't advise running up and down stairs," he said. "But a few steps here can do no harm if she feels like it."

"Did you want something, dear?" asked her uncle, bending over the footboard, where he stood regarding her. "Something that Marthe couldn't get for you?"

She nodded to him, understandingly,

but he noted with a little pang that her usual smile was absent.

He was about to ask her what it was; to offer to see if he could find it; but the visiting practitioner put it out of her power to answer, by slipping between her lips the inevitable clinical thermometer. And for the seconds she held it there, he took count of her pulse.

Physically, at least, Vanderslice was in marked contrast to Burnham. He was big and broad and his grey beard was of the Vandyck model. It was said that his practice, counting gifts from grateful patients, had yielded him in some years more than a million dollars.

When he had written a new prescription, had assured his patient that she would be "quite fit" in a day or two, and Miss Van Ness had followed him to the door, Nicholas, in passing, leant over Hilda and put to her his delayed questions.

"Oh, it doesn't matter, Uncle Nick," she answered, a trifle impatiently, he thought. "It was only that I dreamed I lost something last night, and I wanted to see whether I had."

Then, for an instant, his heart constricted. And so did something in his throat. But his reason came to his rescue. He knew that it could be nothing more than a coincidence. Yet he stammered over the words:

"And—and had you?"

"I don't know," she answered. "Aunt Amelia drove me back here, before I could make sure."

"Whatever you lost, I'll give you a new one," he told her. And bending lower, kissed her on the forehead. "Good night, dear. Sleep well, and have no more horrid dreams."

Outside the room he joined Vanderslice, and together they descended to the library.

"It's not serious?" he asked, anxiously.

"No. A slight cold, that's all, due to exposure last night. And she's upset nervously. Are you sure she hasn't heard about Carey Brookfield?"

"It doesn't seem possible. Unless that maid—"

"I'm afraid she knows. Somehow, I feel she's suppressing something."

"She's frankness itself," her uncle defended. "You must be wrong."

"Possibly. But— Well, I may be obsessed. I got the same idea from Mrs. Brookfield. Though God knows she has every reason to go to pieces and develop all kinds of symptoms. Horrible affair, isn't it?"

"Disgraceful. Atrocious. Won't you sit down?"

"I can't, thank you. I've other visits to make; and yet I never go out at night."

"But, tell me: How is Mrs. Brookfield? She bore up marvelously today."

"Did she? Well, she'd gone all to pieces when I saw her. I left her under an opiate. I hope for the best."

As they were saying good-night, Van Ness asked:

"What do you hear, doctor? Is there any hint, whatever, as to who was with him?"

Vanderslice smiled. "Any hint?" he repeated. "They're like the leaves of Vallambrosa. And all different."

"You have no theory of your own?"

"None." Then, suddenly: "Oh, I recall, now. This is interesting. Jimmy Moncure has a story. He was motoring in from somewhere in Jersey and passed Brookfield in his car going out. He got only a glimpse of his companion. She was pretty well veiled, it seems. But he's almost certain he recognized her. Was certain, in fact, until this thing came out. But, now, he says, he can't reconcile the girl with the subsequent event. It appears he took her for a débutante of last season. Some of them, he admits, he wouldn't be inclined to question. But this one he appears to regard as *sans reproche*."

"I fancy it wouldn't be the first maiden *sans reproche* that Carey caught in his net, or, at least, tried to."

"I daresay. Still, girls like that don't go armed, do they?"

"Hardly," Van Ness agreed.

"There's nothing, really, that hasn't been said," Vanderslice continued.

"They are even claiming that Mrs. Brookfield got wind of the *affaire*, followed, and shot her husband in a fit of unbridled jealousy."

Van Ness's cheeks flushed to the temples.

"That's outrageous," he cried indignantly. "I know, positively, that she was at home at the time. If you hear it again, doctor, for God's sake deny it on my authority. What won't those cursed scandal-mongers say?"

When he was alone he started pacing the library floor. With the tide of calumny, slander and defamation rising at such a rate, how could any woman hope to escape? Here, almost in a breath, Vanderslice, a man of the highest standing, had repeated two wholly irresponsible statements; one of which might be accepted as a reflection on Hilda, and the other openly, without any qualification whatever, charging Camilla with Brookfield's murder.

Under the circumstances would it not have been better for him to have given up the vanity case in the first place? By means of it, and the fingerprints upon it, as Rutgers had suggested, the culpability would, at least, have been restricted, and possibly directly traced. As it was, now, no one was immune.

Rather than allow this sort of thing to continue he'd surrender the vanity case tomorrow. He could easily find some explanation for having retained it. And then, Neely's final words echoed afresh in his ears: "Hide that thing away. I would, if I were you."

What had been implied by that? How near to himself was he in danger of striking by permitting the ownership to be established? Then, too, there was that dream of Hilda's. And her anxiety over it. Was it possible, after all, that it belonged to her? That he had seen it in her hands? And that its seeming familiarity was to be accounted for in that way? No, that was impossible. He remembered Hilda's case, now. Amelia had given it to her on her last birthday. There were no diamonds or rubies in its ornamentation. Only an H, in pearls. Pearls, of course, because

they signified purity and innocence.

He was glad he remembered that. For, despite his effort to put such a horrid suspicion from him, one occurrence after another, even in the face of all he knew and believed, had inflicted a latent uneasiness. Now that that was stilled, what had he to fear? To whom that he knew and cared for, might it belong?

He ran over a long list of friends. But only a few of them appeared to be even remote possibilities. And some of these Neely Rutgers knew only slightly or not at all.

Finally, he determined to appeal again to Neely. On the chance of finding him at the club he went there. But, to his dismay, the young man had not been seen since early afternoon.

He waited until late, hoping that he might come in at any minute. He did not come. And Van Ness, on his way home, decided to delay another twenty-four hours before attempting to force the issue in that way. In the meantime he might, himself, remember. If by tomorrow night he was no less in doubt, he would insist on being given the name.

But, before tomorrow night came, there had been fresh developments which made this proposed course not only unnecessary but inadvisable. And Van Ness thanked his stars that he had delayed.

CHAPTER VIII

THE morning papers, which fairly bristled with all manner of details, even to the smallest, connected with the tragedy at Labiche's, contained nothing of any real importance concerning which Van Ness was not already informed. Finger-prints had been taken and were being developed, and the dead Brookfield's associations and affiliations were being delved into.

So far as could be, his movements of the previous day had been investigated. With great particularity he had been traced from his home to his office on lower Broadway. Some of the papers went so far as to state where he lunched

and of what the luncheon consisted. His telephone calls from the office were printed at length, in capital letters, a separate line to each, though they included nothing whatever that was significant. He had gone uptown by taxicab at three-thirty, spent an hour at his club, and telephoned from there to his garage for the high-powered roadster, in which, shortly after five o'clock, he drove away unaccompanied.

And there the record ended.

There was reference, of course, to Mrs. Brookfield's prostration, and an interview with Dr. Vanderslice on the subject. Van Ness's own name appeared in all the reports as an intimate friend of the family. There was, too, a lot of speculative theory. Certain of Brookfield's intimacies were touched on, but most guardedly, and necessarily without names. To those on the inside, however, some of these were too apparent for complete comfort. And Van Ness, with Neely Rutgers's narrative of the Wilmerding experience fresh in mind, at once recognized the *dramatis personæ* in a story which closely paralleled it.

He was, therefore, not greatly surprised when that morning at his office Reggie Wilmerding's name was brought into him; nor when, following it, Reggie appeared, angered to a white heat.

Reggie was tall, slim, and blond; with a thin face, rather a long, pointed nose, a natural sallow pallor, and a meagre, fair moustache with waxed ends. He dressed a bit too conspicuously for good taste and was never without a *boutonnière*.

He entered, waving the most unscrupulous of the dailies in a trembling hand.

"Have you seen this damnable scurrility?" he cried. "If you haven't you're the only one in town it's escaped. By God, I've been teetering for the last hour between coming to you or going to that scoundrel, himself, and disfiguring him for life. I want him jailed, Nick, within the hour. You know, criminal libel."

Van Ness calmly took the paper from

him and gestured him into a chair.

"Let me read it," he said

Reggie sat down, but it was difficult for him to keep still. Several times in the next three minutes he started to express further his angry indignation, but Van Ness commanded silence.

"Well?" he said when he had finished and dropped the newspaper on his desk, which separated them.

"I know you don't go in for libel business, and all that. But you've handled our company affairs and you can make an exception. I want him put behind the bars, I say. There's not a damn word of truth in it from first to last."

"Then you haven't any case."

"What do you mean? Haven't any case?"

"Your name isn't mentioned, is it? The statements aren't true, you say. Therefore they can't apply to you. Why should you put on the boot if it doesn't fit you?"

Reggie stared, his mouth open. Then:

"But it's meant for us, I know it is. That's not a new story, you know, Nick. It's been in the air for some time. All except the last terrible part of it. I've been trying to nail it for months. It's foul. And now that that scum of the earth has put it into print I'm going to get his heart for it."

"I wish you could, Reg, but you can't. He doesn't identify you. 'A young society matron and her husband, living in a New Jersey suburb.' That doesn't fit Helen and you any more than it does several hundred others, except that you two happen to have been friends of Brookfield. But how many such friends may he have had over there that you know nothing about, not to speak of others that you do know about? If you say 'this means me,' then, no matter how you deny its truth, the world in general will believe the published story and not you. That's the nature of the world in general. Let it drop."

But Reggie Wilmerding wasn't at all inclined to accept such advice. He was *angry and he wished to wreak his ven-*

geance on the man he knew as his calumniator.

"Why," he went on, "Carey was the best friend in the world to Helen and me. He did give us tips, all right. But with the vile object intimated there? Never. Why, Helen and I are like a pair of turtle doves. And to imply that she was at Labiche's that night with him! When we were dining at Short Hills with the Steve Cartons, and playing bridge there until after one, because we got caught by the thunder storm and waited till it was over. And you say I can't do anything."

Suddenly Van Ness bent forward, resting his arms on his wide pedestal desk.

"Why I thought," he began, and abruptly checked himself. "You dined at Short Hills, you say?"

"Certainly. With Steve Carton and Bess. Why? You don't think—"

But Van Ness interrupted him. "I must have things mixed up," he explained. "I thought it was Helen that Hilda and Ted Winston were out with. I don't know how I got the impression."

"Oh, no," Reggie corrected. "Hilda was there for luncheon. At our place, I mean. She was leaving just as I got home. Helen drove her down to the train. I remember perfectly."

"I see," said Van Ness absently.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT Van Ness saw, or thought he saw, was that Wilmerding's call, including his indignation and his threats, was the veriest bluff. From first to last an effort was being made to fix up an alibi for Helen. The Lake Hopatcong trip, evidently involving falsification of the time it consumed, wasn't strong enough. She might have gone to Labiche's with Brookfield after that. He couldn't remember now accurately at just what hour Amelia had said they got back to Summit; or, indeed, if she had fixed that at all. It was quite possible that the washout and the greater part of the misadventures which delayed Hilda's

home-coming, occurred between Summit and New York. So, in order to build something more impregnable, without hiatus, Reggie, presumably, had secured the connivance of the Steve Cartons.

In court, of course, such a flimsy fabric would be riddled in no time. But it was not intended for court. It was designed only for club and tea-table gossip, and aimed at confusing the issue. Van Ness resented it, nevertheless, because it so completely negated Hilda's testimony, which he was ready to take oath was veracious.

The day, however, was to be for him such a succession of contradictions of what he believed to be true, that its close found him turbulently perplexed, devoid of anything stable whatever to which he dared pin so much as a tatter of his torn faith.

Among his early afternoon callers was that young Englishman, Hugh Chelmsford, a particularly well set-up chap, with a charmingly frank manner. He was anxious about getting the Brookfield place at Somerville. From what Van Ness had said of it he and Mrs. Chelmsford were inclined to believe it was just what they wanted. Did Van Ness know whether it was in the hands of any of the real-estate agents?

"Or, do you fancy," he added, "that this untimely taking-off of poor Brookfield will interfere?"

"Some agent may have it," was Van Ness' answer. "That I don't know. I'm afraid, though, that you can do nothing at present. I question that Mrs. Brookfield will wish to occupy it. But that is only my own judgment. And she can hardly be approached on the subject at this time. You see that."

Chelmsford saw it.

"Just our bally luck," he commented. "If we had delayed I should say it served us jolly well right. But we didn't, don't you know. Connie—that's my wife—called on Mrs. Brookfield yesterday morning. She'd met her out, somewhere, and we thought best to get about it that way, rather than for me to see him. Of course we hadn't heard a

word at that time concerning what had happened. To cut it short, Mrs. Brookfield wasn't at home. The butler told Connie that she'd gone out of town the day before and hadn't returned. He believed she'd gone to Somerville."

"What time do you say this was?" Van Ness queried.

"Half after ten, or eleven. Not later than eleven."

"Aren't you mistaken about what the butler said? I was under the impression—"

"Oh, no! I'm quite certain. Possibly he was stretching it a bit. Orders, perhaps. But that's what he told Connie. If it hadn't been that we learned of the shooting just after that, we should have gone to Somerville by the noon train. So you see there's no doubt."

Later in the afternoon Van Ness called on Camilla. He had enquired for her before coming to the office, and had learned then that she was still sleeping. When he called, Simpson received him. Mrs. Brookfield, he said, was denying herself to even her own family, by Dr. Vanderslice's direction.

He was very much tempted to secure a confirmation or denial of Chelmsford's story from the butler's own lips, but his sense of honor forbade it. And it recurred to him then, with freshened significance, that Camilla had adjured:

"Don't answer any questions or ask any."

There was one matter, though, that, for her own sake, he felt it best to go into. Assuming that the statement made to Connie Chelmsford was true, then the telegram of which Simpson had spoken—his telegram—must have arrived in her absence. If so, then her coming to Morristown on that early train was mysterious, if not indeed quite inexplicable, unless, by chance, the butler had opened it and telephoned its contents to her at Somerville. The question was: Had it been opened? If it hadn't, and later it should be, and read, what hideous construction might not be put upon her unbidden appearance?

"Oh, by the way, Simpson," he said, with an effort to seem casual, "that wire

for Mrs. Brookfield which came yesterday morning. The one I sent. What became of it?"

"I have it, sir."

"Would you mind getting it for me? It can be of no service now."

"Certainly, sir." And he produced it from a drawer in the hall table. "A great many have come since. Condolence, I suppose, sir. And none opened yet. Poor lady! She takes it very hard, sir."

But Van Ness did not hear him. This was unopened. How, then, did she know? What had impelled her to take that train? And she had let him assume that she came in response to his message—this message which she had not seen.

He thrust it into a pocket as it was, and walked home, his mind in a turmoil. The very foundation of all that was sacred seemed rocking. But the end was not yet. In the hall of his own house he encountered Teddy Winston, and he saw, at a glance, that the boy had been drinking. His handsome young face was flushed; his fair hair, usually so straightly parted and sleekly brushed, was in woful disorder. His scarf bulged over the edges of his waistcoat. Hat in hand he was evidently on the point of leaving.

"Why, hello!" Van Ness greeted cordially. "Been looking in to ask after Hilda?"

"Yes. I—I'm sorry she's ill. Too ill to see me, they say."

"Not like her, is it, Ted? You must have had the devil's own time of it, in that storm."

"Well, rather. It pretty nearly queered me."

Van Ness looked into the small drawing room. "Nobody in here," he said. "Come in for a minute, and tell me about it."

"I would, Mr. Van Ness; but I've got to beat it. Promised Billy Nancrede a game of rackets at five, and I'm late now."

"Oh, let Billy wait. I won't keep a long." And coupling the boy's elbow in his right hand he led him to a

conveniently placed ottoman, and pulled him down beside him.

"Now, what happened?" he pressed.

"A storm," Teddy answered, grinning.

"I know that. But when? Where? What did it do to you?"

"Coming back from the lake. We had no chains, you know, and no top, either. It was my old car. And to make it worse something happened to the lights. It was after twelve when we got to that little box of the Wilmerdings, what with—"

"The Wilmerdings!" Van Ness exclaimed in assumed surprise.

"Certainly. Why not?"

"What did you go there for, of all places?"

"Had to take Mrs. Wilmerding home, didn't we?"

"What Mrs. Wilmerding? Not Mrs. Reggie?"

"Surely. Who else?"

"But the Reggie Wilmerdings were dining with the Steve Cartons that night at Short Hills."

"What!" exclaimed young Winston, taken aback.

"Mrs. Reg drove Hilda to the station for the six something train back to town. Where did you join her? That's what I'm trying to get at."

More flushed than ever now, the boy sprang up. "If Hilda's told you that much, wouldn't it be better to get her to tell the rest? I've got to go. Sorry if you don't believe me, Mr. Van Ness."

"How can I believe such a contradiction? If you can reconcile the two things I'll be glad."

"Well, I can't," Ted returned, his hand digging in his pocket for his cigarette case. "Not in the time I've got, anyhow. Only I want you to know that we were all right, and had a chaperon aboard. If that's the trouble."

Van Ness's hand also went to his pocket for his own cigarette case to offer the lad who had evidently mislaid his. And, unwittingly, he produced, instead, the perplexing clue—Burnham's find—the vanity case.

"Here," he said, without looking, "help yourself!"

Teddy stared, and retreated a step. And then Van Ness saw.

"Pardon me," he apologized. "I didn't notice. Something I found. You don't by any chance recognize it, do you?"

But the other was wary.

"What's this?" he asked. "Another trap? I don't see why you should adopt this method, since you evidently know everything. She's told you about that, too, I suppose."

"Who's told me?" cried Van Ness, springing up as young Winston backed towards the door, his self-possession crumbling. "What do you mean?"

Had he been quite himself the boy would have realized then that the older man really knew nothing. But he was befuddled and he was angry, and the last vestige of his wariness deserted him. So he called

"Hilda, of course. It's hers. I ought to know. I gave it to her."

Van Ness stood for a moment, stunned. The bauble slipped from his suddenly nerveless fingers to the floor, and he covered his face with his hands. When he was able again to command himself, he was alone.

CHAPTER X

WITH what crashing force the revelation, so impulsively dropped, had fallen, he did not even then realize. For its first effect had been to stupefy, to deaden; and he had emerged from it still mentally benumbed, with no clear appreciation of more than a fragment of the horror it embraced.

His first impulse was to go at once to Hilda and return the vanity case. And with this purpose in mind he recovered it from where it lay on the rug at his feet. But, even with this action, a clearer consciousness began to awaken. The movement of itself flashed to him a picture of how Burnham must have stooped in the same way to pick it up from under the edge of the dressing-table at Labiche's. And he saw sud-

denly that little bedroom, with the host of erotic scenes it must have witnessed during the Labiche tenancy and the Brookfield patronage, and then, in culminating awfulness, the figure of the girl, so young, so lovely, so immaculate, standing before the mirror, endeavoring to enhance a beauty that required no enhancing, for the lustful eyes of the voluptuary so lustfully waiting.

To go to her, bearing such a reminder, was not to be thought of. Better was it that he never see her again than while under such emotional torture, with all manner of doubts pressing for resolution. In no mood now was he to face anyone, and she least of all. He must get away, somewhere, to be alone with this catastrophic thing. For, singly and in groups, the pertaining features were already rushing back upon him, headed by the one paramount and inclusive fact that the woman in the case, after whom the arms of the law were reaching, the woman wanted for murder, was his own niece and ward.

Hurriedly consigning to his deepest pocket the gold case which was, so far as he knew, the one incriminating bit of evidence, Van Ness left the house. A minute later, finding himself on Fifth Avenue, he crossed that thoroughfare and plunged into the Park. There, subconsciously, impelled by a latent craving for solitude, he avoided the drives, keeping to the less frequented paths. Thus he walked for hours, unresting, without pause.

In the beginning his thoughts had coursed at random. For a while they had dwelt almost wholly upon Hilda Chalfin, from the time when, a tiny tot of six, she had been orphaned and he had brought her home; and then on through the intervening thirteen years, up to the immediate present. In speaking of her to Burnham he had called her his "elfin ward." But, was she elfin? Only in the better sense of that term, in that she was different from most girls of her age: given to innocent mischief, utterly care-free, and wonderfully fascinating. For she was not elfish; which is to say impish, weird and spite-

ful. Still, to Van Ness, she had, of late, always recalled a description of a fictional character that he had read somewhere, as having "a look of wild and nervous adolescence prisoned within walls."

But random thinking was at variance with both his nature and his training. Thought was with him, by long habit, an orderly process. And so he came, after a time, to marshal these crowding mental forces which had threatened to overwhelm him. The day, certainly, had been one of revelations. Yet they were all more or less conflicting. What he required, therefore, was to get at the truth. To imagine, to draw conclusions, would only, perhaps, entangle him the more. He knew now, of course, that Reggie Wilmerding's story must in the main be true. But there must also be a shadow, at least, of truth in Hilda's and Teddy's narrative. One part of it—that he had driven her home in the early morning—had Amelia's confirmation. He knew too, now, from Hugh Chelmsford, that Camilla was not in New York on the night of the shooting; and also, of his own knowledge, that she had come to Morristown by train, evidently informed of it, though his informing telegram had never been opened. And then he recalled that intimation of Dr. Vanderslice's that Camilla might know more of the tragedy than she admitted.

There were, therefore, three persons who could assist him very materially, he believed, to the truth. His niece, Hilda; Teddy Winston, and Camilla Brookfield. But he was quite convinced that no one of them would do so except under compulsion. Necessarily, to invoke the law was, under the circumstances, utterly out of the consideration. But, a lawyer himself, with no mean ability as a cross-examiner, he had it in his power to employ the law's methods.

Here, however, a fresh difficulty arose. Hilda was in no condition to be subjected to such an ordeal. Teddy Winston, already driven to the nether of strong wafers, had best be *left to himself*. Camilla, facing the try-

ing experience of the funeral, fixed for the following day and needing all her fortitude for the coroner's inquest, set for the following week, was an even less available subject than either of the others.

And so it came about that, wearied by his hours of ceaseless walking, but with a definite purpose formed, Van Ness achieved at last a surprising calm and a certain measure of resignation to the period of waiting which he accepted as inevitable.

On the following morning he was able, even, to steel himself to sit with Hilda for a while in her room, to which she was still confined. And, while to view her fairness and listen to the soft, sweet cadences of her voice, reassured him not a little, the visit served to rouse in him afresh a violent hatred and anger towards the dead Brookfield. It came to him as a relief, therefore, when, later in the day he received a summons from Washington for a delayed interview with the Attorney General on the morrow. Out of respect for Camilla, and to avoid any question that his absence might engender, he had attended the funeral—had served, indeed, as one of the pall-bearers—but had rigidly held himself from again looking on the face of the dead.

CHAPTER XI

JUNE had come. It was Thursday, the fourth, to be exact; and the hour was lacking but a few minutes of five in the afternoon. In Camilla Brookfield's rose-and-white-and-gold sitting-room Nicholas Van Ness, a model of perfect grooming, stood by a small Louise Seize table, a small vellum-bound book in his hand, his capricious attention flitting at random from one to another of the lines and couplets of French chanson therein printed.

Having desultorily turned a few pages he was about to replace it, when a resolution arrested him. Still holding it, he produced from an inner pocket a yellow envelope with black printing and a rudely scrawled superscrip-

sion, which he inserted between the covers. Then he laid the little volume with others on the table, and turned away.

He crossed the room to the wide oriel window, beneath the awnings of which the fresh greens of park foliage were visible, and paused there, his hands locked behind him, his well-shaped head with its snow-white hair bent a little forward, and his lips compressed. He had thought that night, now nearly two weeks gone, driving to Labiche's, that should Brookfield die, his two greatest problems would be solved. But they weren't. They had only become the more complicated. For one of them was his unspoken love for Camilla, and the other was Hilda's growing admiration for the unworthy and impossible Carey.

He was given scant time now, though, for their consideration. For barely had he paused and begun than the faint rustle of Camilla's entrance interrupted.

She was in mourning, of course. That he had known she would be. But he was not altogether prepared for the exaltation of her beauty. As he had seen her last she was distinctly not at her best, as was quite natural; and he had feared that the intervening period, crowded with ordeals as it must have been, was too brief for any appreciable recovery. And here was not mere improvement, but transformation. Apparently she had dropped off years. She seemed as young as Hilda, and lovelier. And he remembered then that black had always been more becoming to her than any color.

"Dear Nick!" she greeted with a smile of pleasure, giving him her hand. "I thought I was never to see you again. You have been cruel."

"I haven't meant to be," he told her. "On the contrary, I've denied myself to be kind."

And, when they were seated—he near the Louise Seize table, and she with her back to the oriel window—he spoke of his call to the Capital, and how he had been detained there by the Attor-

ney General, who had enlisted his assistance in a case before the Supreme Court.

"Even on Decoration Day I worked," he added, "and Sunday last was the biggest day of all."

"You might have got me on the long-distance," she chided, with something of mischief in those brown eyes, never more luminous than now. "But no. And not so much as a line from you either. And you my very best friend."

"I've a prejudice against your telephone," was his rejoinder. "It played me false when I depended upon it most. You must not forget that."

"I want to forget it," she said. "And I'm beginning to succeed. Won't you help me?"

"With all my heart. Only—"

"Only, you say! Only what?"

"Only, if you mean the whole miserable affair—and I suppose you do—isn't it a little too soon to ask it?"

"Why?"

"Because it isn't finished with, is it? The mystery isn't solved yet."

"The inquest ends it," she asserted. "That was Monday, you know. You saw the verdict, didn't you?"

"I did. Yes. The coroner failed. But the police are still to be considered. They may turn up something at any time. And it would all have to be gone over again."

"But the police will never find out."

"How can you be sure?"

"I feel it," she said. "Every day makes it less likely."

He was watching her hands. How beautiful they were, so slim, so white, and the fingers so finely tapered, and so well-cared-for! But, though she was probably unconscious of it, they were beginning to move restlessly. The first sign of rising nervous tension.

"I shouldn't care to be in the guilty one's shoes," he told her, "for all that. Any day there may be a leak somewhere."

"No," she insisted. "You're wrong, Nick. I'm sure you are wrong."

"Then tell me why you are so sure."

Intuition—even a woman's—is not infallible. Have you anything more than that?"

"Nick!" she exclaimed suddenly, with what struck him as feigned indignation. "What are you saying? How could I have? You don't imagine that I, of all persons—"

"Camilla, my dear girl," he interrupted her. "Hadn't we better be quite frank with each other? You've just declared that I am your 'very best friend.' You can't doubt my entire loyalty. Why then hide anything from me?"

"But I'm not," she declared, her voice under perfect control, but her fingers intertwining. "Nothing. You must know I wouldn't, Nick."

He smiled a quietly tolerant smile, but his chin was never more determined.

"Then you won't mind answering a few simple questions?"

"Certainly not. How funny you are! As many as you like, Mr. Nicholas Van Ness, attorney and counsellor at law. What is the first one?" And her laugh rippled.

"That's a dear," he encouraged. "The first one—let me see. Suppose we make it: Where were you on the night that the crime occurred?"

"Where was I?"

"Yes. At the time it happened, we'll say?"

"I thought I told you that. Here, of course."

"You're quite sure?"

"Perfectly."

"Did you give Simpson orders to tell callers you had not been home since early the preceding day?"

"How ridiculous! Certainly not."

"Then he must have done that of his own volition?"

"I suppose so. If he told such a thing."

"But you did go to Somerville the previous day, didn't you?"

Camilla hesitated. "Why, yes," she said at length, on a long breath.

"What time did you get back?"

"I really don't remember."

"I don't ask the exact minute, or even the hour. Before dinner?"

"Oh yes. Before dinner. I just went out to see to the packing of some things to be sent to the Berkshires."

"You dined here, then? Alone, or had you guests?"

"Yes, I dined here. There were no guests."

"And in the evening? What did you do?"

"I read. I retired early."

"But you didn't hear the telephone."

She moved now, a little restlessly.

"I thought we had discussed that," she said. "Central evidently rang the wrong number."

"Oh, yes!" Van Ness agreed. "I remember."

"I don't suppose you heard the bell when the telegram was brought? My telegram, I mean."

"Naturally not."

"Who awakened you?"

"Suzanne."

"I see."

Van Ness turned to the table at his side and took up the little vellum-bound book of French chansons.

"Is that all?" Camilla asked with a barely perceptible sigh.

"No. Not quite," he told her, riffling the leaves, and finding the yellow envelope apparently by accident.

As he extracted it and turned it over he shot a glance at her, and saw, for the first time, a look of fear in her eyes.

"How odd!" he said, with a light chuckle. "Here's a telegram now, and it's not been opened."

But already she had recovered herself.

"Hasn't it?" she said with a capital assumption of indifference. "I daresay not. There were so many came, you know. And the house was so full of people. His near relatives and mine."

"But this one," Van Ness objected, "isn't one of sympathy."

"How do you know?"

"How do I know?" he repeated. "Because it's dated in pencil. I fancy it's in Simpson's hand. He's marked it

'2:10 A.M.' And the date is that of the day following that affair at Labiche's. Hadn't you better open it?"

But Camilla declined.

"Not now," she said, a bit irritably. "Do finish your questions, please. My nerves, you know, are still not any too strong."

He leant towards her, all sympathy.

"My dear child," he soothed. "Why won't you tell me the truth? Why prolong this thing? I hold here the evidence that practically refutes every answer you've given me. This is my telegram. You weren't here when it came. You never got it's message."

For a long moment, holding her breath, her eyes wide, she sat staring at him, in dumb consternation.

"I'm right! You know that! Don't you? Now tell me!" he begged. "Why all this deception? This misrepresentation? What is it all for? Whom are you trying to shield?"

Now, indeed, did she remind him of Hilda. The Hilda of six, it seemed to him, for she had been an emotional child, easily hurt, and prone to tears. Camilla's lovely lower lip was trembling, her dear brown eyes were misty with gathering floods. All her courage, all her defiance, were quite gone. She wilted and gave way. The flood-gates were over-ridden. She wept. Wept tumultuously. And, in pity for the inadequacy of her handkerchief, Van Ness supplied her with his own, and fought against an, at moments, almost overwhelming passion to take her into his arms.

CHAPTER XII

IT was the tea which did most to give her fresh poise. She must have caught the barely perceptible tinkle of porcelain, for she was up and at the window, before Simpson and a footman appeared, her back to the room and her flushed face thus hidden. It was Van Ness who dismissed them both, and poured the first cup for her, himself.

For a little while, after she had come back and taken the same chair again, neither of them spoke. He had handed

the tea to her without a word, and she had drunk it in silence, while he went on pouring for himself. And all the while the tension had not perceptibly lessened. But when he took the empty cup from her, he asked:

"Will you have another? Please do." And she answered:

"Yes, Nick. You're so good to me."

Then again there was stillness, broken only by the scratch of a match for the cigarette he had placed between his lips. But presently, between sips, she said:

"How on earth did that telegram get into that book?"

"Since I am asking candor," replied Van Ness, "I shall be candid myself. It was I, Camilla, who put it there."

"You?"

"Yes. Simpson spoke of it the afternoon I brought you back from Morristown. I fancied, then, that you had read it, of course. But, when later I suspected you hadn't, I thought it safer with me and asked him for it."

"Oh, what a fool I was not to have asked him, myself! But I was too wretched at the moment, and, later, I was afraid. Then all those others came, and I consoled myself that it had got into a wastebasket and been burned."

"Will you read it now?" And he took it from the table where it lay, and for a second time, offered it to her.

But again she declined it.

"May I open it then? I forget just what I said in it."

"If you wish it, by all means."

He did so, read, refolded it, and returned it to the table.

"What I must know," he said earnestly, "is, how, without that, you learned?"

She finished her tea and passed him her cup. Then, after a moment's pause, she said, quietly:

"I was there."

He winced, as though she had struck him.

"There!" he repeated, in doubting astonishment. "At Labiche's?"

"With *him*?"

"When he was shot, yes."

"Camilla!" His face was ashen.

"Oh, don't be alarmed," she hastened. "I didn't shoot him."

"But how, in God's name? Why? Why did you go?"

"That," she answered defiantly, "I won't tell you."

He gazed at her, unwinking. And, as he gazed, it came to him. He saw. If not all, certainly this: the motive for her silence.

"You were there to save Hilda." He flung it at her, and her eyes, before she spoke, told him that he was right.

"Ah, you—! She has spoken then."

"Not a word. But—" In an instant he had produced the vanity case. "This was found in the room."

"Poor child!" she murmured. "And you, of all persons, had to find it."

"Burnham found it, really," he said, and wondered at his own precision.

For a cruel and overpowering fear was upon him. Had Camilla come too late? Had the "poor child" been already sacrificed? He might reason. But of what use was reason? Were her hands stained by the blood of the beast? And, his composure quite gone, he cried:

"Tell me! For God's sake tell me everything!"

The cry startled her. In all the years she had known him she had never seen him like this. His agitation struck her dumb.

He mistook her muteness for admission. And suddenly he bent forward, elbows on knees, his face buried in his hands:

Seeing him thus, she seemed to sense his thought, and speech returning, she said:

"No, no, Nick! Not that, really! I swear it! Hilda is as guiltless as you are."

And then, as he had asked her, she told him all, with no reservation whatsoever.

CHAPTER XIII

IN order that he might understand fully she started her narration at a point nearly a week prior to that *fateful May night*. Hilda had told her then

of having had a quarrel with Teddy Winston. There was nothing unusual about that, though. He was in love with her, and, of course, wildly jealous. Camilla thought the girl cared for him more than for any man she knew. But, out of sheer mischief, she loved to tease him. And, something she had said this time had made him furious.

"I didn't know then—she didn't tell me—what it was. That was to come later from Teddy, himself," Brookfield's widow continued. "But it seems that the boy had gone off in a huff, after saying some pretty cruel things, and that Hilda was more resentful than sorry. I tried to argue with her from his standpoint, but she was bent on making him regret. 'I'll give him something to be really jealous about,' she said, laughing. And I heard no more of it, until, late that afternoon, at Somerville, just as Suzanne and I were preparing to start back to town, who should turn up there but Teddy, with all the, to him, rather startling details.

"He was in a fine frenzy, as you may believe. It appeared then, from his story, that their quarrel had been about Carey. You may imagine how seriously I took that. Carey was nearly old enough to be her father, and had known her, it seemed to me, almost since she was a baby. And even when I learned that she had threatened to go with Carey to some awful road house to dine, I only smiled indulgently, knowing there was no real harm in Hilda, and believing confidently that Carey respected her for the lovely child she was.

"But, as I've said, Teddy was terribly excited. I was at a loss to understand, at first, how he knew I was at our country place. And it seems he didn't. He had been playing golf all afternoon at Baltusrol, and was on his way over to dine with the Breretons, when, of all things to happen, just as he was about to cross the tracks at the Short Hills station, Carey's car turned into the road in front of him, and he recognized Hilda as the passenger. He rambled a lot about Fate arranging that

he should be there, and that I should be where I was, too.

"It seems he never thought of his dinner engagement from that moment. He just trailed Carey's car. It was a little too speedy, though, for that rattle-trap of his, and, after doing his best, he lost it. He'd got it into his head, though, that as they were headed this way it was Carey's purpose not to take her to any road house at all, but to bring her to his own secluded, and at the moment unoccupied, rural home. Simply, I suppose, because the last he saw of them they were coming this way. So he dashed into the grounds, and there never was a more surprised youngster than he was when he discovered me.

"He knows the country out that way better than I know it, myself. And we both concluded that the objective, really, was a place called Laurel Inn, about five miles further on. Maybe you know it, yourself. Of course you do. Well, then, you know, that it's quite respectable. We had often dined there ourselves. I told Teddy that, but there was no arguing with him. His mind was made up as to the nefariousness of Carey's purpose, and nothing would do but that I should go with him and surprise them, red-handed, so to speak. In his state of mind there was no telling what might happen if I let him go alone, so I sent Suzanne back to town, and I went."

"And they were there?" Van Ness asked.

"They were there. The boy was all for making a scene, and I had a terrible time dissuading him. You see they were in the big public dining room and everything was as right and proper, from my viewpoint, as could be. I may as well tell you now that for two years and more I've had no illusions about Carey. But I did give him credit in this matter for some decent feeling. We got a table where they wouldn't be likely to see us, and, just as I thought I had Teddy pretty well tamed down, he observed that Hilda was drinking champagne. Then he nearly had a spasm. This, he declared, was merely prepara-

tory. I saw, though, that she was drinking very little, and still believed the boy wrong.

"Well, we made a pretence of dining, and stayed there until they left. I don't know what time it was, but to me it seemed ages before they rose and Carey helped her with her wrap. Then, for the first time, I began to doubt my own judgment. There was something in the way he helped her—a certain air of possession, mingled with a caressing lingering of his hands—that actually struck terror to my heart. And from that moment I was quite as determined as Teddy to see the thing through."

A suspicion of a frown slightly furrowed Van Ness's brow and his jaws set hard. But he did not interrupt.

"We got away right behind them, and managed to keep pretty close. The only way I can account for that is that Carey wanted to kill time and wasn't letting his car out. If he had let it out he'd have left us so far behind that we never could have overtaken him. Twice he stopped at road houses and we shadowed them as before. At one of them, near Sinking Ridge, I was almost certain he saw us. But I must have been mistaken. And each time there was more champagne. So I came reluctantly to Teddy's view as to his purpose.

"When at length we found that we were on the Whippany road, and, for the first time, likely to be distanced—for he was running then like the wind and we could see a thunder storm brewing—Teddy gripped my arm, in a fresh tumult of excitement, and said: 'I knew it! I knew it! This is what he's had in mind all the time! He's heading for that damn French place, Labiche's; the rottenest joint within fifty miles of New York.'"

"It was a new name to me," Camilla pursued, "but before the night was over I learned that it was a sort of second home to my so-called 'uxorious husband.'"

And there was a world of bitterness in the way she said it.

Van Ness made no comment.

He sat tense with interest, his cigarette burned out and the others in his case were forgotten.

It was this part of her story that held the vital point which had perplexed him and baffled the authorities, and he was impatient for it.

"I remember looking at my watch as we entered," she went on, "and saw that it was nearly twenty minutes past eleven. I expected a restaurant here—a big room, you know—as at the other places, and when I found that there were only private rooms it struck me that we had come all that way, only to be frustrated in the end. I'm sure now that it couldn't have been Teddy Winston's first visit. He knew too much about it. In the first place, he ran the chance of upsetting everything or winning everything, right at the start. For he followed so quickly on Carey's heels that if Carey had turned his head he must have seen him. But in this way he saw the suite into which that French wretch ushered them, and when he got the chance Teddy demanded the suite opposite. Fortunately, it wasn't occupied, and so we got it. That was another instance of Fortune being with us. I prefer Fortune to Fate, you see.

"We sat there on pins and needles, both of us. Every tick of the watch seemed an eternity, while we trembled to think of what might be happening behind that closed door across the passage. Again and again the boy started up, intent on forcing his way in, if necessary. I was far the calmer of the two, even then, as I had been from the first. And I made him wait. I can't tell yet how I came to be so clear-visioned, but I can see now how, but for that, everything would have gone wrong, and the innocent, probably, have suffered more than the guilty. I am really very thankful, Nick."

And if Van Ness gathered from that she regarded what befell her husband as a blessing, he not only didn't blame her, but experienced a pleasing personal satisfaction that it should be so.

"I insisted, in the first place, that *nothing should* be done until we had

given our order. And it seemed, of course, that the waiter would never come for it. When he did, and was gone again, I relented in so far as to consent to the leaving of our door ajar. For, if there was to be any cry from that suite opposite, I wanted to hear it. But there wasn't. Evidently the same waiter was to serve both parties, for, through the open space in our doorway I saw him, presently enter the other room with his tray. The promptness with which they were served indicated to me that the supper had been ordered in advance."

"It was," Van Ness confirmed. "Ordered for eleven. They were late for it."

"I thought so. When the waiter withdrew Teddy again wanted to rush in. 'Before the door is locked,' he said. But again I restrained him. I don't even now know why or just how. But it worked. Worked beautifully. Not a sound reached us. We just sat there waiting, waiting endlessly, as I have said. And then, what, of all things, do you suppose happened?"

"I don't suppose, I know," was Van Ness's answer. "Carey came out."

"Yes. With a champagne bottle in his hand. They told you about that?"

"Labiche told us that night. I saw it in the newspaper accounts too."

"And we went in. Both of us. Immediately. Poor Hilda! I wish you could have seen her eyes. They flamed at Teddy. She saw him first. I followed, you know. When she saw me, they dropped. Oh, how I pitied her. She was so ashamed. For the first time in my life I saw her thoroughly embarrassed. I fairly ran to her and took her in my arms. I said: 'Get your things at once. You must come with us before he returns.' And, without a word, she started to obey. She went into the other room. You saw it, I suppose. What on earth kept her there I haven't found out yet. I don't suppose it was actually over two or three minutes at the most; but it seemed aeons to me. Teddy stood like a statue by the door from the passage. Or, rather like

a sentry on guard. When, as I say, aeons passed and the girl didn't return, I went to her. She was leisurely pinning on her hat. She seemed dazed. Then I knew that she must have taken more of the champagne than she, even herself, realized. It was awful. Oh, Nick, she would have been such easy prey for him!"

"Don't!" he said. "Don't! Go on!"

"I picked up her wrap from the bed, and put it around her. Then I fairly pushed her into the other room. I saw there were French windows there. I pulled back the red-rep curtains from one of them. And I discovered a shallow balcony outside. And just then a flash of lightning showed me that the lawn was not more than three feet beneath. We could go that way and avoid a possible meeting with Carey. I still had one arm about her, and with the other other hand I beckoned to Teddy. 'Come!' I said. 'We'll go this way.' But the boy laughed in my face. 'You may,' he said, 'if you like. And I'll join you later. Later—after I've attended to him.' Again I pushed Hilda. I pushed her through the window, out into the rain. And crossed over to Teddy, taking him by the arm. 'Look out!' he said. 'This might go off.' And then, for the first time, I saw that he had a pistol in his hand. One of those murderous-looking automatic things."

"Where in God's name did you get it?" Van Ness asked.

"He told me, later. When, at the Somerville house, I left him for a little—it was in Carey's den that we'd had our talk—he discovered it quite by accident, on the mantelpiece, and put it in his pocket without looking at it. He had no idea whether it was loaded or wasn't, he declared. And I believe him."

"He soon found out," Nick grimly observed.

"Yes. Very soon. For he'd hardly cautioned me when Carey came back. If he had had an appointment to meet us there, he couldn't have been more composed. I never saw anything like it. 'To what am I indebted for this lit-

tle surprise?' he said. Actually said it. It's the sort of thing one hears the villain say in a play. And there was something of banter in the way he quoted it. If Teddy needed anything to make him more furious than he already was, that must have done it. 'To my discovery of what a damn cad you are,' he gave him back. But Carey acted as if he hadn't heard him. He just looked about the room an instant, and then walked to the door of the other room and looked in there. 'What have you done with Hilda?' he asked, and added an irony that I know made Teddy squirm: 'She's under my protection, you know.'

"I never opened my lips. I couldn't. I saw the boy plunge at him. There was no pistol in his hand, then. I'm certain of that. Both his hands were empty and open wide. It struck me that he wanted to tear at Carey's face. He flung himself on him. But Carey got him around the waist, somehow, and twisted him sideways. He kicked and clawed. But it was at the air. And, holding him that way, he said to me: 'Hadn't you better go? This isn't just the place for you. You don't fit in, somehow.' He'd hardly finished, when the shot rang out. I saw the flash, and, as Teddy dropped on his knees, I saw the pistol in his hand. He must have had it in his pocket. My first thought was that it was Teddy who was shot. When he fell, I mean. But Carey staggered back and seemed to be bracing himself against the wall. It took seconds for me to grasp just what had happened, and when I did I must have rather gone to pieces. I don't remember leaving the room. I don't remember anything, indeed, till I was outside and the rain beating in my face. Outside in the dark and quite alone. Teddy was trying to find Hilda. He came back with her the next minute, she had jumped to the ground and was crouching under the balcony. She clung to me, and we ran, Teddy leading, to a shed under which his car was.

"Then I must have lost count again, I fancy. When I came back once more we were tearing like mad through the

storm and the car rocking like a skiff in a gale. We were all soaking wet, too. For that car is only a runabout, you know. There was no top, no curtains, no anything. We were all three on the one seat, and Ted had a lapcloth over his head and shoulders. He'd lost his hat. Besides, the lights weren't working and it's a miracle we weren't all killed. For my part, I wished just then—yes, and for days afterward, that I had been."

Suddenly Van Ness exclaimed: "Jove! I remember. It was your car. Burnham and I nearly ran you down between Whippany and Morristown. How he swore! Three women in a car, he said, without lights."

"What would you have thought if you had, and we'd all been killed, and you alive? Could you ever have solved the mystery?"

"Thank God I wasn't asked to," was his reply. "And you and young Winston were the two patrons, Labiche told us, he sent away without their learning a scrap of what happened. That's irony for you."

There was not very much more for Camilla to tell then, except to make clear why, without being bidden, she had arrived at Morristown the following morning, apparently in response to his telegram.

"You see," she said, "I stopped over night in the house at Somerville. I couldn't go home, knowing what I did, and face the servants. Yet, fancy what a horror it was to stay in that place alone! I didn't even try to sleep. I could hardly sit still. Hilda, poor child, wanted to stay with me. But I saw that that was impossible. She must go back, and she must have some story to tell that would account for the hour. She had already attempted to cover her appointment with Carey by telephoning from the Wilmerdings) about the invented motor party. So, between the three of us, we fixed up the sequel. Do you remember how your mention on the train of the possibility of my having gone to the Wilmerdings upset me? *That was the reason.*

"But, to get on: As those frightful hours passed, it came to me that I'd almost certainly be sent for. Whether Carey lived or died—and I had no means of knowing which it was—they'd probably try to get his wife to him. The more I thought of it, the more sure I was. And long before dawn I'd made my plans. I found an old time-table which showed a train from Bound Brook that would get me to Cranford before five. And Cranford, you know, is only about five miles from Millburn, 'cross country; and at Millburn I could board the first morning train from New York stopping at Morristown. I got through some of the long wait by bathing, digging out a last year's frock and hat, and arraying myself as contrastingly as possible with the woman of the night.

"I would have walked to Bound Brook, if necessary. But a milk man, going to get his milk supply from that very train, offered me a lift. And at Cranford I was lucky enough to find a so-called jitney. But to be met by you, Nick, of all persons, on the Morristown platform, nearly floored me."

"Suppose I hadn't been there?"

"If neither you nor anyone else had come to meet me I should have taken the first train back to town. I couldn't have done otherwise."

Van Ness relaxed. Once again he lighted a cigarette. Then, without seeming object he took between thumb and forefinger the folded telegram and began tapping the table with it.

"And I suppose," he said as if just for something to say "if this hadn't fallen unopened into my hands I might never have heard the truth. Eh Camilla?"

"Never is a long time" she answered. "But you certainly wouldn't have heard it today."

He unfolded it again, and once more he held it out to her.

"Won't you read it now?" he asked.

"But why should I? No. Destroy it. Tear it up. Burn it."

For a moment he considered. Then he rose, walked to the empty fireplace, and stooping, struck a match, ignited

the paper, and holding it by one corner, watched it flame and blacken to a curling cinder.

Not until months after, when he was her guest at the Berkshire place, near Lenox, did he tell her what he had, upon consideration, that day, kept hidden.

It had not been *his* telegram after all. He had discovered that, of course, only after opening it. It was a telegram, dated Boston, which read:

"Called here on business. Returning probably tomorrow." And it was signed: *"Carey."*

CHAPTER XIV

It is hardly probable that Van Ness would have bared the fact, even then, had it not been that what occurred that May night at Labiche's was revived in general and in particular by a cable in the morning paper, telling briefly of the death of Teddy Winston in Flanders, where, for only two weeks, he had been driving for the American Ambulance.

Teddy's part in the affair had been, throughout, the saddest chapter, really, of the story. Prior to that night he was as admirable a boy as there was in all that smart upper-crust set. And his purpose to save the girl he loved from violation at the hands of an unconscionable voluptuary was praiseworthy in the highest degree. Yet, because he was as fine as he was, it ended him. His conscience seems to have got him at once. And because it gave him no peace, sober, he was weak enough to try to still it—to drown it, in fact—in drink. To the everlasting credit of Hilda, it may be said—for it is certain that she was fond of him, though doubtful that she signally loved him—that, realizing the impulsion, she did not reproach him. It was rather he himself who realized that he was no longer a fit worshipper and forsook his shrine.

It was in August of that year that war blazed across Europe, and, with almost the first alarm, Teddy seemed to see in it the refuge he craved for. From Paris he wrote to Camilla a long letter

the burden of which was that he had tried to convince himself that in firing the pistol, that night, he had done it in self-defence. But he knew that wasn't true. There had been murder in his heart from the moment he took it from the mantelpiece at Somerville. He had told her that he wasn't sure whether or not it was loaded. But he was. He had examined it and knew that it held a fresh slide. If to save Hilda the shot had been necessary he thought he'd feel different. But Hilda was already saved. She was out of the room. Therefore, he had killed Brookfield for one reason and one only.

"I hated him," he wrote. "He was unarmed. I didn't give him a chance. It was dastardly. The sooner I get mine over here, the sooner I'll be out of torment."

Camilla had kept the letter, showing it to no one. But this day of the cable she gave it to Van Ness to read.

"Poor beggar!" he commented. "Then he simply got what he went after."

"I wonder if we all don't get that in the end if we go after it hard enough," she rejoined.

"I wonder." There was a pause then. It was late afternoon, and they had been having tea in the garden. They sat on a marble bench. In the center of a marble basin a fountain played. Camilla's mother, who was stopping with her, had, half an hour ago, returned to the house.

"Sometimes," he ended the pause with, "there are reasons why we can't go as hard as we'd like."

"What, for instance?"

"Well, sheer decency, for one." And he looked into her eyes, with a little half-quizzical smile.

"Which reminds me," she said, as though darting to a new matter. "That telegram of Carey's you told me of. You were wondering about the Boston date, And I let you wonder. But it was not so mysterious as you seemed to think. Telegrams from him from various cities were quite the ordinary thing. I solved the problem long ago. He simply dictated them by telephone, and set

the hours at which they were to be sent. The ordinary man might have trouble in doing that. But his name, of course, was enough. The telegraph company's bill was sent him on the first of the month."

"You knew this, and yet—"

"I knew a great deal more, 'and yet,' as you say. He knew, too, that I was not altogether ignorant of his infidelities, but he chose to keep up this mockery just the same. Our relations, I don't mind telling you, Nick, ceased more than two years ago, when I made my first discovery. Since then—and before, too, for all I know—he excused himself, when he thought it worth while, on the pretext of my coldness."

Even a far less cleverer man than Nicholas Van Ness was must have detected then that this was not in any sense a new matter.

"Sheer decency then shouldn't deter me?" he asked, the quizzical smile no longer a little one, no longer a half.

"Not after that, Nick. It hasn't deterred me, has it?"

"No," he agreed, "and I'm only too willing to follow your tempting example. Will you marry me, Camilla, when the year is up?"

"I'll marry you tomorrow, my dear, and show the world how I cherish my late husband's memory."

But they weren't married tomorrow. They weren't married for ten days. Then Hilda came back from Newport for the wedding as beaming as though her life had never touched the edge of tragedy, and with a confidential tale of

romance for her uncle-guardian about a young attaché of the British embassy whom she had met and loved. He had gone home, now, she said, to fight. But when the war was over he was coming back to marry her. So very, very brief is youth's memory.

And Nick's friend, Burnham, came up too, by special invitation. It was a very quiet affair and the guests limited to a handful. They had hardly seen each other since that May night, and this certainly was not an occasion to discuss the grim affair in which each had played a part. Still there were one or two questions which the natty, young-looking, little physician couldn't quite resist asking.

"I've so often wondered," he said, "about that vanity case. You said, if I remember, that it appeared familiar. Just between us two, did you ever get any nearer to identifying it?"

And Van Ness, believing that in a case that had been so much lied about, one little prevarication wouldn't very much matter, answered:

"Oh, yes. It resembled one my sister used to carry. But when they were placed together they were as different as swan and goose."

"Dear, dear!" the doctor exclaimed. "Some mystery, as they say. I don't suppose it will ever be solved now."

Van Ness shook his head gravely. "No, I presume not. It's already pretty well gone into the limbo of forgotten things. Let it rest, Henry. Let it rest."

The End



A CHARMING woman is not one who entertains by what she says. She is one who is entertained by what the man says.



THE SURRENDER

By L. M. Hussey

I

SHE had no knowledge, in the scientific sense, of poisons, and when she determined to end her life by one she took the first toxic drug that came to her hand. This happened to be a little bottle of chloral, and imprinted on the label was the skull above the crossed bones with a warning word in large red letters.

For a few moments she twisted the vial back and forth in her fingers, wondering how much of the drug to take. But this was a trivial speculation, and finally she emptied all the white crystals into a glass and poured a small volume of water upon them. They dissolved rapidly, and the fluid remained clear, as if it were no more deadly than the water itself.

She raised the brim of the glass to her lips and a slight chlorinous smell came to her nostrils, and this was pleasant to her. Then with the sudden resolution of such moments, she swallowed the solution. It had a curious, benumbing taste. There was no other sensation. Through her little window, the afternoon sunlight came in with a warm exuberance, covering her head, her face, her shoulders, as in a mantle of gilt, extraordinarily diaphanous.

She stood quietly near the window, her fingers still circled around the glass. Now she was happy at last; her mind was exalted; this was her moment of victory! The cruelty of life, the unremitting harshness of her days, almost personified to her senses in an unseen but fully apprehended presence, was ended, gone and destroyed in a single swift act of her own accomplishment,

like the sudden triumphant thrust of a duelist. She was deeply glad that the properties of the drug left her these strange moments of delight when, removed from all the concerns of life, she still had the sensations of living.

She turned her face to the window, and the sun warmed her cheeks like an ardent touch. Now she felt that her small room was an inadequate place for her end. She crossed the room and went out the door, with the idea that she could walk to the park and have the final unconsciousness reach her in the open air, under the shadows of the green trees.

She went down the stairs rapidly, but when she reached the door her sight seemed very dim. She groped for the knob. It surprised her that the touch of the metal was so faint on her fingers. She wanted to close the door after her, but an acutely felt urgency, a clear knowledge that the time left her was very brief, led her to neglect. The pavement felt soft, yielding to her step, as if she were walking through a deep layer of feathers. The sun disappeared unexpectedly. She looked up . . . she wondered, apprehensive, if it was about to rain. . . .

A physician, driving his car slowly through the narrow street, saw her fall. He slipped out his clutch at once, and jolted his car to a stop with the emergency brake. Two or three children near her ceased a shrill squabble and like little pieces of dirty marble stood motionless and stared.

The doctor reached her where she lay on the pavement; he knelt down at her side and lifted her head in his hands. Her hair was loosened and a

black strand fell over his wrists, as if, in that instant, strangely animate. Her eyes were closed, her lips were parted, the bloodless pallor of her face was apparent through the warm dusk of her skin.

He bent closer, examining her face. He could feel, against his supporting arm, the faint rise and fall of her continued respiration. Now, in the intimacy of his examination, he drew near enough to detect a slight chlorinous odour that arose, like a miasma, from her parted lips.

At once, as if he were inspired, he suspected poison, and the nature of it. He gave a quick glance about him. No one was on the street. The group of dirty children swayed a little forward, gaping.

He stood up quickly, drawing her with him, his hands passed under her arms. It was the moment for a quick decision and he made this in that necessary second. He lifted her in his arms and carried her to the car.

With some difficulty he raised her inanimate body high enough to lay her on the seat. Then, throwing a robe over her, he slipped under the wheel and started the engine.

He passed into motion slowly, looking back every second to see if the jolting of the uneven streets endangered her position. She was without any movement; there were no signs of her breathing. He did not know whether she was alive or dead.

It was not a great distance, but the trip to his office seemed very long. The bloodless face of the girl, her pathetic insensibility, her helplessness stirred his pity, whilst her foreign aspect, her black hair, the black fringe of her closed eyes, her strange collapse brought him a deep curiosity. At last he turned the corner into his own street. He stopped before the door of his office and, lifting her out of the car, carried her up the steps and into the house. His housekeeper met him in the hall.

"This girl is very sick," he said. "Help me carry her upstairs."

She was small and light and they had

no difficulty now in taking her into a little bedroom on the second floor. As they placed her on the bed her head turned to the side, and her loosened hair spread out over the pillow in jetty disorder.

"Hurry, now!" commanded the doctor. "Get me a glass; fill it half full of hot water."

The housekeeper left the room and during her short absence he administered a cardiac stimulant. The woman returned with the water and he hastily dissolved a quantity of the necessary alkaline antidote. He raised her head in the curve of his arm and poured the liquid through her parted lips.

For a moment her tongue refused to respond. Then she swallowed; the antidote was given.

Her head fell back on the pillow. With his fingers on her wrist, he felt a more perceptible pulse.

After a few minutes it seemed to him that the tinge of a colour was entering her cheeks.

II

WHEN she first opened her eyes she saw a man looking at her. His regard seemed kind, and very concerned and his presence did not worry her. She perceived that he was not young; his eyes were surrounded by small lines, modeled there by the years; his hair was grey. Yet this was very curious—she could not understand his nearness, his look of concern, his obvious interest in her.

For a few seconds she made a definite struggle for comprehension. But she was immensely drowsy; her senses demanded sleep with an imperative desire. She closed her eyes again; once more she was without consciousness.

A dozen times, through a period of which she had no reckoning—minutes, hours, days; she did not know—she awakened in the same way, experienced the same wonder, returned to unconsciousness with the same resistless urge. Sometimes she found this man looking at her as in the first awakening;

again she was alone in the small room, lying in bed. Once there was a woman in the room who said something to her, but her mind was too flaccid to comprehend the words.

One morning she opened her eyes, and now, for the first time since her initial loss of consciousness, she was aware of life, aware of her pulse, of her breathing, of the touch of the sheets against her flexed fingers. With a tremendous surprise she realized that she had bridged a gap of time, she did not know how long, in a condition of stupor, that left no memories. She vividly recalled her last definite act—passing down the steps of the house and out to the street. She had intended to die then! What had happened to her?

She lay in the bed weakly, puzzled, wondering.

After a few moments the woman she had seen before entered, glanced at her, turned away suddenly and passed out into the corridor.

A moment after the man observed vaguely at other times came into the room and approached her bed. He bent over her and took her wrist between his fingers.

“You feel better?” he asked her.

She looked at him earnestly, wondering whether, outside that room, she had ever seen him before. She felt certain that he was a stranger.

“Who are you?” she asked.

He smiled, dropped her hand, and drew a chair close to the bedside.

“Don’t try to ask me everything at once,” he said. “You have been very sick.”

Then the consciousness of her own act came back to her clearly. It seemed certain that he must know.

“What are you going to do with me?” she asked.

Her voice was hard, almost hostile. Her English was delivered quickly, with a Latin accent. He ignored her hostility and continued to smile at her.

“I don’t know just what you mean,” he said. “For one thing, I’m going to keep you here until you get well. Also

I want to find out what happened to you. If anyone is to blame—”

“Ah!”

The passionate exclamation broke in upon his sentence with a startling fervour; it passed over her lips in a monosyllable of sound that seemed to imply profound significances—hate, venom, disaster, memories of infinite distress.

The dark pupils of her eyes expanded and she stared at him as if his substance were transparent, revealing through its medium figures of malignity that stirred her mind to bitterness and despair.

He moved a little closer to her, and touched one of her white, flaccid hands.

“Tell me,” he said, “what happened to you? Did you take the drug? Why did you do it? I was driving down the street in my car when I saw you come out of the house. You staggered near the steps and then collapsed. I was just returning from several calls. I brought you here and I’ve managed to save your life. Either you took less of the drug than would be quickly fatal, or else you have a very strong resistance. Have you anything to tell me? Don’t—don’t imagine I want to press you. But if there is something I can do for you . . . any reason . . . any help . . .”

She was searching his face eagerly, curiously, as if some singularity of his features made them, in a measure, the objects of wonder. After a moment she turned her head to the side and closed her eyes.

“This is very strange,” she murmured.

And then, with a detached tone, almost in the manner of some casual pronouncement, she added: “You must know, I am not used to kindness . . .”

A few moments passed and she began to talk about herself. He listened to her almost in silence, only occasionally interrupting her with a simple question. Sometimes she spoke with difficulty, finding expression awkward in an alien speech. More often her sentences were quick and voluble.

III

HER father had been a tradesman in town in the south of France. She had no memory of her mother, whose death had occurred before her second year. When her father died also there was a little money left—enough for a few years.

"Do you know what I wanted?" she asked.

The doctor gave her a look of inquiry.

"Well, you have to know," she said, "that what I wanted was a man!"

She made the naïve statement belligerently, and with an immense seriousness. In that moment the doctor, attending her words, felt in her a fundamental simplicity, touching like that of a child. Her desires had the directness of elemental passions. He saw, foreshadowed in her introductory words, the sardonic comment life would make, in the realities it brought to her, upon the simplicity of her aspirations and her dreams. He spoke to her softly.

"Then tell me," he said, "what did you do to achieve your wish?"

In a gross sense hers was a desire of easy gratification. In that little town where she lived she had, after the death of her father, more than the ordinary dowry. Any young fellow would have married her, but, for the purposes of her content, she was unfortunate, unfortunate in the quality of her spirit. She had the unlucky gift of imagination and the power to make dreams in her head. And in her naïve imaginings she had a naïve faith.

None of the young men she knew in this place aroused any sense of appeal. For her they were uncouth; their hopes were trivial. She told of a dissatisfied year in which her discontent increased, little by little, accumulating, like hoarded small sums, into a store of memories, undesirable and inconsequent. At last she thought of leaving her home and going to Paris.

But the romance of this prospected *adventure* never became an accomplishment. *What seemed to be the promise*

of her wishes came with suddenness and fervour.

"You never saw him," she said, "but I will tell you what he was like. You have to know, I had bought six candles one morning to be lit for my prayers. When I came out of the church he was standing near the door, smoking white cigarettes.

"Yes, and he had an air—nothing like those poor fellows that wanted me. He was blond—I knew he must be from the north of my country, and he was very sure of himself. He looked at me and I was so surprised I gave him more than just a glance. Then, you know, of course he smiled."

It seemed he was the nephew of the local tax-collector, making his uncle a visit before crossing the ocean. He was going to America; he had people there, he said, and there was a lot of money to be made. He expected to stay with his uncle for two or three days, but as it turned out he remained nearly a month, because he and the girl became lovers.

She spoke of her lover with a sombre enthusiasm as if, recalling luminous memories, she filtered them through a gloomy medium of other recollections, remembered from subsequent days.

Listening to her, to the appeal of her full confidence, the doctor tried to picture the qualities of the young Frenchman who had given this girl her vision of achieved hopes. What gifts did he give her to light the fire of her fervour; what was his difference? The reply came, accompanied by his inner sense of her pathos: nothing, nothing marked, nothing essential. There was no surprise for him in this conclusion. The tragedies of life come out of trivialities; even the tragedies themselves, the complexes of hopes and aspirations, of dreams and visions are trivial.

Finally, the young Frenchman left. He told her he would write to her as soon as he landed, and he kept this promise. He wrote to her very frequently and she returned him abundant replies. He said he wanted her to join him at the earliest moment—just the

instant he had his proper bearings and a definite programme under way. This disappointed her a little and made her somewhat impatient. She was not in sympathy with his caution; she was eager to share his difficulties.

They corresponded for a year, but still it was not yet the suitable time for her coming. Her impatience had accumulated and she made a resolve.

"This is what I told to myself," she said: "'You are not going to wait any longer, you little fool! Just take him by surprise and go to him. He will be glad enough, you can count on that, after he has you.' Ah! And you can't tell me I was wrong!"

She wrote to him that she was coming, and then she took the next liner. During the trip her precipitancy worried her a little; she was troubled by minor perturbations: perhaps he would not meet the steamer . . . it might be her letter failed to reach him. . . . But these disturbing suppositions proved wrong.

He met her as she walked ashore; he took her in his arms. There was the clangorous noise of the streets about them, the smell of the salt water blown over the docks, the dust and the drifting smoke of the city embracing them like an unwelcome mantle. But his lips revived the memories of their initial hours and their first kisses and brought her an oblivion of delight.

Then, as they walked away together, she had an opportunity to examine him and with an intense surprise she perceived that he was different. It was not so much a change in appearance that she noted as, expressed through the small alterations of his face, his gestures, his walk, even the clothes he wore, a declination of spirit, a diminution of his courage, a decay of his assurance.

His former air of blitheness was scarcely perceptible. And after all these months of separation, when there should have been an immense eagerness for conversation between them, she found it difficult to talk to him; he fell into silences, into preoccupations.

It was necessary to arrange some place for her to live, until they could be together. She did not see why they should not join each other at once, why the abandon of his desire should not prove adequate to the surmounting of all the difficulties that opposed such a course. But she acquiesced in the plan he set forth and they searched together for a place for her to stay. They could not find any until evening and then he left her, with the promise to see her again early in the morning. She watched him go with a curious premonition in her heart.

And he never returned. . . .

There was no way she could find him, no way to inquire about him. She knew nothing about his employment, nor the place where he had been living. All her letters had been addressed to the general delivery. His disappearance was utter and complete, like the fading of a phantom, like the passing of a dream.

But she could not believe in the finality of his going.

What had happened to him?

Had he, in the interval of their separation, lost his desire of her, without the courage of confession?

Or was he the victim of some obscure misfortune, some incomprehensible disaster?

He disappeared as men disappear every day; he went without a word, and was never seen again. She might wonder and postulate upon his going, but the fact itself was an insoluble mystery, one of the mysteries that give to the aspect of life its sinister and inscrutable countenance.

Since she knew nothing definite, her hopes remained with her for many months. But even these grew less and less with the passing of time that brought her nothing. The strange city, the strange people, the hostility of an alien race, gave her at last the sense of utter isolation.

She chose finally that simple solution that was in consonance with the naïveté of her aspirations, with the simplicity of her hopes. The unforeseen inter-

vention of the man who listened to her now had saved her.

IV

IN the days that followed she sought to comprehend the character of this physician who kept her in his home and ministered to her helplessness. Her recovery was not easy; all strength and all desire seemed to have passed from her body.

She spent the hours of each day lying in the bed, motionless, in a nirvana of inanition. When he came in to talk with her she watched his face, she studied his features. When he left, the lineaments of his countenance remained before her, like a puzzle. He was not young; his dark hair was chiefly lightened with grey. But his face, if not youthful, had something of the aspect of youth; the skin was smooth, like that of a boy, with a resemblance to that indefinable air of hope that expresses itself in even the texture of a boy's face. He always spoke to her quietly; his eyes looked at her with kindness.

He had an acute appreciation of her pathos, perhaps because he found in her a similarity to himself; he had had simple hopes. He admired her courage, and the directness of her resolution. When he talked to her he felt a deep sense of pleasure; the little details of her conversation charmed him. He liked the fervid delivery of her speech, the quaint pronunciation of the words she said, the glow of her dark eyes, the occasional quick gesture that charged her inanimate fingers with life. Whenever he could spare the time he talked to her.

At last she was able to sit up. He had an easy chair brought in and placed near the window; here she sat and looked out over the roofs of the houses.

One day, as he seated himself to talk to her, she watched his face closely, as if listening, and then, at some question he asked, she uttered a quick interrogation.

"Eh?"

He smiled at her.

"You weren't hearing me at all, were you?" he said.

For a moment she made no answer and then, knitting her jet brows, she began to question him.

"Tell me, why do you keep me here? Why are you kind to me? You don't know me! Nobody does anything like this. I have to tell you, I think you are very strange!"

"Isn't it my business to make people well?"

"Ah! Don't tell me these things. You just go around what I ask you."

He laughed a little.

"Well, then, what do you want to know?"

"Why I am here! Why you interfered with me! You know, you had no business to pick me up and bring me to this house; you spoiled my plans. Do you see that?"

She spoke harshly, and her words chilled him. She seemed to withdraw from his sympathy, to erect a barrier between herself and his desire to help her.

The discomfort of the moment was expressed in his face, and perceiving his altered expression, she put out her hand and touched him, retracting by this gesture the austerity of her words.

He was not used to such a touch; his life had given him few pleasant memories of women. Her young skin warmed against his own, communicating a warmth to his veins as if the simple contact of her hand mixed his blood with an infusion of youth.

He closed his fingers around her hand, and she did not withdraw it; it remained in his own, intimate and languid. She did not look at him now, but turning her head to the side, leaning her cheek against the cushions of the chair, she closed her eyes. Her acquiescence to his touch, her languour and her weakness aroused in him a profound sense of protection and the promise of an endearing intimacy for which he had long ceased to hope.

In that moment his mind was filled with suddenly born aspirations that were not yet shaped into the coherence

of definite thoughts. He looked at the girl, turned side-face to his eyes, and the curve of her dark cheek, the drooping lines of her lips, the languid flexion of her small throat made her precious to his prospected hours. She brought him the assurance of a magic gift; she retrieved for him the glow of his departed youth. Continuing to look at her, the resignation and helplessness of her attitude produced within him a deep determination, a matured sense of necessity: he must not let her go!

Her strength continued to come back slowly, and it was many days before she was able, for exercise, to walk up and down the length of the hall.

During this period the doctor spent a certain number of hours with her each day, taking pleasure in listening to her speech, in asking her questions about her home and her former life, in prevailing upon her to talk of herself. He found a charm simply in the quality of her voice and the manner in which she formed the sentence of a language that was not her own.

Sometimes, when her speech became inextricably snarled with foreign idiom, he stopped the flow of her words by a laugh and then, after a second, she understood and laughed with him.

"What I care!" she would exclaim, smiling. "But if I could talk to you in my own language, you must believe me, I would have plenty to say and a good many words!"

He had now the luxury of little intimacies with her. She accepted his hesitant caresses without responding, but with never a denial. When he took her hand her slim fingers lay in his palm like the long petals of flowers, half wilted.

She recognized the affection she had aroused in him. It did not surprise her; she accepted it as one might a natural phenomenon. He gave her no thrill, he gave her no dreams, there was no magic in his presence. For her he was an old man who had been kind to her. She ceased even to find his kindness curious and to wonder at it; she accepted this too. Her mind was flaccid,

but at least she was not troubled, she was calm, she felt secure. She waited, with the resignation of a *devoutée*, for his purpose and his avowal.

One day he told her she was strong enough to go out now, and proposed a ride in his car. He helped her downstairs with his arm supporting her and he almost lifted her into the car. The summer had passed into autumn; there was a tree with red leaves in front of the house. She remembered the days of the falling leaves in the little town where she had been born and there was a melancholy and a regret in her heart.

But the cool air exhilarated her and colour came into her cheeks, flushing her dark skin. They drove out to the park and the doctor stopped his car along the side of a quiet drive. He looked at his companion and saw the warm colour in her face.

"You look better!" he exclaimed.

"I feel much stronger."

"Yes, you'll be entirely well very soon now. It is time to make some plans. . . ."

"What you mean?"

"Dear," he said, "it is true, I suppose, that I cannot give you what you have hoped for or expected. But then, we never get what we expect. Perhaps I can give you other things that will be some recompense. I want to protect you, I want to keep you from trouble. . . . I want you to marry me. . . ."

There was no surprise in his words; they had been fully anticipated. Yet her acquiescence did not come to her lips at once in the easy assent she had imagined.

For an instant she closed her eyes and unexpectedly the vision of her hopes returned to her, the naïve and simple promise of her life. It came like a passing breath, like a remembered perfume, like the far-heard melody of a song; it vanished; she answered him.

"Yes," she said.

V

THEY went home, and he left her in her room. He promised to return in

a few hours; he parted from her jubilantly.

She sat down on the edge of the bed. The light was fading, the room was dusk. The window was a dim rectangle, a palely luminous square set in the dark wall. For a few moments she thought, tenderly, of the man who had just left her, and was grateful for his kindness.

And then with the vision of his face that was not young before her eyes, with the knowledge of his age and his inadequacy, she experienced a revolt passionate and sudden. She stood up from the bed instantly, she turned around, she stumbled backward a few paces in a panic alarm, as a waking somnambulist might from the proximity of a grave danger. In that instant she saw the impossible promise she had made him, the incredible abandon of her most fervid hopes. In another moment she was assured of a profound necessity for escape.

She turned to the bed and found her hat; she placed it on her head with fumbling haste. She ran out of the room noiselessly, down the stairs, through the hall, out the front door. As she half ran along the street the evening air blew sharply against her cheeks. She nearly collided with a man turning the corner; he stopped and stared after her.

She came to a more crowded street and out of breath, slackened the hurry of her pace. The store windows were lighted; boys were calling newspapers at the corners. She moved through the crowds alone, without a goal. And at last the reaction to her sudden effort came and she paused, leaning against a store window, immensely tired.

Men and women passed her endlessly, like a panorama of automatons; she knew no one. She had no share in their purposes, no knowledge of their intents. The noises of the streets, the murmur of a strange tongue, the clatter of vehicles, the mingled cacophonous voices of warning automobile horns assailed her ears harshly, beat upon her consciousness like an inimical presence. She leaned against the store window, isolated in a great loneliness.

And then, with the same suddenness of her emotional revolt, came her fear. The separate aspects of the life about her, the passing crowds, the lighted windows, the shuffling of footfalls, the sinister clamour of the streets, personified themselves into a monster that blindly sought her destruction. She breathed sharply and stepped away from the window. Her strength returned to her, the strength of a last effort, and she hurried back the way she had come.

She reached her street and the house from which she had made her escape. She went up the steps and opened the door. The doctor was in the hall; he greeted her with a gasp of consternation and relief. She saw the intense alarm of his features; he looked older, very old!

"Why did you go out?" he cried. "Why did you risk that? I've been half crazy with anxiety! What was the matter?"

She did not answer him, but simply stumbled against him, into his protective embrace, making the surrender of her romantic hopes to the tenderness of his inadequate arms.



BEING in love, like eating sausage, requires perfect confidence.



RÉPÉTITION GÉNÉRALE

By George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

§ 1

Daily Thought.—How like a hair the line that separates respect and ridicule! What if, at the height of his moral crusading power, a waggish antagonist could have got hold of a photograph of Anthony Comstock taken at the age of two showing him—as was the genial mode in those days—stark naked!

§ 2

The Technique of Amour.—One of the most fecund and persistent myths of amour is that which maintains that a man, once he is taken with a woman, is intrigued in the degree that she affects indifference toward him. The truth, of course, is that while such indifference, whether honest or assumed, may actually contrive to keep him stepping lively for a short spurt, it very soon thereafter causes him suddenly to halt and get out of the race altogether. The clever woman, desiring to ensnare a man, realizes that the best way to get him is to throw away all the traditional feminine weapons and subterfuges and frankly and openly, yet charmingly, tell him that she likes him. The man thus handled, all folk-lore to the contrary, is won—and absolutely. The indifference tactic may in the end achieve some vagram boob, but it has never yet in the history of the world gained for a woman a single desirable, first-rate man.

§ 3

Memorial Service.—Let us summon from the shades the immortal soul of

James Harlan, born in 1820, entered into rest 1899. In the year 1865 this Harlan resigned from the United States Senate to enter the cabinet of Abraham Lincoln as Secretary of the Interior. One of the clerks in that department, at \$600 a year, was Walt Whitman, lately emerged from three years of noble service as an army nurse during the Civil War. One day, discovering that Whitman was the author of a book called "Leaves of Grass," Harlan ordered him incontinently thrown out, and it was done forthwith. Let us remember this event and this man; he is too precious to die. Let us repair, once a year, to our accustomed houses of worship or refreshment, and there give thanks to God that one day in 1865 brought together the greatest imaginative artist that America has ever produced and the damndest ass.

§ 4

The Spook-Chasers. — The trouble with psychical research is not that it is idiotic but that it is too logical. It offers nothing new; it simply reduces what-everybody-believes to an absurdity. This what-everybody-believes is the doctrine that the soul of man is immortal. Is it true? If so, then surely it is logical to try to get into some sort of contact with the ghosts of the departed, and thus find out from them how heaven and hell are managed. Such information is important. If we had it accurately, it would be possible to cashier all of the bad guessers who now rant in pulpits. Moreover, it would probably be possible to make sure of

getting to heaven, or at least of avoiding the more direct roads to hell. Thus there is professional jealousy in the average ecclesiastic's dislike of spiritualists, for if they ever get their wires working his job will be gone.

The fact that psychical research attracts a good many college professors, and particularly physicists, is not to be wondered at. Picture a man believing that the soul is immortal and at the same time trained in the experimental method. Isn't it natural for such a fellow to seek proofs of what he already believes? And isn't it equally natural for him to demand that they be materially ponderable? But an objection remains: these shivering pedagogues accept evidence that is absurd and idiotic, for example, the cheap tricks of a Eusapia Palladino. Well, what would you? Is it unnatural for a man to swallow a hickory-nut after he has started out by swallowing a cobblestone? Is it hard to believe that Little Brighteyes is actually writing on the slate when one already believes that Greek bus boys have immortal souls?

§ 5

The American Credo.—The eleven leading theories and doctrines in the American credo, in the order of their relative popularity:—

1. The doctrine that a man like Charley Schwab, who has made a great success of the steel business, could in the same way easily have become a great composer like Bach or Beethoven had he been minded thus to devote his talents.

2. The doctrine that the man who doesn't hop promptly to his feet when the orchestra plays "The Star Spangled Banner" as an overture to Hurtig and Seamon's "Hurly Burly Girlies" must have either rheumatism or pro-German sympathies.

3. The doctrine that something mysterious goes on in the rooms back of chop suey restaurants.

4. The doctrine that every workman in *Henry Ford's* factory is the owner

of a suburban mansion and a rose garden.

5. The doctrine that all sailors are gifted with an extraordinary propensity for amour, but that on their first night of shore leave they hang around the water-front saloons and are given knock-out drops.

6. The doctrine that a napkin is always wrapped around a champagne bottle for the purpose of hiding the label, and that the quality of the champagne may be judged by the amount of noise the cork makes when it is popped.

7. The theory that because a married woman remains loyal to her husband she loves him.

8. The doctrine that a man's stability in the community and reliability in business may be measured by the number of children he has.

9. The feminine social theory that going to a fancy dress ball rigged up as a Peruvian street-sweeper makes a man feel vastly Parisian.

10. The doctrine that it is inconceivable that a man and woman entering a hotel without baggage after 10 P.M. may be married.

11. The theory that all country girls have clear, fresh, rosy complexions.

§ 6

Edgar Allan Poe.—The myth that there is a monument to Edgar Allan Poe in Baltimore is widely believed; there are even persons who, stopping off in Baltimore to eat oysters, go to look at it. As a matter of fact, no such monument exists. All that the explorer actually finds is a cheap and hideous tombstone in the corner of a Presbyterian churchyard—a tombstone quite as bad as the worst in Père LaChaise. For twenty-six years after Poe's death there was not even this: the grave remained wholly unmarked. Poe had surviving relatives in Baltimore, and they were well-to-do. One day one of them ordered a local stonemason to put a plain stone over the grave. The stonemason hacked it out and was preparing to haul it to the churchyard when a

runaway freight-train smashed into his stoneyard and broke the stone to bits. Thereafter the Poes seem to have forgotten Cousin Edgar; at all events, nothing further was done.

The existing tombstone was erected by a committee of Baltimore school-marms, and cost about \$1,000. It took the dear girls ten long years to raise the money. They started out with a "literary entertainment" which yielded \$380. This was in 1865. Six years later the fund had made such slow progress that, with accumulated interest, it came to but \$587.02. Three years more went by: it now reached \$627.55. Then some anonymous Poeista came down with \$100, two others gave \$50 each, one of the devoted schoolmarms raised \$52 in nickels and dimes, and George W. Childs agreed to pay any remaining deficit. During all this time not a single American author of position gave the project any aid. And when, finally, a stone was carved and set up and the time came for the unveiling, the only one who appeared at the ceremony was Walt Whitman. All the other persons present were Baltimore nobodies—chiefly school-teachers and preachers. There were three set speeches—one by the principal of a local high school, the second by a teacher in the same seminary, and the third by a man who was invited to give his "personal recollections" of Poe, but who announced in his third sentence that "I never saw Poe but once, and our interview did not last an hour."

This was the gaudiest Poe celebration ever held in America. The poet has never enjoyed such august posthumous attentions as those which lately flattered the shade of James Russell Lowell. At his actual burial, in 1849, exactly eight persons were present, of whom six were relatives. He was planted, as I have said, in a Presbyterian churchyard, among generations of honest believers in infant damnation, but the officiating clergyman was a Methodist. Two days after his death a Baptist gentleman of God, the illustrious Rufus W. Griswold, printed a

defamatory article upon him in the *New York Tribune*, and for years it set the tone of native criticism of him. And so he rests: thrust among Presbyterians by a Methodist and formally damned by a Baptist. Let us get out a jug, brothers, and drink to him.

§ 7

Fraternité.—A club is an institution whose café and dining-room tables seat at least two members too many.

§ 8

La Voix d'Or.—That a rich low speaking voice generally bespeaks generations of cultural breeding and background is one of the commonest of American-held social fallacies. The so-called rich low speaking voice is found in America to be regularly less the inheritance of aristocracy than the inheritance of an engagement in "The Lady of Lyons," a medical specialization in women's diseases or a waiting on table in a first-class restaurant. The speaking voice of Mrs. Astor is infinitely less "aristocratic" than that of a third-rate Broadway actress. The speaking voice of Hamilton Fish, compared with that of a Ritz head-waiter, sounds like a foghorn.

§ 9

The American Woman.—However charming the American woman, there is about her always one thing that keeps that charm from true perfection. Unlike the French woman, she is unable to flirt with two men at the same time without causing one of the men to regard her as being just a trifle vulgar.

§ 10

His Master's Voice.—Perhaps the most valuable asset that any man can have in this world is a naturally superior air, a talent for sniffishness and reserve. The generality of men are always greatly impressed by it, and ac-

cept it freely as a proof of genuine merit. One needs but disdain them to gain their respect. Their congenital stupidity and timorousness make them turn to any leader who offers, and the sign of leadership that they recognize most readily is that which shows itself in external manner.

This is the true explanation of the survival of monarchism, which invariably lives through its perennial deaths. It is the popular theory, at least in America, that monarchism is a curse fastened upon the common people from above—that the monarch saddles it upon them without their consent and against their will. Nothing could be more unsound. Kings are created, not by kings, but by the people. They visualize one of the ineradicable needs of all third-rate men, which means of nine men out of ten, and that is the need of something to venerate, to bow down to, to follow and obey.

The king business begins to grow precarious, not when kings reach out for greater powers, but when they begin to resign and renounce their powers. The czars of Russia were quite secure upon the throne so long as they ran Russia like a reformatory, but the moment they began to yield to liberal ideas—*i.e.*, by emancipating the serfs and setting up constitutionalism—their doom was sounded. The people saw this yielding as a sign of weakness; they began to suspect that the czars, after all, were not actually superior to other men. And so they turned to other and antagonistic leaders, all as cock-sure as the czars had once been, and in the course of time these other leaders stimulated them to rebellion.

These leaders, or, at all events, the two or three most resolute and daring of them, now run the country in the precise way that it was run in the palmy days of the monarchy. That is to say, they possess and exert irresistible power and lay claim to infallible wisdom. Their downfall will date from the day they begin to ease their pretensions. *Once they confess, even by implication,*

that they are merely human, the common people will turn against them.

§ 11

Definition.—Humour: the truth with a bun on.

§ 12

The Honest Workingman.—According to the young college professors who write for the uplift weeklies, the object of a trades-union is to protect its members against the inordinate demands and tyrannies of organized capital. This is bosh. The sole object of a trades-union is to protect its members against the righteous wrath of a swindled and outraged public. A union workman is simply one who is entitled to his pay no matter how badly he does his work. He may botch it, he may skimp it, he may neglect it altogether—but still he must be paid in full. If he is penalized for his incompetence and dishonesty, if the money that he has not earned is withheld from him, then all the other incompetents in his union join him in a strike, and drag the few competents with them. This is the only genuine purpose of unionism—to protect the bad workman, to make him as secure as the good workman, to rob the employer of his just dues. No union in history has ever expelled a single workman on the ground that he was a shirker and a fraud. But every union, at one time or another, has called a strike to *protect* the shirker and the fraud—to make his job secure, to prevent whoever has to pay him from forcing honest work out of him.

After a century of unionism the simplest sort of competence among mechanics has almost disappeared. Who, calling in a plumber to repair a leaky pipe, actually expects him to repair it at the first trial? Who, summoning an electrician to do this or that, is under any delusion that he actually knows how to do it? Who knows a single barber who is genuinely competent to shave a customer—that is, to remove *all* of the beard and leave *all* of the skin? Where

is there an automobile mechanic who honestly knows what is the matter with a disabled car, and just what to do about it, quickly, efficiently, at the minimum cost? Where is there a wholly competent typewriter repairman, or bricklayer, or bartender, or embalmer, or stage-hand?

Let me qualify this a bit: such men may really exist. There may be a few hidden here and there; one or two may even be in New York. But how long will they survive? Who is to take the place of each one as he dies? What have the unions ever done to keep such a raisin in every one of their vast pound-cakes of incompetence, shirking, brigandage and tyranny? When will they stop penalizing honest and competent workmen and begin penalizing loafers and frauds?

§ 13

Bacheloria.—The beauty of even the most beautiful woman is a comically insecure and variable thing. The beauty of Helen herself could not have survived so absurdly simple a trial as a combination of red and pink, or wet hair, or circular striped stockings, or a mosquito bite on the eyelid.

§ 14

Definition.—Epigram: a truth spoken by a liar.

§ 15

Duty Before Security. — The most disgusting cad in the world is the man who, on grounds of decorum and morality, refuses to make love to women. He is one who puts his own ease and security above the most laudable of philanthropies. Women have a hard time of it in this world. They are oppressed by man-made laws, man-made social customs, masculine egoism, the delusion of masculine superiority. Their one comfort is the assurance that, even though it may be impossible to prevail against man, it is always possible to enslave and torture a man. This feel-

ing is fostered when one makes love to them. The business flatters them, encourages them and makes them happy. One need not be a great beau, a seductive catch, to do it effectively. Any man is better than none. No woman is ever offended by admiration. The wife of a millionaire notes the reverent glance of a head-waiter. To withhold that devotion, to shrink poltroonishly from giving so much happiness at such small expense, to evade the business on the ground that it has hazards—this is the act of a puling and tacky fellow.

§ 16

The Professor.—One of the cardinal rules preached and insisted upon by the doctors of playwriting is that no play can possibly succeed and prosper if its ending is not precisely that ending—whether “happy” or “unhappy”—for which the audience has been made to hope. “Peter Pan,” with its audience invariably disappointed in the hope that Peter may remain forever with the youngsters the audience has been drawn to love, was the late Charles Frohman’s meal ticket, has made a fortune for Maude Adams and J. M. Barrie, has brought a thousand dollars a week for the St. Louis, Missouri, stock rights, and has thus far been vainly sought from Barrie by eager moving picture impresarios on a bid of \$200,000.

§ 17

The Connubial Comedy.—Marriage, at best, is full of a sour and inescapable comedy, but it never reaches the high peaks of the ludicrous save when efforts are made to escape its terms—that is, when efforts are made to loosen its bonds, and so ameliorate and denaturize it. All projects to reform it by converting it into a free union of free individuals are inherently absurd. The thing is, at bottom, the most rigid of existing conventionalities, and the only way to conceal the fact and so make it bearable is to submit to it docilely. The effect of every revolt is merely to make

the bonds galling, and, what is worse, poignantly obvious. Who are happy in marriage? Those with so little imagination that they cannot picture a better state, and those so shrewd that they prefer quiet slavery to hopeless rebellion.

§ 18

The Rescuer.—It is an old platitude that when a man marries, his bachelor friends turn from him. But surely not the one who is thereby relieved of the menace himself—surely not the one who loses his old girl.

§ 19

Grand Prix.—Not long ago I ventured an opinion that there are probably not more than one or two persons in the whole United States who know Little Eva's last name. I now hang up a prize of one round-fare ticket to Brooklyn, with stop-over privileges, for anyone who knows who wrote "The Black Crook," or for anyone who recalls the plot of "The Black Huzzar," or for anyone who knows (or cares) what the D. in John D. Rockefeller stands for, or for anyone who, on his word of honour, will swear that he has ever, at any time, read a whole newspaper.

§ 20

The Worst of Novels. — The most overestimated book in the world, at least in prose, is probably Balzac's "Père Goriot." It contains one memorable phrase: the rest is almost pure piffle. I often suspect that old Honoré wrote it ironically—that is, to poke fun at Goriot. Whatever the truth, he certainly managed to make Goriot a tedious and irritating donkey. One sympathizes with his daughters throughout, as one sympathizes with Simon Legree in "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

§ 21

Classification.—A sweetheart is an *agente provocateuse*; a wife, a *gendarme*.

§ 22

Après le Déluge.—The notion that prohibition will make drinking onerous and disagreeable is probably quite unsound. On the contrary, the chances are that it will lift the booze art to a height it has not hitherto attained. One will have to kiss the grape in secret—but is that anything to be mourned? Surely not. Even in the palmiest days of bibbing only bounders and idiots drank at public bars. The man of delicate sensibilities liked and likes his bottle in camera, as he likes his gal in camera. Who would care to kiss even the prettiest woman in a place dedicated to public kissing? A plough-hand, perhaps, or a shoe-clerk in Greenwich Village. The charm of kissing, to a genuinely civilized man, lies very largely in the fact that it is not everywhere and always convenient, or even lawful. His fancy delights to play with the contrast between the girl's aloof dignity in public and her somewhat exigent willingness behind the door. This contrast flatters and delights him; it is at the heart of romance. Wine-bibbing, once the Methodists are on the bridge and their spies are everywhere, will take on much of the same intriguing satanry. It will be highly agreeable, faring daily amid shoals of smellers and denouncers, to think of the jug so deftly hidden, and of the high glow of its secret kiss. Drinking, once a mere sordid habit, like gargling in the morning, will rise to the dignity of a sweet and caressing vice. The man who drinks will be mellowed and improved, as he now is by kissing.



CHAPTER IN THE HISTORY OF A GREAT CITY

By Van Vechten Hostetter

I

McGARRY was an honest policeman. He was not blatantly nor bigotedly honest, but honest in an unostentatious and inoffensive way. He turned his virtue to no account whatever. This had puzzled those in police and political circles who knew McGarry—some of whom were honest and some dishonest, all for what there was in it—until they reached their inevitable conclusion that he was stupid. Which he was: however, nobody is too stupid to be a rascal—propagandists of the inherent sanctity of idiocy to the contrary notwithstanding—and there was no more relation between McGarry's simple-mindedness and his probity than there was between his two hundred pounds and his blue eyes. McGarry, being, unfortunately, dull-witted, was honorably disposed and hence in luck.

McGarry lived and walked a beat in the Tenth Ward, a somewhat soggy lowland section between converging rivers, the far end of what was known as "downtown." It was full of evil odours and packed with cheap, dingy and misshapen houses, flats and shops. Its inhabitants were, for the most part, rather tough citizens—men who worked hard, got drunk on Saturday night and then fought with their friends, gambled away most of their wages and beat their wives and children; women who got drunk, fought with and forgave their neighbors, had their husbands arrested when they became too abusive and begged or bought their release when they grew sober and repentant. A small-

er number were criminals—second-rate thieves, pickpockets, footpads, highwaymen, burglars. From these their neighbors were quite safe; they preyed upon strangers who ventured into the ward at night—and generally had no business there—or practiced their trades elsewhere in and out of the city. At home in the Tenth they were on good behavior, so when they got into difficulties abroad they had character witnesses and sometimes even alibis.

With this vicious element McGarry the honest policeman had nothing to do. The beat he walked and lived on, constituting the northern border of the Tenth, was a sort of strip of respectability. Here lived people who were decent enough to have nothing in common with the other inhabitants, yet not sensitively decent enough to move farther away from them or try to make them any different than they were.

There were men on his beat that McGarry had not known to take a drink in the four years since he had quit firing to become a policeman. Once he had gone for five months without making an arrest and then his captive had been released and he had been mildly reprimanded by the lieutenant. He had caught the crippled Abe Kaplan on the beat abusing a rebellious girl and had "taken him in" for disorderly conduct. McGarry knew Kaplan, as all the police and politicians knew him. He knew how he lived and he despised him. He knew how he came to be a cripple. But, "You've got nothing on him and we've got nothing on him," said the lieutenant. "You ought to know better. He could get us for false arrest if he wanted to."

Kaplan did not try to "get them," but McGarry remembered his lesson. He admitted he had let his loathing for Kaplan get the better of his judgment and had been over-eager to arrest the cripple. Kaplan did not belong on McGarry's beat, anyway. The honest policeman wished he had kept off it.

But for this unpleasantness and the weeks of uneasiness that followed, McGarry led a reasonably satisfactory existence. For a while he was afraid his mistake would be "held against him" and had visions of losing his place. But he did not lose it. This beat in the Tenth was just the one for him and he was just the man for it. It had no opportunities to attract or hold a dishonest patrolman and presented no situations that required a smart one to master. The men that walked it when McGarry was off duty were constantly quitting or being transferred. Elsewhere in the city there were a few beats much like this, with men much like McGarry walking them.

McGarry's neighbours liked him in an unenthusiastic sort of way. He was good-natured, minded his own business and did not go out of his way to exercise his authority. He was not a tryant nor a scold; neither was he a professional "jolly cop." Even Nick Rocco, who kept the fruit stand and had the street vendor's traditional hatred of policemen, was not unfriendly toward McGarry. McGarry, helping himself to Rocco's wares, roused no resentment. Others, doing likewise, made the little Italian so furious it was almost impossible to conceal his fury. McGarry, without consciously considering the ethics of the subject, reasoned subconsciously that custom had made it quite proper for a policeman to take what fruit he wanted. This the intelligent Rocco knew, and he knew one mild objection would stay McGarry's hand. He knew the others were taking advantage of their situations and his to rob him.

McGarry worshipped his wife Molly. Since he was so stupid it would have been easy for her to deceive him, if she,

too, had not been stupid. She would have tried it anyway if she had not been in love with him. McGarry's pay was a hundred dollars a month. He gave ninety of it to Molly, who put ten in the bank and ten in "the building and loan" and spent the rest for their home and their clothes and their amusement. The amusement was mostly at home. They had an old piano that McGarry's mother had left them when she died. In its best days it had been none too good, but they did not know that, and Molly played well by ear. They had a second-hand Victrola with "Cohen on the Telephone" and every record John McCormack ever made. McGarry often told Molly he would not trade places with any man alive. "Neither would I, Joe," she would say.

McGarry told the truth; no opportunities to change his situation or his wife had been offered him, but if they had he would have refused them. Molly, being a pretty young woman, remained just where she was by choice. The cripple, Abe Kaplan, had once made cautious overtures—once—but she had never told Joe.

II

THE fact that Congressman Bill Johnstone was the political boss of the city, including the Tenth Ward, and controlled the Bureau of Police was a matter of such common knowledge that even McGarry knew it. Yet McGarry could not have proved it. Of the system and method whereby Congressman Johnstone ruled he was as ignorant as the clergymen who preached and resolved and protested against "gang rule" and "shameless prostitution of the police for vicious political purposes."

So far as he knew, McGarry had never been "prostituted." He had never seen Congressman Johnstone. He had never been to the City Hall. He had never been told how to vote. (That was because it was unnecessary, although McGarry didn't know the reason. He voted as his father before him had, which happened to be as

Johnstone wanted him to vote.) He had never been ordered to contribute to a campaign fund. (He contributed promptly and voluntarily to the City Committee fund, just as his father had done.)

Within a day after the breach between Congressman Johnstone and Senator Porter everybody in the Police Bureau knew of it—everybody but McGarry and the other McGarrys. Senator Porter was the boss of the state and to him for a dozen years Congressman Johnstone had delivered the vote of the city for rewards that were satisfactory. Now Johnstone asked greater returns and Porter refused them, calling on Johnstone to accept what he was willing to give. Johnstone refused and Porter threatened to overthrow him. Johnstone told him to go ahead and try.

Senator Porter was old and wise and shrewd and unscrupulous. He was older, wiser and shrewder if not more unscrupulous than Johnstone. Senator Porter knew every editor in town, knew everyone better than that one knew himself. He knew this one wanted money; he knew that one wanted an office; he knew another wished to be known as an apostle of civic righteousness, but was not particularly eager to be one; he knew the wife of still another wished to see him in Congress.

Senator Porter knew the clergymen, although they did not know him. He had them classified and card indexed. He knew the women's clubs, although they never had invited him to speak or be their guest of honour.

The newspapers assailed the Police Bureau. By magnifying petty thefts that usually were considered not worth space to print they created a "wave of crime" and blamed it upon "a corrupt and incompetent police force," ruled by "a venal politician," Bill Johnstone. They asked "decent citizens" how long they would sit with folded hands while their city was being debauched. "What are you going to do about it?" they shrieked.

The clergymen took up the cry as

election day approached. Bill Johnstone and his fellows, seeking re-election to Congress, must be repudiated and the fair name of the city must be redeemed, they shouted. Johnstone and Johnstone must be driven from public life and public power.

Bill Johnstone and his friends wrote to the newspapers that the preachers didn't know what they were talking about; that their indignation was created and developed by Senator Porter without their knowing it; that Porterism and Johnstoneism were one; that the so-called independent candidates were puppets of Senator Porter; that the "crime wave" was a myth. Their letters were never published. They sued the newspapers and the clergymen for libel. The newspapers said the suits were brought for campaign purposes only and would never come to trial.

The Women's Civic Reform League was organized and called upon "you who have the vote" to "use it for the protection of womanhood and motherhood."

The Sunday-school children, led by little girls in white, paraded, bearing banners with slogans: "Strike at the Polls for God and Home"—"Vote as We Would Vote"—"Let God Mark Your Ballot."

The newspapers made much of the parade. They published pages of pictures of it. One of them described a young woman on a float, designated "Goddess of Civic Purity," as a "Political Joan of Arc." Another, pretending it did not know the demonstration was worked up by the clergymen, who could have made the children parade for Judas Iscariot, declared, "This spontaneous uprising of pure childhood against unspeakable vice and corruption" was "the most damning indictment of political misrule in the history of the world."

Congressman Bill sat day after day in his private room at City Committee headquarters, receiving reports and giving instructions. His henchmen came and told him the best and the worst. Under his gray hair the wrinkles in his

forehead deepened sometimes, but he smiled grimly, no matter how deep the wrinkles were.

The day before election the newspaper reporters came and asked Congressman Johnstone's forecast of the result—asked it blandly, naïvely, pretending they did not know they had used him unfairly. He did not order them kicked out. He smiled and offered them cigars and said:

"Boys, there's nothing to it. We'll win by the biggest majority in the history of the town."

To his trusted lieutenants, who came with reports of their own districts and asked what he thought of the general situation, he said:

"They're giving us a hell of a battle. It's going to be damn close. If they don't get us now they never will."

Five hours later—it was seven o'clock of election eve—Tom Devlin, Johnstone leader, sat in the little upstairs room of the Tenth Ward Johnstone Club alone. An undersized, stoop-shouldered young fellow came in and stood before him nervously.

"Well, what's the matter?" asked Devlin.

"Tom, Abe Kaplan's double-crossed us. Porter's gang's got to him. Abe's telling all his men we're licked and giving 'em the word to knife us."

"The hell you say," said Devlin phlegmatically, and took the telephone.

"Give me the Tenth Ward Police District," he said and waited, puffing impatiently at his cigar.

"Hello, Tenth District? Put the lieutenant on; this is Devlin. That you, Krause? Listen, that damned Jew, Kaplan, is giving us the double cross. Go get him and let me know the minute you get him. We've got to put the screws on him hard."

Twenty minutes later McGarry, the honest policeman, telephoned the station, according to the rule.

"If you see Abe Kaplan bring him in," came the order.

"What's he done?" asked McGarry innocently.

"None of your damn business! Bring him in!"

III

McGARRY started back as if to escape a blow and stood staring in a kind of daze into the patrol box. What there was in his natural question to rouse such ire was beyond him. He could not understand why he should not know what Kaplan was wanted for. The more he cudged his wits the less he seemed able to understand. Finally he recovered himself sufficiently to restore the receiver to its hook, close the box and resume his patrol.

McGarry frowned deeply and ground his teeth as he racked his brain. For the first time he experienced an actual consciousness of his stupidity.

"I ought to know—and I don't," he thought.

Presently he was repeating the words in an undertone, "I ought to know—and I don't."

But there was a rich vein of optimism in McGarry's soul and before long he was smiling, smiling with the thought that, after all, Abe Kaplan was in some kind of trouble. It didn't much matter what the trouble was. The station had released him when McGarry had arrested him; but now the station wanted him and that must mean something serious.

"I hope they've got something on him," thought McGarry in his honest and righteous soul as his smile broadened, "and I guess they have, all right."

Another thought came to mar this pleasant one. Kaplan had appeared but once on McGarry's beat. He had suffered little enough as a result of that appearance, and McGarry did not suppose fear kept him away. Nevertheless, he had not reappeared and there was small chance of McGarry's finding him tonight.

"No," he was saying to himself, "I'll not get to make the arrest, but I can watch the papers and see what happens to him."

Just then McGarry turned the corner

and bumped into Abe Kaplan, almost knocking him over.

McGarry dropped a heavy hand on the little fellow's shoulder.

"Just the man I'm looking for, Kaplan," he said. "I've got orders to take you in."

The cripple looked up at him with crafty, half-frightened eyes.

"Take me in?" he questioned, feigning indignant innocence. "What for?"

"None of your damned business," said McGarry as viciously as the words had been said to him. "I've got orders to take you in and I'm going to take you."

Two other young fellows who had been a few paces behind Kaplan had stood by and now one spoke.

"Say, you can't arrest that man without a warrant!"

"You look and see if I can't," said McGarry savagely, and, shaking Kaplan fiercely by the shoulder, started off, half dragging, half walking him toward the patrol box.

Fifteen or twenty men, attracted by the argument, were walking behind them, when Kaplan wrenched himself free and tried to run. But with his weakened leg there was no hope of escape. With a leap McGarry recovered his captive. He seized him by the shoulders and shook him until his teeth chattered.

"Don't try that again," he growled, "or I'll knock your head off!"

"Leave me alone!" screamed Kaplan. "Leave me alone, you big bully! Pick on a cripple! Pick on a cripple!" And then he shrieked out words that made a madman of McGarry, words that vilified the name of McGarry's mother, her race, her religion and her honour.

McGarry dropped his club and struck Abe Kaplan in the face with his fist. The victim staggered back and fell. McGarry picked him up and set him on his unsteady feet. He stood there swaying, blood streaming from his lips. McGarry stood away and before he could fall struck him in the face again.

Kaplan lay still and McGarry stood above him, fists clenched.

"Get up!" he yelled. "Get up!"

Kaplan did not move. McGarry kicked him savagely twice in the side.

"Oh, have a heart," called somebody in the crowd.

"Get out of here! Beat it!" cried McGarry and the crowd moved back.

"It's Abe Kaplan," the word was passed around.

McGarry stood for minutes over his unconscious victim. Then, much of his frenzy spent, he picked him up, hoisted him to his shoulder and carried him to the patrol box.

IV

In an hour McGarry was under arrest and charged with assault with intent to commit great bodily injury. The lieutenant told him he was sorry, but the Porter crowd had sworn out the warrant and it had to be served. All night newspaper reporters and photographers and "sob writers" worked furiously. Editorial writers were called from home and told to "cut loose" and "go the limit."

In the morning the newspapers screamed and screeched in eight-column headlines that the end had come. Police thuggery had reached its unspeakable climax. The Johnstone-controlled officers, no longer content with standing by while vice flourished and criminals plied their trades, had themselves turned criminals. There had not been murderous assaults enough; they would commit them themselves!

The first-page stories told in double-leaded ten-point type how McGarry had paid for his job by serving the interests of Congressman Johnstone; how for four years he had terrorized the decent and law-abiding citizens on his beat; how he had habitually swaggered up and down the streets, cursing those he met and kicking them off the walks; how he had continually robbed Nick Rocco, the fruit vender, until the little Italian, too fearful of a beating to protest, was almost penniless. They de-

clared that complaint after complaint against the cruelty and brutality of "Kaiser" McGarry, as he was commonly known, had been ignored by the superintendent of police at the order of Bill Johnstone.

McGarry had grown bolder and bolder until the climax had come with a vicious and wholly unprovoked attack on Abraham Kaplan, a poor and sickly crippled boy, whose only offense had been to try to do his duty as an honest citizen.

This boy's parents had brought him from Russia to escape tyranny, persecution and perhaps death; yet here, in so-called free America, with its boasted protection for the weak, he had suffered a worse fate than might have been his in Siberia—"for even a Cossack," one newspaper said, "is more human than a Johnstone policeman."

Abraham Kaplan was described as a noble young man, who, profoundly grateful to the country that had given his family asylum, had enlisted in the forces of civic decency to make it an even better place to live in by destroying its one plague spot. He had struggled to redeem the Tenth Ward, to reclaim it from corrupt politicians who were shameless and brazen in their corruption. (The detail that in the course of his uplift activities Kaplan had been shot by a girl who then committed suicide was overlooked.) McGarry, owing his job to these politicians and being a part of their merciless machine, had flown into a fury at sight of this unfortunate but noble-hearted young man. McGarry, venal, brutal, hating all that this poor Russian boy loved, and realizing that with his infirmity he was helpless to defend himself, had set upon him and tried to kill him.

Kaplan's mother loved him, although she had not seen him for months, although she knew how he got his money and would not have taken any of it, even if he had offered any. She was a rare inspiration for the "sob writers," whose phrases—"tear-dimmed eyes"—"*brave but broken-hearted*"—"sobbing

tured breast"—were intensified by appealing photographs.

All the eulogies that she did not know how to frame were put into her mouth. His devotion was not that or the ordinary good son; it was greater, oh, far greater. And it extended to all women, because, as he always said, "My mother is a woman." Even the little children loved him. He was their idol.

Where the morning papers had been forced by passing time to stop the evening papers began. They found new and fiercer language with which to denounce McGarry, the Johnstone thug in uniform, and discovered many rare and surpassing virtues in Abraham Kaplan that earlier had been overlooked. They obtained interviews of impassioned denunciation from clergymen and "prominent civic leaders" who had never seen Tom McGarry of Abraham Kaplan, knew nothing about them and ten hours before had not even been aware of their existence. Subscription lists were started for the heroic Kaplan and his sorrowing mother and father.

Bushels of flowers and bushels of sweets and dainties poured into the hospital room where the martyr lay. Many encouraging notes from sympathetic souls accompanied the gifts. Much as he had suffered, they wanted this unhappy boy to know that all America was not cruel and vicious, that it held true hearts that could feel.

The Women's Civic Reform League hurriedly organized a mass meeting that denounced "rule by murder" and appropriated a hundred dollars to start a fund for a monument in honour of Abraham Kaplan. As a result of his martyrdom, rousing the people to revolt against misrule, the city was to be redeemed, the resolutions said, and his name must never be forgotten.

V

ALL day as the storm raged Bill Johnstone sat in the little room at the City Committee and smiled his grim smile.

the university, to whom he had barely begun to teach "the game." "The town is going mad."

Bill Johnstone answered with no emotion in his voice:

"The noise is awful. They *are* cutting into us like hell, too. But we've got a normal majority of eighty thousand. We can lose just one vote less than that and win."

When the ballots were counted it was found that Congressman Bill Johnstone and his colleagues had been re-elected by majorities that were thin but still majorities. Senator Porter made peace overtures to Bill Johnstone. Bill Johnstone accepted.

Senator Porter called off the newspapers. The clergymen tired of assailing Congressman Johnstone in sermons that became an old story to congregations and never saw print. The Women's Civic Reform League became interested in the movement for more night schools and gave its monument fund to that.

Senator Porter and Congressman Johnstone found political jobs for some of the late candidates for Congress. They let others sink back into their places among obscure lawyers.

The editor Senator Porter knew that wanted money didn't get it. The one that wanted office didn't get it. The one that wanted the name of an apostle of reform was told to give up the idea or his job and voted to keep the job. The one whose wife wanted him to go to Congress didn't go.

Abe Kaplan, who never had been anywhere near death, recovered and resumed business. Senator Porter and Congressman Johnstone agreed that in Porter's interests the charge against McGarry, the honest policeman, should be sustained and that Johnstone could clear himself by repudiating the man. He had never been a Johnstone man anyway, the Congressman said, and he owed him nothing.

McGarry was indicted, tried, convicted and sentenced to serve ten years in the penitentiary. His wife, Molly, was waiting for him when he was released eight years later, having got time off for good behaviour. Molly, by going back to her old work in the mills, had kept their savings intact. They drew these from the bank and "the building and loan," sold the furniture, packed up the Victrola and the John McCormack records, and went West.



GITANILLO

By Muna Lee

O H, you will sing in a hundred halls
And I shall never sing.
You will have what you take from life,
And I what Life will bring.

And you may break a stern man's pride
And win a princess yet
With that wistful song you made for me
The night we met.



AFTERNOON TEA

By John V. A. Weaver

III

YOU curve, white against the green cushions, on the window-seat. I am opposite you, painfully neat. April breaks in waves through the wide-open windows. You chirp of this and that, while the maid, very staid, moves noiseless, like a cat, with the tea. On that tree, buds are pouting, and I can feel the sap shooting in its tendrils. . . .

And "Don't you think *Town Topics* is just dreadful?" you say. . . . And it will soon be May. . . .

II

THE sun is in the west, pouring gold upon the curve of your breast, so that a lump is in my throat. A boat faintly gleams on the sapphire horizon bound—who knows?—for Troy or Colchis, full of strong youths with long yellow hair. . . . The smoothness of your ankle stabs me like a knife. . . . Oh, Helen, and Paris, and the long, bitter strife for one glorifying passion! . . .

"I really think tight skirts are out of fashion. . . ."

THE old, wistful earth-tang pervades the air, mingles with the faint, swooning perfume of your hair, tugs at me as it were the odour of some forgotten Hesperidean flower. I see hyacinths nodding, and myriad exotic blossoms that bloomed in an hour when Hellas was young.

And you and I have flung away the shackles of the year. There is no tea, nor whirring wheels of automobiles, nor owl-eyed fears—we are free! We are free!

The petals crush beneath our dancing feet. Io!

A hundred youths and maidens, nymphs and satyrs wheeling, leaping in the mad, glad riot of the Spring. Sing! Io!

I am drunk with beauty and your lithe whiteness! Oh, shimmering brightness! Strain lips against lips!

"Why, you haven't touched your tea," you chirp to me. "My dear, what a queer look. . . . You know, I've read the sweetest book. . . ."



IT takes a man without fear to practise what he preaches. It would take a man without shame to preach what he practises.



THE truly charming woman is one that all men like and that no woman quite approves.



THE OTHER WOMEN

By Lillian Foster Barrett

I
MARGUERITA was virtuous in that the majority of the virtues were undoubtedly hers. The fact that the one she was least regardful of was the very one that plays the title rôle and gives its generic name to all the rest is negligible in these days of sketchy morality. Marguerita had never been guilty of theft; Marguerita had never taken the name of the Lord her God in vain; she had never coveted her neighbor's wife, or his ox, or his ass. As to wives—more later. And if she had allowed herself a too frank affair of the heart now and then, let it be said as an extenuating circumstance (if such a situation needs extenuation) that she played her game with a nice observance of all points of honor.

For instance, she was faithful,—blindly, consistently, absurdly faithful. Her fidelity, however, was not without its complicating element, for it worked to a demand for faithfulness on the part of others. This, in turn, when not duly met, worked to jealousy. A jealousy of right, and Marguerita was capable of being as blindly, consistently, absurdly jealous as ever she was faithful.

There was the matter of Stanley Wright. Everybody knew Stanley was devoted to Marguerita, madly devoted, as devotion goes on the Stock Exchange. But there had been a wife some twenty years before; and in Marguerita's sensitive soul the shadow of that bride of yesterday played havoc. She thought of Stanley in his first bloom, slender, supple, ardent in his lovmaking; and the Stanley she knew seemed dull and heavy by comparison.

"How old are you, Stanley?" she asked irrelevantly one day.

"Forty-seven!" came the answer promptly. A man doesn't have to hedge when his fortune is a matter of note.

Forty-seven! Marguerita turned away to hide her tears. How cruelly the other woman had scored! Her protest was against time and tide and fate, but primarily against other women. Other women! There were dozen of them, here, there, everywhere, lurking in the cafés, on the streets, in her own imagination, but, worst of all, in the memories of the men themselves. Sweethearts, wives, mistresses, a long procession to torment her. Poor Marguerita, out of senseless nothing could she provoke a conscious something to be jealous of.

Her jealousy had driven the stalwart Stanley from her side, the young Preston boy, Warren Gates. So, at thirty, Marguerita could truly say there had been in her life only lovers and women to be jealous of. She was unhappy, wretchedly unhappy; "it's because I idealize love and no man can understand," she told herself.

It was at a dinner given by the artist Shelby that Marguerita was to meet the man who *did* understand. She had gone to the dinner, beautiful, drooping, in an exquisite creation of a gown that fostered the illusion of her disillusion. She was pensive, indifferent. The man on one side of her talked politics; the man on the other, horses. The man directly across was too drunk to talk at all. The women? Yes, there were women to fill in, but Marguerita failed to notice them. She fell into a daze.

Then it was that a voice penetrated her stupor, a voice subtle, shaded, arguing gracefully.

"But you don't understand here in America. It's what we call in northern Europe—"

Marguerita was never able, as she recalled the scene afterwards, to think of just what it was they *did* call it in northern Europe. Yonana, or Yohana, something of the sort, beautiful and suggestive. The more beautiful and suggestive for the voice that enunciated it.

"It is not what you call love, here in America," the voice went on. "It is a thing neither of the intellect nor of the emotions. It is not platonicism; it is not passion. It is a glorious blend that makes for the perfect relation."

Marguerita's heart began to pound. So excited was she that she did not dare to raise her eyes to this man, this prophet as it were, who had come out of the wilderness to cry a doctrine she had been waiting for a long time and passionately to hear. That the man was a foreigner she knew from the peculiar musical timbre of his tones, from his strange enunciation. She was afraid to look at him lest she be disappointed. But he was still speaking.

"Ah—but you can't understand." His voice had become bantering. "You are too, too unimaginative! No, nor you, nor you." He was obviously being appealed to in all directions. Marguerita felt, somehow, that his attention was about to stray to her, and with a supreme effort she raised her eyes.

He was there for her that first second of quick exchange, as intensely as he was to be there for her in the months that followed. Big, brown and tender, he seemed of a Viking strength, yet of infinite sympathy and subtle understanding. His gray eyes held hers a wonderful moment. Then,

"*You* could understand," he said so softly the words failed almost of utterance.

"Yes," she whispered back, "I think *I* could."

However, as Marguerita thought

about it all that night, with a delightful flutter of pulse, she convinced herself they had actually said nothing, that their understanding was an occult, telepathic thing. They two of all that goodly company had been picked in exemplification of that perfect relation, called—*was* it yonana or yohana? Marguerita could only wait and hope, but she went about with an exalted look in her eyes as of one destined for a high mission. He, Mr. Eric Lundestad, as she discovered him to be, had left as soon as the dinner was over.

"Business!" he had pleaded.

"A woman, of course!" Shelby had unkindly whispered in Marguerita's ear. It was evidence of Marguerita's new vision that the words struck no jealous chord in her heart.

Marguerita came to learn a surprising amount about Mr. Erik Lundestad in the days when she waited for him to make his second appearance on the scene of action. It was as if each tea, each party she attended was not complete without the quota of gossip in connection with him. The women, in particular, were very vivacious on the subject.

"A perfect type! Such a profile! Such eyes!"

"And *such* ideas!"

"But what is he?"

"A beloved vagabond!" It could, in short, be all summed up in that. He had lived here, there, everywhere, the world his playground. Five years in Ceylon, two in Yokohama, Buenos Aires, Jamaica—he was incapable of taking root, that was it. He was unidentified with any country and so with any convention or custom. He was a free spirit, free as the wind.

It was beautiful. Each time his name was mentioned, even by a woman, Marguerita thrilled anew to the message she had surprised in his wonderful eyes. Two weeks passed since Shelby's dinner. He was giving her time to prepare herself. Three weeks passed; she began to wonder.

Then one day as she was taking a walk in Fifth Avenue she had met him

She had seen him coming half a block away, his bronzed face above the heads of the mediocre crowd, and he had seen her. He had taken off his hat and they had shaken hands. The crowd parted about them. Women looked back—what wonder? For indeed Mr. Eric Lundestad was a perfect specimen of man at the height of virile manhood.

Marguerita felt a great pride of possession as she said,

"I was just going home. Will you join me in a cup of tea?"

He had taken the proposal quite naturally. Evidently he, too, had spent the weeks in preparation and was ready. He smiled down at her. Marguerita drew a quick breath; it was all so ecstatic and yet so quiet and peaceful. A refinement of emotion that she had often dreamed of, a quintessence of content!

They had gone home to dim lights, a smouldering fire; and they had drunk tea, their eyes alert over the tea cups. They talked of books, of music. He would break ever and again into his native Norse, into French, German. Even Latin, beautiful, ecclesiastical Latin, he had ready to use. Marguerita could only marvel.

So it was that the kiss, that came inevitably with the waning light, seemed to Marguerita of the nature of a boon from heaven. He had drawn her close to him and closer; she could only shut her eyes and wonder that such joy could be. Yonana—or was it Yohana? Something that is neither of the intellect nor of the passions! He kissed her again. Something—the perfect love it is—you people in America can never understand. He kissed her a third time and found her cheeks wet with tears.

"My darling!" he cried in protest.

But she could only sob out her happiness and her unworthiness.

Yonana—or Yohana! It was all so great and wonderful, and she seemed so little and insignificant to be chosen!

II

THERE followed for Marguerita a month of perfect happiness, undis-

turbed by doubt of any kind. She kept herself in isolation lest vulgar contacts mar the beauty of her new experience. It was as if she, too, were seeking to detach herself from people, from the world, seeking to be of those who breathe the rarer ether of the spiritual and acknowledge no ties of the mundane.

Marguerita, it must be admitted, was romantic. The myth of Cupid and Psyche had always appealed to her as the most artistic and graceful of old lore. *There* was an *affaire*, indeed, of the finest subtlety and nicest shading. The arrangement was so neat; Cupid so delicate. Marguerita had even gone so far, in her appreciation of the chiaroscuro of such a relation, as to write a poem on the subject, after the style of Swinburne. Marguerita always turned to poetry, after the style of Swinburne, during periods of emotional stress.

So it was that Marguerita took a certain pride now in knowing *nothing* of Mr. Eric Lundestad. Definite detail, such as street address or telephone number, would have constituted a stain on the white radiance of their understanding. He came, not too frequently, and went at will. Marguerita found the uncertainty of it all blissful. She was in her sunroom, delightfully costumed, waiting for him if he cared to drop in mornings. There was always hot coffee to be procured from somewhere, a variety of newspapers to afford dreamy discussion. She was in her drawing room, late afternoon, pensively costumed, drooping and willowy over the tea table. Then there were the evenings when diaphanously clad, she waited and wondered with a quicker sparkle in her blue eyes. Had he come too often the charm might have been dispelled; but, as it was, their talks seemed the more satisfying, their kisses the more ardent, for their infrequency.

Marguerita rested content.

"It's because our relation is a *big* one," she said to herself, "that I have outgrown the pettiness of jealousy."

She could find it in her heart almost

to be sorry for Stanley and Preston and Warren Gates. After all, they had been too *little* to understand.

A month passed, five weeks, six. Then it was Marguerita discovered by an absurd, hackneyed little incident, that in this world, essentially a world of bonds and ties and conventions, complete detachment and isolation are impossible. How often a hair divides the false and true! And it was just a hair, a long dark, sleek, treacherous looking hair, surprised on Mr. Eric Lundestad's coat, that awoke Marguerita from her happy dream. The old jealousy flared up, wild, violent, unreasoning, and Marguerita came to realize that, as she had never known real love before, she most certainly had never known real jealousy.

She was miserable; she was wretched. She talked, she argued; she wept. The days Eric spent away from her took on a new significance now. His nomadic career tore at her heart. Yokohama, Jamaica, South America meant now just so many women. She could see him, eager, ardent, making tropical love under tropical skies, with a tropical sweetheart in his wonderful arms. She could see him, his noble head bared to northern breezes, protesting with Viking vigor to some woman of his own race all those hundreds of things he knew how to protest so well. She could see him in his Yokohama home under that wistaria arbor he had talked of so dreamily, with a painted Japanese doll to play with.

It was awful; it was terrible. But most horrible, most gripping, was the vision her overwrought brain conjured up of the women, dozens of them, who were sharing his life now as she was sharing it. She pictured other morning rooms, other dinner tables, other fire-sides, and, most harrowing of all, other costumes that outshone hers in artistic delicacy. Ah! how miserable she was! But there was born of her misery a high resolve, not without its element of the martyr's ecstasy, to win him entirely from those other creatures whose shadows hovered deep in the depths of

his tantalizing eyes as they looked into hers.

She made dramatic scenes at first.

"Ah, the other women, the other women!" she would cry and catch her breath in a curious little sob.

"But, my dear, what *can* the other women matter now?" Eric would answer a little wearily. "You are the only one at present, you—"

Then she would throw her arms about his neck passionately and try to force him to new declarations of his love.

"Why me?" she would persist, her cheek soft against his.

"You are, or you have been, so, so restless!" he said reflectively.

Then, seeing that did not quite suit, he seized her hands as she fell away from him and held her as he smiled his quizzical little smile.

"Yonana!" he murmured softly and she melted again to his embrace.

Yes, she would *win* him from those others. So Marguerita determined and set about a course of action, warranted to bring about the coveted end. She instituted dinners here, there, everywhere. They did things brilliantly, went to the opera, took motor trips. She exacted more and more of her lover's time, and very soon began to glory in the image of those other women, waiting, waiting in vain. There was an element of the cruel in her nature that she had never suspected before. She was ruthless.

"And why not Friday night?" she would persist, her eyes hard as she watched him vacillate.

"But, my dear, I am *tired!*" Eric would say, almost plaintively. "A good night's rest—"

"The opera is refreshing," she would say. "I shall order the tickets. Oh—and—er—Shelby wants us for dinner on Saturday."

"But—"

"Come here for tea first; we can go on later."

They were always going on later, a dance, a supper, rushing about, dining extravagantly, meeting in lobbies. Mar-

guerita wore dozens of beautiful gowns.

"I liked it better," Eric sighed wearily one night, "when you and I were seeing only each other."

Marguerita looked wise. "Seeing each other—yes—but how often?"

Eric had shrugged good-naturedly. "Twice a week," he said.

"Exactly!" Marguerita's voice was a little sharp. He saw her discomfiture.

"But, my dear, how can I make you understand? I am, as you say in English, getting middle-aged. This rushing about is too much for me."

She laughed at that as she took in quite thoroughly the wonderful vigor of his figure, lounging so gracefully in a fireside chair, the bronzed strength of his fine head, the warm depth of his grey eyes. She laughed at the absurdity of his words and then stopped his protest with a kiss.

Perhaps it was that Marguerita suspected some of the women of her own set that she flaunted so openly her connection with Eric. A month of continuous dissipation, however, and she realized that, whoever the other women, her triumph over them was a complete and signal one. It was almost in a sense of being able to gloat that Marguerita had dropped in at a tea one afternoon at Lina Chadwick's. She knew, perfectly, the sort of gathering it would be, a dozen women, each ready with her little quota of gossip, a few men to ease the strain of feminine boredom.

Jack Harding was there and came at once to Marguerita's side.

"The first time I have been able to get you alone for weeks," he murmured sentimentally. There happened to be a lull in conversation at that particular moment so everybody heard.

Conversation took a fresh spurt, the Lundestad man the point of departure.

"After all, people are so little subtle," Marguerita thought and settled down comfortably to listen.

"Billy says—" Marie Winton prefaced every remark with something of the sort, "that Lundestad's settled down

and is doing wonders in the business. It's shipping, isn't it?"

She referred to Marguerita gracefully.

Marguerita sat up stiffly.

"I didn't know he even *was* in business," she said, a certain tartness in her soft voice. "After all, there's something vulgar about *all* business," and she dismissed the subject and turned to converse in undertones with Jack. But she could not help but follow the trend of conversation.

"Billy says—" Marie went on, put on her mettle by Marguerita's indifference, "that it's quite remarkable. Lundestad's moved to Brooklyn—"

Marguerita winced.

"So as to be near the docks. Gets up at four every morning and, up to the last few weeks, never went out except a night or an afternoon and then—"

"But, *my dear*," Lili Woodward was aghast. "You mean he's given up his *affaires*?"

"Absolutely." Marie was decisive.

Two or three other young married women rushed in to the general commendation of such a policy of renunciation and reform.

"Marguerita, are you responsible for his reclamation?" Lina Chadwick asked slyly.

"Certainly not!" answered Marguerita, forced into the discussion in spite of herself.

"Well, don't give Lundestad too much credit for picking himself up," came from Willard Densher. "I'll tell you what's the trouble—" He stirred his tea deliberately and waited till all attention was focussed quite intensely upon him. Then he brought out what he had to say with all dramatic effect.

"Lundestad is growing old."

Marguerita never knew how she got home. White, faint, sick at heart, disillusioned, she had staggered to her motor. She had gone home to a night of the wildest protest and despairing grief. Now, it was because there *were* no other women that jealousy racked her. The brilliant images she had conjured up to triumph over were as dust.

Life resolved itself into the dreariest monotony.

Middle-age! Middle-age!

She recalled the weariness in Eric's voice as he had said, "But don't you see? I am so *tired*, dear." She had judged it then the subtlest strategy; she saw it now simply as *dun truth*. And he had chosen *her* as the love of his middle-age; in that lay the sharpest sting.

He had come to her the next evening in all trusting faith; her strange silence, the tense dramatic look in her eyes pointed something amiss.

"That damned jealousy again!" he said to himself and sought to allay it by tenderness. He tried to take her in his arms, but she drew away.

"Where have you been—the last two days?" she managed to falter.

So he tried to explain. "I have been working hard, so I went home and to bed after dinner."

That was enough. Marguerita burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping. He had forcefully taken her into his arms.

"Darling, you *must* understand; there is no one but you—"

She had shown sign of hysteria.

Good God! What could he do? Had someone been gossiping? Or—that damned hair again!

"Listen," he cried, this time more firmly. "You have no proof—That hair—it must have been I picked it up in the Subway."

Poor Marguerita! Not even the illusion of that hair was to be left her. The storm had broken. Subway, Brooklyn, business, middle-age; she could only throw herself on the divan in the immense despair that fastened upon her and sob great big sobs that shivered up from her inmost being.

So it went for a week. Eric tried everything in his power to comfort her. However, the more he protested his devotion and fidelity, the more difficult she was to handle. Even Yohana—or was it Yonana?—failed of its charm.

One evening he had arrived to find *Marguerita quite calm*. He breathed a

sigh of relief; the thing had been getting intolerable. She smiled a little twisted smile up at him.

"Sit down," she said, "I want to talk."

He obeyed.

"I have been unreasonable," she began.

"Oh, no!" he murmured weakly.

"Don't interrupt!" she said.

"You see it's this way," she went on in a second. "Two people should never see too much of each other. So, I am going away to the mountains for the summer."

"But—" he began.

"You can have my house at Long Beach. It's quite comfortable." She looked at him shrewdly. "Eric, do you know what Long Beach stands for?"

"Not exactly!" he answered.

"I'll tell you," she said. "It's the *gayest* of New York's resorts and the *fastest*. Every well-known chorus girl in the country—"

Eric's bewilderment threatened to get the better of him.

Marguerita turned away and dabbed her eyes with her handkerchief.

"It's a sort of—of test," she brought out at last.

Then she looked up at him as he stood before her in his bronze strength and she could almost bring herself to be cheerful. She pictured him in a bathing suit, the cynosure of all Long Beach's languishing eyes. There would be parties, beach parties, dances, moonlight trysts; there would be women, dozens of them, to lure him to what Marguerita in her perversity now deemed his salvation. The idea exhilarated her. She would return in the autumn to find him lost to her. That is, for a little. The glory of winning him back, taking him from someone else, obsessed her and she thrilled to the adventure with a romantic zest.

"Yes, a sort of test," she repeated, and rising, went of her own accord and for the first time in a week to his arms.

Eric smiled his quizzical smile.

"All right, darling," he said. "You

are lovely, but your tactics are bewildering."

At which they both laughed merrily. The evening proved a jolly one.

Events after that until the parting were rather a lark. The day before Marguerita was to leave for the mountains, she drove Eric out to Long Beach in her motor. It was one of the first Sundays of the season and the beach was swarmed with its usual gay throng. Marguerita could see at once as they promenaded that Eric *was* a sensation, and a big one. They dined conspicuously. Another promenade later! The women stopped talking to look around. Once, Marguerita was certain Eric himself almost turned to follow the progress of a siren who had unquestionably flashed him a provocative smile from under her lavender parasol. Marguerita was ecstatic.

As they said good-bye late that afternoon, it seemed to Marguerita that the old thrill of their relation was back again. He kissed her once, twice, three times.

"Yonana," he murmured.

"Yes," she said.

"Till autumn?"

"Till autumn."

III

SHE had stipulated that he should not write.

"I will let you know when I return," she said.

The summer months passed, months exciting for Marguerita for the very uncertainty of events taking place on that warm stretch of sand that was ever in her thoughts. He *would* succumb—how could he help it? And she smiled knowingly to herself at the radiant prospect of their reunion.

She returned to town the first of October, having prolonged her mountain stay to make certainty the more certain, to key herself to a greater pitch. The house was ready for her, dainty and cool, her favorite flowers in their proper places. She wandered about and contemplated everything with a happy

little smile on her lips. Then she had proceeded to shop. The gown this time, must be of a more subtle delicacy than any she had yet achieved. The gown was found, of the color of a fading gardenia. She dressed herself in it that night and stood before her mirror. The effect was everything she could have asked. She sighed deeply and sat down to write the note.

"I am back," she had written and congratulated herself on its cryptic suggestiveness.

She was ready the next morning betimes, but he did not arrive. That argued well. The next evening passed and the next. Then terror had come to Marguerita. Suppose—suppose— But just at the point where her suppositions were taking alarming proportions he arrived.

As he entered the room, stronger, browner than ever, Marguerita felt a little clutch at her heart. The deep light in his eyes was evidence—of what? She put out her hands to him, trembling, expectant. He stood a second, looking at her, with that quiet deep look of his. Then he had come forward and taken her in his arms.

"My darling!" he said, and his voice was firm and carried its conviction. "I have been true to you."

Marguerita gave a faint cry. He held her closer to him. The tears that slowly trickled from under her closed lids he gently kissed away. They seemed to constitute a great tribute to his triumph, for he read them as tears of pure happiness.

"Yonana!" he whispered softly in her ear. Or was it Yohana? But, after all, what did it matter now? A thing that is neither of the passions nor of the intellect! A glorious blend!

Marguerita smiled cynically through her tears. Yohana, or Yonana; all one, for it was, in the last analysis, but plain middle-age, and *she* was the chosen one.

"Yonana!" he murmured once more.

She sighed wearily.

"Yes," she said at last, and then broke into an agony of sobs.

GENIUS

By F Gregory Hartswick

THE Great Author and I were seated side by side on the couch at the club. He seemed in a communicative mood, and I was nerved to put the question which had trembled on my lips for days.

"Tell me," I begged, "how you have been able to write such real stories of death by violence. Your descriptions send folk shuddering to bed haunted by the gasping rattle in the throats of

dying men. Surely you must have seen much of horrible death in your life to describe so convincingly the choking anguish that goes with the wrenching apart of the spirit and body!"

The Great Author smiled.

"I'll tell you, if you promise never to give me away," he confessed. "When I have a particularly frightful death to describe I fill the basin in my bathroom and pull out the plug."



SONG FOR A GUITAR

By Glenn Ward Dresbach

I GAVE you robes of rainbows
And my Dreams' silver shoon,
And sang to you of hill-roads
That go to meet the Moon.

And now you think the splendour
Is all your own. You live
Forgetful of the giving
That gave you things to give.

I have more robes of rainbows,
And shoon for roads apart—
But what if I had given
To you my heart?



FOR WHOM HE FOUGHT

By N. G. Caylor

BY mutual agreement they had decided to say good-bye on the street, choosing one where the midday traffic was heavy. Often since he had acquiesced in Rhoda's suggestion, Donald Elliot had doubted the deep significance she had meant to attach to such a parting. Just now it seemed that it typified only the restless attention, tinged with patronage, which she gave him.

The patronage—well, how could she help realizing how much her graciousness meant to him, and gaining in queenly condescension with each notch of realization, he thought. Women—they were like that, and it became them.

The waiting became long to Donald. That he was going abroad on a transport that night was somehow remote—immaterial. He was waiting for Rhoda.

Subconsciously, he was amused as he wondered whether he would enjoy the tribute of the people hurrying past. Perhaps friendship would well into their eyes in place of the strained disquietude. Maybe with war-time mawkish phrases, they would sling endearments toward him, telling him "God-speed" and "Come back safe." After all, it didn't matter. It was Rhoda's praise, her kindness, her graciousness, that he wanted.

So they hurried on—the others—and he saw them dispassionately and remotely.

Suddenly visible in a break in the crowd, she came toward him. Her eyes were bent on the sidewalk as if she were quietly choosing her way. Her little mouth was thoughtful; he noticed with a rush of glad pain that she was somewhat pale. Of course. They loved each other.

The welcoming pressure of her small hand, the intimacy of her glance—they were good. Her smile, always a little tardy, was the more a gift when it came. Unconscious reproach, which had filled him, faded. He drank in avidly every line of her, the full softness of her bobbed hair, which he could never resist touching, the white brow against the black velvet of her sloping small hat, her delicate eyebrows, soft grey eyes beneath widespread long lashes, the little downward motion of the upper lip when she was preoccupied, her little pointed chin—

"And so, Donny," she was saying, "I'm going to lose myself in work."

Her eyes gave him their slow smile. "You may come back, boy, and find me famous—"

He felt a stir of resentment at her easy, delightful trivialities.

"I've listened to a lot of bugaboo about the stage, Donny. But now *you* are my world! *You* don't care, so let the others talk."

She caught the resentment in his eyes. With her soft voice bordering on the sincerity for which he hungered she spoke:

"Dear, if only I could have gone abroad with you. It wasn't right—I know—to urge you when I couldn't. But—training. Sweet, this will help me forget."

She had a way of putting things right. Then he knew they were about to part.

"Don—only let's remember—the things we said—"

As he looked at her, time seemed to stand still. He sensed the tramping of crowds about them, but there was no motion in this moment, as there was

neither beginning nor end. It was a slow, sad life in itself, isolated amid eternity.

She flung back her head with a smile. He felt the pressure of her hand, the sudden release. She was gone. He saw her small figure disappearing down the street, everything about her characteristic, from the angle of her little velvet hat to the slender hang of serge about her limbs. It seemed that, departing, she was drawing his eyes, his thoughts, away with her. As if pulling realization back into himself, he came to in his own body.

She had been wonderful—her parting a symbol—electric with the delicate essence of her. God, how she could rise to moments!

But she had disappeared easily—just slipped back—. The thought came like a sigh—how easily she plunged home into the streets; Already she was at home in their ready-made life. Perhaps she was looking into a shop-window with serious attention.

He set his teeth. Yes, that was it—a queen of the moment!

Somehow, he found his way back to his comrades. That night they boarded the ship. Excitement failed to quell a deep hurt within him. Low-barked commands, the busy, pregnant darkness, the thump of hurrying feet did not arouse him. The creak of boards was distantly sad, a whistle whined desolately, chains clanged. He threw his tired body into the bunk heavily, and slept . . .

II

IN the weeks of training that followed in France, he took each day when it came with what it brought him, unquestioning. This was his stoicism in army life. His visioning, he confined to Rhoda. But she was very far. Her letters placed her even further. They were casual in their relation to him—a disheartening jumble of individualism. They might have been written to anyone. *Donald, who had always pretended that he understood her, was forced*

to admit that without the inspiration of her presence, her balanced sentences were cosmic nothings; her flashy epigrams meaningless, her little ironies the frowzy dissatisfactions of an unpoised soul.

But he was young, and he loved her. An occasional "Don, dear," filled him with a glow. When she signed herself "ever yours" or "your own Rhoda" he felt again her nearness. Sailing his kite from the words, he was transported to the colourful heavens where every vapour was her rosy image.

Eagerly he sought points of departure from which to fly to exaltation.

There were few.

More usually he was forced to read, impatient, through arid wastes of bad description, unpleasantly revealing in its egotism. Often he descended to scathing criticism, trying, with a stylist's care, to find phrases to fit. Then he would give up. She was self-conscious, sex-conscious and type-conscious, he thought—a conscious Alice in a conscious Wonderland.

And the way that she was "trying to forget"! She had joined a "music show" as a chorus-girl. This fact was penetrating as the dust in a dune region. He set his teeth against it as if it were sand in his mouth.

"I have made a discovery," she wrote.

"One has got to begin humbly in the dramatic profession. Experience must include atmospheric sophistication. And coryphees, I know, revel in atmosphere, if very little else."

Her trite pleasantries made him exclaim in distaste.

Another time she wrote: "The only thing that hurts me is that I hate to be one of the thousands of stage-struck young women—I who so despise classified types. You know I have even objected to being called an anarchist because that is classification—and here I am."

Laboriously she made expositions on the chorus work, in what she meant to be a seemingly unconscious contrast between herself and her surroundings.

Her "unconsciousness" was pitifully flimsy.

"The idiotic thing repels me," she said in one letter. "The silly titles—back-waltz, rag, double-eagle, ballet (the director pronounces it 'bally')—all these things mean something when shouted at you. And the 'chorus-ladies'—flat-souled creatures, loving their routine. I am convinced that if they slept in a row and someone shouted 'Off-to-Buffalo,' they would rise, mechanically click off eight steps to the left, kick, and click back right again—their arms swinging nonchalantly like lead pendulums. And they would look as intelligent as they do at rehearsals."

Often she assailed women with a dry, iconoclastic wit.

"You should see us in our 'Peacock' number," she wrote. "Each one of us, dressed in furs and feathers, represents the animal kingdom in herself—bird, beast and reptile."

He was baffled. This was a stranger writing. He found her letters as unanswerable as the fact of her joining the musical show. It was only by remembering her charm, her soft intimacy, the rareness of each moment of her companionship, that he could work himself into an emotional storm over what he called her "exploitation for the cheap enjoyment of thousands."

He could only remember her emotionally when he had not heard from her for some time, and had refrained from reading her last letters. The hard-minded arrogance in her point of view irritated him, and dispelled all memory of her completely.

Once he determined to reach her—the real Rodie—to attempt to pierce the shell of sophisticated iconoclasm and make the little girl in her respond.

He struggled with a sense of failure as he wrote to her. Wishing to speak of the spiritual degradation of her work, he wrote about its discomfort. He wrote that he thought her work "horrible," leaving the impression that it was materialistically so. In a sad terror lest she submerge herself—what he called "her real self"—in the sordid

morass of cheap theatricalism he wrote her a letter full of pleadings and admonitions, wavering between fatherliness and hysterical schoolboy love; and in a raw, but desperately sincere, manner he begged her to accept what assets he had left in the United States—to take the money and attend a good dramatic school.

He wrote the letter feverishly, trusting that its sincerity would somehow touch her. She could not fail to understand—he was trying to keep her true to her ideal self, he thought. When he had finished he was hopeful.

"She will answer me—and we will understand each other again," he thought.

III

MEANWHILE, in New York, Rhoda was living plainly from day to day, unconcerned with the psychic fluctuations of which introspection might have made her aware. She was a pretty girl, sympathetic when occasion demanded, clever when the situation made it necessary. Just now she was struggling with the engulfing vapours of boredom. Perpetual ennui seeped the joy from every minute; she was finding it hard to live up to the actions her intellect deemed proper for many occasions. Physically tired often, and spiritually dissatisfied, she was finding it hard to stage-manage herself at times. Often she was chagrined with a momentary sense of failure—when she could not rise to a gay mood, when querulousness spoiled the carefully planned vocal nuance she had attempted.

Among her companions was one Tom Middleton, an advertising manager, inclined to be heavy, and with intimate eyes that were bold at times despite his habit of narrowing them under stress of emotion. As she left him at the stage-door one night she realized in a flash that he might be interesting as a husband.

Later, she faced him across a small table in a blur of swimming lights, a little tired and a little intoxicated. She was very comfortable.

The sudden romance that followed was the kind that the newspapers describe cryptically in the breezy formula: "It took Cupid three days."

In reality, it was one of those common shams which plunge unanchored liars into marriage—a travesty of "love at first sight." . . .

With her marriage Rhoda assumed a sad air. It became her style, and had as its basis a sincere revulsion of feeling that once brought her as near fainting as she could come. Sadness became her. Shadows beneath her eyes gave her beauty a sweet evanescence. Besides, her mouth was childish in seriousness, but when she laughed her lips were knowing. Rhoda preferred the serious expression.

It wasn't long before she was enjoying life in a way for which she had had no leisure previously. She enjoyed her prettiness too much to be sincerely unhappy, and she enjoyed a veil of sadness because it enhanced her prettiness.

She began to use careful make-up. Her features, which would look at times finely chiselled, she learned to accentuate to achieve an effect of etching. Fine lines of carmine outlined her lips; her brows were touched; her lashes skillfully mascaro'd; a negligent yet precise wave in her hair added to the porcelain appearance of her head. But the permanency of the picture she made robbed her of her charm.

A long time had passed since she had received Donald's frantic signal for understanding. It was an obligation. She would answer—effectively. She sensed wistfully that it invested her with something she did not have. She was almost reverent before it. . . .

IV

It seemed as if a thick blackness descended on Donald when he read the letter, which began, without any salu-

tation, "I am married now." He fought unreasoning against understanding. She was married. A giant cataclysm had wiped out the existing order of things. . . . The thing was beyond condemnation—almost beyond bitterness. One had to sense it first.

He put away the letter. Days passed before he could assemble his thoughts on the subject—days in which an aching numbness stiffened his fingers and tightened the muscles of his mouth. One day he picked up the letter and read it entirely.

"The economic struggle," "tired every night"—these phrases made a setting whose pathos, affecting her whom he loved, made him wince with its sharpness.

She was a tired butterfly—delicate, irresponsible. He felt that he understood. He should have been there to protect her. She loved him. "Dearest, the memory of your face is a living thing with me," she wrote. "I am always comparing every one I see with you—you were so dear to me."

And the money he had offered. "I couldn't take the last cent you had on earth—I thought about it and realized that anything was easier," she wrote.

It was the final stab of a petty soul. But he was young, and he loved her image—which nature had made to rhyme in poesy. He saw her again, always irreproachably attuned to his every mood, never assertive, a delicate flower whose every colour was made to delight.

He read avidly every line of her letter. The flattery of it seemed adoration, the easy solicitude was the tenderness of a vibrant soul, her cowardice was noble renunciation—and sacrifice.

Sacrifice? God, this world was hard . . .

He felt that he would always worship women.



ENCHANTERS OF MEN

VII

A Belle of the Regency

By Thornton Hall

WHEN at last the sceptre dropped from the senile hand of Louis XIV, a sigh of profound relief ran through France. Nowhere, not even in his own Court, was there any pretence of grief; for Louis had long outlived the splendor of the days when he was hailed as the "Sun-King" throughout Europe.

A new generation had sprung up, to whom his magnificence and his power were but a vague tradition. He had worn his crown much too long to please them. They had little but pity or contempt for the sovereign who had long passed from view into the obscurity of Madame de Maintenon's apartments, where he dozed his days away in the company of his unromantic wife—he in one chair, she in another.

His Court, once the gayest and most splendid in Europe, had become the dullest and most depressing. It was a Court *pour rire*, the laughing-stock of the Continent. His country lay crushed under a mountain of debt, drained of her vitality and resources by war; his subjects, made desperate by poverty and hunger, were full of a dangerous unrest.

Now that Louis was dead, France could raise her head once more and wake to new life. With a boy-king on the throne and the gay and gallant Duc d'Orléans as Regent, a brighter era was assured. France would again be gay and prosperous, they felt; and they were not disappointed. The Regency was, as Michelet says, both "a revelation and a revolution." After a generation of slumber the court awoke to a life more

splendid and brilliant than it had known even in the "Sun-King's" prime. To long faces and hushed voices succeeded the laughter and coquetries of fair women, the fine feathers of love-making gallants; the twinkle of feet dancing in galliard and volta; banquets and midnight revels—the whole kaleidoscope of a court that lived for pleasure.

And the magician who wrought this revolution was, of course, the Regent, the Duc d'Orléans, that strange jumble of statesman and sensualist, gallant soldier and gay Lothario, who knew more of the arts of love and pleasure than any other man in Europe. He it was who set the merry tune to which all France was soon dancing in an abandon of joy. Not even Rome in the days of her decadence could match the midnight revels of which Philippe was the arch-spirit; and no court gallant could point to such a list of conquests, in which a duchess was succeeded by a ballet-dancer and a princess by a *grisette*.

Son of that Orléans Duc, brother of Louis XIV, whose passion for his minions shocked Europe in the days of her greatest licence, and broke the heart of his English wife, the Stuart Princess Henrietta, Philippe inherited the hot blood of his father with that of his grandmother, Anne of Austria, Mazarin's Queen. And this bias of sensuality was doubtless strengthened by his tutor, that arch-scoundrel Dubois, who taught him a contempt for religion and morality, the cynical view of life that the pleasure of the moment is the only

thing worth pursuing, at whatever cost ; and who had impressed indelibly on his mind that no woman is virtuous and that men are knaves.

And there was never any lack of men to continue Dubois' teaching. The Duc gathered around him the most dissolute gallants in France, in whose company he gave rein to his most vicious appetites and to whom he gave the equivocal name of his *roués*—because, so he disingenuously declared, they were so devoted to him that, for his sake, they were ready to be broken on the wheel (*la roue*) !

Among these boon comrades of the Regent were many of the most dissolute men of his court—the Comte de Nocé, whom he playfully dubbed his brother-in-law ; the Marquis de Broglio, famed throughout France for his wit and his debauchery ; the Chevalier de Simiane, poet and profligate ; De Farcy, the handsomest man of his day, with a reputation for gallantry commensurate with his good looks ; the Marquis de la Fare, Captain of Guards and *bon enfant*—and so on through the long list of Philippe's boon comrades.

Strange tales are told of the orgies of this select band which the Regent gathered around him—orgies which shocked even the France of the eighteenth century. At six o'clock every evening Philippe's kingship ended for the day. Pleasure called him away from the boredom of Empire ; and at the stroke of six he retired to the company of his *roués*, to feast and drink and gamble until dawn broke on the revelry—his laugh the loudest, his wit the most dazzling, his stories the most piquant, keeping the table in a roar with his infectious gaiety.

He was Regent no longer ; he was simply a *bon camarade*, as ready to exchange familiarities with a lady of the ballet as to lead the laughter at a joke at his own expense. At nine o'clock, when the fun had waxed furious, and wine had set the slowest tongue wagging and every eye a-sparkle, other guests streamed in to join the orgy—the most beautiful ladies of the court, from the Duchesse de Gesores and the

Comtesse de Sabran, to the Regent's own daughter, the Duchesse de Berry. And in the wake of these high-born women would follow laughing, bright-eyed troupes of dancing- and chorus-girls from the theaters, with an escort of the cleverest actors of Paris, to join the Regent's merry throng.

The champagne now flowed in rivers ; the servants were sent away, the doors were locked and the fun grew riotous. Ceremony had no place there ; rank and social distinction were forgotten. Comtesses flirted with comedians, Princes made love to ballet-girls and duchesses alike. The leader of the moment was the man or woman who could sing the most daring song, tell the most piquant story, or play the most audacious practical joke, even on the Regent himself. Thus the mad, merry hours passed until dawn came to bring the revels to a close ; or until the Regent would sally forth with a few chosen comrades on a midnight ramble to other haunts of pleasure in the capital. A few hours later he would resume his sceptre, as austere and dignified a ruler as you would find in Europe.

Such was the man who, amid the ruins of his country, inaugurated in France an era of licentiousness such as she had never known—a kingly presence with the soul of a Caliban, statesman and sensualist, high-minded and low-living, spending his days as a sovereign and his nights as a sot.

II

It must not be imagined that Philippe of Orléans was the only royal personage who thus set a scandalous example to France. There was scarcely a prince or princess of the blood who did not flaunt his or her amours in the face of the world. The Dowager Duchesse de Bourbon, a daughter of Louis XIV, openly indulged in a *liaison* with Law, the Scottish financier and impostor ; the semi-devout Princesse de Conti had *la Vallière* for lover ; the Princesse de Clairmont made herself notorious by her conduct with the Duc de Mahon

while the Regent's own daughters eclipsed all their royal rivals in the promiscuity of their love affairs, especially the Duchesse de Berry, whose lovers ranged from a comedian and a page to her ill-favored Captain of the Guards, de Riom.

It was, in fact, an era of corruption in high places, when, in the reaction that followed the dismal and decorous last years of Louis XIV's reign, Pleasure rose phoenix-like from the ashes of ruin, and flaunted herself unashamed in every guise in which vice could deck her.

For the Regent it must in justice be said that he never abused his position to gratify his love of pleasure. His mistresses flocked to him from every rank of life, from the stage to the highest court circles, but remained no longer than inclination dictated. He brought no pressure to bear on any one of them. Their wish was his law, and he treated all with the same chivalry and consideration. He made love as a man and not as Regent of France; and as a man he had little fear of rivalry.

Few men, indeed, have been better equipped for the conquest of woman; for, in addition to a handsome exterior, he had the gifts of charming and courtly manners, a clever and supple tongue, and above all the magnetism which is as difficult to define as it is to resist. Like Henri of Navarre, and Napoleon the First, he was a born lover, to whom conquest comes easily and inevitably.

And not even Henri or Napoleon made more conquests than this Regent of France. Actresses and Duchesses vied with each other for his smiles. The Duchesse de Fedari had for rival and successor to his favor, Mademoiselle Emilie, the ballet-dancer, whose love for him was as disinterested as it was deep, and whom he treated with a rare chivalry and devotion. The Duchesse de Gesores replaced Mademoiselle Desmarre, the pretty soubrette; and the Comtesse de Sabran succeeded "La Souris," the pet of the Paris stage. Thus Philippe's favorites followed each other in bewildering succession. Each reigned her brief hour; and when she

relinquished her sceptre, retained her love.

But of all the fair women who thus captivated the Regent, Madame de Parabère held his affection the longest. She stands out supreme in the galaxy of fair and frail women, though she entered his life when the Duc had long outlived his youth, and the flame of his passion no longer burnt fiercely.

"My son," wrote the Princess Palatine, his mother, "is no longer a youth of twenty; he is forty-two, and Paris cannot pardon him his running about like an impetuous youth, with all the weighty affairs of state on his hands. When the late king took possession of the kingdom, it was in a state of prosperity, and he could very well afford to enjoy himself; but it is quite different today. My son must now work day and night, in order to repair what the late king and his faithless ministers ruined. It cannot be denied that my son has a great weakness for women. He has now a principal favorite, a *maitresse en titre* named Madame de Parabère. She is a daughter of Madame de la Vieuville, who was Lady of the Bedchamber to the Duchesse de Berry. Madame de Parabère is now a widow; she has a fine figure, is tall and well-made; her skin is dark and she does not paint. She has a pretty mouth and beautiful eyes. She is rather stupid."

Such was the description of the woman who had now caught the Regent in the toils of her charms, by the austere princess who looked with stern disapproval on her son's favorites; and had less cause to look kindly on one who promised to be the most dangerous of them all. We may thus be sure that the description does not err on the side of flattery. Madame de Parabère was, in fact, if we are to believe contemporary records, one of the loveliest women in Europe.

"She was," says a chronicler of the time, "incomparably the most seductive woman I have known—irresistible, from her wonderful eyes, which could change in an instant from a melting tenderness to a flash of flame, to the

silvery laughter that was always bubbling from her pretty lips." And to her physical charms of a tall, perfectly-moulded figure, instinct with grace and dignity; a face of pure oval, illuminated by glorious dark eyes; delicately-cut features; exquisite mouth and teeth, and the glory of hair which, when unloosed, rippled in a cascade almost to her feet," she allied a sparkling wit, a clever tongue, a nature of singular sweetness, and an irresistible gaiety. Such was the woman who for some years was fated to play a leading part in the life of France's ruler.

When and where Philippe first set eyes on Madame's ravishing loveliness is not certainly known. It is said, however, on the authority of the Princess Palatine, that he first met her in the palace of Luxembourg, in which his daughter, the Duchesse de Berry, held her notorious revels, with Madame de Mouchy and a Jesuit priest, one Father Ringlet, for companions, and de Riom as Lord of merry disports." We know, however, that at sight of her he completely lost his middle-aged head and heart, and rapidly became her abject slave.

Madame, the worker of this magic on the hero of so many love conquests, was born in 1693, and, as with a curious premonition of her future, was baptized under the name, Mary Magdalene. She had for father Monsieur de la Vieuville, the descendant of a long line of Breton ancestors, one of whom had come to France in the reign of Louis XII, in the retinue of Queen Anne of Brittany; and for mother a niece of the Duc d'Argenson, with whose beauty she had inherited her wit and gaiety and passion for pleasure. Mademoiselle, as became the daughter of her mother, loved fine feathers and jewels, joy and laughter. She was merry, overflowing, dissipated and charming." And so beautiful was she that even before she emerged from short frocks she had her retinue of admirers, whom in turn she drove to distraction by her alternate coquetries and coldness.

When, at the age of eighteen, Made-

moiselle made her *début* at the Versailles Court, she turned all heads by her loveliness and witcheries. Even Louis, dotard as he was, thawed to life at sight of her young charms; and, patting her on the cheek, vowed, "Were I but fifty years younger, I would tilt with the best of them for the guerdon of a smile from those pretty lips." And while every gallant at Court, from the veteran King to the youngest Page, paid enthusiastic homage to "la belle Bretonne," the women, among the fairest in all France, vowed that she was the Queen of them all. As for Madame de Maintenon, the girl's beauty and winsomeness so effectually won her heart that she took her under her protective wing, adopted her as daughter, and declared that she would find Mademoiselle the most eligible husband France could produce.

This husband was soon forthcoming in Jean César Beaudeant, Comte de Parabère, a young man of courtly graces and handsome exterior, with wealth and a long and distinguished ancestry to support his claim to the hand of Madame's protégée. And thus we find the Breton maid blossoming into a reluctant Comtesse a few weeks after making her curtsy to Louis.

That her heart had not accompanied her hand she made no concealment. She was quite willing to please Madame de Maintenon by wearing a wedding-ring of her choosing; she was quite pleased to be a lady of title; but for the husband chosen for her she never affected to have either affection or respect. All she asked of him was to be allowed to go her own way, while he went his—a bargain to which the Comte gladly agreed; for he had his own pleasures which he preferred to wedded life with a woman, though she was the loveliest in France, whom he had not learnt to love.

III

So far, in spite of her coquetries and frivolities, no breath of scandal had sought to soil the new Comtesse's fair fame. She had turned a cold and dainty shoulder to all advances, with the seem-

ingly cold virtue of a nun. Now that she had the protection and sanction of a wedding-ring her scruples took wing, and before many months had passed her flirtations gave cause for many a mysterious whispering and covertly pointed finger at the Court or Versailles.

"Love," she boldly declared, "is the only thing in life worth living for; and it shall not be my fault if I do not have my fill of it."

And in this spirit she began to indulge openly and unashamed in one love-adventure after another. Now it was that Prince of Lotharics, my Lord Bolingbroke, England's Ambassador to France, whom she caught, a willing victim, in her toils. He was her shadow and her slave, pursuing her with all the ardour of a love-sick boy. And when his duties called him back to England, his place was promptly taken by Marshal de Montluzon, officer of the Guards and the most notorious roué in Louis' army.

Thus one gallant succeeded another in Madame's favour, each discarded in turn when she wearied of him and desired a successor. In her pursuit of pleasure she allowed no day to escape her, no opportunity to pass unseized.

"Eternity is only in Heaven," she said; "the earth is turning and we must turn with it."

To her mother's reproaches and pleading she turned a deaf ear.

"It is all very well for you to preach," she said; "you have had your day and gathered your flowers. You must leave me to enjoy mine. Like you, I shall probably turn to piety and good works some day, when my appetite for pleasure fails, and seek to atone by a belated penitence for sins that have lost their allurements."

Madame's *linisons* were now the common knowledge and gossip of the Court, and it was thus unlikely that her husband should be ignorant of them. It is true that in those days it was no longer *bon ton* to love one's own wife, and reciprocity of affection was good enough for the *bourgeois ménage*, but not for people of quality. The Comte, however,

in spite of the understanding that he should not interfere with his wife's pleasures and of his indulgence in his own, could not look on placidly while she coquetted with one lover after another; and his jealousy was a constant thorn in Madame's bed of roses. Fortunately for her he was a man whom it was not difficult to hoodwink, as the following amusing story proves:

One day, in the first flush of his devotion, the Regent presented Madame with a diamond ring said to be worth two thousand golden louis. Madame was delighted with such a regal gift; but the horrible thought assailed her—how could she account to her husband for the possession of such a valuable piece of jewelry? Her quick wits, however, were not long in solving the problem; and this is now she did it.

"My dear," she said to her husband, assuming an air of innocence calculated to disarm the morbid suspicion, "a friend who is much in need of ready money, offered me this ring for a ridiculous sum—a thousand louis only. Don't you think it would be a pity to miss such an excellent opportunity?—I should love to have it," she added in a tone of irresistible coaxing. The unsuspecting Comte fell promptly into the trap, produced the thousand louis, and gallantly declared that it was a pleasure to purchase happiness for so charming a wife. Madame thanked him effusively for his generosity, pocketed the money, and proudly displayed the ring to her friends as a gift from her indulgent husband.

But all Madame's ingenious artifices could not long conceal from her husband the knowledge of her many infidelities, which indeed were food for scandal and amusement throughout France; and becoming more and more a prey to jealousy—for he had, beyond a doubt, learnt to love the wife whom he had reluctantly married, and who had proved so false—he plunged into dissipation; and, so it is said, drank himself to death—an event which his widow celebrated by a banquet at which she was the arch-spirit of gaiety.

"Thus," says Saint Simon, "died M. de Parabère; but it would have been better if he had left this world earlier."

Her husband thus conveniently removed from her path, Madame was at full liberty to indulge her appetite for adventure without the least restraint, a freedom of which she took full advantage. "Never," we are told, "was she without a lover. Her heart never remained vacant for a single instant. She abandoned her lovers, and she was abandoned in her turn by them; but the next morning, nay, the very same day, another had raised his shrine in the vacant heart of Madame de Parabère. And she loved the successor with equal ardour and vivacity; she was devoted to him with the same submissive passion; for she saw everything only through the eyes of her admirers.

"This faithful devotion," writes a contemporary, "is as rare as a constancy of many years devoted to one man.

The lovers to whom she was most loyal were the Regent, Beninghen and Montluzon; the others were mere interludes. But of them all the only man who ever really won her heart and held it was Philippe of Orléans, just as the only woman whom the Regent ever truly loved was Madame de Parabère.

The reason, perhaps, is not far to seek. She loved him for himself—Philippe the man, not Philippe the Regent—and wanted neither gold nor favours from him. She never trespassed on the hours which he rigidly devoted every day to affairs of State; and in those affairs she never interfered. It was a mutual love, free from the taint of self-interest on one side, and sensuality on the other.

IV

THEN followed for the Comtesse a few years of such happiness as she had never known, years during which she loved and was loved by the greatest man in France. She was his constant companion, with a place at his right hand at banquets, receptions and reviews. She was the acknowledged Queen of his

Court, fawned on by the greatest in the land; the sharer of his counsels, the repository of his hopes and ambitions. She weaned him from his vices and directed his energies into channels of greater usefulness for the France they both loved.

How great was her influence over him is illustrated by the following story: When Dubois, the Regent's evil genius, was to be consecrated Archbishop of Cambrai, he was anxious that his old pupil, the Regent, should lend the ceremony the dignity of his presence—an ambition which the Duc de Saint Simon set to work to thwart, pointing out to the Duc that he would incur public odium by assisting at such a mockery of the Deity as the consecration of the greatest scoundrel in France.

When the Regent gave his promise to stay away, Saint Simon was jubilant. But his rejoicing was premature. He had not taken into account Madame de Parabère, who had her own reasons for wishing the Duc to be present at the ceremony, and told him in no ambiguous terms that he must go.

"I particularly wish it," she said, "and for this reason: The Archbishop and I have had a quarrel; and if you are not present at his consecration ceremony he will conclude that it is I who have kept you away. He will thus become my enemy and try to harm me in a hundred ways. One thing he will certainly do. He will try to part me from you, and that," she added tearfully, "would be worse than death."

In the face of such pleading and argument, what could the Regent do but go? He went, as Madame said he must; and thus she won the gratitude of the most dangerous man in France.

But Philippe of Orléans, long as he remained loyal to Madame de Parabère, was not the man to remain faithful forever to any woman, however charming and devoted; and the day came at last when she realized that her reign was nearing its end. When she saw the first signs of the Regent's loyalty wavering under the seductions of Madame d'Averne, a woman younger than her-

self and no less beautiful, she decided to leave the arena while she still retained a portion of his heart.

"Prince," she wrote to the Duc, in a pathetic letter of farewell, "instead of waiting until you send me into exile, I shall exile myself. One must never drink together to the last drop; for the last drop often proves to be a tear of blood. Henceforth I shall live only for God. I am leaving your world, and we shall only meet after death."

Thus, without a final kiss or even a handshake, the woman who had been France's uncrowned Queen, stole away from St. Cloud, with a maid for companion, and sought refuge in the Chateau de St. Heraye, which had been the home of her wedded life and which she had not visited since her husband's death. Here, for a few years she oscillated between piety and dalliance with her old lover, Montluzon, the Guardsman, who, after years of hiding from justice (the result of a fatal duel fought for her), reappeared to fan the embers of her old passion into flame.

Thus loving to the last, sinning and praying, alternating dalliance with good works, and seeking to reconcile the fear of God with the love of man, Madame de Parabère spent the closing years of her life. And when at last death came to her, she faced it with a brave heart and smiling face, whispering with her last breath the Magdalene's plea, *quia*

multum amavit. She had loved much; and God would understand and forgive.

As for the Regent, the close of his mis-spent life came a little later with tragic suddenness. Worn out with excesses, his doctors warned him that he might die any day; but with the light-heartedness that was his to the last, he scoffed at their gloomy forebodings.

"Let it come when it will," he said with a laugh. "I do not fear death; and if it comes quickly, so much the better."

Two days later, he was chatting gaily with the young Duchesse de Falari, when he suddenly turned to her and asked, "Do you think there is any hell—or Paradise?"

"Of course. I do," answered the Duchesse.

"Then are you not afraid to lead the life you do?"

"Well," replied Madame, "I think God will have pity on me."

Scarcely had the words left her lips when the Regent's head fell heavily on her shoulder, and he began to drop to the floor. A glance showed her that he was dead.

The Regent had gone to find for himself the answer to his question, "Is there any hell—or Paradise?"

The eighth article in this series, entitled "A Coquette of France," will appear in the next number of THE SMART SET.



HE who hath a pretty wife, a castle on the frontier or a vineyard by the roadside, is never without war.



A WIDOW is a mummer who dresses for a tragedy to play in a farce.



MAN tries to live up to his ideals, woman to her photographs.

THE KISS

By Kathryn White Ryan

FOR years the man gathered his treasures, quested, ransacked the world for his home that would be a Temple to Beauty.

"When I have all beautiful things about me," he said, "then I shall know joy. I shall keep out ugliness, the crowds, curious eyes, noise."

As a trader collects pearls from port to port to form the perfect string that will find limpid unrest on a woman's fluttering throat, so he collected.

His palace rose in storied whiteness and people on the streets stood gaping up at it. And when the hammers were stilled and the trampling of carriers was done, the man went in.

But, oh! the world and its traffic, and nagging domesticity, and exactions of many kinds, followed him in! And joy was not there; it had even retreated, receded. And he hated his silken walls and his soft-cushioned shrines of gloom.

Finally, spent, disappointed he went away. But going, he flung to his city his worthless crumb—a palace.

Soon now, all those gaping folk no longer stayed without the gates but entered, came in the vestibule, and passed through brass wheels that clicked and registered the visitors. Small companies of four or five escorted by a guide would wander through the rooms mumbling and fawning over their possessions.

And one day after many years the man came back. No one knew him. He waited as any stranger in the vestibule until a group was formed. And then, accompanied by an old man who pursed his lips disapprovingly at Art, a woman who asked to know more of

the dim wife of the builder, a slender girl lush with silence who held herself close to her stalwart escort, he roamed from room to room and up circling marble stairs. And ever his heart murmured:

"Bootless! It is all bootless! It has no fruitage. It was all to no avail."

A woman beside him tittered to another.

"It does not even distract them," he said—"my beautiful dream that failed me!"

And he went back down the stairs.

But as he went he turned, to give his eyes, misty with their shroud of futility, a last leave-taking. As he did so, he saw—off in a distant corner, in a shadowed recess that yet had sunlight like a screen protecting it—the young girl and her lover. The youth had taken her in his arms, and the two swayed to the clinging of their lips.

In a flash it seemed to the man he had never before beheld true Beauty. Here, at last, he saw it. Here it was, alive, companioned by Joy and Love!

"Ah!" he told himself eagerly, "This is enough. This justifies my impassive vases, my tapestries, my cold statues. If it had not been for them, for my quest of them, they might have parted, those two, without their kiss. There might have been no Temple ready to receive it! But now this kiss has corded this man and this woman together forever. Their souls nor their bodies will ever unwind from it!—nor their children's, nor their children's children's."

And, smiling, he walked out of the house.

THE WOMAN OF FORTY-FIVE

By Miffin Crane

I

SHE had been conventional long enough to do the conventional thing at her husband's funeral: she cried, she looked out of her black veil with tearful eyes, she regarded the condolences of the spectators with a melancholy countenance. Nor was she wholly insincere, for it is difficult to observe, unmoved, the complete severance from half a lifetime of trivial habits. She had done so many things for this man: cooked his food, put three lumps of sugar in his coffee every morning, taken tucks in the sleeves of every new shirt, quarrelled with him, listened to his uninteresting conversation each evening, made him listen to her own! She regretted his going; after all, the inconsequence of her acts with him had been the measure of her days.

Nevertheless, her fundamental emotion was one of relief, the sense of being liberated from an oppressive confinement, the sense also of an opened door, giving ingress to chambers of novelty and diversion. Her feeling was one of renewed youth, of revived hopes, of freshened possibilities. He was gone and with him went a thousand vaguely irritating duties that had been like chains during the years she spent with him.

In these moments her mind contained no definite want, no clearly seen prospect, but only the assurance that whatever might become of her, freedom was now hers for its gratification. She was tearful in the automobile that took her to the cemetery; she cried as they lowered his casket into the yellow rectangu-

lar hole, but as she cried she thought of certain changes she would make in her home. She was no longer limited by his prejudices, nor forced to the compromise of her own desires.

For several weeks she diverted herself by rearranging the familiar rooms of the house in which they had lived together. She was glad of the opportunity to give away many pieces of furniture that had long annoyed her; she enjoyed the business of buying new ones. It was pleasant to spend his money and know that there would be no accounting for the bills that come in. Occasionally, in disposing of something that was intimately associated with his habits, she experienced a moment of regret, a second of melancholy. But these dolorous instants never persisted; she was cheerful, she was content.

She knew that she was only marking time, resting before the initiation of certain activities that were shaping themselves in her mind. She had no especial interest in her home; she was tired of the routine of home-making. She had practically decided on selling the house, sooner or later, and securing a small, expensive apartment. She thought of the pleasure of a few pretty rooms, with a maid to take entire charge of them. Every night she went to bed with agreeable expectations; her mind was stimulated by new plans and new prospects.

One afternoon as she was walking out of a millinery shop she was surprised by the meeting with an old acquaintance, of whom she had had no word for nearly ten years. A woman

touched her arm, smiled at her, and spoke.

"Aren't you Lucy Cobbe?" she asked. "Don't you remember me?"

Lucy regarded her with a puzzled smile. There was a vague familiarity in the face of this woman, yet she could not definitely recall her.

"Oh! I'm disappointed," she exclaimed. "And I recognized you at once! Just look at me now!"

Then Lucy had her moment of recollection.

"Marie Jordan!" she said.

"Yes, of course! Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Lucy? And you're my very oldest friend!"

They kissed each other affectionately and went out of the shop with their arms linked together.

It seemed an age since she had last seen Marie. She remembered her last as a comparatively young woman who had gone out to some western state shortly after her second marriage. As young girls they had been close companions; as married women, up until the time of their separation, they had seen each other frequently.

"Marie, don't accuse me of any neglect," she said. "If I didn't know you the first instant you spoke to me, you can certainly count it your own fault. You let me forget you. Why didn't you ever write to me? Just think: you didn't know whether I was alive or dead!"

Her companion laughed.

"Only the good die," she said. She gave Lucy's arm a conciliatory squeeze. "Forgive me, dear! I can't write letters. When I try to write a letter it seems to me my brains are all made of wood. Do you remember when I used to get you to write my letters to Walter?"

"Poor Walter!"

Her friend shrugged her shoulders.

"A person can forget anything," she said.

"Still, I was surprised when you married again. . . ."

"Why? I might marry a third time, for all that!"

Lucy turned her face in surprise.

"What do you mean, Marie?"

"I seem to be a very fatal person to men, dear. I've been a widow for nearly six months now."

"You, too!"

She told Marie of the loss of her own husband. They stood out on the sidewalk, talking eagerly for some minutes until Lucy suggested that the other woman come home with her for dinner. Marie consented and they hailed a taxicab.

In the cab they had an opportunity to examine each other, and between their sentences they made their appraisals with critical eyes. In observing her companion's appearance, Lucy experienced an uncomfortable conviction of inferiority, a sense of jealousy. She was convinced that fundamentally she was the younger looking, but she had not availed herself of the means of youth that this other woman employed. Marie's clothes had more style to them, her corsetting was more thorough, her coiffure was immeasurably more skilful, the lines of her face were overlaid with a more sophisticated mask.

For an instant she sneered with an inward virtue at such an evident display of cosmetics, yet she secretly determined to experiment fully with a rouge stick, vanishing cream, and plenty of powder. Meanwhile, they smiled at each other sweetly, asked questions, and talked without interruption. Marie was congratulating herself on her own advantage; Lucy was confident of her surpassing possibilities.

"Poor thing!" thought Marie. "Twenty years of darning socks for a lump of a husband has done for her. She looks awfully like a frump!"

II

THE meeting with Marie opened for her a prospect vaguely enchanting. It made her more acutely aware of her freedom; the untrammled air of her friend accentuated the knowledge of her own liberty. It revived the memo-

ries of her earlier years, the memories of romance and expectation, the glitter and the promise of old hopes. Occasionally, in seconds of depression, it occurred to her that she was old, that the years must have marked her spirit, must have stolen some incalculable power of response from her. These instants of weariness passed, and still without conceiving definite desires, she responded to the thrill of desire.

When the two friends parted after their first reunion they promised each other to meet very soon again. A few days later Marie called on the telephone and asked Lucy to visit her the next evening at her hotel.

"There's somebody I want you to meet," she said.

She was very glad to go and she made an immediate determination to present herself in a new and more satisfactory appearance. She began her toilet early the next evening; she examined herself thoroughly in the glass, observing her face with an eye of critical optimism, and the countenance that returned her gaze seemed almost young. She carefully lined her eyes with a black pencil, and their transparent blue acquired a deeper shade, a more enticing depth, a suggestion, she believed, of mystery. She touched her lips with red, she rouged her cheeks, she covered them with powder, and scarcely any lines were visible.

She was delighted with the result; it seemed so simple to cheat the limning hands of the years! And now she congratulated herself that in the still plentiful strands of her light hair there were so few gray threads to conceal.

When she was ready she stood up in front of a full-length mirror and turned slowly around. If her aspect were not entirely that of a girl, nevertheless she felt assured of a certain suggestion of girlishness.

Marie occupied a suite of rooms in the hotel; as she went up in the elevator it occurred to her that she must very soon get into her own new quarters.

She walked through the corridor

slowly, wondering what her friend would think of her, wondering whom she was to meet there.

She opened the door and entered into a little parlor; Marie was sitting across the room and a man was near her, talking.

As she came in they both stood up. Marie ran toward her, kissed her, gave her an effusive greeting.

"I want you to meet my friend, Mr. Wolcott," she said.

Lucy shook hands with the man; she saw that he was not young. This gave her a second of disappointment; her own sense of youth made her expectant of youthful companionship. As he held her hand during the interval of introduction he smiled at her in evident pleasure, and the agreeable assurance of his approbation washed her clean of her temporary depression. They all sat down, and as Marie resumed an animated discussion that had been in progress on Lucy's entrance, she had a few silent moments in which to appraise the man.

She felt that she liked him. His manner was sophisticated; his attitude as he sat in the chair, his crossed legs, his easy gestures, the little smile with which he listened, expressed assurance. She contrasted him with her husband, who had had none of this air. He was dressed well, he had an immaculateness and a finish.

She found his face interesting, full of reservations and suggestive possibilities. His countenance was not easy to read and so he stirred her curiosity. He wore a small dark moustache, only lightened by a trifling admixture of grey, that was trimmed close enough to reveal the lines of his lips, easy and flexible in the shaping of words. As he listened to Marie, he occasionally looked at her, and the conventionality of his smile, she felt convinced, assumed a subtle meaning, as if it were directly, covertly, intended for her, a silent confidence, an unseen agreement. The implication of this fragile comradeship warmed her like the sip of an old liqueur.

The conversation became more general. Wolcott began to tell of some of the amusing aspects of a South American country, from which he had recently returned.

"These people are very different from us; we can't understand them easily," he said.

"The Spanish women know all about making love, don't they?" asked Marie, smiling suggestively.

"I've heard that," he replied, "but really, I've had no experience. I have only met the South American women under entirely conventional circumstances. There's no freedom of access to the women—you can't visit a woman there, go out with her alone, see her alone, as you can here. The only men who have a chance for *affaires* are the family doctor and the family confessor. But what surprises you in these people is their astonishing enthusiasms. For example, I found myself in the midst of a tremendous controversy on the theories of Darwin—something almost unbelievable, isn't it? There were hundreds of articles in the newspapers, several men got knifed in the course of arguments, a couple of private duels were fought; even the cart-drivers on the streets read the papers and took sides. Imagine all this happening half a century after everyone else had quit talking about such a matter! The dispute was finally referred for settlement to the president of the republic. After an immense amount of deliberation, he decided that all men were closely related to monkeys. The question was settled, everyone was entirely satisfied, and the whole quarrel was forgotten with the suddenness with which it commenced!"

He laughed, and Lucy, unused to a man who could talk about such things, felt intensely stimulated. Already her life had a new colour, a new variety, a new sensation. Her interest was not entirely centered upon this man, however charming she found him, but upon the possibility of knowing many such people, upon the prospect of exchanging, like a new Cinderella, the drab

garments of her former days for this raiment of alluring hours.

Already she was incredulous of the recent years, unbelieving that her spirit had endured them, unconvinced of their monotonous reality. She smiled with a deep pleasure; she deeply regretted the poverty of her own experience; she envied Marie the ease with which she talked of a sophisticated life. Yet her envy was not profound; she felt superior to Marie.

When it came time for her to go she was greatly surprised that Wolcott did not offer to go with her; she had been fully expectant of his suggestion to take her home. Smiling, she shook hands with Marie and with him, but there was a chill in her spirits. She wanted to ask him to call on her; her sensitiveness in that instant deterred her. She walked through the hotel corridor slowly, deeply depressed. It seemed impossible that a few minutes before she had experienced a complete content.

The night was cool, the air was inhospitable. All the people whom she passed, all those who passed her, seemed young, young men and young women. Their manifest youth was flouted before her spirit; the slim, smiling women, leaning on the arms of their companions, were shameless in their slenderness, obscene and cruel in their vivacity. Her body was weary, not the weariness of a moment, of an hour, of a day, but the accumulated fatigue of years, the profound languishment of having lived too long. She walked very slowly, like one immeasurably tired.

Then she had the subconscious sensation of someone calling her name, yet her conscious mind was too depressed, too abstracted, to respond. A touch on her elbow surprised and startled her. She turned swiftly, her face alarmed. Wolcott was standing with his hat off, smiling at her.

"You can become lost in thought, can't you?" he exclaimed. "I tried to attract your attention by calling to you

from my car, but you wouldn't consent to hear me!"

She saw now that his car was drawn up close to the curb; he had jumped out to detain her. Her surprise kept her face immobile, she had nothing to say to him. He drew a little closer to her, speaking quickly, smiling with conciliation.

"Please don't be angry," he said. "I didn't want to see you go alone, but our friend expected me to stay. I hadn't quite made up my mind how to manage getting away with you, and in the second that you decided to go I was absolutely at a loss. You understand, don't you? I left her very abruptly and hurried as fast as I could; I've been lucky enough to find you. Won't you get in my car and let me take you home?"

Now she gave him her smile; ail her melancholy was gone and her spirit was buoyant.

Unexpectedly, with a sense of acute delight, she found herself involved in an intrigue, with a rôle that flattered her intensely. It seemed impossible that she had been so obtuse, yet she had looked upon Marie and Wolcott as entirely casual acquaintances. She knew now that in some measure they must be more than that; that possibly Marie sought to make him love her.

With a thrilling unscrupulousness she found it delightful to oppose herself, like a sardonic fate, between the conception of this plan and its achievement. The allure of life returned to her with an augmented intensity; she got into the car and sat down beside him; the night air blew against her face like an exhilarating fluid.

There was an instant assumption of intimacy between these two. He commenced a confession.

"I met her out West," he said. "Was invited to her house there; knew her husband. We came across each other just by accident here. . . ."

"The same way, exactly, that she and I met again," interpolated Lucy.

"Yes. And I had just come back from the South and was glad to see someone I knew. Really, you know,

the woman assumes too much! I don't suppose I've given her more than half a dozen kisses. I ought to be old enough to know better, but then, so ought she, don't you think? Must a woman always take a kiss seriously?"

The expression of his face was pathetically humourous; she laughed and his own laugh joined with hers. Careless kisses! His assumption that she understood them, that she had their acquaintance, delighted her. She had not been kissed by a man for twenty years! Her husband's kisses had long been formalities only, and nameless . . .

III

WHEN they reached her home he helped her out of the car and stood on the pavement a few moments talking to her. She wanted to ask him in, she wanted to be alone with him and watch his face comfortably by a dim light and listen to whatever he had to say to her. The street was lonely, and the quietness of its desertion accentuated her agreeable sense of intimacy. But after a moment he turned back to his car, promising to telephone her the next day.

She went indoors with a certain return of her depression. He should have been more ardent, he should have been more eager. For a moment it occurred to her that his was a shortcoming fundamental and irreparable: the lack of youth. Then she remembered Marie and when she reached her room she was smiling. It was pleasant to intrigue against Marie. As she got into bed she experienced a sentimental instant. In a measure, to a degree, she was sorry for Marie. The unfortunate woman had lived too long; she looked very old.

He did as he had promised; she talked with him the next morning and agreed to see him in the afternoon. After lunch, as she was dressing, Marie called her and wanted her to go to a matinée. For a moment, under the necessity of a refusal, she had difficulty in thinking of an excuse. The woman was very insistent; she finally invented the

rather unsound expedient of a sick friend. Marie was a little piqued.

"I thought I'd call Wolcott, ask him to bring some other man, and then we could have had a little party. When am I going to see you, anyway?"

Lucy smiled into the receiver. Her pleasant anticipations were heightened. The situation was genuinely droll!

Wolcott arrived early. He was dressed in a light suit, wore a flower in his buttonhole and looked debonair. The ease of his manner, the reservations he suggested, gave a subtle charm to his personality. Standing in front of her and uttering the conventionalities of greeting, he appeared the actor from many absorbing rôles, the one who had lived a life of complexity and hazard, the life of her own unfulfilled wanting, and bringing to her now the completeness of his experience, and the maturity of his charm. She was glad then that he was not young; he had the flavour that youthfulness could never have, the bouquet of old wine. It flattered her immensely to see the pleasure in his face as he talked to her.

He asked her where she wanted to go.

"Did you come in your car?" she inquired.

"Yes; do you want me to drive you somewhere?"

"I'll tell you," said Lucy. "I thought we might drive out to some little road-house, some quiet place, have a little talk, and then come back here until you have to go. Do you want to do that?"

"That will be splendid," he said. "Nothing better!"

They went outdoors and got into the car. For a while they were somewhat silent. They did not know exactly what to say to each other. She was a trifle surprised at this; she had anticipated that conversation would be ready and eager. However, he began to talk to her presently about some of his friends, about certain of his business experiences, and she listened with an occasional comment.

His words disappointed her; she wanted something else, something more *intimate, a confessional, a confiding.*

They came out of the city and along the road passed a young girl and a boy walking close together. The pair did not seem to be talking at all. Lucy looked after them and an intangible regret entered her spirits like a perfume recalling memories melancholy in a passing that had no return. She wished suddenly that he would stop telling her these easy inanities; she desired that they could be silent with the meaning of the boy and the girl.

She was glad when, later on, they turned back to the city. So far the afternoon had lacked some anticipated flavour; she could not define its exact wanting. When they entered the streets of the city again, some of her expectancy revived. The sights of people hurrying through the streets, the sounds of a diverse and incalculable activity, the crowding of the traffic, returned to her her glimpse of mystery, gave her again the feeling of potentialities and alluring promise. She was smiling when they reached her home.

She took him into her little drawing-room and asked him to sit down beside her on the divan. She turned to him with a provocative smile.

"I suppose," she said, "you have been acquainted with so many women that you know the essential secrets of all of us! Tell me about some of the women you have made love to. Who was the first little girl you ever kissed?"

"I don't know," he said. "It's a terrible thing not to be able to remember the first girl, the first kiss, isn't it? Everyone should have this memory; that should be the most pleasant. However, do you know, the first one with me, whenever it was, hasn't left any distinct impression. Perhaps you have a first recollection of your own?"

She looked at him a moment, lowering her eyes a little, and in that instant she understood the poverty of her emotional life. She had no fervid memories; the experiences that would have given memories had been denied her. Instead there came to her recollection the ghosts of her hopes, the wraiths of

her unachieved fancies. And, under a curious impulse, she began to tell him about them, as if they had been real, as if she had known their substance and recalled their lingering sweetnesses in her words. She lied to him in a low voice, whilst he sat and listened to her silently.

"There were five different men that I loved best," she said, "and each one of them comes back to my mind . . . equally. The first was a boy who wrote verses about me. . . ."

Her inventions passed her lips with a melancholy ease. She related the situations that had never happened, she described the kisses that her lips had never known, she talked of separations whose regret came only from her imagination. She was convincing; she was fervent; he believed her.

As he listened to her, to the low-voiced utterance of her reminiscences, his mind responded to vague longings, to regrets, to the wish that he had known another life. This woman had lived, and all his own experiences seemed trivial in comparison with the poetry of her recollections, with the fervour of her memories. Why had he not known her before, why had the knowledge of such women been withheld from him?

The room was growing dusk, the afternoon twilight dimmed her face. He put out his hand and touched hers. She stopped speaking; his touch warmed her with a sudden thrill. She raised her head and met his eyes. She glowed with an expectancy of fulfilment; her dreams—like returning, lost birds—fluttered into her hands at last. He leaned toward her and kissed her.

For an instant the thrill of her expectancy persisted, and then it was replaced by a startling and malign surprise. His lips gave her no delight; she knew no response to their pressure. His closely trimmed moustache pricked her unpleasantly; the faint odour of old tobacco smoke that came to her nostrils revived a vague dissatisfaction, an old discontent, a well-remembered discomfort.

In another second she understood. This had been the flavour of her husband's kisses—the unpleasant moustache, the stale tobacco smoke! And she remembered, in a moment of time, all this man had said to her that afternoon and his words, she knew, were also well-remembered, were the words of the other man who was dead—the dull talk of dull people, of business, of inanities.

She shrugged herself from his embrace; she stood up quickly. Her hair was disarranged; she felt absurd and silly. She was acutely conscious of her age. She was forty-five years old and acting like a fool. She was deeply disgusted with herself, disgusted with her folly, with her absurdity. Her amorous sentimentalities seemed profoundly and essentially indecent. . . .

"You'd better go now," she said.

He stood for a moment irresolute and foolish, like a schoolboy after a reprimand. He tried to talk to her; she would not answer.

"When will I see you again?" he asked.

She did not reply. After another second he turned and left the room.

She remained standing a moment and then, sighing, sat down near the window. She looked out on the ugliness of a square of backyards. The sun reddened on the bleached board fences; it threw a gold glamour over the refuse of the houses, gilding ash-cans as if they were flowers. She stared without seeing, and tears came into her eyes.

They dropped down her cheeks, they fell upon her unheeding hands. She began to sob; she sobbed from the pain of her acute disappointment; she cried for the unattained visions of her lost romance; she wept from disillusion, from an indefinable sorrow, from an oppressing weariness. In the silent room her tears seemed to have a significance and an utterance; they were her ultimate comment upon life.

The room was dark when she stood up and dabbed a handkerchief to her eyes. With one hand she searched in her dress for a powder-puff.

CALPURNIA'S HUSBAND

By Helen Leeds

AS the door closed behind her handsome husband, a tear trickled down Patricia's cheek. For the third time this week he was going to his office after dinner. She knew what that meant. Many were the men who were compelled to start for work of an evening, but few, if any, ever reached their destination.

She wondered who the girl could be who had come between her and Jack. Dear old Jack, who had been such a tender and true husband all the eight years of their married life. It seemed incredible that now—and yet it seemed impossible to overlook the evidence—

Suddenly she was galvanized into action. She snatched up coat and hat and swiftly darted into the street. It

was bitter cold. A sob rose in Patricia's throat as the utter loneliness of the winter night came over her.

As she climbed the stairs of her husband's office building—for she did not want any elevator boy or watchman to have the opportunity to report to Jack the next day that she had come looking for him—her heart sank lower and lower. She knew he would not be here, and she wished—almost—that she had not come. Better to believe his time-worn stories than to *know* that he lied. But fate had led her this far; she would go on.

She swung back the heavy oak doors to his office.

Her husband was at his desk, working busily.



ENDING

By Maxwell Bodenheim

WITHIN your heart are untouched ruins:
Splintered palaces of regret.
Crumbled austerity silvers the crevices
Of timidly ardent doorways broken apart,
While here and there a slender pillar
Raises its frail blasphemy.
Over all, the dusty permanence of colors
Spreads like the discarded robe of some vanished song.



THE MAN HUNT*

A ONE-ACT FARCE

By Harlan Thompson

IT is fairly light in the room from the moonlight that streams in through the two windows at the back and the French doors between them. Outside the doors is a porch railing on the second floor, to judge from the tops of the trees beyond. It is a very pleasing bedroom, evidently in the home of some one with that rare combination, taste and money. The furnishings, light in tone, include a wicker table near the center, a dressing table against the left wall, two or three wicker chairs, on one of which some indistinguishable garments are hanging, and a team of twin beds. The latter are in tandem, one resting its head against the right wall, the other in a similar position to the left.

At the foot of the bed to the left is a chest covered with a Navajo blanket. There are doors in both right and left walls. It is well to make ample traffic provisions in bedroom farce.

A slight breeze stirs the curtains at the windows. A young man, handsome chap, is asleep in the bed to the right. After a bit something moves out on the balcony. As the curtains blow back for a moment a figure in white is seen making its way along the porch railing. It comes outside the French doors, another convenience of *negligée* drama, and takes hold of them. The doors, thus encouraged, swing inward. They are followed closely by the girl. Surely there is none who had any idea that the figure and its outer layer could be aught else than a girl and Georgette respectively.

She moves slowly, her hands ever searching in front of her, until she reaches the table. It can now be seen that her eyes are closed. A fit of shivering moves her shoulders and she starts in the direction of the occupied bed. She stops momentarily at the foot of it, then begins a circuit of the room that brings her to the other bed. Her hands explore it before she slips in between the covers. There is silence until a clock somewhere in the house strikes three. The original inhabitant stirs, but continues to sleep. So does the girl. The curtain is inconsiderate enough to descend.

* * * * *

The asterisks are not to be taken literally. There really is nothing else to use.

Besides, the curtain is rising again with a two-hour old sun shining in the windows with the personal equation utterly undisturbed. The curtain could have remained down a while longer were it not for the young man, who turns over, flops back again, inhales deeply, exhales proportionately and blinks open his eyes. He stares before him a little while, then fishes his watch from under the pillow and looks at

it lazily without raising his head. Rising on an elbow he yawns prodigiously as he glances about. The yawn crumples when his eyes fall on the other bed. He blinks them furiously and looks again with the same results. The girl is still there.

He turns away, then looks again very quickly. Suddenly he thrusts his little finger in his mouth and bites. He looks. Still there. He bites harder. Still there. He drops back on the pillow to think it over, but sits up again in a moment.

His movements have brought results from the other bed. After a few preliminary twitchings the covers fall back and there emerges a slender white hand and the startled face of the girl. One must be quick to reassure oneself that she is a pretty girl, for there comes a piercing little squeal and the face has disappeared again.

The young man has been watching in a state approaching catalepsis. He remains sitting upright, his fingers clutching his cheeks.

THE GIRL

(Her voice lost in the covers.) . . .
(A silence. She repeats whatever it is she is saying more loudly. The young man remains speechless. She lifts the covers enough to be understood.) . . . Mr. Gregory, what is the meaning of this?

GREGORY

That's what I wish I knew.

THE GIRL

I am going to scream for help.

GREGORY

Scream for me, too, won't you? God knows I need it. . . . (To himself.) . . . Do you suppose I'm still asleep? . . . (He bites his finger again to see.)

THE GIRL

(Still under the covers.) I thought after what you said last night you were never going to trouble me any more. You said you didn't ever want to speak to me again and now you have forced your way into my room in a manner that proves you are not a gentleman, but a monster!

GREGORY

I? In your room?

THE GIRL

Oh, it is terrible. . . . What have you done with Lillian, you brute?

GREGORY

Lillian? . . . (He looks about wildly.) . . . Is there another one around?

THE GIRL

What have you done with my sister?

GREGORY

Lillian may be somewhere around—I'm not sure about anything right now—but you'll have to point her out if she is.

THE GIRL

(Peeking out and pointing.) She was right there in that bed when I went to sleep. . . . (GREGORY looks under his covers.) . . . What have you done with her?

GREGORY

In here? . . . In here, you say? . . . Where? . . . I think you're mistaken. I'm sure I would have noticed her if she had been, Bess.

BESS

(Half hysterically.) You're making fun of me now! I know something dreadful has happened to her. What have you done?

GREGORY

Listen here, Bess . . . if I'm not asleep . . . I want you to tell me whose room you think this is.

BESS

Whose room . . . (Her head comes

up.) . . . Whose could it be but— . . .
(*She looks around in bewilderment and then lets out a piercing scream.*)

GREGORY

(*In agonized protest.*) S-sh-sh! Not so loud! . . . Not so loud, please!

BESS

(*Still loudly.*) Where am I? What has happened? . . . I know what you've done. . . . (*Pointing at him.*) . . . You've kidnapped me! . . . You said once you would be a cave man and now you are one! . . . (*She bursts into tears and dives back into the pillow.*)

(*GREGORY is left sitting up as before, not at all the cave-man in appearance or expression. He starts once or twice to say something, but turns back in dismay from her heaving shoulders. Suddenly she sits up and faces him defiantly.*)

BESS

No matter what place this is to which you have brought me—no matter what tortures you may subject me to—I will never be yours!

GREGORY

But, Bess, I'm not—

BESS

I told you last night when I broke off our engagement that my decision was final. You can't force me to change my mind. Out of my sight, you brute—go away!

GREGORY

(*Obeying her sweeping gesture by catapulting out of bed in his pajamas and coming over toward her.*) Just let me tell you, Miss Ripley, that I haven't chloroformed you or carried you off anywhere. You are still—

[*He is interrupted by another scream from BESS, who has just noticed his attire.*]

BESS

O-o-o-h! . . . Put on more clothes!
[*GREGORY searches about nervously until he comes upon his evening clothes across one of the chairs. He flings*

on the coat, holding it together in front as he comes back to resume the discussion.]

GREGORY

Now look here, as I just told you, you haven't been kidnapped or anything of the sort. You are still at Margaret Field's house party, though I haven't the slightest idea how you got in my room . . . like that. I want to say that I have no intention of trying to change your decision of last night.

BESS

No, I suppose you are glad of the chance to play around with Vivian Ray more openly. You know you are free now to make love to her all you please, or let her make love to you, which is the same thing. But if you thought you could do it and remain engaged to me, you have discovered your mistake.

GREGORY

I fail to see how any further discussion of Miss Ray will be of any benefit. That was all settled last night. The thing we are concerned with now is to get you back where you belong before anyone discovers you're not there. . . . Come on, you are going to start back down the hall right away.

BESS

But I can't go like this.

GREGORY

You came like that, didn't you? You must have. . . . (*He scurries around the room.*) . . . There's nothing else here of yours. . . . Wait! . . . (*He dives into the bathroom on the left and brings out his bathrobe.*) . . . Here, get into this.

BESS

But you must turn around and not look.

GREGORY

All right, but for goodness' sake, hurry.

[*BESS puts the bathrobe about her and gets out of bed, but halts in the center of the room.*]

BESS

No, I can't do it. You will have to find some other way.

GREGORY

But you've got to do it.

BESS

Suppose I would meet somebody—a man—out in the hall.

GREGORY

Tell him you're taking a walk.

BESS

Any of the fellows would know this was your bathrobe.

GREGORY

Tell them I left it in your room.

BESS

(*Horrified.*) What? That would be worse than ever.

GREGORY

Well, tell them something else, but you've got to go just the same.

BESS

But suppose someone sees me?

GREGORY

We will have to run the risk. . . . Besides, that's *your* lookout. Come on, now, and I'll let you out. . . . (*They tiptoe toward the door to the right and GREGORY is about to grasp the knob, when there is a loud rapping. The two fall back and begin to search wildly for a hiding place. GREGORY opens the chest at the foot of her bed and motions for her to crawl in. She tries, but it is too small. At last he flings the blanket over the foot of her bed, forming above the chest a little tent into which he shoves her. That arranged, he vaults into the bed she has occupied just as there is a louder knock at the door. He utters a suppressed exclamation and with great disgust throws a hairpin out upon the floor.*)

GREGORY

(*With feigned sleepiness.*) Come in.

[*In hurries a callow chap in flannels He is greatly excited.*]

GREGORY

(*Yawning laboriously.*) Hello, Simms.

SIMMS

Good morning, Gregory. Listen, do you know, a dreadful thing has happened?

GREGORY

What?

SIMMS

Bess Ripley is lost.

GREGORY

No such luck. . . . (*BESS sticks out her tongue at the remark.*)

SIMMS

(*Going on.*) She has wandered away. . . . Can't be found anywhere.

GREGORY

Who wants to find her?

SIMMS

Why, everybody, of course, you silly. Don't you understand? When her sister, Lillian, woke up this morning Bess wasn't there. She had wandered away in the night—and in not very much else, from what her sister said. . . . (*BESS frowningly draws the blanket closer about her.*) . . . They say she often walked in her sleep when she was a child and the habit has come back.

GREGORY

Oh! Is that it?

SIMMS

Is it what?

GREGORY

Tell me the rest of it. Go on.

SIMMS

She is probably out in the woods somewhere now, lost or dead. We have organized a searching party and you must get up right away and come along. I know it's going to be too thrilling for anything.

GREGORY

Yes, for Miss Ripley, at least.

SIMMS

Won't it be scandalous? You must hurry up or we will find her before you get there.

GREGORY

Not much danger of that. . . . (He looks furtively to see if BESS is visible.)

SIMMS

Why not?

GREGORY

Well, you see, I . . . a . . . I always have been lucky finding things. . . . It was that way with four-leafed clovers when I was a boy.

SIMMS

There's something wrong with you, Gregory. Tell me, who was it you were talking to in here just as I knocked.

GREGORY

How funny. . . . Was I talking to someone? . . . Who do you suppose it was?

SIMMS

How should I know?

GREGORY

Well, how do you expect me to know? I was—now I have it—I must have been talking in my sleep. Lots of times, would you believe it, I talk so loud I wake myself up. . . . He climbs out on the front side of the bed.)

SIMMS

What in the devil are you doing with that thing on?

GREGORY

What thing?

SIMMS

That coat.

GREGORY

Oh, the coat? . . . Well, well, how absent-minded of me! Must have forgot to take it off last night.

SIMMS

How did you get the rest of your clothes off?

GREGORY

I think I can explain that. . . . (He has come down in front of BESS.) . . . You see, it was this way— [BESS takes the most direct means of interrupting his blundering by pinching his toe.]

GREGORY

Ouch!

SIMMS

What's the matter?

GREGORY

Stepped on a tack or something. . . . (Kicking at BESS and hitting the chest with his toe.) . . . OUCH. . . . There it is again.

SIMMS

(Starting around the bed.) Did you find it?

GREGORY

(Hopping to meet him.) . . . Never mind. It's all right. I'm going to get dressed and come with you.

SIMMS

Be sure you get on the right clothes . . . (He goes out. GREGORY flops across the bed and peers around the corner of it to confront BESS.)

GREGORY

Sleep walker!

BESS

Sleep talker!

GREGORY

If you can walk around so well when you're asleep, you ought to be able to do much better when you're not. . . . (Reaching down and pulling her up.) . . . You had better be getting started.

BESS

Do I really have to go out in the hall?

GREGORY

Out in the hall? You don't expect

to get *back* to your room that way now?

BESS

Oh, I'm so glad of that.

GREGORY

The whole house knows about you. They think you have wandered out in the woods someplace. The only thing to do is to get out in the woods and let them find you.

BESS

Go out in the woods?

GREGORY

Certainly. If you are lost out there, you can't be found anywhere around the house, can you? How would that look? Don't you see that you will have to get out there just as fast as you can and that I'll have to go, too?

BESS

What for?

GREGORY

Why, to search for you, of course. You're lost—you're missing. Hurry up and get started.

BESS

But what do I have to do?

GREGORY

It will be easy enough. Just take off the bathrobe, go out on the porch, climb over the railing, slide down one of the pillars, jump over the flower beds—and *run*. Keep going until you get out in the woods a few miles and then chase yourself around and around until we come and find you.

BESS

(*Almost in tears.*) I don't know how to chase myself. I never did it before.

GREGORY

That doesn't make any difference. You've got to learn. Look here. This is the way. . . . (*He gallops about the room.*) . . . See? That's all you have to do.

BESS

But I don't think I'd like to chase myself.

GREGORY

That doesn't make any difference. You've got to. It's better than being found here, isn't it?

BESS

What will I tell them when they find me?

GREGORY

Tell them anything. Tell them you're out practicing "The Spring Song." Now go chase yourself. . . . (*She starts out*) . . . Here, you can't take the bathrobe along.

BESS

Oh, I forgot. . . Mr. Gregory.

GREGORY

What is it?

BESS

Bring it along when you come out to find me, won't you, please? . . . You mustn't look.

[*GREGORY nods and she starts toward the porch. A knock comes at the door. BESS flies back to the bathrobe.*]

BESS

Who's . . . there?

GREGORY

S-sh-sh!

BESS

But I only said, "Who's there?"

GREGORY

(*More frantically.*) S-SH-SH! . . . (*He points to the bathroom. In a whisper.*) . . . In there. . . . (*He takes the blanket from the bed, wraps it carefully about him as a shirt and goes to the door.*) . . . Oh, it's only you again. . . . (*He lets the blanket fall and starts to close the door, but SIMMS pushes in.*)

SIMMS

(*Looking about the room.*) Just came in to see if you were ready yet? Why, you haven't even started.

GREGORY

It won't take me a minute. . . . (He starts to dress, but suddenly stops and looks toward the bathroom door.)

SIMMS

By the way, I didn't know there was anyone else occupying this room with you.

GREGORY

What's that? . . . Why, there isn't anyone.

SIMMS

(Pointing to the beds.) Since when have you been twins.

GREGORY

It . . . it does look singular, but you don't understand about a little peculiarity of mine. You see . . . it's this way. Now, in the first place . . . I . . . but perhaps I had better begin at the beginning. You see, I have a little peculiarity . . .

SIMMS

Yes, you mentioned that before.

GREGORY

So I did. . . . Well, to begin . . . at the beginning. When I was at college there were so many of us fellows in my fraternity one year that there weren't enough beds to go round. . . . (Forcing a laugh.) . . . What do you think of that, Simms? . . . not enough beds to go round. . . . Well, you see, I was a freshman and so I was one of those that didn't have a regular bed. They were kind to us, though, the other fellows were. They let us sleep in their beds until they came in at night, but along about three or four o'clock, sometimes as early as 2:30, we'd have to get up and go sleep in the bathtub or some place like that. . . . Well, it grew to be such a habit with me that I got so I simply couldn't sleep in the same bed all night. I'm that way now, if I only have one bed in the room I have to get up and spend the rest of the night in a chair; but when I have two beds, like this—I get all caught up on sleep. Isn't that fine?

SIMMS

Very fine. A very fine story! I think I shall go before you begin explaining something else. . . . (He goes, slamming the door. GREGORY strides across and opens the bathroom door. He looks in, then looks more closely to be sure of what he sees.)

GREGORY

What on earth are you doing? This is no time to be fixing your hair. . . . (BESS comes demurely out of the bathroom, tucking up a last strand or two and pausing to look in the mirror of the dressing table.) . . . Don't you realize we're in for it now? That fool Simms suspects something is wrong and he won't quit until he finds out what it is. Well, what are you thinking about?

BESS

I was just thinking what an awful liar you are.

GREGORY

My conscience isn't bothering me—it's how in the world you are going to get out of here. . . . It's all your fault. . . . When you walk in your sleep why don't you look where you're going? What are you going to do? And what am I going to do?

BESS

I thought it all out—in there. I don't intend to go out in any woods and chase myself. The first thing for you to do is to get into some civilized clothes. Then you can go and get mine. . . . (GREGORY picks up his clothes and makes for the bathroom.) . . . Hurry up. . . . (He goes in and closes the door.)

[BESS comes over and sits in the chair by the table, drawing her feet up and huddling into the bathrobe. There is a knock at the door. She glances up in alarm as it is opened and a servant enters, bearing a tray of breakfast things. He is just about to put it on the table, when he sees her. He gives an involuntary start, but recovers in time to save the breakfast.]

JAMES

(*It might as well be JAMES.*) Anything else, Miss?

BESS

(*Almost calmly.*) No, James. . . . (*He starts to go.*) . . . I suppose . . . I suppose you are rather surprised at seeing me here.

JAMES

Begging your pardon, miss, but since you ask, I must state that I am never surprised at things that happen at house-parties.

BESS

You are not surprised at seeing me here?

JAMES

No, miss.

BESS

Such occurrences are not unusual in Mr. Gregory's room, then?

JAMES

I couldn't say as to that, miss. This is the first time he has been a guest here. I was speaking of house-parties in general.

BESS

Then you think that I . . . that I—

JAMES

Begging your pardon, miss, but I have schooled myself never to think during house-parties. . . . (*BESS has picked up a piece of toast and is nibbling at it, to JAMES'S dismay.*) . . . Shall I get something more for Mr. Gregory?

BESS

Oh, no, that will be all right. He hasn't any appetite this morning. . . . (*He starts to go.*) . . . James, you won't mention anything about by being here?

JAMES

I never mention anything that goes on at house-parties.

BESS

Never?

JAMES

Never. Having eyes and ears is too expensive.

BESS

Expensive?

JAMES

Yes, miss. By not having any at the last house-party I was enabled to purchase a new motor. . . . (*He goes out.*)

GREGORY

(*Having come out of the bathroom in fairly presentable condition.*) More visitors, eh? It's becoming a procession.

BESS

James was a darling about it all, but he must have perfectly dreadful ideas about house-parties.

GREGORY

(*Noticing that she is eating.*) You can eat at a time like this?

BESS

Why not? I can't do anything else until you get me some clothes. Don't be so fussy. James can get you some more breakfast if you like.

GREGORY

But what are we going to do?

BESS

I'm going to stay right here. You are going out on the porch and across to my room. It's the first one on that side. . . . (*Motioning to the left.*) . . . You can slip in. There won't be anyone there now. Lillian is probably out helping them drag the lake for my body. . . . When you get inside, take whatever clothes you see and hurry back. . . . Go on now and be sure to get . . . well, be sure to get a variety.

GREGORY

But suppose they see me?

BESS

Keep down low and they can't see you from the lawn. Besides, that's *your* lookout.

GREGORY

Oh, it is.

[*He goes out, stoops down and makes off toward the left. BESS is helping herself to some more of the breakfast when a knock comes at the door. She glances up as it is repeated and very deliberately makes a face at the door. In a short time another girl appears on the balcony from the right, comes across and cautiously peers in. BESS, hidden by the back of the chair, hears a sound and peeks around to see what it is. When she recognizes the visitor she slides back into the chair and begins to eat again. The other girl ventures in and comes far enough forward to discover BESS.*]

BESS

(*Looking up.*) Hello, Vivian. Have some breakfast?

VIVIAN

No, thank you. What are you doing here?

BESS

(*Moving as if to go.*) If you are expecting to meet Mr. Gregory, I'll be going.

VIVIAN

Do you mean to suggest that I would meet Mr. Gregory here?

BESS

(*Sweetly.*) Well, I didn't know. By the way you walked in, I thought you must be familiar with the place.

VIVIAN

Are you trying to insult me? Don't you know that everyone has been searching for you since daylight?

BESS

Have they? How does it happen that you are not with them?

VIVIAN

I was out for a while, but as I came in just now I met Clarence Simms. From things he said I decided Bob must know more about the case than he pre-

tended to. I came up to ask him about it.

BESS

It was awfully sweet of you to take such an interest. Too bad that Bob isn't here to thank you, too.

VIVIAN

Where is he?

BESS

Don't you know? I was beginning to think that you kept informed as to everyone's whereabouts.

VIVIAN

I seem to have had a better idea than the others as to where you might be found.

BESS

So you did, dear.

VIVIAN

It wasn't a particularly nice opinion to have about anyone, but after what Mr. Simms said—

[*GREGORY appears from the porch with an armful of feminine apparel. He starts into the room, but halts when he sees VIVIAN.*]

BESS

It must have grieved you to think such things. What was it Mr. Simms said?

VIVIAN

It wasn't so much what he said as the way he said it that aroused my suspicions.

BESS

(*Sitting up in her chair.*) So you have suspicions, then? . . . (*She catches sight of GREGORY, standing helplessly in the doorway, then turns back to VIVIAN.*) . . . Have you made a careful investigation? Have you determined, for example, whether the door there . . . (*Pointing*) . . . is locked? . . . (*As VIVIAN looks at the door BESS motions for GREGORY to slip into the bathroom. He sneaks across the room, keeping well down behind the furniture. In his course he drops one of the more intimate burdens and has to crawl back to retrieve it. Finally he gets inside without attracting VIVIAN'S*

attention. *He leaves the door slightly ajar.*)

VIVIAN

I don't see that the door has anything to do with it. The case seems plain enough. A girl disappears overnight, her sister tells a story that she has walked away in her sleep, she is found the next morning in a young man's room. It doesn't seem quite proper to me.

BESS

I fear your upbringing has been hopelessly old-fashioned, my dear.

VIVIAN

Old-fashioned! Then you . . . you don't attempt to deny anything? . . . This is dreadful. . . . You don't deny it, then?

BESS

I don't deny anything that has occurred.

VIVIAN

Because you *can't* deny it. What about your presence here?

BESS

What about *yours*?

VIVIAN

That is an entirely different matter. I came here, if you want to know the truth, to find you—and I did. I am willing to give you a chance to explain, if you can. If not, I consider it my duty to tell Mrs. Field all about it. She should know the sort of persons she has brought into her house as guests.

BESS

Meaning me. It must be hard, Vivian, to have a conscience like yours. I wonder it lets you sleep of nights.

VIVIAN

It doesn't let me sleep except in my own room.

BESS

That was very good. And what are you going to report as to Mr. Gregory's part in this dreadful affair?

VIVIAN

I shall have to talk with him first.

It may be that he is not to blame. He seems to have left after your uninvited call.

BESS

Oh, I daresay I led him on.

VIVIAN

Your shamelessness is simply unspeakable. I have tried to be charitable with you, but you seem to have no conception of your position. You don't seem to realize that if I should call in the other guests you would be disgraced for life. We might as well be frank with each other.

BESS

I can't complain as to that, my dear. You have been as frank as anyone could desire.

VIVIAN

There isn't any use wasting words. You know and I know that both of us have been trying to land Bob Gregory for the last four months. . . . You almost had him once, but things are looking better for me now. You know what it will mean for you if I call in Mrs. Field and the rest. Don't you think it would be better to bid Mr. Gregory good-bye . . . permanently?

BESS

Do you intend that as a threat?

VIVIAN

You can take it as you choose. I do not mind being plain with you. I intend to marry Bob Gregory—and I intend to make use of any advantages that may come to me. . . . Now what is your answer?

BESS

I'm afraid I can't be blackmailed.

VIVIAN

You won't, then? You still think you can get Bob Gregory. I'll show you. . . . (*She goes back toward the porch.*) . . . Clarence! . . . Clarence, come here. . . . (*SIMMS appears from the porch.*) . . . Clarence, Miss Ripley and I have some things to talk over with Mrs. Field. Would you mind calling her?

SIMMS

Call her Yes, I'll call her. . . .
But wouldn't it be better to have James
do it?

VIVIAN

Oh, very well. Ring for him. . . .
(SIMMS rings.)

BESS

Oh, good morning, Mr. Simms.

SIMMS

Good . . . morning.

BESS

Having lots of sport with your tale-
bearing?

SIMMS

I beg your pardon.

BESS

I was just wondering whether our
recent conversation had anything to do
with your eagerness to run to Miss Ray
with the scandal you had discovered.

SIMMS

To what do you refer?

BESS

I'm speaking about your proposal the
other night at the dance. I was just
wondering if there were any connection
between my refusal of your heart and
hand and your present interest in my
affairs.

VIVIAN

Never mind her, Clarence. . . .
(There is a knock at the door.) . . .
Come in. . . . (JAMES enters.) . . .
James, go and ask Mrs. Field to come
here, please. Tell her that Miss Ripley
has been found—in Mr. Gregory's
room.

JAMES

Yes, miss.

BESS

James, you may take away these
things. . . . And you might come back
with Mrs. Field. Maybe you could get
some new ideas about house-parties.

JAMES

If you don't mind, miss, I had rather
not have any new ideas. The ones I
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have now are showing a very handsome
profit. . . . (He goes out. The silence
rapidly grows painful.)

BESS

Would you kindly open the services
with a short prayer for my lost soul,
Mr. Simms? . . . Well, then, while
we are waiting for the jury to arrive,
I would suggest that the prosecuting at-
torney . . . (Indicating VIVIAN) . . .
make us a short speech. . . . Or per-
haps you would like to have the accused
say a few words in her own behalf.
. . . . Or would it be better to hear
from the witness for the defense?

VIVIAN

Who is that?

BESS

Mr. Robert Gregory.

VIVIAN

Where is he?

GREGORY

(Who has come out of the bathroom
and stands by the door.) I am here.

VIVIAN

You?

GREGORY

Yes.

VIVIAN

(Anxiously.) How long have you
been here?

GREGORY

Some little time.

VIVIAN

(Coming toward him.) Oh, Bob,
please—help me straighten out this un-
fortunate affair.

GREGORY

Hardly unfortunate—for me. I am
glad to know how to avoid capture.

VIVIAN

(Changing to unconcealed anger.) A
very virtuous resolve, surely. I sup-
pose you consider yourself entirely
blameless.

GREGORY

I do.

VIVIAN

How can you explain Miss Ripley's presence here?

GREGORY

Suppose I told you that Miss Ripley was not in my room? . . . Suppose I told you that she was not Miss Ripley—but Mrs. Gregory?

VIVIAN AND SIMMS

Mrs. Gregory? . . . Married! . . .

SIMMS

When?

VIVIAN

Where?

GREGORY

Why, the other day at . . . a . . .

BESS

You forget, Bob, it was last night. I can't quite see that it is any affair of theirs, dear, but if they must know, I suppose we will have to tell them that we slipped away to . . . Georgeville—and that if it were not for certain uninvited guests we would now be spending a quiet and peaceful honeymoon.

VIVIAN

(To GREGORY.) Is what she says true?

GREGORY

As true as if I had said it myself. . . . (To BESS.) . . . Are you tired of sitting there, wife darling?

BESS

Yes, I am, Bob. . . . (To the others.) . . . So sorry you must be going. Do come again, sometime, won't you?

[VIVIAN stalks out, followed by SIMMS, who turns at the door.]

SIMMS

Where was the place you said you were married?

GREGORY

Georgeville, Clarence. . . . Shall I write it down?

SIMMS

No, thank you. . . . (He goes out. BESS and GREGORY look at each other.)

GREGORY

(Coming over to her.) Forgive me, Bess, but it was the only way out that I could see.

BESS

Forgive you? I thought you lied beautifully.

GREGORY

It wouldn't have to be a lie, if you cared for me any more. We could go right over to Georgeville and give some preacher so much money he'd believe he really did marry us a day ahead of time. She caused the misunderstanding that killed your love.

BESS

You mean Vivian?

GREGORY

What a fool I was! I never heard of such a man-hunter. Oh, these women that plot to catch husbands. . . . Deliver me!

BESS

A girl gets pretty desperate when she feels she is losing the man she loves.

GREGORY

Don't try to excuse her, Bess.

BESS

I'm not—

GREGORY

Don't even talk about her. I'm too miserable at the thought that she is the reason for your not loving me any more.

BESS

(Raising her head.) Who said I didn't love you?

GREGORY

Your actions show that.

BESS

If I didn't love you, do you think I would have turned man-hunter, too, and pretended to walk in my sleep?

GREGORY

You didn't . . . Bess! . . . (He rushes over and seizes her in his arms.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

A KISS FOR THE LOU

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

CARÈNE, the very young wife of Pompey Gilfoil, was yawning over the comedy of manners. Her yawn begged her husband not to remain for the inevitably tame finale of the play. Pompey's laugh, always good-humored, conceded the tedium of the melliferous dialogue. They left the playhouse while the plot of the comedy was being brewed by tea-table repartee.

In the limousine, Carène looked through the glass at the weather. It was raining. Rivulets zigzagged down the beveled surface of the windows. The rain fell with a force that obtruded bold, fresh whiffs into the car.

"*Il pleut à seaux!*" sighed Carène. "Some giant in the sky is weeping. The poor fellow is crying his eyes out."

She turned to her husband, showing him a raindrop on her white-gloved hand. "See, Pomp,—one of his tears fell on my glove."

Pompey Gilfoil wiped off the drop of rain with his handkerchief.

"It has spotted your glove," he smiled.

She regarded the faint water-stain on the kid. Impulsively, she turned her hand palm upward, to count the tiny gold buttons running the length of her slim arm.

"Twenty of them!" she shrugged. "Unfasten them, Pomp." She gave him her gloved wrist.

Pompey removed his own gloves to comply. His well-groomed fingers worked steadily upward on her arm, and he puckered his face over the elusive buttons in a way that emphasized the rather ponderous contour of his features.

"This is no easy job," he said genially.

Carène studied the puckered, handsome face from under her eyelashes. How admirably compliant Pomp was; how impressive his kindly features and generous proportions! She bent her arm, to clasp his hand in the curve of her slight elbow.

"I have you fast," she said softly. "And, while I have you, I shall say something impolite, *Cher ami*, must we stop on the way home at your sister's?—must we go to Isabel's reception tonight? I know you adore her. So do I, truly. But tonight, Pomp—in such pails of rain—! Let's not be puritanious!"

Her nostrils were widened by a whiff of the downpour that filtered into the glass-encased car. She turned to the water-dashed window with a gesture of youth.

"Ah, if we could find some adventure beautiful tonight!" she exclaimed. "Some wickedness fresh as the weather! Small wonder the sky weeps for us, who button our hands into gloves, and spend our nights play-going and chit-chatting, or stupidly sleeping, or—*ciel!*—stupidly sinning!" The motion of the car swayed her slender body forward and she buried her nostrils in a red rose of the flower-cup.

Somewhat ruefully, Pompey Gilfoil—banker and conservative—surveyed the sheened, girlish head bent to the flower.

"Isabel's parties aren't very hilarious," he admitted; "but I promised her we'd drop in a few minutes after the play. We won't have to stay long, Carène."

A shade of meditation came into his rotund face.

"By crickets, you're right about the sameness of things!" he exclaimed. "It's the truth that nobody's able to find any new sensations. However, let's mind our manners; and be nice to Isabel." He smiled at his very young wife.

She pulled the rose to pieces, shredding the petals.

Pompey waited for her eyes to come to his, and, when they remained down, he spoke uncomfortably.

"Well, where do you wish to go this evening? Rake your mind for a beautiful adventure. I'm game, dear."

For a minute she was silent, making red pellets of the rose-leaves. Then she said, in her charming, restive voice:

"Many years ago, ~~some~~ ago, Pomp, a great-great-aunt of mine—the little French *duchesse*, you know—grew so tired of Paris that she put her hand into the hand of a *marquis* and went off with him to Naples, where they forgot all about society and made believe they were a fisher lass and lout. They threw away their shoes and dressed very simply. On a quay of the Mediterranean, under the Neapolitan sky, they hauled their nets, and bore their shimmering, silver quarry along the finest promenades in Naples, not caring a jot that some of the fine people in the villas knew their story and their shame. *Hélas!* she was married and so was he, but neither was married to the other. It was their idea that they could find happiness hauling fish and singing Neapolitan love-songs together. If you were able, Pomp, to really give me adventure tonight, you'd carry me down to some water-edge and we'd frolic there, barefoot in the rain."

Her face sparkled. She might have been the indiscreet little *duchesse*, who, tiring of the conventions, had hauled fish with a festive and pleasure-tired *marquis*.

"My dear," said Pompey to his young French wife, "there are obstacles in the way of such adventuring; we are married to each other, and I am a bit stout to be a fisher-lout—a trifle oldish."

She was quick to touch his hand.

"*Vraiment,*" she laughed. "I am weaving fantasies tonight. It is the storm. It seems to bring the spirit of *la petite tante* into my spirit. Sometimes," lightly, "I believe the dead live again in those who resemble them. It is agreeable to blame our *mécontentes* on those who, being long gone, cannot refute the charge!"

There was abstraction on her mobile features, an expression that quickly became a volatile frown.

Paulton, the chauffeur, swerved the limousine smoothly under the carriage-porch of Isabel Gilfoil McKim's house, where a strip of carpet and a footman denoted the reception in progress.

"I will not go to this tiresome party!" declared Carène, out of temper with the formalities of the evening. "Tell Isabel that I have a headache, Pomp,—and give her my love." Carène pressed her ringed hand to her temple.

Pompey folded her gloves and laid them on her lap.

"So be it, my dear," he voiced pleasantly.

She turned a shoulder on him.

"I shall go home to sulk because your *embonpoint* prevents you from playing a lass-and-lout game with me!" she flung at him.

"Sorry; the years bring their burden," replied Pompey philosophically. "Run along home and sleep off the rainy humor, Carène." He stepped from the car. "I'll make it all right with Isabel. Good night, my dear."

"*Au revoir, mon cher mari.* Home, Paulton," Carène yawned.

II

THROUGH puddles and over mirrored thoroughfares, the limousine began the long spin up Riverside Drive. Carène's thoughts outran the modified speed of the car and reached Pompey Gilfoil's elegant and decorous apartment: on arriving there Paulton would carefully remove his sausage-bulk from the seat and open a large umbrella, to escort her up rain-swept steps; within, an eleva-

tor like an enlarged jewel-box would bear her to her floor; her ring would be answered by Stevens, the serving-man, who would voice a discreet comment on the weather; from the rear would come Witherspoon, her automatic, autocratic maid—she would be disrobed and a cup of bouillon would be served her, in a bed of down she would sleep away her rainy humor.

With downcast eyes, Carène listened to the beat of the rain against the car. She seemed to hear the lapping of the Mediterranean and the swishing of fishes' soft bodies as they were gathered up in nets, in fancy, she followed progress of an idyl in Naples, a love-prank long since fallen to nothingness!

"*Pauvre petite,*" reflected Carène; "*il faut obéir à la loi!*"

She nestled in the cushions of the car. Her hands resembled dew-sprinkled lilies against her rich wrap and above an ermine collarette her face blossomed exquisite as anything ever fashioned by nature and enhanced by art. Her mouth was flecked with arrogance and dimpled by rebellion.

The skidding of the limousine to the home-curb made her lift her eyes.

She found herself looking at a face beyond the rain-dashed window—a lout-face, fresh as the weather!—she sensed a pair of eyes young as her own, a forehead-lock of wet, dark hair, water-roughened cheeks, and Herculean shoulders in oilskin—

Then Paulton was opening the car-door.

"I hope I did not stop at the curb too shortly, Mrs. Gilfoil," he apologized.

He hoisted the large umbrella.

"It is raining very hard, Mrs. Gilfoil."

Holding the canopy as if for a priestess, the chauffeur escorted her up rain-swept, marble steps.

She glanced over her shoulder. Discerning, through heavy lines of rain, a figure at the curb, she had a second, blurred sight of the young lout-face—then the figure crossed the Drive and

vanished somewhere in the gusty spaces of the park.

"Shall I return to Mrs. McKim's for Mr. Gilfoil?" inquired the plump voice of Paulton.

"Yes," said Carène inattentively. Beyond the globular lights of the apartment-entrance, the town seemed deluged in the shimmering sweeps of rain. "You may give me the umbrella, Paulton."

Paulton demurred. "The umbrella is very wet, Mrs. Gilfoil."

"Yes," she said again, holding out her hand for the dripping *parapluie*.

Paulton released the umbrella in some reluctance. He touched his cap, and returned to the limousine. The car rolled away.

Drive and park were almost deserted in the flooding night. Carène stood at the entrance watching the storm. Through the vista of a murky archway loomed the wet cavern of the park. From the river below the parking came odours turbid and delirious. The torrents feil with an alluring sound on concrete stretches, gravel riding-path and foliage. Poised at the entrance, Carène thirsted for more than whiffs of the rain.

"*Moi, j'aime Forage!*" she thought, capriciously. She opened the umbrella that Paulton had closed. It was at once a shelter and a shield. Her feet and ankles flashed down the rain-swept steps. She paused, drawing delicious breaths. Already water poured from the points of the umbrella and her suede shoes were wet.

On the far side of the slippery Drive the rain in the park was clamorous, there the foliage appeared luxuriantly sodden and the infrequent lamps seemed foggy beacons. The capricious spirit of rain-worship carried Carène over the Drive to the park, where the torrents were noisier! the bushes heavier! the lamps more eerie! Her shoes were sopped. Hidden by the umbrella, she was no more than a blur, an obscure little figure of the tempest! She ventured to go on in the rain. She was deferring Stevens' weather-comment and

Witherspoon's bouillon. *Eh bien!* she would not return to her apartment until she was drenched, she would fling a handful of raindrops in Stevens' face and throw her wrecked shoes at Witherspoon—and she would dream divinely in her bed of down!

Eh bien, yes! A wild rain—a simple rain. One might almost seem a young fisher-lass out in the storm, or a fabled water-nymph with misty kisses on her lips. Her tread was fleet, with no more substance than her thoughts. The path wound downward, toward the river.

A gleam of light on oilskin shoulders visualized a figure ahead of her on the river-path. She stopped.

"*Le voilà!*" she exclaimed, biting her lip. "*Il faut retourner!*"

He was swallowed by a black patch of the path. Then light gleamed again on his shoulders and on the heels of his shoes. Another patch of darkness engulfed him. She sighed, brimming with odd confusion. His was the figure that in momentarily blocking her limousine had flashed a young lout-face across her listless vision!

Her mind frothed with curiosity. Was he a fisherman, going down to the river to loose his boat and roister off in the storm? Was he the droll type that the festive *marquis* had once enacted in a love-comedy of no manners in Naples?

Full of inquisitive fancies, she moved on—breath abated when the light glistened on his oilskin shoulders, breathing more freely when the darkness hid him from her. On a path above the river she stood still, to see what he would do when he reached the sand-dunes by the water. The only illumination down on the stretches of sand was the green disk of a switch-tower flanking some train-rails between the river and the park. She watched him cross the rails and go along the slimed platform of the tower. The door of the tower opened, and an older figure in oilskin came out with a lantern and plodded off in the rain. The lout entered the switch-tower. A minute later the signal-light *changed from green to red*. A whistle

sounded in the night, and a train went by.

"*Il est un signaliste!*" she exclaimed, laughing. "He is but a keeper of the lights!"

The door of the tower being open, she could see into the round room under the signal-loft. She saw the lout come down a ladder from the loft. He hung his oilskin coat on a peg. Taking a book from a shelf, he sat by a table and turned a lamp higher—kerosene light flared over a skiff set against the wall, a chest piled with fishing nets, iron heating-stove and rush-bottomed chairs. Though the lout opened his book he did not turn the leaves, but sat inert, as if staring at something that was not etched on the pages.

On the path above the switch-tower Carène was seized by a desire to go down to the water-edge and frolic there in the rain. She shrugged. *Hélas!* how could she go, in her dripping ermine and velvet? She leaned through the rain to look down at the river. She put her hand out, palm upward, and let the torrents beat upon it. With a sudden laugh, she propped the umbrella against a park-bench, and, crouching under it, achieved a *coup de théâtre* worthy of her little great-great-aunt: pulling the pins and filigree band from her hair, she twisted the finespun masses into ear-coils, *à la grisette*—removing her velvet wrap, she stripped her gown of adjustable peacock-trail and silver tunic, and stepped forth in short, ungarnished satin skirt and corsage with simple sleeves of silver net. Jewels and peacock-appendages in a velvet arm-bundle fashioned from her wrap, she closed Paulton's umbrella and laid it on the bench. The full force of the rain fell upon her. In a minute she was half drowned. A struggling minnow. A little fish of the night.

She followed a path down to the sand-dunes.

The rain commingled the red signal-light of the tower and the lamplight coming from the door of the round room where the lout was reading a book. Flat-bottomed boats anchored to

oozing buoys were rocking in the fragrant storm. Below the tower-platform a crude wall of stones dammed a plashing river-pool. Noisy water-drops were pelting everywhere.

Carène, *la grisette*, reached the platform. She ran along it and dived in the fresh-water pool with a splash!

III

THE lout heard the splash and looked up from his book. He came running from the switch-tower with a gait that suggested alarm. He lost no time in jumping into the pool and fishing out a form slighter than a tangie of seaweed! Clambering to the platform, he carried her to the bright, round room of the tower and set her—dripping like a fish—on a chair.

"It's lucky I heard you!" cried the lout, aghast. "I've seen your kind before, these rough nights."

"B-r-r-rh!—have you?" laughed Carène, shaking the water from her fine, curling hair.

"You're a youngling to take the river-jump," said the lout.

Swinging the iron cap of his stove, he built a fire.

"What made you do it?"

"The rain," she answered, squeezing water from her tarnished silver sleeves and scopy garments.

He surveyed her from his lusty height. "I know," he nodded.

He pushed a tin coffee-pot to the front of the stove and went to the chest for bread and cheese.

"I'll fix you something to eat," he said. "Your kind are apt to be hungry."

"Are we?" said Carène gaily. She tilted her chair to the table, wet, and deliciously ill-mannered.

He poured a mug of coffee. Sweetening it from a brown paper bag, he brought it to her.

"This will hearten you up," he told her.

She burned her fingers on the mug.

"It is too hot to hold," she said.

Sitting at the table, the lout fed her coffee from a tin spoon.

Also, she munched bread and cheese with her teeth of polished pearl.

"Your food is good," she said.

He nodded again.

"Don't eat too fast," he warned.

"Go slow, at first."

She decorated a crust of bread with a finger-fleck of cheese.

"Are you chiding me for my bad manners?" she asked merrily.

The question was lost on the lout. So he did not reply, but continued to stain her curving lips with dreggy coffee. The sound of the river and the rain filled his round room. The fire crackled in his iron stove.

He noticed the velvet bundle hanging limp on her arm.

"I guess you ran from something with all your ownings," he hazarded. He added, seriously: "No glass around you!"

Her teeth clicked slightly on the tin spoon. She said, under her breath, "*De quoi pense-t-il?*"

Aloud, she said boldly, making little fins of her hands and hunching her bedraggled, pretty shoulders, "That is true."

The lout gave her the last of the coffee. The mug being empty, he put it down. He pulled a chair to the opposite side of the stove and made himself a cheese sandwich. He took big bites of bread and cheese. His forehead-lock fell over his eyes, moisture hung on his young brows and ruddy cheeks, his damp shirt outlined his muscular shoulders and arms. He was all a lout should be, in a comedy of no manners!

Carène let her velvet bundle rest on the table. River and rain were boisterous beyond the open door. Gusts of water blew in, making the lamp flare. She looked at the things on the table, the tin spoon, the drinking-cup, the brown sugar-bag, and the book he had been reading. She saw that it was a French primer with which the lout had been improving his mind.

She seized the little book in surprise. "Thou lovest France and her lan-

guage?—*la langue française!*" she cried. Her face was bright. She said, impulsively, "*Ne parlons pas anglais!*"

Eating cheese, he stared at her. "I'm only in the second lesson," blankly.

She laughed—seeing by the primer that the lout had been conning such restricted conversation as "*les hommes sont mortels,*" and "*le ciel est rouge les matins.*"

She sighed, half closing the book, and saying, "*Hélas!*"

"Are you a French girl?" asked the lout.

"But yes, *monsieur,*" merry again.

He looked at her sleeves of silver net. "Do you dance for a living?"

She made a fish-basket of her velvet bundle. "One easily sees you are only in the first-reader that you do not know a little *poissonnière* when you meet one." She pushed the make-believe basket cross the table. "*Les poissons rouges,* to make your mouth water, *mon gourmand!*"

He burst out laughing. Shoving aside the velvet bundle, he leaned across the table to catch at her hand.

"Tell me your name!" he cried.

She used her hands to find his name on the flyleaf of the primer.

"Yours is Dory Jones," she said.

He pulled the primer from her, over the table.

"What's yours?" he asked.

Seeing a pencil-stub on the shelf near by, she jumped up, and wrote, "*Le Poisson Rouge*" on the wall above the fishing nets. She put the tip of the pencil to her lips.

"*C'est ça!*" she said. "When you study your French on rainy nights you may remember the little one you pulled from the river, eh?"

He came eagerly to decipher the name, but could not pronounce it.

"I'll call you plain *girl,*" he laughed, leaning against the wall with folded arms.

She returned the pencil to the shelf. His bookshelf was simply a piece of driftwood swung by hemp cordage. She found a battered copy of Sir John Suckling's poems cheek to cheek with

a thumbed booklet on marine animals.

"Does listening to the river make one thirst for knowledge, *monsieur l'étudiant?*" she said curiously. "Are you a *rêvasseur*—a dreamer, *mon camarade?*"

He was grateful that she did not laugh at his bookshelf.

"Maybe I am," he answered, shame-faced. "Don't you ever dream?"

She nodded. "*Mais oui*—yes." Her look drifted out to the rain.

Lounging against the wall, the lout's eyes were drawn to the lamp. His face was slowly submerged by a flare of dreamy blood. In his lazy attitude, shoulder against the wall, he said:

"Tonight, I had a dream-notion. Up on the Drive I saw a woman in a glass car. She looked at me. I stood in the rain and watched her go up some marble steps. Near the top she turned and looked at me again." His voice drowned the sound of the river and the rain. "I brought her look down here with me! It was as if I brought *her!*" His reverie lent him a lawless beauty. "That was my dream."

Carène was no longer looking at the storm.

"*Nom de Dieu!*" she said. "An insolent dream!"

"Yes," said the lout. "Wasn't it?"

Somewhere out on the river a fog-whistle blew. The regular wash of the waves came and went in the silence of the round room.

Carène approached the table and put her arm through the sling of her velvet bundle. She said, with bravado, "*Hom!* A fine fellow, you, with your glass-lady! *Ferme ça!*" Her nostrils quivered like little gills. She touched her tarnished sleeves, laughing. "Your lady was dressed very differently from me, eh?"

"Yes," said the lout, still looking at the lamp.

She touched a blonde ear-coil.

"Her hair was in no way like mine, eh, *monsieur?* And her face—was it like mine, *monsieur le mal-à-pris?*"

The lout stretched his arms and shoulders. He looked at the little seaweed he had pulled from the river, at

her touseled hair and white face, in which her eyes were oblongs of mica and her mouth was a splash of coral.

"No," he said. "The woman in the glass car was beautiful. And she wasn't your kind."

She lifted the tin drinking-cup from the table and made a mirror of it. "*Tiens! tiens!*" she reproved a glimpse of river-trickled features, "hast thou lost thy face?"

She set down the cup. She rubbed a pin-point of mud from her pretty chin.

"Great lady or gutter-princess, all we have is our beauty, *monsieur*," she said gaily. "Even the river is hungry for a tender crab!" She made pink claws of her fingers. "As for your *grande dame*, were the wave washed from her hair, the pearly powder beaten from her cheek and the daintiness blown from her mouth, she might be any *écrevisse* tossed up by the sea!"

She thrust out the tip of her tongue. "And this look that she gave you"—resting her velvet bundle on her hip—"what was it, that you brought it down here to be a living thing in your arms? Was it so bad that it tempted you? Or was it so pure that it pleased you? What was the look she gave you, *monsieur le lourdard?*"

Dory Jones, keeper of the signal-lights, dreamer, young lout, pondered her question. Color flared high in his face again.

"It was the look of a costly woman," he said.

"Ah!" she cried, paling. "That was all you read in it?"

"It showed me what men up there on the Drive own," he went on, slowly. "It made me want to biubber."

"Because you were too poor to aspire to her kind?" coolly.

"Yes. And because it made me want to be her kind."

"Her kind are not so happy as you fancy, perhaps."

"I'd be happy, owning her."

"Why?"

"There was all a man wants in her eyes."

"You mean—? *Hélas!* you are only in the primer! You have yet to learn '*les femmes sont mortelles*,' and '*le ciel est noir les nuits*.'"

As he did not understand such advanced conversation, he said, stoutly: "All I know is, I'd be a great man if she gave me that look twice!"

"So you think," she shrugged, retying the sling of her velvet bundle. "Ladies will look and louts will dream. *Moi*, I do not care. I am but a gold-fish."

She slung her bundle up over her shoulder. "*Merci*, for so bravely rescuing me, *camarade*. Maybe some night you will not be quick enough, and then from the river you will hear me singing, if you listen."

She went toward the door and looked out. "See, the rain is nearly over. I must be off. *Bonne nuit, mon brave*. May another year find you up yonder where the glass-ladies dwell."

She was ready to leave.

"Hold on!" he said. "Have you anywhere to go? If you haven't, I can sleep in the signal-loft and you can take a chair here by the stove."

"That is good of you, but every rat has a hole," she replied.

She stepped to the threshold. A gust of rainy wind blew against her face.

"Anyway, take my weather-coat." He pulled his oilskin coat from the peg, and brought it to her.

She sniffed whiffs of tar and brine, of rain and oilskin.

"It is fishy!"

"So it is," he laughed, and threw the coat back to the peg. His hand swung toward her.

"Any night you're hungry, come down here and I'll give you something to eat," he told her.

Her face was thrown back to meet the gusts of river-wind.

"How high the water is!" she exclaimed. "It leaps to catch the little crab it lost. What a monster!"

The flat-bottomed boats were still rocking. And, below the tower-plat-form, the river-pool overflowed the wall of stones.

In the uncertain, gusty light, the lout caught her silver sleeve.

"Kiss me good-bye, what's-your-name," he laughed.

Without ceremony, he jerked her up into his arms.

"*Tiens! tiens donc! et aïe donc!*" she scolded breathlessly. The wind was increasing and fresh gusts blew about them. "Put me down, thou!—and I will kiss thee," she wheedled. She touched his mouth with her fingers.

Dory Jones set her on her feet, laughing at her puny fury. The wind buffeted the forehead-lock of his dark hair. His face was full of laughter and young blood. His shoulders blocked the lamplight of the round room.

He stooped for the promised kiss.

Carène took his face between her hands and gave his forehead the sugared kiss of a perfumed soul—a caress no fish-girl could have given—a dream-kiss for him to hold until, having learned all the lessons in his primer, he might claim a lady for his own!

The lout was transfixed for the moment.

Closing the door on the simple, staring face, Carène fled from the switch-tower beside the running river. Her feet and ankles flashed in the dark.

She heard tapping wires summon him to the signal-loft.

On the path above the river, looking back, she saw the signal-light change from red to green. A whistle sounded in the night, and a train went by.

"*Mon Dieu!* the little train of cars saved me from my folly!" breathed Carène—in the sheltering vastness of the park.

IV

SHE found Paulton's umbrella where she had left it on a park-bench.

Hastily untying her velvet bundle and half hooking herself into peacock-trail and tunic, Carène enveloped her head in a scarf from the pocket of her wrap. She cloaked herself. Under the umbrella she traversed the windy park.

She came out on the Drive with lengths of damp velvet whipping about her. With the river-wind behind her, she crossed a width of concrete and blew into her apartment-house.

A jewel-box elevator bore her to her floor.

Stevens answered her ring.

"It is a miserable night. Mrs. Gilfoil," he ventured to comment, as he relieved her of the umbrella.

"Is Mr. Gilfoil in yet?" she inquired, passing the drawing-room and going toward her own quarters.

"Not yet, Mrs. Gilfoil." Stevens gingerly brushed the umbrella.

Witherspoon came from the boudoir, with a wooden exclamation: "You may catch cold, Mrs. Gilfoil!"

A gesture of Carène's hand dismissed her maid. "Go to bed, Wither. I shall not need you."

In the sanctuary of her boudoir, Carène's agile fingers made a corner-heap of cloak, scarf, frock and shoes. She sat at her dressing-table, and made little white fins of her hands. "*Il était mal-avisé!*" she murmured, of the adventure, as she unscrewed the gold top of a lotion-jar. She erased the marks of the river and the rain. She brushed her hair until it shone like amber. After plunging her slight, white body into her bath, she went to her sleeping-room. It was an ultra-modern room, with height and breadth, flawless ventilation, archings and alcoves—yet the perfect details revealed by a night-taper tended to cloud Carène's humor.

When Pompey came home he looked in at her door. "Awake, dear?" he said.

"Yes," sighed Carène. A tear rolled down her cheek.

Pompey said, concernedly, "You're not crying, my dear?"

He came into the room with his somewhat weighty tread.

She was like a crumpled roseleaf.

"It has been such a rainy night," she sighed. "Did you enjoy Isabel's party?"

"No," confessed Pompey, puckering his face; "it was dull as dishwater."

With a little laugh, she clasped her hands behind her sheened head. "Shall we take a trip to Naples, *mon cher ami?*" softly impulsive. And, dejectedly, "*Ciel!* we'd only be fashionable people playing by the sea!"

Pompey Gilfoil slowly drew off his gloves.

"Funny; that fisher-lass-and-lout love hung in my mind all the evening," he said.

He laid his gloves one on the other.

"By crickets, let's go to Naples, Carène! Stout, or not stout, Ill kick off my shoes and play in the water with you!"

With his temperate, lovable laugh, he kissed his young wife. "Go to sleep and dream of the jaunt," he

told her. "We'll have some happy times."

He whistled a Neapolitan love-song as he went to his quarters.

Carène nestled in her bed of down. She heard the river-gales against the windows of the costly room. The gales did not stir the silken hangings, though here and there on the polished surface of the glass the storm had left its tracery. She yawned behind the white lattice-work of her fingers.

Half wishing herself in a chair by an iron stove, she fell asleep.

**The third and last story about Carène, entitled "A Kiss For the Old Marquis," will appear in the next number of THE SMART SET.*



THE INGRATE

By T. F. Mitchell

SHE selected the hat with great care, examining it from all angles and with numerous questions as to its durability. Her husband was with her during the scrutiny, and his face wore a growing look of disapproval. Although the headpiece was extremely modest in price, yet he could not look satisfied. The hat was for him.



A MAN should never blame the woman he loves for flirting with other men. She is merely trying to prove to her own satisfaction that she loves him best.



THE less one knows, the better one loves.



THE VISITOR

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

SHE looked into the glass, noticed that her lips seemed less crimson than usual and touched her hair swiftly with her fingers. Long, slender fingers they were, flexible and capable.

He would arrive in a few moments. She hummed a little tuneless song, picked up a book, dropped it, looked at herself in the mirror again. Her lips were now red enough. They pleased her by the contrast with her white skin.

She was waiting for his ring at the door. They would have tea as she had planned, and those sweet cakes he liked. What would he say? Would he notice what she wore? She liked her gown; the modiste, usually an idiot, had pleased her this time. She knew he would notice what she wore.

A long, cozy chat they would have and perhaps their acquaintance would make progress. This would be their

first tête-à-tête, and she was conscious of a quickening of her heart-beat. A chat with a man alone always brought results. They were sure to be free from interruption.

The bell rang.

She gave a last touch to her hair and then, slowly, carefully, looked at herself again. Yes, all was satisfactory. She would keep him waiting for a moment. The maid would not answer the door; she had been ordered not to.

Presently, she walked to the door, quickening her footsteps as she neared it.

"Hello! I—" she stopped.

"I have her, Madame!" said a strange, dusty man. "A combination egg-beater, tea-strainer, axe and life-preserver that—"

He did not finish. The door had been closed for some time.



THE FOUNTAIN

By Oscar C. Williams

THE night has hung her curtains on the air
With trellises of frail and cloudy snow;
The moon is kind,—a fountain here below
Is fondly fingering her silver hair.

The birds have folded in their warbling gold,
The flowers, the glowing beauty of their red;
One thing alone night tucked not into bed,—
A fountain is a flower that will not fold!

DRESSES

By Rita Wellman

THEY lived in two rooms in a cheap hotel, and the sun never shone into their windows. They liked the electric light better, and on cold winter afternoons you could have found them in their negligées lying on their couches reading romantic novels, the room filled with light, steam heat, tobacco and perfume.

Their names were Elise and Jewel. Elise was the older, being twenty-seven. Jewel was only nineteen and promising to be very beautiful. Men came and went, but their fortunes remained the same. They were kind-hearted. They were amateurs . . .

When the rent for the small sitting-room and bedroom became overdue, Jewel was sent to interview the hotel manager, a kind, red-faced man who had invented a patent medicine guaranteed to cure anyone of anything. Jewel was always genuinely sympathetic, and listened patiently to the history of John's Wonderful Cure, and always came away with three bottles of the medicine—a present—and the assurance that the rent could wait.

Somehow they managed. If you should open the top of their heads under their careful hair and take a look inside in search of some solution to their actions, some main idea, you would know as much as you did before you attempted this difficult operation. There was no main idea. They lived vaguely, drifting with their emotions, seeking nothing definite, resisting only the difficult.

A small weekly sum came in to Elise from a mysterious source. Only Jewel knew of the wealthy man who misjudged Elise's character and thought it wise to "pay for her silence."

"As if Elise would ever harm anyone!" Jewel thought—and rightly.

But, owing to this man's cowardice, and lack of judgment, they at least had something definite in their lives, something as certain as debt and much more agreeable.

In the evening they held little parties. There were two actors who always came for dinner—as they needed it. Dinner was cooked on a small gas stove with one burner, and all of it came out of cans.

After dinner there was usually a game of poker. Jewel and Elise always lost—they didn't know why. The man who did never told. He was an ex-opera singer with soft, trustful brown eyes, who, since his voice had failed him, had done everything but earn an honest living. He had found their softest spot. He was going to put Elise and Jewel on the stage. "The Gay Girl," a great music-show production. Fortune and fame! Elise and Jewel could not sleep at nights thinking of this great project. After weeks of rehearsal and anticipation and loans—managed somehow—the ex-opera singer disappeared with his trustful eyes, their prospects of fame, and all their money. They never heard of him again.

One night one of the actors brought a celebrity with him, a "big figure" in the theatrical world. So he was introduced to Elise and Jewel, and they were greatly impressed, and felt ashamed of the disorderly appearance of the sitting-room, with beer bottles all about, and newspapers, and a shirt, belonging to one of the actors, washed by Elise's kind hands and hung over a chair to dry. They became suddenly

energetic and tried to smooth the surface of their surroundings by thrusting the bottles and newspapers and the shirt out of sight. They sent the actor out for food, and offered the "big man" the very best chair.

He accepted it with a grunt, and sat down, looking about with his suspicious, small, keen eyes, from which nothing ever escaped. A pickpocket could never have worse misfortune than to choose this man for a victim. He was a comfortably married man who only indulged in "parties" as he called them when he needed diversion, when things went wrong, when he was tired and dull. He distrusted all women, and divided them into three classes, beautiful, virtuous, and actresses.

He decided at once that he liked Jewel. Jewel respected his size and importance, and his clean, well-brushed clothes. He gave her a safe, comfortable feeling of solidity and well-being. After a time they disappeared for a quiet talk, quite naturally and simply, into the next room.)

Jewel had the lavishness and graciousness of youth, and when she and the big man reappeared he looked quite silly and pleased and had hold of her hand.

Elise looked at them curiously and anxiously, and then, seeing Jewel so pleased, sent one of the actors out for more beer and became very friendly and sympathetic with the big man, and called him by his first name—Joe.

The big man called Jewel "little girl" and seemed to be growing very fond of her. Elise and Jewel became very happy and excited. Then Elise whispered in Jewel's ear:

"We need clothes."

Jewel frowned, then decided that it was no more than right—they *did* need clothes. So when the big man said, "Little girl—need anything? I'll buy you anything in the world," she answered: "I only need a dress. And Elise—she needs one, too."

The big man frowned, but suddenly came to a decision.

"Meet me tomorrow," he said, and

told them where. "Twelve-thirty—*sharp*."

Everything was *sharp* with this man.

They helped him on with his overcoat, and their thin white little fingers liked the touch of its heaviness and softness and expensiveness, and they smiled at him, and patted the wrinkles out across his shoulders, and Jewel buttoned the coat with her lingering, soft hands.

"Twelve-thirty *sharp*," were his last words.

"Twelve-thirty *sharp*," they agreed, and patted and smiled him out.

When he was gone they embraced each other and cried out:

"New dresses!"

"Mine is going to be blue—silk."

"No, I want blue. I always wear blue."

"But blue looks best on me. You ought to have green—with your hair."

"I hate green, and, besides, who's he buying them for, you or me, I'd like to know?"

"You, of course. Oh, well, take blue if you're such a greedy little pig."

"Oh, I don't care. I'll take green, it doesn't make any difference."

"No, you take blue."

"Well, we both will. How'll that be?"

"Of course. We'll both have blue. You satin and I silk."

"But I want silk."

"Well, we can't dress like twins. I said silk first."

"I had my mind made up on silk from the beginning."

"So did I."

"Well, you get one, and I won't get any. I don't want any, anyway."

"Now, Elise, don't be sulky. I'll get satin then."

"No, you won't. We'll both get silk—blue silk."

"All right. We'll both get silk—blue silk."

II.

AFTER they had gone to bed, with their arms about each other, they talked

for hours about the dresses—how they should be made, who should make them, where they should buy the material. And then they fell to making plans, where they would go in the dresses, what they would do, what their friends would say when they saw the new dresses.

Suddenly Elise said:

"And hats—we'll have to have hats."

"Oh, yes, of course. We can't wear our old hats with them."

"And shoes. We'll have to have new shoes."

"Oh, yes, we will. To match."

"Yes, of course. To match."

After Elise had fallen asleep, her body childishly curled, Jewel awoke her.

"How did you like him?"

"I thought he had a nice face."

"Yes, so did I."

"Rather fat."

"Yes, rather fat. But he has a nice face."

"Yes, he *has* a nice face."

III.

IN the morning they were up early, even before Valeska came to do up the rooms. Valeska was the chambermaid who, like nearly everyone else in the house, possessed a history—and little else. She was a Russian, the wife of a Russian violinist who had run away with another woman to America, where Valeska had followed him. A bitter, miserable woman who had nothing in the world but her hate and her love and a pair of antique silver earrings. She had great contempt for the two who had nothing and yet managed somehow, but she felt sorry for all women, because she considered them the victims of men and fate, and for this reason she was kind to them and lent them money which she made painfully enough, and even brought them real cream for their coffee.

They always told her everything.

"We're going to get new dresses."

"Indeed! You need them."

"To-day. We're going right out now."

Valeska went sourly about making the bed. She hated disorder and dirt and weakness and all of the things she had always known. She wanted straightforward, keen-bladed life, hard and clean as the ice that was never absent from her home in Russia. Somewhere in her soul there was a stern singing for duty and country and ideals, and here she was in this United States hunting for a worthless husband and making beds in a third-rate hotel.

She watched them, disdainfully, as they made their toilet.

This was the thing of all things which really gave them pleasure, and in this they were linked with their sisters down the ages to the time of Luxor.

The quiet, idle hours of self-importance, of massage and hair treatment, of manicure and beautifying. Spread out before them were their boxes and bottles and brushes, and, mirror in hand, they blended color and applied it, and studied the effect, slowly, carefully attending to each feature until at last they were ready for the street, as artificial as Chinese dolls. When they had gone Valeska looked at her own haggard, tragic, burning face in the mirror and smiled—grimly.

They reached the place of appointment exactly on time—*sharp*. The big man was not there. Chattering together about the dresses they sat down to wait. Their envy of the well-dressed women who walked by them in parade was softened somewhat by the assurance that soon they, too, would be wearing the latest cut, and be able to look like everyone else.

The half hours went by. The hours went by. He had said *sharp*, but he did not come. They grew hungry. At last they looked at each other and exchanged a silent interrogation.

"We'll go," Elise said at last.

"Yes, we may as well go."

And they went out, their bodies swaggering proudly as if it didn't matter at all—for all their softness they had a

certain bravery. But Jewel's eyes were gleaming slits, and her white throat quivered.

They were silent going home, holding their heads high, but once more in the hotel rooms they threw off their banners of defiance and cried like children.

Then Elise, being older, became "the bosom" and received Jewel's copious, wrathful tears.

"Our dresses!" she moaned.

"Yes, our beautiful dresses."

At last, calm and disillusioned, they faced each other over their cigarettes.

"I didn't like his face," Elise said.

"No. He had a bad face."

"He did. He had a *bad* face."

IV

IN this country stories are supposed to have endings.

Americans, working always for results, demand them in everything.

Elise, being not so pretty, and with certain deplorable weaknesses, including one for gin, which increased as time went on, had a bad ending. I tell you

this for the sake of truth, and not because I am a moralist.

Jewel, it seems, was destined for respectability. She married a few years later, a nice, serious young man who fell very earnestly in love with her. She lives in a suburb of New York, where she has numerous friends, a cook and two children.

The nice young man has grown dulier and duller with contentment, as Jewel has never crossed him in anything. Their amusements are their back garden, their wedding anniversary dinners, and a weekly trip into New York when they take the children to visit the nice young man's parents.

I do not know what Jewel's inmost feelings are. But she is probably content. She has enough to eat and drink and a pretty little home that looks just like the pretty little homes all about her.

If you should ever meet her compliment her upon her dress. It will please her enormously, as she has always paid the highest price possible for her clothes.



BRAGGART

By John McClure

I HAVE had love and lost it, and am thus
 Not overapt to treasure aught too well
 Lest once again I lose all happiness
 And feel the pangs of a departed hell.
 I sleep no lighter for the love of you,
 Not one whit lighter—sweat no bloody sweat.
 Should you discard me for a love more new
 I should not find it painful to forget.
 I have forgot so much, my dear—so much
 That you have heard no faintest whisper of—
 That I might lose you from my thought and touch,
 Yet rest unruffled by your lack of love:—
 Faith, I would give my eyes, and halfpence too,
 And half my song-books, if those words were true!



HIS MOTHER

By Howard Mumford Jones

I

MRS. GAULT sat in the wooden rocking-chair she had carried into the kitchen, patiently waiting for the arrival of Peter's train. From time to time she arose and looked after the stove whereon macaroni-and-cheese, a favorite dish of Peter's, tomatoes, an apple pie and beaten biscuits—other favorites—were, in their respective fashions, cooking. The stove gave her trouble; it was old, and there was some reason why the gas didn't flow properly, and, although before Peter went off to college he had suggested that they needed a new gas-range, the old one still did service. On these occasions she tinkered with the refractory burner as best she could, and resumed her slight rocking to and fro, glancing ever so often at the clock on the shelf by the window.

Under the light of the Welsbach burner—they could not afford electricity—the kitchen looked very comfortable. She had decided that for this, Peter's first night home since the Christmas vacation, they would eat in the kitchen as they used to do; and the leaves of the old table were accordingly spread out and covered with a red table cloth. She had thought of using one of the linen ones from the dining room, but the red one seemed cozier. In the center of the table stood the kerosene lamp to re-enforce the unsatisfactory gas-light (which Peter would undoubtedly fix when he had been home a few days), and the light from it shone in little pools on the dishes (not the best set, because Peter would object) and lay in streaks and curves along the

silverware. The other table was covered with kitchen utensils and the bread-box, and at the back stood the geraniums she had nursed all winter to forget how lonely it was in the big house with Peter away. A faint steam rose from the stove where the potatoes knocked gently against the cover of the pot in which they were cooking. It was almost time for him to come.

Mrs. Gault was a thin, spare woman with greying hair and intense blue eyes. As she sat in the chair with the gas-jet behind her and the shadows softening the lines in her face, she looked younger than she had looked for some time. It had been a hard winter; she had been sick (Peter hadn't been told), but it was all right now—Peter was coming home. She wondered whether he would kiss her in the hall or when he came into the kitchen. He was not demonstrative, and her cheeks flushed to think that he might not kiss her at all. Not that he would mean anything by it, it was only Peter's way.

As she rocked methodically, her hands strangely idle in her lap, she thought how good it was that Peter was coming home. She and her husband had agreed before he died that they ought to send the boy as far as they could because education was such a good thing, but on the whole she was glad that Peter couldn't finish out the last year of his course. He would go to work now and they could pay off some of the bills which, for all her carefulness, she had not been able to avoid. She was glad she had not even hinted that he should stop; she had always been vague about herself and household

matters in the weekly letters, and it was Peter's own decision that was bringing him home.

Not that he had failed in any way, she hastily added, because his professors, on the one occasion when she had visited him at the university, had spoken so highly of his work. It was merely that Peter must have read between the lines, must have seen how difficult it was for her to manage alone, and so he had left his work unfinished and was coming home.

"Peter is coming home," she repeated to herself half aloud before she could prevent it, and she flushed because she had spoken. Peter hated sentiment so; and here she was, talking right out like a person in a novel. She arose and bent over to look into the inconvenient oven. When she straightened up with a red face, Peter was standing in the dining-room door.

"He's had his hair cut differently," she thought, and then she thought he must have opened the door with his latch-key without her hearing him. It was dear of him to plan to surprise her and to work it out so cleverly.

"Peter!" she said, and went up to him. She noticed that his face looked queer; there was a suppressed excitement in his eyes, and he breathed rapidly.

"Mother," he said as she paused, and held out his arms. She ran into them, amazed, and he kissed her. She made a little sound in her throat.

"Mother, I've—I've a surprise for you," he said awkwardly, stepping a little away from her as she lifted her head and not looking directly at her. At the sight of his face a sudden fear chilled her heart:

"Yes?" she said and managed to conceal her anxiety.

"It's Leila." Her heart stopped pounding. "She's outside in the cab. We're married."

II

PETER went to get Leila and the suitcases. Mrs. Gault was thankful for

the moment she had alone. She had not cried or fainted, she remembered, but her face must have gone white because Peter had put his arm around her and asked her what was the matter. Then she had pushed away from him and said, "Let me see her, let me see her!" very rapidly.

And Peter, after looking at her a few seconds had turned white and gone away without saying a word. He had understood, then. But would he never bring her? How had it happened? Why hadn't he written her? Probably it had begun at some college dance, and after that— They were mad, mad. Suddenly she felt dizzy and sat down.

She heard him drop the suitcases heavily in the hall, and stood up unsteadily. But he didn't come. She heard him talking to a man, the cab-driver probably. He had never come home in a cab before. To support herself she placed a hand on the stove and burned her fingers on the dish that held the macaroni, though she was not conscious of any pain for a long time.

Peter was coming now with—with the girl. She would have to call her Leila. How could she bear to look at her? Peter she could face, but not—not his wife. She turned and mechanically shut off the gas under the macaroni with her uninjured hand.

Peter had his arm around her again. Yes, it was Peter. The girl stood in the doorway. Peter was talking to her, but Mrs. Gault couldn't make out anything. She raised her eyes to look at Peter's—wife.

If only she wouldn't stand there so uncomfortably. She wasn't coarse looking, that was something, and she had nice eyes and black hair and a snubby nose and—yes, her mouth was too wide. That was too bad. But her clothes were good, though.

"How do you do, Mrs. Gault!" The girl, very red in the face, was holding out her hand. Mrs. Gault looked at it. She didn't mean to be rude. It was only— What was Peter saying? "Good God, mother!" He mustn't swear like that. What was her name?

Oh, yes, Leila. She hoped she wouldn't kiss her—no, she wasn't going to. She took her hand.

III

MRS. GAULT sat in the worn living room without moving, long after Leila and Peter had gone upstairs. She had prepared the best bed-room in a flurry of fear that Leila would offer to help her, and she couldn't have stood that. But Leila hadn't offered; she had sat in a corner of the room, her face hard, and by and by she had burst into a storm of passionate tears and gone out of the room into the kitchen where she had bumped against the stove in the dark and hurt her elbow.

Mrs. Gault hadn't been in the least sorry. What business had she or any other girl in her kitchen—even though she was Peter's wife? But Peter had walked up and down the floor, when Leila started sobbing, until he heard her cry out as she hurt herself on the stove; then he had gone after her. When she heard Peter kissing Leila and calling her "dear," Mrs. Gault went straight upstairs and finished arranging the bureau in the front room, working with furious precision. It had seemed grotesquely unbelievable as she carried Peter's toilet things from his own room into the best room that Peter was going to sleep there with—with his wife. That made it all right, of course. Now she could hear Peter tramping up and down in the bed-room just as he had been doing down stairs. Every time he stepped he shook the chandelier in the parlor. Why didn't he stop?

She was tired, tired. She could not feel, or think, or cry, she felt so numb and wooden. Of course it was true, this impossible thing, though she couldn't believe it. Peter had a job, though he had never written her. Peter was to make thirty dollars a week in the National Bank under Mr. Burton. Out of it she was to have ten dollars, and Peter and Leila, twenty. And, Peter said, because they couldn't afford a home of their own yet, they wanted to

live with her a little while if she would let them. It was then that Leila began to sob. For Mrs. Gault, trembling and tall, had risen and said in a hard voice that Peter could live there until he died, but she would never live in the same house with his wife, never, never! Of course she hadn't meant she would turn Leila out on the street, and so now they were upstairs together. It seemed curious that Leila should cry. She hadn't meant to hurt her especially. In fact, she didn't think about Leila at all. She thought about Peter.

Peter had failed her. Peter hadn't seen at all. He had gone mad, that was all. He hadn't even thought how lonely she was, or how she had been expecting him. She remembered thinking how comfortable they would be together, she and Peter; reading in the evening under the lamp in the sitting room, or going out together to the movies, or to church, or visiting. No, Peter hadn't thought of her. He had just met the girl and married her, without even asking what his mother was to do. Why, he had known her only six weeks. Peter—Peter was selfish. Then she thought, "I will never forgive Leila!"

Breakfast next morning was a strained affair. Peter and Leila came down together, laughing. His mother could see him stop Leila in the hall and look at her face as she had never seen him look at anyone else, and then he had kissed her and whispered in her ear. Probably he was telling Leila to brace up and never mind his mother's ways—she would get over it. At the thought Mrs. Gault stiffened perceptibly. When they came into the dining room where breakfast was all prepared, and saw her, Peter's face changed and Leila looked unhappy and miserable. Mrs. Gault said, "Good morning!" Then she went into the kitchen.

They ate in desperate silence, broken only by more desperate, solitary sentences. Once, when the muffins ran out, Leila half rose and said, "I'll get them, Mrs. Gault," but Mrs. Gault pretended not to hear her and stalked out

of the room in rigid silence. It took her a few moments to get the muffins out of the muffin-pan, and when she came back there were tears in Leila's eyes and Peter was standing with his back to them, looking out the window.

He turned and spoke in a queer, strangled voice.

"I'm sorry, mother. But Leila and I can't go away. We haven't anywhere to go."

Leila looked up. Mrs. Gault stood holding the muffin plate in her left hand because her right hand hurt her—the one she had burned last night. She put the plate down with hard deliberation.

"Take me away, Peter, take me away!" sobbed Leila. "I can't stay here—I can't. She doesn't want me!"

Peter put his arms around her without looking at his mother.

"You can stay," said Mrs. Gault briefly. "Peter, your light overcoat is in the hall closet."

Peter came up to her and shook her arm. "You *must* love her, mother, you *must*. You've *got* to. Don't you love me?"

Mrs. Gault said nothing.

"You must love her if you love me. I know it was unwise. But—but—"

"You'll be late," said Mrs. Gault. "Mr. Burton doesn't like people to be tardy."

Without saying a word Peter kissed Leila and went into the hall, put on his coat and hat and left the house, slamming the door violently behind him. Leila started to go after him and stopped.

"You can stay in the front room if that suits you," Mrs. Gault told Leila coldly. "You better go up and finish unpacking. You'll find plenty of room in the big closet."

The girl turned imploringly. She was a nice girl, Mrs. Gault had to admit, even though—

"Aren't you—can't I help you?"

"No, you can't," said Peter's mother succinctly and started carrying the breakfast things into the kitchen. *Leila went slowly upstairs.*

IV

PETER was working savagely at the bank. Mr. Burton, a lean, grey-whiskered, thin-lipped autocrat of fifty, thought that marriage was a good thing for Peter, he had suddenly become so industrious; and as to over-time, instead of dodging a little extra work to go home to his wife. Peter, like a sensible fellow, seemed positively to welcome it. Peter welcomed anything that offered him a decent excuse for not sitting through a silent evening with his grin-lipped mother and his speechless wife. In his long absences Leila sat in their room. When they dared she and Peter went to the movies.

Sometimes Peter cursed his lot and sometimes he pitied himself so, he wanted to cry. On such occasions he and Leila stole off somewhere by themselves and, between kisses, Leila assured him that she was very happy and it didn't matter, anyway. Peter believed her at first.

But once, after a long silence, Leila suddenly clung to him and said, "If she would only call me something—Leila, or Mrs. Gault, or even Mrs. Peter! But she won't. She always says 'Here' or 'You'! And—oh, Peter!—why won't she let me help with the work? Why, I daren't even dust the library table!" After that when Leila said it didn't matter, Peter wasn't so sure.

Try as she would, Leila could devise nothing that seemed to help. Mrs. Gault steadily ignored her. Peter began to wonder vaguely whether he was entirely at fault. They talked over expedient after expedient, but the first of these, when put into practice, failed so miserably that Leila never made another attempt. Mrs. Gault was always the first downstairs, and prepared breakfast for the three—"just as if we were paying guests!" said Leila, whereat her husband winced. So Leila stole down one morning very early and put the oatmeal on the stove before Mrs. Gault heard her; then Mrs. Gault descended the back stairs and ordered Leila out of the kitchen with a stinging crispness

that sent the girl back to bed, ill. Peter almost hated his mother that day, and he was sorry for Leila.

He didn't seem to know his mother any more. They had been good comrades before, and he had planned this so differently. He was used to reading aloud to her in the evenings, and once he had picked up a magazine in a tentative way while Leila tremulously looked on from the shabby window-seat.

Mrs. Gault rose.

"I am going to bed," she announced. "Good night."

Without waiting for a reply she went upstairs. They faced each other miserably.

"You've got to think of something," said Peter at length. "Why don't you—?"

"What?" said Leila, eyeing him curiously.

"You're home all day. I should think you could do something," he concluded lamely and not at all pleased with himself.

"Oh," said Leila. That was all. But they did not say anything else the rest of the evening.

"She was still his mother, though. Hunting for a clean pair of socks, Peter came upon a whole heap of them, neatly darned, in the bureau drawer.

"You darling!" he exclaimed rapturously and kissed Leila vehemently.

"Peter, don't!" she said when she could free herself. "I didn't do them. She wouldn't let me. She won't let me do anything for you—not even send your collars to the laundry."

Peter swore. Leila covered her ears and that made him swear harder. Then he asked her how long she was going to stand for this sort of thing. Leila looked at him in a frightened sort of way, and they were half an hour late for breakfast. When they came downstairs, their meal was waiting for them on the dining-room table, and Mrs. Gault sat placidly reading the morning paper in the sitting room.

"Why don't you let Leila mend my socks?" Peter demanded, marching into the living room,

Mrs. Gault laid down her paper.

"Aren't they well darned?" she asked solicitously.

Peter did not answer, but he looked at Leila thoughtfully as she gulped over her grape-fruit.

He was growing desperate. He assured himself again and again that it would end all right. He hadn't been rash or precipitant; with the income from their few securities and the money he was earning there was enough for all three of them. Even his mother admitted that. As for being selfish—Every fellow expected to be married some time. And if his mother didn't like Leila, that would come in time. Who could help loving her?

Only it didn't seem to come. Even Peter could see that Leila had made no progress. Over four weeks had gone by, and his mother still barely tolerated Leila in the house. Suddenly Peter found himself growing critical. Leila was a little to blame. Why did she let his mother treat her like that? Good heavens, wasn't she a mature woman? She was too yielding, that was it. It was all well enough to be a petted child with one's husband, but with other people— He began to think about Leila's shortcomings. He had a right to. She wasn't perfect. He had never thought that. She ought to be more sensible, too, and—and more independent. And Peter illogically remembered that he had twice been late at the bank on account of having had to wait for Leila to find things and dress.

Mr. Burton had said nothing about it. But that evening about five o'clock he came and stood by Peter's desk with a sheaf of statements in his hand.

"I want you to check these up," he said, "for the directors' meeting to-morrow."

"But—but it's five o'clock," said Peter aghast. "It will take me two hours. I haven't time."

"Young man," began Mr. Burton severely, "you have been late two times this week."

"Oh, damn!" snapped Peter before he thought.

Mr. Burton dropped his bundle on Peter's desk as though it had been a chunk of fire, and walked off, looking hurt. Peter did not get home that night until half-past seven.

"You're working too hard," said his mother impersonally when he came into the dining room. His dinner was ready for him.

Peter grunted.

"Where's Leila?" he asked.

"She's been upstairs," said his mother coldly, "all afternoon."

Peter pushed his inquiry further. "Have you had your dinner?"

"Yes."

"I thought this was your night at the Woman's League," he continued, pausing with a forkful of potato half-way to his mouth.

"It is," responded Mrs. Gault dryly.

"Why—?"

"I didn't go," she said. "I had to keep your dinner hot."

Peter rose. The time for direct action, it was evident, had come.

"Leila!" he called, standing with his napkin in his hand at the foot of the stairs.

"Yes?" said Leila's voice languidly and without interest.

"Come down here. I want you." Peter was very commanding.

Peter could hear Leila dragging about the bedroom. Why couldn't she have a little gumption? By and by she came to the head of the stairs. When she saw Peter's face she paused.

"Hurry up," said her husband rudely.

Leila came slowly down. Her eyes were red from crying and she didn't look pretty. Come to think of it, she was always crying.

"When my mother wants to spend the evening out," Peter enunciated distinctly, "you might get your husband's dinner for him."

"Why, Peter!" Leila's eyes and mouth widened with astonishment.

"Now you can wash the dishes," said Peter morosely. "And don't stand there like a fish with your mouth open."

"You're—you're not a bit nice to me any more," said Leila.

"Here, stop it," sternly commanded her husband. "Quit that snivelling for a change and be a man—I mean, a woman," Peter hastily corrected himself.

Leila sank down on the lowest step. "I won't wash the dishes," she wailed, "I won't, I won't, I won't! Your mother hates me!"

"I should think she would," growled Peter. It was unfortunate. Leila looked at him for a single, horrified instant.

"You don't love me any mo-ore!" she moaned, abandoning her useless handkerchief in favor of the newel post.

Thereupon Peter, flapping the napkin against his knee for emphasis, delivered himself with great distinctness of all the thoughts the last two weeks had dammed up in his head. He reviewed the past few days unfavorably and with caustic candor. His review was largely concerned with Leila's failure of commission and omission. He said exactly what he thought of himself and Leila and Mr. Burton and over-time work and people who snivelled on the front stairs. He was nervous and tired and unhappy and he said a good deal more than he meant. Leila listened to him and forgot to sob. Then she covered her ears. When he concluded with the savage statement that he wished he were dead, she collapsed, lying full-length on the landing and crying as if she would never stop. Peter looked at her. Then he began again.

Mrs. Gault appeared in the doorway. She had remained seated in the dining room, listening.

"Stop that swearing," she commanded. Peter stopped. "Get up," she told Leila briefly, as though she was addressing a dumb animal.

Leila rose, and Mrs. Gault helped her upstairs. When she came down again, Peter eagerly searched her face. It was as coldly impassive as ever.

"I hate to see any man make a fool of himself," she vouchsafed acidly.

Peter quit attempting to eat his dinner and went out on the porch.

V

Mrs. GAULT sat looking out the window at the gray spring rain, trying to put it all together. She thought she could get used to anything, but the last week had been worse than all the others put together. Since their evening on the stairs Peter and Leila had barely spoken to each other. Leila spent most of her time in their room or sitting moodily on the desolate front porch, and Peter either sat alone or stayed away from the house more than ever. Mrs. Gault realized that she ought to be glad—it was their proper punishment—but she wasn't.

She couldn't bear it much longer, Peter was so unhappy. How she hated Leila! He had been so joyous and jolly before, and now, as though she were an enchantment, this girl had made him forget his duty to his mother, had blinded him and misled him and made him miserable. He looked old; there were lines in his face his mother had never seen before.

Pretty soon he would be looking twice as old as—as his wife. Then her mind went back to the morning she had seen Peter and Leila kissing in the hall, and she remembered with a pang how happy and young they had seemed, and how pretty the girl's face had been. Why did life hurt so? Now—why, Leila's face, she remembered, had changed, too. Well, she deserved some punishment for her thoughtlessness. She looked old and sick. That made Peter unhappy. Mrs. Gault quit thinking about Peter and began to think about Leila.

She heard a noise upstairs as if some one were moving furniture about. How happy she and Mr. Gault had been! Then she remembered she had been vaguely conscious of the noise before, recurrently and for some time. She rose and made her way upstairs, wondering vaguely about Leila. It was a queer honeymoon, she had a right to be happy, but—well, she had brought it on herself. Mrs. Gault was now conscious that the noise came from the front room and that, when she and her

husband visited Chicago on their wedding journey, Mr. Gault had not known how much to tip the waiter in the Palmer House, and they had laughed about it, all of them, including the waiter.

She opened the door of the bedroom. Some one was in there. Oh, yes, it was Leila, she had forgotten. A trunk, all locked and strapped, stood in the middle of the room on the worn bear-rug, and a suitcase, partly ready, was spread out on the bed. Leila was kneeling before it; as the tall, gray-haired figure came into the room, she turned slightly and sprang to her feet.

"What are you doing?" inquired Peter's mother. After their breakfast at the Palmer House they had gone to the world's Fair on the steam cars, as people called them then. But then, Mr. Gault hadn't been the only son of a widow.

Leila faced her. Her face had changed. What business had her face to look so, when it made Peter unhappy?

"I'm going away—to Chicago," said the girl defiantly. "I haven't told Peter. But I can't stand it any longer. Peter shouldn't have married me. I've only made him and you unhappy. He—he can get a divorce or something."

"Are your folks there?" asked Mrs. Gault. It was curious she should live in Chicago.

"I—I have an uncle there," said Leila, even more defiantly. She hadn't spoken to him for years. "I've put your things back in the closet you let me use and left Peter's clothes where he can find them. His shirts and things are in here." She pulled open a bureau drawer.

VI

It paid to work in a bank, Peter thought, it was so central. If he had been working in a store, for instance, he would never have heard about the Langleys having to go West and leave their furniture and their new cottage. It was just big enough for two, and no rent. Wouldn't Leila be glad? She

could get away from his mother, and now, maybe, they could be happy.

As he thought of Leila his heart smote him. What a nasty beast he had been. He hadn't even kissed her for four days. Think of it! And think of all she had stood for, too, and how little she had complained—just a few times, and then he had scolded her. Well, they could be by themselves now, if Leila would forgive him, and maybe time would heal his mother's hurt. What a brick Langley was! At the memory of the little cottage and its cozy furnishings, Peter's step quickened until he was almost running through the rain.

But when he unlocked the front door his enthusiasm slipped from him with his raincoat. His mother wanted to be rid of Leila, but she wouldn't be so pleased at the same time to be rid of him. How was he ever going to tell her? There would be another scene, like the one when he first came home. He hated scenes, and yet the last weeks had been simply unbearable. Well, his mother would be glad to get Leila out of the house, anyway, and as for the

rest, he would promise to come over every day and see her.

Although it was supper time Mrs. Gault was sitting in the living room, beside the table lamp, reading a magazine.

"Mother," said Peter, coming before her bravely, "I've thought it all out. I shouldn't have brought Leila here, and I should have told you about her long before. I'm sorry. But I hope you'll be happier now. The Ben Langleys are going to Nebraska. Ben says I can have his cottage furnished, if I want it, without rent, just for taking care of things. It's just right for two people. I'll come over every day, so you won't be lonely." It was a long speech for Peter.

His mother said nothing. She put down the magazine. He had failed again. She was angry with him, or she would have spoken.

"Where's Leila?" he asked bitterly. What if it did hurt her?

"She's in the kitchen," said Mrs. Gault, rising from her chair, "getting supper. I guess you won't need that cottage. I'll go out and help her with the macaroni."



WHEN I WALKED PAST THE MORNING

By Ward Twichell

WHEN I walked past the morning
That was upon a hill,
I saw what was the great dream
That made the world so still.

When I walked past the twilight,
That stood beneath a tree,
I wondered why the white noon
Had tried to blind me.



A MUSEUM-PIECE

By Leonora Speyer

SHE was exercising her Pekinese puppies in the Park when they met. They had met many times before—the leaping excitement of the two little dogs bore eloquent witness to that—but the color came finely into his young face all the same and her older eyes, in which the fire of a girl still flamed blue, lit suddenly.

“You!” was all she said, and he laughed a little as he answered:

“Confess you’re caught! This is ‘vegetating quietly at Pretty Corner,’ is it?”

She made a little sound—what shall I call it? Not a giggle, nowhere near a laugh, more like a sunshine bubble of escaping *joie-de-vivre*, and one felt that there were millions more of them effervescing somewhere behind the blue flames.

“Well, you know, Jack, I simply *had* to come up to see about my country-clothes. I can’t trail about muddy roads in Lucile teagowns! And I wanted to pick out a piano for the cottage—just a teeny weeny seven-month-baby-grand to play with when it rains—and Chang had sneezing fits—Chang, sneeze for Jackums—and I brought him up to see the vet, and, of course, Wuh had to come, too, didn’t you, Wuh?—and so, to make a long and tragic story as cheerful as I can”—again the bubble—“we’re all at the Ritz for a few days! I was just going to write you about it.”

“I see,” he answered a little grimly and linked his arm through hers as they walked along. “That’s a country hat, isn’t it?” looking admiringly at the enormous, drooping velvet mushroom leaning over the full, brown waves of hair.

“Do you like it?” she asked anxiously.

“It’s brand-new! Bendel’s, of course, and oh, the prices this year! It seems positively wicked—but what can you do about it? I—I only got three,” she bubbled happily. “Now don’t say the blue feathers exactly match my eyes! I know they do and they’re intended to, and I’ve been told so four times this morning!”

“I won’t then,” he answered. “I’ll say I think it’s much too—too old for you! It makes you look at least twenty-eight.”

She leaned a little closer to him.

“Oh, Jack, I’m so glad to see you! I’ve been thinking about you—worrying about you! That’s the real reason that brought me to town! And then—we stumble upon each other the very day I arrive, in this dear, romantic way!” she bubbled. “And now I want to hear all about Evelyn. . . . Let’s find a nice, quiet bench near the Museum—there’s never anybody near the Museum, I’ve noticed. I believe people are a little afraid of it—oh, Jack! There’s a policeman!—Chang! Wuh! Come here, you horrible little things, do you want to get me arrested?”

She smiled brilliantly at the tall young Irishman as the dogs were led decorously past the stern arm of the law, in little leather leashes.

“No, no, let me take them—a great, grown-up man being drawn by two Pekinese pups, Jack!” She looked at him with a quiet pride. “I thought you were in Boston,” she said.

“So I was—but I got over it,” he answered. “I’ve just telegraphed you about coming down tonight.”

She gave a little cry.

“Oh, dear! And I’m not there! And

Bob taking me to the theater! Shall I put him off? Do you think he could stand being put off, Jack?" she bubbled again. "You know he went to school with your Uncle William. Ought I to put him off, do you think?—Chang! Come here!"

"Oh, don't throw old Bob over—though I haven't forgiven him yet, Katherine, and don't mean to, Uncle William or no Uncle William!"

She beamed. "Oh, yes, you have! Tell me, how's dear Evelyn?"

"Evelyn's all right," he answered a little restlessly. "She's sweet! She cried when I came down to Pretty Corner last week, Katherine! I felt—a criminal!—and it's all so absurd, really!"

The other's face was very calm.

"What had she got to cry about, I'd like to know? I hadn't seen you for a month!"

"Whose fault was that?" he asked quietly.

"Here I am—wiped out," continued Katherine. "At Pretty Corner all winter—"

"It's the fifteenth of October," he interrupted.

"*All winter*," she went on. "Don't interrupt, please, you know I'm going to veg—stop there all winter. And you're *hers*, your big emerald that I helped choose—oh, Jack, I adored choosing it!—safe on her finger! What has she got to cry about, kindly tell your oldest friend!"

He looked at her and smiled a little.

"*You wiped out!* That's funny. I believe you'd like to be—for a little while—just for the novelty of it. Well, you're not, and you never will be—can't be! And you know it! No one can take your place, eliminate you—and no one, not even my little Evelyn, can make me less yours, Katherine!"

Blue flames dancing—"Dear Jack,"—the tenderness of it—"Let's sit here!" She looked about warily. "I think we might let the dogs loose—oh, Jack, she'll cover you with mud! Your nice, clean coat!"

The little dogs had leapt onto his knees

—they were evidently old friends—and was climbing up, biting his buttons joyously on the way.

"Good doggy!" he answered, dodging Wuh's frantic kisses. "You understand, don't you, old girl? You don't drop old friends overnight, do you?"

And he threw a pebble along the path, which sent the faithful Wuh hotly scampering in pursuit.

"She's as playful as a kitten, isn't she?" remarked Katherine tactfully, and slipped her hand into his.

They sat silent for a few minutes.

He spoke first. "Well, I hope you're satisfied, my dear! I'm engaged to Evelyn, you're dashing about with Bob—in blue feathers—"

"Jack, be fair. I'm—*wiped out*—at Pretty Corner—and Bob never wore blue feathers in his life!"

She bubbled ever so little, but held his hand very tight.

"We're sufficiently independent of each other, I hope! You didn't know I was back in town, I didn't know you were at the Ritz—"

"I'm not, dear. I'm with you in the Park, we're having a perfect little tête-à-tête, holding each other's hands and—"

"It's my turn to say don't interrupt, please; I want to talk to you seriously."

"Please don't, Jack, it's bad for my complexion. Tell me instead that you are happy with Evelyn, that I have arranged things beautifully, and that you're very, very grateful to me!"

He looked stolidly in front of him. "It's always a mistake to arrange, anyway, I believe."

"How *can* you say that! (Indignantly.) Why, I *always* arrange, Jack, you know I do—and always beautifully! You love Evelyn, she adores you—and I was—in the way, dear boy! Oh, why, why won't you enjoy it all, the way I planned you to?"

"And it's a mistake to plan," he went on. "What do you call beautifully arranged? I was beautifully satisfied with things as they were! I was perfectly happy! Then you discovered

that Evelyn was fond of me! Was she, I wonder—or did you deliberately make her fond of me, 'put the thought on her' as the Christian-Scientists call it? And what did you do it for? Were you tired of me, Katherine?"

She made a little movement towards him that was entirely loving.

"Well, you 'put the thought' on me, at any rate—what a cad I feel!—you discovered—or I discovered—it doesn't really matter who discovered, does it, as long as it was discovered?—that I loved Evelyn! But I never dreamed of giving you up, Katherine! I thought we were all going to be so happy together."

"Dear Jack," said Katherine, "go on."

"Well, I asked her to marry me, and her first words were—'What will *she* say?' And the look in her eyes! Her dear eyes! They were simply shouting, 'You've chosen me, you're mine, you're mine!' And suddenly I realized that she was—jealous of you, madly jealous—and I had never suspected it! And I felt somehow that I'd lost you, given you up—and I knew I couldn't!"

"Dear Jack," said Katherine.

"Oh, and she thinks it's 'funny' I call you Katherine! I told her everybody did, and that I always had—and she said, 'I shan't, Jack!' I almost told her I wouldn't let her! Instead of that—I kissed her!"

"Good boy," said Katherine.

"I love Evelyn. I love her! But she can't understand—and she won't! We talk so much about you and everything we say seems to make it worse. And back of it all is the miserable, hurt longing for you, the fear of losing you! I swear I'll never give you up—no woman on earth, nor Evelyn herself, can make me do that!"

"Of course not," said Katherine mistily.

"And that's all," said Jack—and he lit a cigarette.

She watched him blow three fretful little puffs of smoke into the sunshine and then she spoke.

"Evelyn's nerves are on edge," she

meditated. "It's very upsetting, being proposed to, Jack. No man can quite understand that. I'm jumpy for days afterwards, each time. And poor little Evelyn is so young—though I'm sure you did it awfully well," she added kindly. "After you're both beautifully and becomingly married in broadcloth and white satin and rice, and all your useful wedding-presents changed for something pretty, she'll feel quite differently about me, you'll see," she bubbled. "Oh, Jack, she'll probably discover me! And tell you all about me! What a helpmate Evelyn is going to be! Don't ever, ever forget that I found her, ungrateful Jack."

She gave his hand a gentle little squeeze.

"In the meantime, you must let me go on eliminating myself. I simply won't come between you two young things! Chang! Do go and take him away from those children, Jack. They're feeding him—and he's under a strict régime! Heaven knows what they're giving him!"

She watched him as he rescued Chang from the too-friendly overtures of the little group, making him beg first, bark his thanks and give his paw all round, to the intense delight of children and nurses. How well he carried himself, how tall he was—how she loved him!

"What a father you'll make!" she said as he came back to her. "How dear you are with children! Do you know, I actually believe you've changed—I very nearly said grown—the last six weeks! You look gloriously engaged, Jack! I hope the nurses over there think it's to me!"

"I look too old for you, my dear. They probably think I'm Uncle William! You eighth wonder! I wish you could have seen yourself smiling at that policeman!"

She chuckled. "Don't be a goose! You *know* I'm old enough to be your mother! I can't help it if I don't feel old, can I? And I don't mean to try and help it, what's more! Let old Anno Domini shift for himself, there's much too much talk about him anyway.

He's a bore! Lie down, Wuh! You muddy little thing—*good girl!*"

She looked at him, a little remorsefully. "Tell me, are you still angry with me? About my—rest-cure, I mean?"

He thought a little.

"I was angry, Katherine, furious, and utterly miserable. I still can't bear to think about it! You were downright cruel—and I don't think even now you realize it in the least. You go on pushing me away, you seem to want me to neglect you, forget you, be gloriously, selfishly happy with Evelyn! *Why?* Surely ours is the most beautiful relationship that ever existed between man and woman, you know that, dear, you taught me that! And then, just at the time I needed you the most, you disappeared! Vanished! And called it a rest-cure! As if you needed a rest-cure!"

"I didn't, Jack," she bubbled, "that wasn't the idea at all! *You* needed it, you—and Evelyn."

"For a month you were gone out of my life," he went on. "For a whole month! You might have been dying, dead—in heaven knows what mischief—for all I knew of it!"

"Oh, no," she corrected. "You had a little note from me every day, you knew that I was all right, didn't you? And you had Evelyn."

He laughed aloud. "Knew that you were all right! Oh, did I? What do you call all right, may I ask, without being rudely personal? Where were you? *I* didn't know! And Evelyn kept asking about you—and I thought I'd go mad inventing things to tell her! I was determined she shouldn't know—what would she have thought? Do you think Evelyn would believe that you needed a rest-cure? She's no fool, bless her! Obviously she thought that something was wrong. Finally she grew tactful and we never spoke about you. That left a nice hole in the conversation—and we edged around it, pretending it wasn't there! And your little notes! A fat lot of good *they* did! 'Be happy, Jack, get to know that sweet *girl*, spend every hour you can with her,

give her my love, don't forget your K.' *My K.!* I could have—slapped my K.!"

He caught her hand, then dropped it coldly. "And then you calmly return! Ring me up from the Ritz, inform me the house is let for the winter and that you are going to Pretty Corner for six months! And could Evelyn 'spare me' some Sunday! Of course I was 'angry,' of course I said I wouldn't come to Pretty Corner—and of course I came! And Evelyn suggested coming, too—and I had to say I wanted to see you alone this time. That helped to make things better all round, didn't it? Oh, my God!"

"*Dear Jack,*" said Katherine.

"*Dear hell!* And it leaks out that Bob, old Bob, my oldest friend Bob, had seen you every day, and that you were only at the Brevoort all the time!"

"Jack, you've really no idea how perfectly delightful old New York is. I never—"

"And he had lunched with me regularly and witnessed my ravings, seen your notes, helped pump the old fool that brought them! Even for you, it was 'going some,' my dear! And then you ask me if I'm still angry! Besides, who's ever angry with you?"

"But the reason," she cried, "tiresome boy, you *will* keep ignoring the reason! I had monopolized you long enough, I was standing in your way, you were—too fond of me, dear! I was too old for you—how I hate saying that!—and you and Evelyn looked such sweets together!"

"Sweets!" he sneered. "Bob isn't too young, is he? Why don't you marry him off? He'd look sweet with some dear old lady, I'll bet!" he stormed.

Katherine smiled. "I'm thinking strongly of it! I even believe I've found the dear old lady! But don't tell him, he mustn't know yet."

"*Tell him?*" replied Jack. "Tell *him?* I never do anything but curse him when we meet—and then he begins to snicker and I'm so afraid I'll—kill him that I have to clear out! He's not worth risking the electric chair for!"

Suddenly they both laughed. They looked at each other tenderly.

"Jack," she said, "I'm glad it's Evelyn! I tell you frankly I couldn't have borne its being anyone else!"

"It couldn't be anyone else," he answered.

"I know it," she smiled, "she's the only girl—and you're the only Jack—and neither of you are very grateful to me, are you?"

"The only girl, the only girl," he grumbled. "What's that got to do with it anyhow? You're the only girl, too—and you're trying to chuck me, you know you are! Well, you won't succeed, that's all."

"Oh, how unjust!" She spoke these words so gently, so blissfully. "Just because I refuse to be a millstone round your dear neck! Say you're sorry, Jack! Or I shall have to kiss you before all those sweet, innocent little children, and poor, tired nurses!"

"If you do, I'll go and tell them—what we are to each other! Ah, you pale at the thought, don't you, shameless one! Katherine, Katherine, I believe you're going to marry Bob yourself, just as soon as I'm safely disposed of! That damned, damned Bob! And God help you both when I find out!"

"Jack," she said, "you're a fool and I simply adore you!"

She got up.

"I've got to go and try on those disgusting tweeds; and walking-boots! I wonder if any man realizes what a tragic thing it is to be a woman?"

"Some men realize what an extravagant thing it is, Katherine. You'll never wear the tweeds, you'll never walk a step in the boots."

"Never wear them? Never walk at Pretty Corner? Why, how can you say that, you, who have seen me there so many times!"

"Exactly," he answered.

She gathered up the dogs with a little shake of the two leashes. "He doesn't understand little muzzy, does he? Muzzy duzzy, muzzy duzzy! Oh, you lambs of Pokes! Jack, did you ever see such a sublime ménage? Every-

body stops me in the street to talk about them."

"I dare say," said Jack, looking at her hat, her eyes. "The blue feathers do match, Katherine. Did you leave an eye for a pattern?"

They passed the Museum and Katherine gazed intellectually at its stern walls.

"I always mean to go there some nice, rainy day, quite by myself, and spend a wonderful morning with great and beautiful things. Oh, how much good it is going to do me, Jack, and how I long for it!"

"You'd better take Bob with you. If he's old enough, that is," he jeered.

"I said quite by myself," she answered chastely, "that's the whole point. That's the splendid, mysterious way it's going to help me."

"I see," said Jack. They walked on in silence.

"When are you going to get married?" she asked suddenly.

"Ask Evelyn, my dear. Are you coming to the wedding, Katherine?"

She gave him a swift glance. At that moment their eyes were curiously alike.

"If I'm invited," she said lightly. "You old darling! Perhaps when I'm a—grandmother Evelyn won't be jealous of me any more!"

"Yes, she will," he answered, "more jealous, probably! You'll be such a wonderful grandmother! And I shall be more in love with you than ever!"

"My son!" said Katherine in a new and very wonderful voice; but the bubbles reasserted themselves, a whole rainbow series of them this time. "Jack, let's shock the nurses! Let's fairly flabbergast them! Kiss your poor old bedridden mother, my son, my darling, darling boy!"

And then, before the scandalized French governesses on the benches, an old man eating out of a paper bag and a harassed nurse trying to keep three children from quarreling over one skacycle, Jack put his arm around his mother and disappeared under the blue feathers.

The nurse looked after them, while

the largest of the three children kicked the smallest, pushed the other violently, and made off with the ska-cycle, unnoticed. "Well if that ain't the limut!

What's the idea?" she said to the old man with the paper bag.

"I should worry," he answered in a husky voice and went on eating stolidly.



LOOK NOT TO ME FOR WISDOM

By Charles Divine

LOOK not to me for wisdom,
 There's naught you shall be told;
 I make the moon my loving cup
 And toast the spilling gold.

Look not to me for wisdom—
 The cup is warm above,
 And I shall drink of kisses,
 So look to me for love.

When love speaks well of wisdom,
 Watch out, and guard your heart,
 O do not give it wholly,
 Or happiness depart.

For love with me is courage,
 A vagabond, a road,
 Two roving underneath the moon,
 And on their hearts no load.

For love with me is madness—
 Go to, who would be wise!—
 For O she talks of wisdom
 With challenge in her eyes.



A MAN'S age commands veneration. A woman's demands tact.



THE man who hesitates is lost; so is the woman who doesn't.

GROWING PAINS

By Milnes Levick

THE memory of his father was the abiding fact of his days. It gave a hallowing and precious meaning to the length of years; it rested upon him as a duty, a pleasant and manful task of fulfillment, and from it he drew the need of worthiness that was his stimulus and reward.

It was less a memory than a brave presence. He did not think about his father deliberately and with ordered processes, but lingered constantly in secret happy brooding. In the rebuffs and the elations of his shyness he turned toward him, finding a delight more subtly companionable even than in his mother. A complete and never-failing understanding laid its solace upon defeat and left his triumphs all the more for sharing them.

Often the ache to know the man that was his father walked beside the boy in solitary places and revealed to him the mysteriousness of life. At times it seemed as if an arm was round his shoulder . . . he had seen other fellows so, with their fathers. Often the presence was like a chum who answers when one shouts for joy at the smell of a meadow and capers with the tree-shadows upon the green sunlight of the grass.

At such moments the remembrance that it was but a presence would slip away from the fulness of his heart; the living knowledge was warm and palpable like the clasp of a hand. Then the inescapable fact would return like a gentle, smiling melancholy and with the sober acceptance of childhood he would look steadily upon the difference between his world and that of other boys. To do so made him happy with

unashamed selfishness. They did not have such fathers, these others. He could never tell them. They could not see. That was why he liked best to be alone; there was so much they could not understand.

There was a photograph. He would gaze at it a long while, holding it to the light in both hands, but he would not let anybody see him do this, not even his mother, so that no one could laugh at the carelessness he affected before others. Behind the retouched commonplaces of the print he sought for the reality, for the soul of the man, for those strange and pervading virtues of the hero. Sometimes he gazed till he was almost dizzy and it seemed that he stood before a door that was about to open, disclosing the glorious beyond that would explain to a single glance. . . .

There was so little that he could really remember. His father used to laugh; yes. It seemed as if he was full of pranks. The farthest memory he could reach back to was of his father: his stubbly beard, with little specks of red in the light on the blonde bristles. It scratched. Not the way a hair-brush does: he had tried that and it was not like his father's beard. He could feel it now, just as it used to be when he was little. He would scream as if it hurt and his father would laugh and put him down on the floor, holding him with both hands. He must have been a jolly one. He laughed a lot. No one else laughed the way he did . . . in these memories. And there were the little paper boats and the rows of paper dolls, all holding hands, and the cast-iron fire engine. His father had

fixed it when it broke. He fixed it with a penknife. A knife with a pearl handle and a corkscrew. It was wonderful what he could do with that knife.

Only sometimes he used to come home late, when he was sick, and then he would lie down. It was just as plain now: his father, the couch, the whole dark room and the smell of it.

But it was clearer when he thought of him at play. His father would run after him and he would pretend to get frightened . . . did he pretend?—little fool! And his mother would hide him. She had a place in the games, too. His father would run after her. Sometimes she would go out into the garden and take him. It was hide and seek, she said. Other fathers didn't play hide and seek. Once he fell asleep with her in the garden. It was funny to look back: he did not think of himself as just a baby, but grown as big as now. . . . His father never seemed to win in these games of hide and seek.

He sought eagerly for recollections and was fascinated by the development of his own memory. He counted the years proudly. So many he could remember: five, six, maybe more. In another five he would be able to look back and say, "Ten years ago . . ."

He liked to talk of old times to his mother, of the penknife, the games. She did not seem to want to talk about it. Of course, that was because his father was her husband and he was dead. Folks used to say good people who were dead were in heaven, but now they didn't believe in heaven, like that. Still, he was dead and up there, somewhere.

He wanted his mother to tell him everything about his father: what he did, the things he said, how he proposed to her. He suggested these things with laughter to hide his timidity. He was proud that he could share in her past.

One day she turned from her sewing-machine and asked: "Do you really remember the hide and seek?"

"Of course." Remember? It was

like asking if he remembered he had a nose.

"You were so little."

"It was a long time ago, wasn't it? I remember lots of things—way back."

"You're a big boy now." She looked at him steadily, a little quizzically.

"Nine, going on ten." This was his formula. He liked to use it jestingly because he took pride in his knowledge of the redundancy.

"You're old enough to know a good many things."

He waited: the cryptic words sent a little thrill of chivalric initiation through him.

"Things you'll have to know." She seemed to be talking to herself. She hesitated, and then went on almost tonelessly, drawing him to her and smoothing his hair as if he were a very little boy. "You've spoken so many times of the hide and seek, how you and I used to hide in the garden. Well, . . . it wasn't a game."

He did not understand. He pondered upon the words: not a game. Their meaning glanced from the armor of his ideal.

"He wasn't playing, dear, when he did that. . . . It was only when he'd been drinking. . . . We had to hide."

The odor of the darkened room with the couch came swiftly to him. He had never connected that odor with his father. It had always been an unexplained, unthought of similarity. All at once he knew. Many thoughts came rushing and sprang to their places in a new conception.

. . . He mustn't let her see. He turned his head quickly and his teeth clenched. He walked slowly. The world weighed tangibly upon him from all sides and its pressure steadied, helped him on. The rooms were so big now; they swam. The photograph . . . He looked at it, without touching it. It was all blurred. Then it got clearer. He looked a long time. It remained hard and firm and lifeless, just the picture of a man. And he knew the little door would never open. There was no beyond.

LES CRÊPES

By Henri Allorge

LE bureau de copies de Mme. Lhermitte était fort achalandé. C'est qu'elle travaillait dur, ainsi que ses aides, Mlles. Juliette, Suzanne et Mme. Marthe. On avait l'habitude de ne désigner les dactylographes que par leurs prénoms. Et les clients eux-mêmes suivaient cet usage,—oh! en tout bien tout honneur, car, s'il était permis de badiner, il ne fallait pas dépasser certaines limites.

Seul, un jeune préparateur à l'école de pharmacie, M. Gaston Sarrazin, aimait à plaisanter innocemment avec Mme. Lhermitte et ses jolies auxiliaires. Il leur donnait à copier des travaux arides.

— Bah! disait-il, vous n'êtes pas forcées de savoir la chimie, heureusement pour vous!

Et il contait, car il s'était spécialisé dans l'étude des fraudes alimentaires, quelles épouvantables falsifications il constatait chaque jour.

Assez, assez! criait en vain Mme. Lhermitte; vous allez nous couper l'appétit et nous empêcher de dîner.

— Eh! eh! ce serait le seul moyen pour vous d'éviter l'ingéniosité des fraudeurs.

Et il partait en riant.

Or, les jours gras approchaient. Pour donner à ses aides surmenées un peu de repos et de distraction, Mme. Lhermitte les invita à venir déjeuner et dîner avec elle en famille. On ferait des crêpes.

Ainsi en fut-il décidé. Une pancarte avertit les visiteurs éventuels que le bureau de copies serait fermé l'après-midi.

Après le déjeuner, on s'occupa de confectionner la pâte, qui, savamment composée, devait reposer jusqu'au soir.

Une grande soupière fut remplie de la mixture jaunâtre, que la charmante Juliette se mit en devoir de remuer.

Comme elle était dans tout le feu de cet utile travail, un léger coup de sonnette retentit.

— Qui peut venir à cette heure? murmura Mme. Lhermitte. La pancarte indique bien pourtant que le bureau est fermé. Ne répondons pas!

Mais un second coup de sonnette, fort, décidé, autoritaire, se fit entendre. Pour le coup, les dactylographes émues s'enfuirent. Seule, la soupière resta immobile, et pour cause.

Cependant, Mme. Lhermitte interpellait ses employées.

— Juliette, Suzanne, Mme. Marthe! Il faut aller ouvrir! . . . N'y allez pas toutes à la fois!

Aucune ne bougeait, quoique la sonnette carillonnât maintenant sans arrêt.

Enfin, Mme. Marthe, à contre-cœur, se dévoua. Elle ouvrit et M. Gaston entra, souriant.

— Enfin! Ce n'est pas malheureux! s'écria-t-il. J'ai une erreur à corriger sur mon manuscrit; c'est pourquoi je suis venu. Mais vous êtes seule? ajouta-t-il.

Mme. Lhermitte, en effet, aussi confuse que ses aides, avait disparu.

Soudain, le chimiste aperçut la majestueuse soupière, trônant sur le bureau.

Oh! oh! fit-il, je crois que vous me faites concurrence.

Des rires fusèrent à travers une porte; puis un minois chiffonné se montra. C'était Juliette. Derrière elle, rentra timidement Suzanne, puis la maîtresse du lieu, toutes trois se tenant les côtes.

— Au premier examen, continua M. Sarrazin, j'inclinerais à croire que ce récipient contient de la terre glaise bien malaxée . . . ou de la colle de pâte colorée à l'ocre jaune, ou bien encore.

— Oh! fit Mlle. Juliette, scandalisée, en brandissant sa louche, n'avez-vous pas honte de calomnier ainsi la pâte à crêpes, que nous avons si habilement composée!

— Ne croyez pas que ce mélange soit irréprochable! Je vois, à la couleur, que votre farine contient une forte proportion de carbonate de chaux; que votre lait a été fabriqué avec de la cervelle de cheval; que vos œufs même étaient artificiels. Vous savez que plusieurs grandes usines, en Amérique, fabriquent des œufs par millions. . . .

— Voulez-vous bien vous taire! s'écria Mme. Lhermitte.

— Eh! dit Suzanne, pour vous punir, nous mangerons nos crêpes sans vous, et elles seront exquis.

— Oh! je ne tiens pas à m'empoisonner. Grand bien vous fasse! Mais j'allais oublier le but de ma visite.

— Croyez-vous par hasard, demanda Mme. Lhermitte, que nous allons travailler un mardi-gras pour vos-beaux yeux?

— Ne dites pas de mal de mes yeux, surtout devant ces demoiselles!

— Oh! dit Juliette, vos yeux nous indiffèrent. Ce n'est pas pour nous qu'ils brillent!

— Qu'en savez-vous? risqua M. Gaston, en envoyant à la jolie copiste une ceillade.

Et il avança la main pour pincer le bras nu de Juliette; mais celle-ci, qui avait repris la louche, lui en donna sur les doigts un coup qui les lui englua de pâte.

— Là, dit-elle, comme cela vous en analyserez un échantillon, si vous voulez.

— Vous voilà puni de vos mauvaises paroles, dit Mme. Lhermitte. Quant à votre copie, si vous voulez repasser ce soir, après dîner, peut-être sera-t-elle terminée malgré tout, par faveur toute spéciale.

M. Gaston revint le soir; on le força de goûter aux crêpes, qu'il trouva excellentes.

— Ce n'est pas mauvais, n'est-ce pas, dit Juliette, pour du carbonate de chaux assaisonné de cervelle de cheval et d'ocre jaune?

Mais les crêpes avaient une autre vertu. Quelques mois après, le jeune pharmacien épousa la gentille dactylographe.



THERE are two kinds of advantageous matches: those in which the girl is pretty and has a million dollars, and those in which she is homely and has a million dollars.



KIMONO: an article of apparel figuring chiefly in divorce suits.



ALL women love brutal men—if their husbands are kind.



ROOF SHOWS

By George Jean Nathan

THAT such roof music shows as Mr. Ziegfeld's "Midnight Frolic" and Mr. Gest's "Century Whirl" would be more advantageously placed were they moved downstairs into the theaters proper and that such theater dramatic productions as, say, Mr. Morosco's "Cappy Ricks" and Mr. Belasco's "Daddies" would similarly be benefited were they moved upstairs onto the roof, I begin to persuade myself. I speak, of course, not so much from the purely critical point of view as from that of the practical theater: for from this latter point of view the gain in such a shuffling of the deck is not difficult of deduction.

Let us consider, first, the roof music shows. After reviewing a dozen or more of these amiable pastimes in the last few years, I have on each occasion been brought to the conclusion that they largely defeat themselves in the very business of polite aphrodisiac wherewith they seek to cater. The reason is simple enough. The success of the music show stage—the stage of the "Black Crooks" of yesterday and the "Follies" of today—is predicated on the polite sensual allure of that stage. And the polite sensual allure of that stage is predicated, in turn, on the eternal allure of what seems to be remote and unattainable. Or in another phrase, what seems to be illusory and esoteric. What we engage here is the same thing that the late Charles Frohman accurately appreciated as obtaining in a measure in the dramatic theater; the same thing, indeed, that the equally astute Mr. Belasco appreciates today. It was Frohman's injunction to his leading women players, as it is Belasco's in this day, ever to keep them-

selves aloof from the public eye and thus ever to make of themselves piquing and mysterious figures. "Never allow yourself to be seen on the street—above all, never on Broadway. When you go out, use a closed cab. Do not allow yourself to be seen in public restaurants. But if you must dine out, make it Sherry's. And never allow yourself to be seen with an actor." That was, in part, the shrewd Frohman's dictum. That, in essence, is the dictum, in part, of the equally shrewd Belasco. When one young leading woman one day disregarded the Frohman edict and hoofed Broadway, Frohman promptly got rid of her. (She has never since, incidentally, been successful.) When one somewhat older leading woman one day disobeyed the Belasco command and became fiancée to an ex-actor, Belasco promptly released her from his management. (And she, too, incidentally, has never since been successful.)

The sensual horse-power of a music show is obviously diminished in the degree that the girls are brought into proximity with the gentlemen sitters. In the downstairs theaters, this is very clearly to be observed in a comparison of the "Follies" and its distant stage with the Winter Garden and its relatively intimate runway. In the roof theaters, this horse-power is reduced to what approaches a vanishing point by bringing the girls so close to the audience that barely a trace of illusion remains. The girls who adorn the remote stage of the Ambassadeurs in Paris get the snooping American pew-holder by the ear; the same girls, dancing familiarly at close range in the garden between the acts, merely bring him to uncork a blue chuckle. The stage of

the Hofoperntheater of Vienna, commonly agreed by visiting connoisseurs to hold the fairest and most fetching wenches in the world, is farther removed from the audience than any other music show stage in the world. . . .

Any music show, however poor, is a certain success the male members of whose audience go their several ways at the fall of the final curtain individually wishing that they had the telephone number of this or that particular baby. (I appreciate that this isn't precisely the sort of criticism deeply admired by the Drama League Ilidors but, as every music show producer knows, it is true.) And the hankering for this connection is plainly more fully cultivated by the distance-lends-enchancement stratagem of the downstairs stage than by the present misguided roof move of bringing the pseudo-lovely one within such close range that the Louisville and Allentown admirers may cruelly assess the mirage in terms of devastating grease paint, moles, gilt teeth, loud perfumery, stocking seams and hooks and eyes. The most beautiful woman's beauty diminishes in the degree that it comes toward the male eye; the most beautiful woman in the world, scanned nose to nose, betrays previously unsuspected and discordant blemishes. And—"*les illusions ne sont-elles pas la fortune du coeur?*"

But where this intimacy is highly damaging to the music show, it is precisely the reverse in the instance of drama. If the remote Hofoperntheater stage has been an extraordinarily prosperous music show stage by very reason of its remoteness from the stalls, the remote late New Theater stage was an extraordinarily unprosperous dramatic stage by very same reason of its equal remoteness from the stalls. And since the modern practical dramatic theater has increased its fortunes as it has more and more increased the intimacy of its dramatic stage and auditorium—going back, in this, to the auspicious principles of antecedent centuries—one cannot but believe that, still speaking practically, this theater might not aug-

ment its financial fortunes even more by developing the intimacy to an even greater degree.

When Mr. Belasco produces a dramatic piece like "Daddies," it is assuredly reasonable to assume that Mr. Belasco does so purely and simply to make money. To believe that Mr. Belasco believes that a play like "Daddies" is an art-work and that its presentation will enhance his standing in the art world, is a gooseberry too sour to suck. Therefore, since the question is primarily one of boodle, it is an eminently safe assumption to believe that "Daddies," were it presented on a roof, would prove not only a much more amusing show than it proves to be downstairs, but that, hence, by way of predicate, it would make much more money than it makes downstairs. And why? Firstly, because it would on the roof still appeal to all the same sentimentalists who admire it in the more austere nether confines of Thespis and, secondly, because it would on the roof further appeal to all those who have no relish for its diabetic pollyannaism as it is currently presented. And why again? Because while those persons who presently admire it downstairs would admire it equally upstairs, those persons who presently do not admire it downstairs would find it a great diversion upstairs where—following the Ziegfeld and Gest roof idea—they might throw balls at the actors, ring bells when the dialogue became too swashy and squirt siphons at the diabolically cute stage children.

Aside from the undeniable facts that such plays as "Daddies"—and there are dozens of them along Broadway—would profit more with roof audiences who were somewhat squiffed than with the cold sober downstairs shoppers, would make a better impression, and would hence be doubly successful, these plays—were they moved up to the roofs and made the subject of characteristic roof *divertissement*—would by this change in projection draw to them the large number of persons who cannot stomach their idiotic *uplifterei* in its

current condition of presentation. A man who presently couldn't be drawn in to see a piece like "Daddies" with a halter would be delighted to see it on the New Amsterdam or Century roof where, when Mr. John Cope, *aetat* fifty-one, comes out in the rôle of a college boy, he might stop eating his chop suey long enough to throw a cane ring over Mr. Cope's ear or where, when Mr. Bruce McRae as a great novelist observes that he must hurry up work on the last chapters of his serial since otherwise George Horace Lorimer will have to hold up the presses of the *Saturday Evening Post*, he might, in the playwright's absence, in-curve one of the cotton balls against the M. McRae's aft-pant.

II

LOOK at the situation honestly, without hypocrisy, and tell me if eight out of every ten of the so-called straight plays annually uncovered along Broadway might not thus be made much more enjoyable and profitable. I do not refer, plainly enough, to the respectable play that every once in a while contrives to show its head above the Rialto slopjar, but to the omnipresent exhibition of purely commercial showshop accent. Thus, such a play as "Just Around the Corner" that lasts a scant week in the dramatic rathskeller and induces a mental morbus might upstairs prove a gay diversion and last many months. For here was excellent roof material gone to waste. Picture the pleasure that the theatergoing public might gain by ringing the table gongs on such venerable Hobart *mots* as the best book to be had in the small town being a mileage book back to New York, alluding to the sheriff as Mr. Marshall and, upon one character's mistaking Pompeii for a man, causing another to observe that he died of an eruption! Picture the immense enjoyment to be procured from using the little wooden hammers on such goatee'd hokums as the man kissing the wrong girl in the dark, the repentant youth

from the Reformatory upon whom suspicion of robbing the safe is made cruelly to rest, and the climacteric nosing out of the rich villain by the poor pure young heroine! True enough, one would wear out one's right arm, but think of the fun.

Take other downstairs plays. Even a play of infinitely better grade, such as "Molière," would be improved by the change. For in the instance of a play of this better kidney the performance on the floor in the very midst of the roof audience would relieve the present performance of much of its hurtful chill. The effect, on the intimate roof floor, would be to bring the audience out of its present twentieth century mood and, by the curious familistère potency of theatricalism, make it in spirit part of the court about the fourteenth Louis. There would be no loss of respect for the text, but a subconsciously provoked gain in respect. This trick, in small measure, was utilized by Granville Barker in his staging of the induction to Shaw's "Fanny's First Play." Reinhardt, on a large scale, executed the same plan with great success in his Kammerspielhaus when, on one occasion seven years ago, by carrying the scenic decorations and lighting out into the auditorium he literally contrived to lift his audiences bodily over into the milieu of the dramatic characters. In Japan, of course, the scheme is familiar. And William A. Brady, in this country, tried out the idea very happily in the last act of "Pretty Peggy" when, by filling a portion of the orchestra chairs with supers in costume, he converted the balance of the audience into actors in the scene.

Some years ago, I read in an Italian periodical devoted to the stage a somewhat analogous suggestion as to vaudeville. The critic here contended that the trouble with vaudeville was that the vaudeville audience was ever shortsightedly regarded as of the same complexion as the dramatic audience, whereas it must be plain even to the most eminent Drama Leaguer that the two audiences are of as diverse species.

as jackass and owl. The Italian critic maintained, therefore, that since vaudeville audiences are very largely of a piece with the kind of yokels who, in our country, merrily spend their holidays in the so-called Steeplechase parks getting deathly sick on roller coasters, fracturing their ribs in revolving barrels and catching pneumonia by standing agape in a mechanically operated blast of wind that blows hats off and skirts up—that, since this is the case, vaudeville audiences should be handled in a similar vein by the vaudeville impresarios. To make vaudeville doubly enjoyable to these persons, argued the critic, the chairs in a vaudeville dive should be so built that they would drolly collapse when sat upon, that the hat holders under the seats should impart electric shocks, that the ventilators under the chairs should at unexpected intervals squirt streams of water into the faces of the sitters, and so on.

But to return to the roof music shows. That these shows would be measurably better placed in the downstairs theaters must be apparent to anyone who has sat critically before them. One goes to a music show, obviously enough, not to hear, as in the case of a dramatic piece, but to see. Therefore, where in the potential instance of a roof-presented dramatic piece like, let us say, "The Burgomaster of Belgium," it would not matter much whether one saw the actors or not so long as one could hear what they were up to, in the instance of one of the current roof-presented music shows it quite as certainly does matter. That these music shows would be better placed in a downstairs theater where one's view of Lillian Lorraine was not periodically cut off by the migratory hinter anatomy of a fat Swiss waiter and one's pleasurable appraisal of Mollie King every other minute interrupted by the moving across the vision of the ambulatory person of a Roumanian bus boy, no one can well contradict. When—as I have often written—I am courteously invited by the management of roof music show to inspect Martha

Mansfield or Rosie Quinn and then, just as the lovely virgins shoot out onto the floor, my eye meets instead with the enormous posterior of a roving garçon, I am intelligibly provoked.

When I visit a roof show—and I presume that I am not much different from other men—I visit it primarily not to hear the so-called music, nor listen to such accompanying rhymes as "A sweet French grisett-a, whose name it is Yetta," nor envisage tableaux disclosing a scowling chorus man in a red undershirt and placarded "The Spirit of Anarchy," but merely and purely, plainly and simply, to look over the girls. And when my eye is caressed by a creature sufficiently fetching to take my thoughts for the moment off such of my habitual ruminations as the occlusion of the aqueduct of Sylvius in relation to hydrocephalus, or the question of orokinase and ptyalin in the saliva of the horse, I don't wish to be interrupted. It is distressing to go to a roof with the notion of getting the little Quinn and her shimmy dance to rid the tired mind of speculations on the phenolsulphonephthalein test and its application to surgical diseases of the kidneys, or with the intention of getting the Mlle. King's pretty legs to make one agreeably forget for the nonce such workaday problems as the genetic study of plant height in *phaseolus vulgaris*, to say nothing of the notion of summability for the limit of a function of a continuous variable, and then find that at the Miss King's very first knee exposé or the Miss Quinn's second wiggle a nomadic chow main butler, cigar vivandière or wine-pail porter is shutting the gentle houri from view.

The august Professor Brander Matthews may rather look at Holbrook Blinn than at Betty Allan, but I call upon such of my somewhat softer arteried friends as the Professors William Lyon Phelps and Archibald Henderson to lift their right hands to the ceiling, smack the Book, face the jury, and solemnly on their sacred words of honour swear that they would do likewise.

III

WHAT I observed a few months ago in relation to Maurice Maeterlinck, the Belgian Amy Lowell, has been conveniently emphasized anew for me by Maeterlinck himself in his latest drama, "The Burgomaster of Stilemonde" (locally presented as "The Burgomaster of Belgium"). Whatever his debatable eminence in the world of letters, there can remain increasingly small doubt that in the world of drama Maeterlinck's position—save in the minor instances of three one-act plays—has been absurdly overestimated.

To this overestimate, various easily appraisable things have conduced. Literary critics, whose delusion that any short novel with the descriptions printed in italics, the dialogue indented and the names of the characters centered constitutes an actable play, have mistaken such of his typographically mis-set, if in this instance extremely praiseworthy, novels as "Pélléas and Mélisande" for effective theater drama—when, presented as a play without the blood transfusion of music, the composition actually constitutes acting drama in the same degree that Fouillée's psychological treatise, "Tempéramente et Caractère," constitutes a novel. Further, the sedulously cultivated and craftily promulgated picturesqueness of the man himself and of his life have operated—very much as the same thing operated on a much smaller scale in the case of the late Richard Harding Davis—toward the confounding of values that habitually infects all the numerous impressible swallows of magnificent hocus-pocus. Again further, the first and largely unweighed (if at the time understandable) enthusiasms of such first-rate literary critics as Huneker contrived to affect and dazzle—as is the wont of literary criticism—much of the subsequent dramatic criticism. And further still, the man himself struck almost at the outset of his career the extreme good fortune of falling in with, and being personally liked by, a noteworthy group of French boosters. This

group literally "made" Maeterlinck in the same uncritical way that, on a lower level in the England of today, Swinerton's and Merrick's close friends are doing their damndest to "make" them.

Maeterlinck's latest dramatic effort, named above, is in the most liberal estimate merely second-rate Broadway melodrama. The name and fame of its author, of course, have as usual taken the local criticism by the nose and there has been the customary attempt to ferret out absent virtues. The work is without drama or literary distinction. Mr. Edward Sheldon, a Broadway playwright, could have written the play better than Maeterlinck has written it: not only from the point of view of actable drama but, I venture to say, from the point of view of literature. Had "The Burgomaster of Belgium" been signed with the name of Max Marcin, for instance, it would have been jestingly charged with all the manifold imperfections which, since it has been signed with the name of Maeterlinck, have been stereotypedly and solemnly accepted as cardinal excellences.

Mr. E. Lyall Swete, a bah-Jove cockney Londoner, was drolly revealed in the rôle of the Flemish burgomaster.

IV

"TUMBLE IN" is a musical comedy the libretto of which was derived from a farce of seven years ago which was derived in turn from a novel of eight years ago which was derived in turn from a magazine serial of nine years ago, embroidered with tunes derived from various Princess Theater musical comedies of three and four years ago, and further embellished with such jocosities as are derived from allusions to poison ivy, the nervous fat comedian's lugubrious observation that he feels six men will presently be walking very slowly behind him, and the mistaking of a reference to ghostly spirits for a reference to alcoholic spirits—and with such innovations as a wedding ceremony danced to ragtime and a comedienne who, upon drinking a small

pony of whiskey, becomes instantaneously tipsy. This modernity, however, has not seemed to militate in the least against the success of the exhibit.

"Luck in Pawn," by Marvin Taylor, is a thin musical comedy libretto presented as a straight comedy. Amateurishly written and witless, it is one of those stereotyped affairs wherein, before a character can fully introduce another character to a third character, the third character exclaims, "Oh, so this is your uncle!" and wherein, before the latter can in turn protest, the third character chatters on "Now don't say no; you simply *must* join us on our yachting party."

"A Good Bad Woman," by William Anthony McGuire, is flimsy anti-abortion propaganda by a playwright who evidently has a bust of Brieux on the bookcase.

"Papa," by the talented Miss Zoe Akins, at length produced in the theater—and completely botched—is the best Continental farce comedy ever written by an American. Since its appearance in book form in 1913, I have written of it so much and so often that there remains little for me to say. To repeat in a sentence: it is a play drolly conceived, smartly executed, worldly, witty and consistently amusing.

"Take It From Me," a show by the Messrs. Johnstone and Anderson, is—in the phrase of Mr. Archibald Van Rensselaer Selwyn—"Listen Lester" set to music.

V

EACH more recent successive play of Miss Rachel Crothers marks a downward step in her career as a dramatic artist and an upward step in her career as a box-office artisan. That this descent is, however, to some degree the result of premeditation, that the playwright is ever considerably better than her play, is fairly obvious. But that the teeth of Broadway are gradually biting and chewing so deep into her artistic conscience that in a year or so that conscience will bear the proud aspect of

a Hamburger steak is quite as apparent. For more and more all that was of sound accent in the Crothers work is disappearing and its place being taken by the adroitly manipulated but intrinsically cheap and trashy jig and jargon of the yokel stage.

First in "A Little Journey" and now in "39 East," it has been made further evident that the immediate enterprise of Miss Crothers rests in the attempt to adapt the technic of Clare Kummer to such tastes as find that technic too subtle and delicate. Miss Crothers, observing the limited appeal of the Kummer representations, has elected herself a hokum syringe and, her eye doubtless glittering at her own sagacity, has gone after the big trade by expeditiously eliminating the pretty humour, easy sentiment and simple grace from the Kummer technic and supplanting them, respectively, with B. F. Keith wheezes on Kansas, bad eggs and chorus girls' motor cars and diamonds, with Marcus Loew sentimentalisms on spring flowers, women's chastity and the moon, and with such Pantages jazbos as the girl who, though she loves a man deeply, breaks into tears and drops her head in great humiliation when he dares offer her modesty the affront of kissing her. The deliberateness of this general enterprise of Miss Crothers is especially noticeable in her most recently presented play. The fable is, in essence, that of Miss Kummer's "Be Calm, Camilla." The treatment is, in essence, that of the chiropractic school of playwriting: the kneading and pummeling of every bone in the play with such painful thoroughness and pressure that the play, though ostensibly treated for hysteria and enjoyed by the playwright to remain relaxed and quiet, becomes twice as unruly and hysterical as it was originally.

"39 East" is not so much the result of a study of human nature, as has been claimed for it in certain critical quarters, as the result of a study of actors. For every flash of the observing Crothers of other days—the Crothers of "Old Lady 31," for example, or of

"The Three of Us"—there are a dozen examples of the inferior Crothers of today: the Crothers who, brazenly rattling the thirty pieces of silver in her fist, sells her artistic soul to the box-office with low-comedy renditions of "Rocked in the Cradle of the Deep," venerable jokes on boarding-house fodder and the Mayflower, lachrymose trepidations over the danger that confronts virtuous young girls in New York, and such rubber-stamp Gus Hill characters as the acridulous spinster who sits with her hands crossed over her middle and snaps out sarcastic remarks, the comic Irish policeman, the flirtatious widow who is constantly dropping something for the men to pick up, the Italian who longs sentimentally for his sun-kissed native land, the portly negro serving maid who says "Lawdy" and elaborately rolls her eyes when slightly alarmed, the boarding-house madame in the maroon plush dress who speaks of her aristocratic forebears. . . .

On the other hand, there is a suggestion of the better and finer Crothers in the drawing of two sex-starved old maids, in the composition of the love scene between the young people in the first act, and in the writing of the brief scene between the landlady and the young girl (in design somewhat similar to a scene in her locally unproduced play, "He and She") in the final act.

The play has been dexterously staged by the author and is in the main very skilfully presented. The performances of Blanche Friderici, Alison Skipworth, Lucia Moore, Albert Carroll, Edith Gresham and Mildred Arden are particularly praiseworthy, though the credit here doubtless rests in great measure upon the uncommonly careful casting and direction of Miss Crothers. Mr. Henry Hull and Miss Constance Binney have the leading roles. Mr. Hull ranks considerably above the customary obscene juvenile. Miss Binney gives a very good account of herself for one with so little experience, but she is much too fat and dumpy for such

wistful, helpless, sentimental roles as this.

VI

SEM BENELLI's grand opera without music, "La Cena della Beffe," reaches the American stage through an adroit English version by Edward Sheldon named "The Love Feast," derived from the somewhat laborious French translation of Jean Richepin named "La Beffa." Rechristened "The Jest" by Arthur Hopkins, the exhibit is revealed as "theater" to the n-th: Sardou on the trombone with D'Annunzio at the drums. Undeniably effective and not without a considerable measure of luscious phrase and swaggering situation, the play is yet intrinsically but a flord weaving of such familiar brocades as "She answered, telling me to come at sundown to her garden gate beyond the city walls," . . . "Today, when fair Aurora with her rosy fingers drew back the sable curtains of the night," . . . and "We are two birds caught in the same net; they have broken our wings; we shall never fly to God's blue heaven again": the modern Italian drama of the imitators of the French romantic drama of thirty-five and forty years ago rather than the modern more independent Italian drama of Giacosa and Rovetta, Martini and del Testa.

Above the gaudy strut and roll of the manuscript—the play in this late hour periodically provokes amiable recollections of Devilshoof, Loris Ipanoff, the Duke de Gonzague, Scarpia, Mazzeppa, Premislas and proscenium drop curtains emblazoned with the tableau showing Nero fiddling at the burning of Rome—lifts brilliantly the admirable Hopkins production: still another attestation to this man's incontrovertible position at the head of American producers. The two central roles, in the hands of the brothers Barrymore, are well played—in the instance of the brother Lionel, particularly well played; though the Ginevra of Miss Hanaford scarcely suggests the Florentine "velvet bosom and slim ivory shanks" of the partly expurgated text.

THE INFERNAL MYSTERY

By H. L. Mencken

I

THE parlous state of Christian theology, emerging from the war with two black eyes, both ears in tatters and its tail cut off, summons all the divines and metaphysicians of the Western world to a sort of death-bed autopsy or preliminary coroner's inquest, the double aim of which is (a) to find out how it came to be so badly hurt, and (b) to bind up its wounds before it bleeds to death. As a relief from the serious business of editing a great family magazine I often turn to theological books and periodicals as to jazz music after a fugue. During the first year of the war they were full of a somewhat florid optimism. The butchery, it was argued, would inevitably focus the thoughts of men upon things post-mortem, and so greatly promote the trade of dogmatic theology. More, there was direct evidence that the business was already under weigh. British soldiers, waiting to go over the top, dropped to their knees in prayer; chaplains were no longer assaulted with half-bricks and spit-blowers; whole battalions began to see angels in the air. Much congratulatory slapping of backs ensued among the men of God. The war, they rejoiced, was giving the death-blow to materialism, Darwinism, rationalism; the men of all the Allied armies were going back to simple faith; a new day had come to rosy dawn. But then, via the impartial journalists of Copenhagen, Amsterdam and Zürich, came news that the German and Austrian soldiers were praying the same prayers to the same God, and cultivating their spiritual advisers in the same way, and seeing the same angels in the *smoke of battle*—and so doubts began

to penetrate the theologians, and presently those doubts resolved themselves into disquieting certainties, and before long the whole tone of pious speculation changed, and there was no more congratulation, but only a dull feeling that the bottom had dropped out of something or other, and that measures would have to be taken to save the faith from complete collapse.

That collapse, I am inclined to think, is now developing and revealing itself. What remains of historical Christianity, both as theology and as ethic, is in the sad state of demoralization and reorganization. No matter how much a man on one side may try to convince himself that divine intercession followed the prayers offered on that side, he must always collide with the fact that it went against the equally ardent and copious prayers offered on the other side. And no matter how much an advocate of Christian ethics may argue that they are psychologically workable and divinely true, he must always stand refuted by the fact that they proved wholly unworkable and humanly false when put to the test on a large scale. What the war teaches, in brief, is that the ideal Christian scheme of things, however charming in theory, is quite impossible in practice. It is humanly impracticable to prevail by meekness; it is humanly dangerous to rely upon virtue and prayer; it is humanly impossible to love one's enemies. The very effort, in fact, is full of peril. Essayng the thing, endeavoring honestly to do what is against nature, the poor experimentalist ends by yielding to nature more violently than one who has never tried. If one would observe hatred raised to the intensity of a path-

ological passion, if one would behold Christian ethics blown up by the very forces they are relied upon to hold in leash, then one needs but glance at any one of a score or so of eminent British and American (to say nothing of German) ecclesiastics—honest men, men of good intent, men who preached the gospel of brotherhood and forgiveness in all candor until the pressure got too much for them, but now, with the lid banged off, as whoopish and implacable as so many dervishes. These are salient specimens; lower down there are less conspicuous millions. After nineteen hundred years of Christian precept and example, Christendom is in such a state that it makes heathens shudder. And this infernal outbreak of the Old Adam is not only between race and race; it is also between man and man. In every Christian country in the world at this moment half of the people hate the other half with a bitter and merciless hatred. Only Turks, cynics and atheists remain serene.

The blame, I believe, lies upon injudicious suppressions, upon fantoddish efforts to make men too good. Christianity originated among a people forced into an unhealthy resignationism by long-continued helplessness. You will find the whole process described in the books of the late F. W. Nietzsche, or, if Nietzsche is forbidden by your pastor, in Sir John R. Seeley's "The Expansion of England." That resignationism sufficed those early Christians; more, it protected and prospered them. But it is not only inadequate to the needs of the chief Christian races of today; it is fundamentally in conflict with their most characteristic instincts and aspirations. They are races full of self-consciousness, egoism, the will to power. They crave, not security here and hereafter, but elbow-room, dominion, a chance to function. What has filled them with that craving is the new sense of nationalism. When the old nationalism died out, with the decay of Rome, the Western world was ripe for Christianity. But when the new nationalism arose, with the first death tremors

of the Holy Roman Empire, Christianity ceased to be grounded upon fact, and so became, not a source of strength, but a sort of disease. It was as if men had agreed to assume, for some occult purpose, that two and two were five. They remained four all the while, and in the end their intrinsic and eternal fourness asserted itself by catastrophe. The Germans, always radicals in theology, began overhauling the old ethics of Christianity half a century ago. Characteristically, they did it with too little regard for the feelings of more conservative folks, and so it helped to get them into trouble. But a mistake will be made if the unpleasantness of some of their doctrines is mistaken for unsoundness. What they obviously groped for was an ethic that was not idealistic, but realistic—an ethic grounded, not upon the dire needs of weak and forgotten peoples, but upon the powerful impulses and antagonisms of races in the full flush of strength. Sufficiently crushed and so made hopeless, the Germans would become Christians again, as they were in the seventeenth century. But they were surely not Christians when they began their stupendous *Vormarsch*. Nor is there anything colorably resembling Christianity on tap among their chief foes today, say the French and Italians.

II

Well, what is to take the place of this moribund faith? Various proposals appear in current books. Alexander Kadison, in "Through Agnostic Spectacles" (*Truth Seeker Co.*), argues for the abandonment of religion altogether, and the restoration of the Goddess of Reason. Stanwood Cobb, in "The Essential Mysticism" (*Four Seas*), makes an eloquent plea for a theology purged of anthropomorphism and supernaturalism—in brief, for communion with the Eternal without the intervention of messiahs, saints, prophets, priests and all the rest of the historical stock company. Roy Wood Sellars, in "The Next Step in Religion" (*Macmillan*) makes a plea for humanism—religion trans-

formed from the contemplation of God into the service of man. And so on and so on; such books pile up almost like war novels. Do they meet the emergency? Do they solve the problem? I doubt it. All of them are based upon one or other of a series of fallacies. One is the fallacy of assuming that when the substance of a religion is abandoned all of it is abandoned—that it may be put off like a worn-out garment, and another put on. This is not true; the old garment is always patched, and though the patches may grow larger and larger, something of the form always remains. Another is the fallacy of assuming that the theology and the ethics of a religion are indistinguishable, or, at all events, inextricable, and that one may serve in place of the other. A third is the fallacy of assuming that a religion fit for one people is fit for some other people, and that what is fit for part of a people is fit for all of them.

These fallacies, and others like them, are responsible for much of the loose thinking on the subject that now shows itself—on the one hand, the doctrine that Christianity will profit by a reaction from the current realism and so enjoy a new birth, and on the other hand the doctrine that it will presently succumb altogether as the last of the great Western religions and give way to universal skepticism. Unless I err as greatly as the prophets, neither of these things will happen. Christianity, for all its wounds, will not die; even its forms will not die; the forms, indeed, will preserve what remains of the substance. Of all religions ever devised by man, it is the one that offers, so to speak, the most for the least money to the average man of our time. This man may be very briefly described. He has enough education to make him view all religions somewhat critically, to make him competent to weigh and estimate them, particularly in terms of their capacity to meet his own problems—but not enough to analyze the concepts underlying them. Such an analysis leads inevitably to agnosticism; a man who

once reaches the point of examining religions as psychological phenomena, without regard to their ostensible authority, always ends by rejecting all of them. But the average man is incapable of any such examination, and his incapacity not only safeguards his religion but also emphasizes his need of it. He must have *some* answer to the maddening riddle of existence, and, being unable to work out a logical or evidential answer, he is thrown back upon a mystical answer. This mystical answer is religion. It is a transcendental solace in the presence of the intolerable. It is a stupendous begging of questions that nevertheless disposes of them. Of all such answers Christianity is at once the simplest and the most reassuring. It is protean and elastic; it has infinite varieties; it has comfort both for the man revolting despairingly against reason or congenitally incapable of reason, and for the man whose capacity for reason stops just short of intelligence. It is, at its best, a lordly and beautiful thing, a profound inner experience, a kind of poetry that is lived—call it Catholicism. It is, at its worst, a puerile sort of supernatural politics—call it Methodism. But in either case it organizes and gives a meaning to life. In either case it soothes the man who is too weak to stand up single-handed against the eternal and intolerable mysteries.

But what of Christian ethics? What of the Christian way of life? The question is already half academic. The Christian way of life is a way that few men tread, and certainly no Christian. Even its old hortatory value is passing; we cannot even approximate it. What remains of it is, in plain words, poetry. It survives as a dream of what ought to be, or might be, but isn't. Thus moving into the limbo of the ideal, it takes on a new and greater beauty, as the Christian sacraments have taken on beauty as their literal significance has been gradually forgotten. The ethics of Christianity, beginning as the practical morality of a people so shrewd that they may be almost said to have survived

extinction, will end as a Freudian wish. They will represent, not an order of daily conduct, but a vision of escape from life, an aspiration toward beatitude. Men will dream of embracing them as Hindus dream of achieving nothingness. A few inordinate men—ascetics, the spiritually gifted, idiots—will make the actual attempt, but the overwhelming majority of Christians, following the overwhelming majority of Hindus, will be content to throw a glance in that direction now and then, and maybe to heave a sigh and drop a tear.

I employ the future tense. But, as I have already hinted, I believe that the time is actually here. The Christian scheme of ethics, as Christ expounded it, is not only discarded in Christendom; it is even prohibited. I hesitate to risk the banality of speculating as to what would happen if Christ came back. But here the thing is almost unescapable. What *would* happen? I need not remind you. Unless, following the example of his current vicars and viceroys, he agreed to overhaul the Sermon on the Mount in very material ways, modifying some of its main points radically and deleting others altogether, he would find himself denounced by a patriotic press as an enemy propagandist, his seditions eagerly seized upon by a district attorney aspiring to higher office, his doom pronounced by a Jewish judge hungry for the name of right-thinker, and his ticket booked for Atlanta, Georgia.

III

WHEN, among the new novels that roll in endlessly, there is one by Arnold Bennett, I always turn to it first, for the chances are that it will be the most amusing in the lot. As a sheer technician Bennett is clearly unrivalled in English, and it would be a matter of some difficulty to find his peer in any other language; perhaps Anatole France and Hermann Sudermann would qualify, but it is hard to think of others. This inordinately adept technic of his frequently deceives the defectively in-

formed. There is, for example, an eminent campus-pump critic, grounded in the bozart in Iowa, who whoops it up as profundity and hymns Bennett as a Great Thinker. This doctrine, I daresay, gives a good deal of secret joy to the novelist himself. A clever and somewhat cynical man, he must know what delight there is in pulling the noses of the yokelery. As a matter of fact, his Great Thinking confines itself to the simple doctrine that life is a charming spectacle, and humanity a pathetic troop of clowns. This doctrine, of course, is sound enough; it probably, indeed, embraces all the ascertainable truth; but it states that truth too generally, it begs too many specific questions. The whole work of Bennett, in and out of fiction, is marked by just such a begging of questions. He is pre-eminently *not* a social philosopher, but only a social observer. But with how sharp an eye! With what an acrid sense of comedy! With what an air! Turn to his latest piece, "The Roll-Call" (*Dorran*), and you will find him at once at his best and at his worst. The thing, intrinsically, is lamentably hollow. The fable unrolls itself spasmodically, trivially and often incredibly; effects do not always follow causes; the very people of the tale are often unreal. One never quite believes in George Edwin Cannon, son of Hilda Lessways. He springs into full flower too suddenly; he is an eminent architect in London, winning a great competition, before it is quite established that he has grown up. Nor is his career thereafter convincingly in consonance with his achievement. Starting off as a decidedly extraordinary Englishman, he soon converts himself into a very ordinary Englishman, and his reactions to women, to marriage, to the money problem, and, in the end, to the great challenge of the war, are those of a conventional and rather stupid man—surely not those of a distinguished artist.

This pervasive unreality of George keeps the book on the plane of agreeable make-believe; it is never searching and poignant; it never penetrates to

the inner springs of character. The other personages are often quite as artificial as George, particularly old Haim, his chief antagonist, and Lois Ingram, the woman he marries. There is a good deal more in Marguerite Haim, the girl he doesn't marry, and there is all one could ask for in old Enwright, his chief. But, for all this, the story is charming; it holds the attention from first to last. And why? Simply because of its gigantic liveliness, its endless flashes of irrelevant but amusing observation, the cynical sagacity of its detail. The long chapter on the terms and conditions of the Cannon marriage is capital stuff, indeed. It has but small bearing upon that specific marriage; one almost forgets George and Lois in the midst of it; but it is an excellent treatise upon marriage in general; Bennett has emptied his note-books into it. -Often in the volume, in fact, those note-books show themselves. In one place, for example, I encountered half a page that seemed amazingly familiar. A search discovered its origin in a note dated May 22, 1901, and published in E. V. Lucas' Annual for 1914, page 40. Why doesn't Bennett print more of his notes? Those upon books, done into print a year or so ago, were extraordinarily interesting. He is, I venture, only half a novelist. Two-thirds of his novels are no more than collections of essays defectively dramatized. His characters quickly fade. Who remembers much about Sophia Baines, or even Clayhanger? But who will ever forget those brilliant and merciless panoramas of the Five Towns? Who will forget the recorded reality behind the imagined puppet-show? Bennett is a stupendous reporter. More, he is free from the typical reporter's romanticism, credulity, childishness. But he is a novelist only now and then—and not always when his book is most positively labeled "novel."

In the other English fiction of the current crop there is not much worthy of remark. E. Temple Thurston's "David and Jonathan" (*Putnam*) is a somewhat labored variation of the standard castaways-on-a-desert-island

story. Two men are there and one woman. Both of the men fall in love with the woman and one of them puts to sea in an open boat to give the other a clear track, but she finds that she prefers the gallant fugitive, and after all three are rescued they are married. The drama is worked out with some skill, but at bottom it is stale and unprofitable. Frank Swinnerton's "Shops and Houses" (*Doran*) is a study in snobbery. The leading family in a small English town is thrown into consternation by the appearance of a remote relative, who opens a grocery store. The makings of an amusing comedy are here, but Mr. Swinnerton contrives to make it very dull. Not a trace of the skill visible in his "Nocturne" is to be found. Nesta H. Webster's "The Sheep Track" (*Dutton*) and Cynthia Stockley's "Blue Aloes" (*Putnam*) I cannot read. The former is a long story of London society; the latter is a collection of South African novelettes. Leonard Merrick's "While Paris Laughed" (*Dutton*) is far more readable, but I am unable to subscribe to the prevailing doctrine that it is a piece of literature. The truth is that it is a piece of quite obvious bosh. The Frenchmen it depicts are simply the pathetic idiots of standard English fiction. That concept of the Gaul as half child and half simian has apparently survived the *entente cordiale*. The English, alas, never learn anything.

One of the apparent objects of "The Library of French Fiction," edited by Barnet J. Beyer (*Dutton*), is to offer evidence against this ancient stupidity out of modern French fiction. The series will be made up, in the main, of translations of novels by living French novelists, "including books treating of the life of the various provinces as well as of the life of Paris." The first two volumes are "Jacquou the Rebel," by Eugene Le Roy, translated by Eleanor Stimson Brooks, and "Nono," by Gaston Roupnel, translated by the editor. The former is a novel of quite unusual merit. Though it is autobiographical in form, it covers a range of no less

than eighty years, beginning with Waterloo and ending in our own time. The central character is a peasant of the Garonne country, and the moving theme is the long conflict between peasantry and aristocracy, with the gradual emancipation of the former. Old Jacquou takes an active hand in this conflict. First, he sets fire to the forest of Nansac and then he burns the chateau; in his old age, ninety or more, he tells the story, throwing in garrulous detail as an old man will. It is a story full of human appeal, and through it walk a score or more of very real persons. Perhaps its fault is an excess of sentimentalism; the discreet reader will give an occasional glance to Zola's "La Terre" while reading it. The second novel in the series, Roupnel's "Nono," has interested me a good deal less, chiefly because Roupnel is far inferior as a story-teller to Le Roy. The ensuing volumes deserve attention. The trouble with most of the French fiction that gets into English, when it is not frankly pornographic, is that it is heavily propagandist—that it supports some tedious *Tendenz* or other. The French take novel-writing with great seriousness, and often show the defects of their enthusiasm. But Mr. Beyer announces that he will present stories that are representative rather than hortatory. If he finds more as interesting as "Jacquou the Rebel" he will make a success of his series.

Another translation of uncommon quality is that of Pio Baroja's "Caesar or Nothing," made by Louis How (*Knopf*). The Spaniards regard Baroja as the best of their living novelists; no doubt it has surprised them greatly to hear of the vogue for Blasco Ibáñez in America. But in "Caesar or Nothing" he presents a book that is a good deal less a novel than a series of short and acidulous essays upon modern society, and particularly upon Spanish and Italian society. Caesar Moncada is a young Valencian who studies law, develops a talent for financial speculation, makes a good deal of money, and then decides to go in for politics. Into this

enterprise he carries a large stock of rather bitter worldly wisdom, by Nietzsche out of Machiavelli. For awhile it serves him admirably. Utterly indifferent to puerile party issues, he obtains a seat in the Cortés as a Conservative, flops to Liberalism and then sets up as a sort of Bolshevik dictator. But his reign is not for long. He is too clever for the other professional politicians, he is too clever for earnest reformers, and his left hand, so to speak, suffices to lead the great masses of the plain people by their snouts, but when he tackles the Catholic Church it overthrows and destroys him, and that is the end of his politics. This political portion of the story is the least interesting; the politics of Spain seem banal and transparent to an American. But what goes before is extremely well done. It is made up, in the main, of an incisive and brilliant picture of ecclesiastical politics in Rome, and it is the phenomena there displayed that give Caesar excuse for his always amusing and often devastating judgments upon men and ideas. There is something of Bennett in this Baroja. He is a man who has observed sharply, and missed none of the gaudy farce of human existence. It would be pleasant to have more of his books in English.

IV

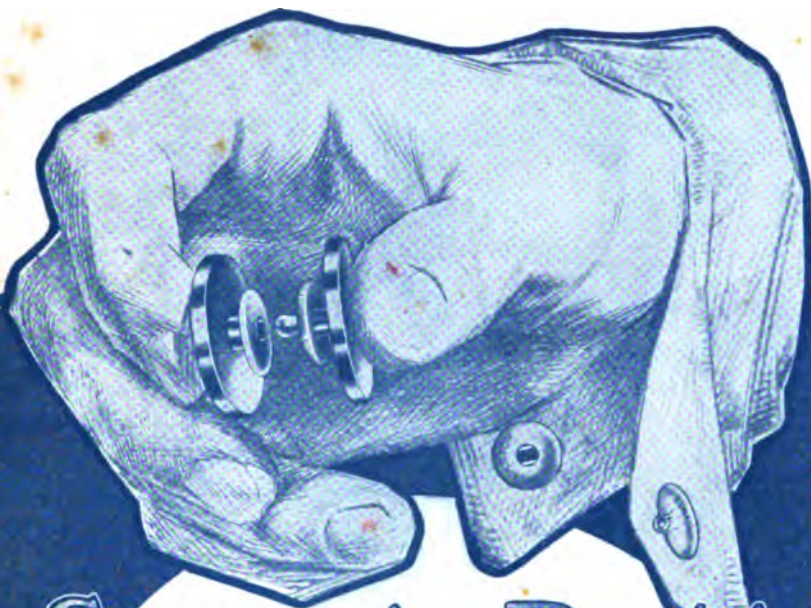
Now for the home-made fables. Alas, not much is here! "Kings-At-Arms," by Marjorie Bowen (*Dutton*), "The Duchess of Siona," by Ernest Goodwin (*Houghton-Mifflin*), and "The Highwayman," by H. C. Bailey (*Dutton*), are costume novels, fair enough of their sort, but born long after their time. "The Twenty-Six Clues," by Isabel Ostrander (*Watt*), is a conventional detective story. "The Playground of Satan," by Beatrice Baskerville (*Watt*), is an eighth-rate war novel. "Green Valley," by Katharine Reynolds (*Little-Brown*), is a piece of sentimentality. "Magnhild," by Prof. Dr. John D. Quackenbos, late of Columbia University (*Badger*), is balderdash—a wooden love story relieved by execra-

ble poetry and mental suggestion. "The Song of the Sirens," by Edward Lucas White (*Dutton*), is a collection of short stories, most of them very bad. "The Flail," by Newton Fuessle (*Moffat-Yard*), starts off with promise, but then descends to buncombe. The central theme is the effort of the American-born son of poor German parents to adjust himself to American ways of doing and looking at things. The first half is done with considerable skill. The narrow immigrant's home, the idiotic German Lutheran Church, the social background of a poor Chicago neighborhood—all these things are depicted with insight and persuasiveness. But after Mr. Fuessle's Rudolf Dohmer comes to manhood, the story begins to wobble, and when his participation in an advertising campaign for a quack patent-medicine is solemnly offered as a proof of his lingering Hunnishness, the thing frankly blows up. The author, in brief, manages the transformation of his hero ineptly, and is handicapped by very dubious theories. The worst of those theories seems to be that the sort of German most likely to make the best American is the sort entirely devoid of self-respect. Unburdened by such pish-posh, he might have made a very fair novel. As it is, he must try again.

The best of all the native fiction currently under view is in "Birds of Prey," by George Bronson-Howard (*Watt*). This is a series of short stories of life

along Broadway and in the side streets thereof, and has faults that are obvious enough. The worst of them is a frequent show of moral indignation. Howard is not content to display his chorus-girls, his stage-door Johns, his gamblers and his procurers as they are; he is forever rubbing in the too palpable fact that they are cads. But that supererogation, after all, doesn't take anything from the clarity of his picture. As mere representation, forgetting the accompanying sermonizing, it is capital. These grotesque and idiot ladies of the half and quarter world actually live, and there is scarcely less life in the motley males who pursue them and are pursued by them. Moreover, the vividness of the portraiture is always helped out by a good story, for Howard is a crafty hand at tale-telling. He is, indeed, a crafty hand at all the other devices of letters, and has been much underestimated by current criticism. Perhaps his too great facility and versatility have warred against his recognition. He has done all sorts of things, from thrillers for the cheap magazines to a very earnest novel, and from librettos for Broadway burlesques to such sound and excellent plays as "The Only Law" and "The Red Light of Mars." He is a man of fertile ideas, wide information and enormous experience with the pen, and, unless I greatly err, he will one day make a splash.





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MR.
HEAD
18

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The SMART SET

*A Magazine of
Cleverness*



JULY, 1919

25 CEN

The SMART SET

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The SMART SET

Edited by
GEORGE JEAN NATHAN
and
H. L. MENCKEN



METAMORPHOSIS

By VanVechten Hostetter

OLD John Gorham lay deep in his easiest chair in his spacious and dim-lighted library. It was evening after a morning of coupon-clipping—irksome enough even with modern labor-saving devices—and an afternoon of reciprocal boring at the club.

It was old John Gorham's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary. He knew it because he had read it in the newspapers, damn them. One of them had published pictures of him and Mrs. Gorham, side by side and connected with some fancy scroll work, made out of ticker tape most likely.

He supposed it was a picture of Mrs. Gorham anyway. The newspaper said it was and the newspapers were forever getting things right. And the picture did resemble Mrs. Gorham as he remembered her. Still, he reflected, his memory for faces was rather poor, although he recognized her name easily enough.

SS—July—1

Having developed a doubt, old Gorham was somewhat curious to know if the picture was his wife's. In fact, he was so curious that he was on the point of going up to her boudoir on the third floor for a look at her. But just then he vaguely recalled having heard or read something about her going to Palm Beach. Or was it Camden, Maine?

Still, that may have been last year. And, anyway, he wasn't sure whether the report had her coming or going. Old Gorham was about to ring for a servant to find out if the climb would be of any use, but before he could execute the idea he fell asleep.

* * *

Gorham was awakened by laughter, uproarious and harsh, that filled the great library and awoke echoes among the purple wall hangings. It was laughter that would have chilled his blood if that had not been done already. It was the most malicious and inhuman laugh-

ter he had ever heard and he had listened to a good many experts in his time.

Blinking until his eyes were accustomed to the dim light, old Gorham saw, seated and facing him, the most disgusting and frightful being in the form of a man that he had ever laid eyes on. Gorham felt some emotion of disgust, though, of course, not enough to endanger his dignity and poise. As for being frightened, he was past fearing anything but a tariff for revenue only.

The creature was naked—a huge, misshapen man-beast, incredibly fat and bloated, filling and bursting out the arms of the roomy chair, which creaked and groaned with each new convulsion of mordacious mirth.

Long, curly and coarse hair, tangled and matted, like gold bleached to lifelessness, covered the creature's head and hung over its shoulders. Its eyes, small and set deep in fat, were red and bleary, yet cunning and wicked. From the bulbous nose, upturned and flattened, deep and cruel lines ran to the down-turned corners of the mouth. Between them was a moustache—a score of whitish bristles like a pig's. The lips were fat and puffed out and as the thing chortled revealed teeth, uneven, yellow, fanglike. The creature's cheeks hung below its jaws in rolls of morbid fat and its chin merged into its thick neck.

Around the visitor's waist was a well-filled cartridge belt and in either hairy hand, resting on its fat knees, was an automatic pistol.

The intruder, recovering from a final paroxysm of unearthly laughter, put one

weapon aside, filled a tumbler from Gorham's decanter of Scotch and downed it at a gulp. It smacked its lips vulgarly, bit a chew of tobacco off a plug produced from the cartridge belt and then grinned gloatingly at Gorham.

"Well," it said, "why don't you bid me welcome? Don't you remember me?"

"I'm afraid you have the advantage of me," said Gorham.

"Think hard," said the visitor.

"Who are you and what are you?" asked Gorham with a trace of impatience. "And what are you doing with those pistols?"

"Oh," said the visitor, looking at the weapons proudly, "they're a little modern equipment I got. Had to, you know—old equipment was artistic enough, but lacked efficiency. I'm in the same business, though—and you?"

"Nothing about me until I know who you are," said Gorham with more animation than he had yet shown.

"Scratch your head," said the creature. "You must remember me."

Gorham scratched and studied his guest keenly.

At last, "It does seem as if I had met you some time or other," he said. "There's something familiar about your face, but I swear I can't place you."

"Keep on trying," said the visitor encouragingly.

Gorham knitted his brows and thought desperately. Presently his face cleared and something of the light of twenty-five years ago came into his eyes.

"Yes, yes, I know you now, but, good Lord, Cupid, how you have changed!"



BY the time a woman has learned how to kiss there is no longer any pleasure in kissing her.

CAGED

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Thyra Samter Winslow

CHAPTER I

LEOTA CLIFFORD was packing her husband's steamer trunk. It was a stupid enough occupation, but it was unbelievably delicious to Leota. Each garment she put into the trunk brought delightful new thoughts into her head.

Leota decided that four sets of medium weight and three sets of light underwear would be sufficient. She folded the awkward garments slowly, tucking into neat squares the unmanageable arms and legs.

—So—Will was going away. He was going to England and would be gone six weeks. Six weeks of freedom! Six weeks of doing what she wanted to do! Six times seven is forty-two—at least Leota thought it was forty-two; she'd have to try it with a pencil, later; arithmetic wasn't one of her strong points—forty-two days of being uncaged! Forty-two days of being herself, of experience, of living!

Leota followed the undergarments with pajamas. There was a buttop off one of the coats. Almost unconsciously, she got thread and needle from her work-basket and fastened it. There—no more sewing on of buttons for a long, long time! How she hated it—the button-sewing and the things the button-sewing stood for—domesticity, repression, the cage! She threw out her arms in dramatic agony. How had she stood things—all these years? Nine years of married life—and now she was thirty-two. Nine years of life gone, wasted, lost.

Well, thirty-two was still young. Of course, when the six weeks were over, maybe there would be the cage again. But even then, there would be the memory of the open door, freedom. Maybe, she could find a way to keep the door open a little. There might even be a change, some wonderful opportunity—perhaps she would never have to go back into the cage at all. You can't tell, things like that, still—six weeks of freedom, of being unfettered, might point the way. How had she ever stood it?

How had she stood it? A feeling of sudden awakening came to Leota. Of course, all these years she had known that she was caged. But, until now, she had never realized how much she had suffered, how strong and hateful the bars had been. Now the door stood open.

Leota added the shirts, conscientiously choosing Will's favorites. What a stupid fellow Will was, with his worrying over details! Will—even his name sounded hard, unromantic, sluggish. William Burrage Clifford—wasn't it fate to be married to a man with a name like that? No one even called him a compromising Bill or a playful Billy. Just Will. . . . Well, he was going away.

It had never occurred to Leota, until three days before, that there was a possibility of Will's ever going any place, a chance for her own freedom. Then, suddenly, a bounteous gift from the gods, he had announced this sudden trip, with an apology for its suddenness and because he must go alone.

"Someone had to go and start our London office moving smoothly. Had to be me, it seems—firm thinks I understand things pretty well. I'll get back as soon as I can. I know it'll be lonesome for you. Maybe you can get your mother or Ida to come in to keep you company.

Leota had clutched desperately at this gleam of liberty, explaining that her mother, who lived in Rochester with her older sister, probably wouldn't care about taking a trip just then, and that Ida might not want to make new plans, either, after she'd got comfortably settled with Grace. Ida was Will's old-maid sister—wasn't it just like Will to have an old-maid sister?—a pleasant pert little thing, who was always sewing on something or preparing neat addresses for unnecessary club-meetings. Ida wore nose-glasses and looked intellectual. Ida said, "Do you really think so?" when she means "I don't think so at all." She dressed briskly in the morning and was always ready for an early walk, speaking about "the crisp morning air." Ida liked to brag about never wasting time—she was always skipping busily from one useless thing to another. She wore stiff shirt-waists and never had attractive dressing gowns or seemed to need them. She wore cotton lingerie. And Ida had been suggested to her as the person to keep her from being lonely!

"No," Leota had tried to keep her voice even, "I couldn't think of bothering Mother or Ida. Of course I'll be a little lonely and miss you a lot, but I'll manage to get along. It isn't as if we were strangers in New York. We've so many friends here. I'll look up some of the girls I used to know. And you know I'm on the publicity committee of the bazaar. That will take every minute of the time I can give it. With Katie and Freda sleeping here in the apartment, I won't even feel afraid. Just think—we haven't been separated a day since our marriage, have we? Don't you worry a bit about me, I'll get along—"

Will had had so many things on his

mind he hadn't thought of objecting. Now he was sailing in the morning—six weeks—

Leota finished packing the trunk, counted the handkerchiefs, added half a dozen more for good measure—what ugly things men wore!—

How could she have stood it, this long? What if the trip hadn't come—if the years had gone on and she had grown old, caged—?

Nine years of being caged—!

CHAPTER II

LEOTA remembered the beginning of it—when she was married. At twenty-three, she had entered the cage gladly enough. Of course she hadn't known what it meant, then. She wondered if any girl ever did know. At twenty-three she had been eager to get away from home—a home which had offered little, where there had been three single girls. She hadn't been madly in love with Will Clifford, but she hadn't been exactly in love with anyone else. She had never really loved anyone else—except Jeddy. That was different. She couldn't marry Jeddy, of course. She'd known that. For Jeddy was even more ambitious than she had been. Jeddy, too, wanted money, position. Jeddy and she had been in love, in a way—very young love, nothing definite—dances together, a few remembered walks and drives, some talks, dear little memories, that was all. They had said a great deal about how much they cared, but nothing at all about a future together. Still, Jeddy had been a dear. He had had such attractive ways, quaint fancies, said things that Will could never have understood. Jeddy had read poems to her, odd things, bound in light blue paper covers.

She had married and Jeddy had married and they had attained a little of what they had wanted. She saw his name in the papers, occasionally—Joseph D. Hallidan. Jeddy had not become famous or rich, though his wife was related to rather well-known people and he moved in a circle slightly better,

socially, than her own—one of those many climbing circles, each complete, selfish, pretentious, foundationless, the members of one always endeavoring to step into the circle just above in money and pretence. No, Jeddy had not failed—and yet—Leota wondered if Jeddy ever thought of her. Here they both were, in New York—funny, she never saw him. She could have written him a note, any day, asking him to call—but that would have meant so many things, explanations, Will. Now, while the door was open—why not—it wasn't fair, losing all of the lovely things in life—

Leota knew, now, that when she had married Will she had not understood, fully, about the cage of marriage. She had been glad enough to enter it. She remembered the night she had met Will. She had lived in Westmont and there were no marriageable men there. It had looked as if she would have to stay single for a long time. Will had been in Westmont on business and she had met him at a little party at the Robinsons. He had been good-looking in a solid, square way. Even now she admitted to herself that she had used all of her little tricks on him, tricks accumulated from living in a family of girls, from meeting boys, socially, since she was seventeen. She had been poor and hated Westmont, and Will had had a fair business position with a New York firm. She had felt that Will was as good a catch as she would be able to find.

Six months later they were married and moved to New York. She had thought, then, that she would be free. She felt the bars of the cage just when she most desired to try her freedom. All of the things that she had longed to do when she was single and poor and that she had thought marriage would bring were just the things she couldn't do, married and with a little money.

Before her marriage, Leota had visited New York, occasionally, and had been eager to live there. She had looked into attractive shop windows and up strange, alluring streets, climbing in-

numerable stairs to the galleries of the theaters, envying the people who weren't poor.

Leota, married to Will and living in New York, wasn't so dreadfully poor. But things weren't as she had dreamed them. She found herself one-half of a little married couple, doing conventional, stupid, decent things. She was swallowed up in a middle-class set. Buying in shops, when you have to be careful about monthly bills and when it seems as if all your friends are spending more, had not proved any more entertaining than gazing in the shop-windows. The alluring little streets became commonplace, dusty by-ways or disappeared altogether. At the theater, orchestra seats had not added to the brilliancy or sparkle of the performance. Married, daring epigrams became commonplace; risqué situations seemed stupid.

Will developed a jealousy and a regard for middle-class conventions that Leota had never thought him capable of, if she had thought of it at all—she really hadn't considered Will. It developed that there were things Will's wife could and couldn't do. She couldn't talk, very long, to any other man for one thing, or later Will would say something about "how funny it looked" or "you've got to be careful of appearances." Leota could never go any place, at night, without Will. Leota knew that there were sets—real society, not to mention Bohemian circles—where women dined with other men or lunched with them, where a wife could go places without the presence of her husband. But in Will and Leota Clifford's set these things did not exist.

Leota's days belonged pretty much to herself, though, of course, she was supposed to tell Will where she had been and what she had done and she was not supposed to see other men. Not that Will questioned her closely, but he was quite willing to tell where he had spent his absent hours and he expected equal frankness in reply. During the day Leota attended to her household duties,

wasted time as she wished, joined the various feminine activities that were open to her.

In the evening Will came home at about six and dinner was served half an hour later. Or Leota met Will at his office or at a hotel and had dinner with him. Although he belonged to two clubs Will didn't care for them nor for going places with men. He was "a home body" and bragged of it. They went to the theater, frequently, and Will talked, heavily, of the acting and the plot, on the way home. Or they spent the evening with a few friends, at dinners or informal dances or bridge.

Now it came to Leota with a terrible force that, not once during the whole nine years of her married life, had she had dinner one night without Will. When Will took his short yearly vacations they went, together, to near-by summer hotels or took hackneyed trips. They had had good times, of course, usual, middle-class times. But—always together, as if they had been bound. Why hadn't she rebelled before? How could she have stood it—all these years?

CHAPTER III

LEOTA knew that she had never yearned for a career. There had never been anything she really cared to do. She had painted a little, when a girl, daubs of china painting, spending tedious hours with a Westmont teacher, copying fruit and flowers on white plates, smearing in pale backgrounds, having the pieces fired, adding more details and gold bands for a second firing, polishing the gold with a glass brush. When china painting "went out" she had studied with another teacher, drawing still life in charcoal, collections of vases and bowls, onions and apples, tomatoes and jugs, against a background of seemingly carelessly-draped velvet. She had never taken this seriously, though she liked to think she had talent. She had taken piano lessons, too, for two years, thumping out scales and finger exercises and "first pieces" for an hour each day, glancing at the clock

between notes. She had never tried anything else. Leota was lazy. She disliked every kind of work, anything that needed concentration. She hated the small amount of housework she had had to do at home in Westmont. Will had seemed especially desirable as a husband, then, because he had sufficient money to provide a servant.

She now had a pleasant enough life, as far as that went. She had nice things—in a way—though she always envied women who had more. Her apartment was all right, she supposed. She knew she could have had a small house in the suburbs, instead—Will would have preferred it, he liked leading such a simple life—but she would have hated to have felt herself so far from the center of things and living by a time-table. Leota had chosen all of the apartments they had occupied in New York—they had moved four times and each time to a more expensive apartment—except the first one. She still remembered the dreadful things Will had picked for furnishings. She had got rid of those, years ago. They had had this apartment for nearly two years. She liked it as much as she could like any apartment they could afford, though Will thought even the rent for this one was rather high. There was an attractive view of the park from the windows and it was near things, shops and the theaters. And it wasn't impossible socially—as long as you stay below the hundreds you are safe enough. Even the furniture suited—odd things, painted with lots of terra cotta and purple and green, and black draperies.

Leota remembered the decorator who had done the apartment. He was a part owner of a decorating shop in Madison Avenue, but Leota felt that he had taken more than a financial interest in her and her home, even if his prices had been rather high. She had had tea with him a couple of times, while they were discussing furnishings, and she had felt dreadfully wicked about it. He had asked her to go to a little studio party but she had had to decline—Will

wouldn't have dreamed of allowing her to go out at night with another man and Will hadn't been included in the invitation—and, if he had been, that would have spoiled everything. How badly Will would have fitted in with anything like that!

Allan Frederickson was the decorator's name, a charming fellow, with graceful mannerisms. He had understood—about the cage. Why, he had said something about it at the time, Leota remembered now. They were choosing wall paper—the apartment had been papered before, so they couldn't have painted walls—and Frederickson had decided on a golden grass-cloth—and had said something about "gilded bars." It was hateful to think she had been caged like this—and that people knew. She would write a note to Frederickson or drop in to see him—to show him—she didn't care anything about him, of course—still, it would be interesting—

There were other men, too—Claron Wilmott, Laurance Haines, Dr. Stanton—others— She'd never been able to know any of them, really. Claron Wilmott had asked her, so often, to go places with him—of course she could never go. Wilmott was a bachelor—went with wonderful people—could do anything. And Laurance Haines—she had never known him very well, but whenever they met he would always say rather hard-to-understand things—he seemed mysterious, fascinating. He was married, too—but not caged the way she was. His wife was a faded little blonde with an inadequate turned-up nose, who dressed too girlishly. Of course she didn't understand him. Haines was a business man, but he had the soul of an artist and, just the year before, had exhibited half a dozen pastels at a private studio. He had explained to Leota about not being understood—now she could see him and talk to him.

And Dr. Stanton—why is it doctors seem peculiarly fascinating? Is it because you can tell them so much, because they seem to understand every-

thing, life, so thoroughly? Leota was a bit afraid of Dr. Stanton. He was quite rich and his patients represented "real society." Leota was flattered because he noticed her at all, yet, whenever she saw him, in a crowd, any place, he would stop, bend close, whisper a few words to her, squeezed her hand for an instant. Oh, there were so many worth while men who did things—and here she had been wasting her life, doing petty nothings, living stupid days—with Will. She had a chance, now—

All other women weren't caged, though most of them were. Some were free—like Roberta Miller. How Roberta must look down on her and laugh. She didn't blame Roberta, either. Roberta had come from Westmont, too, and they had had such good times, together, there. She had expected to see a lot of her in New York. But day times Roberta was busy. Leota never quite understood what she did, but it had something to do with chemistry and analyzing things. It seemed dreadfully stupid, but Roberta was always an odd one for things like that. All day Roberta was in a terrible looking office, wearing a stained apron and cooking things in glass tubes—Leota had run in there, once, to take her to luncheon. Leota couldn't see much of Roberta at night. Occasionally she came out to dinner, but she and Will never had anything to talk about. Leota could see how uncomfortable they both were and how Roberta disapproved of all of Leota's middle-class things.

Roberta had a studio all to herself, a big room with a fireplace and a tiny bed-room and a wee kitchenette behind a screen. There she could have all the company she wanted, artists and writers and people who Thought. Roberta got a big salary and wore odd clothes and talked about the Independence of Women. But, most wonderful of all, Roberta had a Past. There had been a Man and Roberta wasn't married to him! Roberta scorned marriage as a humiliating and unnecessary experience, called a wedding ring "the sign of bondage," said all married people hated

each other—and read things out of books to prove it. And Leota felt, when she saw what a bore Will was and what a wonderful life Roberta led, that perhaps there was a lot to Roberta's theory. No wonder Roberta wasn't at home in Leota's up-town apartment. Leota understood perfectly—Roberta thought her a slave, more than likely. And wasn't she—?

Of course, some things were rather pleasant. Freda was a good cook—even Will had to admit she was the best cook they had ever had—Leota did love good things to eat. And Katie knew how to wait on the table nicely and keep things in order—not bad looking either, quiet and quick. And Mrs. Brackett was good, too, always got through all of the washing and ironing and cleaning on Monday and Tuesday. It was really very comfortable, that way. Will didn't complain much about bills. He put Leota's money in the bank every month and increased it when she complained a great deal about the cost of things. Why shouldn't he? His salary was good. Leota felt that she did without clothes and dozens of other things that she wanted, and she was a good manager, careful, and did some of the ordering, herself, stopping at the market on her way down town, lots of times—and she wasn't extravagant. Other women—why she and Will didn't even have a car—!

Leota didn't care about that. She had no interest in driving and felt you don't get much satisfaction out of a car, always out of commission or the chauffeur leaving. Will's arrangement was really quite sensible—some sort of a monthly thing—you telephoned and the garage sent out a fairly nice looking car and a good chauffeur, usually, and you didn't have to bother about tires or things like that. It wasn't a car or thinking a lot before ordering a new frock—it was big things—living, being free—

CHAPTER IV

LEOTA closed the trunk. She'd leave it unlocked, in case Will thought of

something else when he came home.

She went into her own room, glanced at the pale green enameled clock on her green painted chest of drawers. It was time to dress. Will would be home and they were going out to dinner—as they did several times a week, and then to the theater—and in the morning Will was to sail.

Leota slipped out of her clothes, took a hasty shower and dressed slowly, calling Katie to get together the things she needed, fresh lingerie, her suit and hat. Katie wasn't as good as a personal maid, of course, but she was quick and handy and it annoyed Leota to hunt for the things she needed. She liked doing her own nails and hair—she could take a long time over them—but she liked, too, to find her clothes spread out, neatly, on the bed, waiting for her. Leota felt that Katie didn't work as hard as most maids—lots of time off. She'd had Katie for three years—oh, Katie knew a good job when she found one.

Leota adjusted her dress, looked at herself critically in the long mirror of her closet door. She really wasn't bad looking, she felt—and didn't look her age, nearly. Her type was fortunate—some women do have such a hard time of it. Leota was just a trifle over medium height and looked slimmer than she was, with plump arms and neck and a slender waist. She had rather small feet, but her hands were fairly large and her wrists and ankles a trifle thick, though not noticeably out of proportion. Her face was oval and usually pale, though she added a little color. Her eyebrows were nicely curved and she kept them slender and dark. Her eyes were rather a light brown, of a good size, and when she darkened the lids and corners were quite attractive and brilliant. Her hair was a smooth brown and she wore it rather tight, which made her head look nicely proportioned and small. Her nose was slender and slightly arched, her nostrils a bit long and narrow. Leota's mouth was rather full, especially her lower lip and in repose it turned down slightly at the corners. She always kept it very *Will*

There were slight tracteries of lines around her eyes and mouth and her skin was soft and smooth.

Looking in the mirror strengthened Leota's opinions—all her charm was wasted. Will liked her because he could show her off—his wife. What did he know of her—how attractive she was, how different from other women—this wife he had caged for nine years? Well, now the cage was going to be open—

Will came home at a quarter past six. A business conference had detained him for a few minutes. It was April, but the day had turned unusually warm and he was perspiring. He was a pleasant looking man, fairly tall, with square shoulders and rather a square shaped head. In his late thirties, his brown hair was still crisp and black, his moustache close-cropped but strong. Even after shaving, his beard showed dark—he always gave the appearance of being well-fed, well-groomed, hairy. His skin was unexpectedly fair and he usually had a little color around his rather prominent cheek-bones. The backs of his hands were hair-covered to the knuckles and his hands were big, capable-looking, rather white, with thick, square fingers.

He let himself into the apartment with his key, looked into the living room for his wife, then went to the door of her bed-room.

"Leota," he called, pleasantly.

Leota, dressed in sleek black satin, opened the door for him and gave him a hearty kiss.

"Hello, how's everything?" she asked, "All ready to go? My but I'm going to miss you," and she didn't feel deceitful as she said it. She was really fond of Will, in a way—Will was good. Of course she'd miss him—how can you help missing anyone you've seen every day for nine years?

"All ready."

Will took off his light overcoat and his hat and laid them on his wife's bed, wiped off his face with his handkerchief.

"Getting awfully warm. Walked fast

from the subway so you wouldn't worry about my being late. Had to stay to see Cushing about some reports. Got everything ready now. Trunk packed? They'll call for it tonight. You'd better tell Katie."

"It's in your room. I think I've put everything in."

"Sure you have, sure it's fine."

He patted her on the shoulder.

Leota moved away slightly and shrugged. Will was so warm, heavy.

He examined the contents at the top of the trunk, added a packet of papers, called "Thanks, thanks, this is fine," as he closed it.

Leota put on her hat, seated at her green dressing table. It was rather a large, flat hat, of thin black material, with a small glittering ornament in front. She wore it far over her face and tilted a bit to the right and she carried her head rather high. Leota liked large, flat hats and wore them nearly always. She usually carried, too, the collection of little glittering toilet things she picked up now—a small silver puff box, a lip stick in a chased silver case, a pencil that could do double duty for eyebrows or shopping notes.

Will telephoned to the garage he patronized for a car. Leota didn't mind the subway or the busses or even surface cars in the daytime, but she did object to them after dark or when she was with Will or when she had on nice clothes. While they waited, she strummed on the upright piano that stood in the small music room which opened its double French doors into the living room and where stood, too, a small bookcase, half full of books and magazines. Leota played a popular piece, rather poorly, by note, humming unevenly, while Will jotted down some things on paper. Will didn't like the way Leota played or sang. Sometimes he said so. Tonight the occasion was rather a momentous one, so he said nothing.

They talked little as they rode to the restaurant, Leota asking several times how Will felt and did he think he'd be seasick and saying how she, herself,

would dread an ocean trip. They had been to Porto Rico several years before and Leota had spent several dreadful days of seasickness. She told Will to be especially careful about his health and to put on the heavier underwear if the weather grew colder. Visibly touched by her interest, Will told her not to bother about him, he'd be all right, he'd take good care of himself. He told boring business details about what Crowell and Cushing had said.

They went to a restaurant where they frequently dined, which, in their set, was noted for its food and service. An orchestra was playing. The lights and the gilt decorations were a bit gaudy, but the small tables were nearly all occupied.

As they entered, it came to Leota again that she never had liked the way Will entered restaurants. There was never enough force or personality about him. He entered meekly, as if afraid, and then stood, undetermined, until a head waiter rescued him. Even then, he followed mildly, accepting the designated table. Some men, Leota noticed, entered restaurants as if they owned them, sweeping the menials aside, securing the most desirable tables. She felt that with her looks and personality she deserved a man who had spirit, forcefulness, who appeared to be a man of importance, who knew how to press a bill, skillfully, into the hand of a head waiter.

The evening progressed as evenings usually did when Leota and Will dined out. It was better than dining at home, alone, anyhow—at home, after a too-heavy dinner, during which Leota tried to make the conversation interesting and never succeeded in raising it above the heaviest commonplaces, silences broken only by the sounds of the clinking of knife against plate, ice against glass, then several hours of reading, of picking up and putting down various newspapers, magazines and books. Finally, one or both of them would fall asleep. Will in the big, black velour-covered fireside chair, Leota stretched on the terra-cotta-colored

damask couch, clad in a becoming tea-gown, satin-slippered, in case anyone should happen in. Usually Will said, "Might as well go to bed," and a half hour of splashing in the bath-tub would follow, while Leota rubbed cold cream into her skin, always stroking carefully upward—she thought it would make her look younger—then vaselined her eyebrows and eyelashes. Leota and Will had separate bedrooms, but they shared the same bath, although a guest room, with its adjoining bath, lay farther down the hall and was seldom used, for they had few house-guests. Leota knew, too, that dining alone with Will was just about as much fun as if some of their friends were with them—there were always the same people, the same uninspiring, stupid chatter.

Now, in the restaurant, Will had to order dinner, a task spared him at home. Leota disliked Will's method of ordering. He picked up the card and studied it carefully, as if he had never seen one before, paying a due amount of attention to the prices. He leaned toward the waiter and asked such questions as "How is this?" and "Is the roast lamb good tonight?" The usual, "Very good, sir," even after a score of years, seemed to Will considerate and satisfactory, and he usually ordered the food he inquired about.

Leota knew that there were men who knew how to order a dinner, who didn't need cards at all, who gave directions to waiters and paid attention when platters were held before them—oh, not men who mixed their own salads at the table and knew but one salad dressing, but real men, to whom good dining was important. Well, soon she'd find men like that—

CHAPTER V

WILL chose the dinner slowly, ponderously, even pointing to an item with a thick, white finger.

The food was good and Leota had a large appetite, as usual. She and Will spoke very little, and save that they talked of Will's trip it might have been

any one of a hundred dinners they had had together. After dinner Will looked over his check carefully and gave the waiter a moderate and usual tip. He stood by while the waiter held Leota's coat for her. Leota remembered Jeddy, how he always took her coat from the waiter and said, very low to her, "I don't want anyone else this near my girl."

Will didn't know things like that. Jeddy—was he still dear, gentle? Now, why now—she could see Jeddy again—

They went to a musical comedy, the kind Will liked best—two comedians. The wit of one consisted of mispronounced words, that of the other of odd costumes and falls. There were also a dear little ingénue, who could dance but not sing; a dear little juvenile, who could neither sing nor dance, but who knew how to toss back his hair—the two sang dear little songs that were already popular on the Victrola—a chorus of eighteen, mouths too large, eyes too much made up, curls, scenery in splashes of green and orange, by a new scenic artist who had just discovered the real art in scenic production—the usual musical comedy, called, in this instance, "I'll Say It Is."

After the theater they went for a bite to eat at one of the more glittering roof gardens. This was an expensive treat, a fitting farewell for Will. Here they watched the same two comedians they had seen in "I'll Say It Is," two dancers whom they had seen in another musical comedy the week before and well-known chorus girls who managed to get their faces and names into every Sunday supplement and many scandals. There were souvenirs of balloons painted to represent ears of corn for the song, "Corn Husking Time," candy "kisses" for "One Kiss More" and tops and marbles for the "We're Boys and Girls Again" number. These, thrown by the chorus girls, were worth a couple of cents each and Leota was amused, as always, to observe Will's evident eagerness to secure these souvenirs or a smile from the girls who approached their table. This time the

stage was red and purple, the work of a just-discovered scenic painter, one Monsieur Leopold, who knew the last word in stage art. Leota liked to watch the audience—she felt she was clever at character reading and could tell which people were New Yorkers and which from out-of-town. She liked to make up little stories about them, to pick out those she thought she recognized from published photographs or whom she felt were rich and prominent—whom she wished she knew.

They got home shortly after one. The trunk had been called for. They undressed hurriedly, for Will wanted "a good night's sleep," though he had nothing to do but rest on the trip across.

Katie knocked on Leota's door, as usual, in the morning. It was raining and a cold wind came in the open window. Leota heard Will moving around, so, slipping into a rose negligée, she went into his room.

"You won't mind if I don't go down with you?" she asked. "I did want to see you off, but it's a dreadful day and I'm so afraid of getting another cold."

"Of course I wouldn't hear of you going." Will, already bathed, was buttoning his shirt. "Don't think of it. Go back to bed. Might as well take it easy while I'm away."

Of course she wouldn't think of going back to bed—the idea—Will's last morning here! She washed hurriedly and joined him in the dining-room.

The breakfast passed, as their breakfasts always passed, Will munching heartily as he read his *Times*, Leota glancing at the *Herald* carelessly, eating a bit of toast. She never had much appetite at breakfast, thought the whole thing a bore, but came to the table because it was one of the "wifely" little things Will liked.

Will, as usual, glanced at his watch two or three times during the meal. He got up finally, taking his paper with him and in the hall stuffed it into his overcoat pocket.

Leota was rather touched at his leaving. After all, crossing the ocean is always dangerous—six weeks is a long

time, anything might happen. She put her arms around him, the silk sleeves of her dressing-gown falling back. She happened to glance at her arm, smooth and white, a bit of the flesh-colored crepe de chine of her dressing gown against it—Will didn't appreciate her, he never even noticed—

Will kissed her heartily, unconsciously wiping off his mustache on the back of his hand.

"There, there," he said. "Be a good girl while I'm gone. Try not to get lonesome. I'll be back as soon as I can. Good-bye."

The door closed. She was alone, free!

CHAPTER VI

LEOTA spent the morning much as she spent her other unengaged mornings, wasting time with pleasant musings. But there was a feeling of elation, of abandon that she had never experienced before. She loved it. She stretched out her arms, pleasantly, as she stood at the window. Even the rain didn't bother her—what was one lost day with six weeks of freedom! It would be splendid not to have to dress. Even the days she didn't go out Leota felt she must be dressed when Will came home. During the day, too, she usually tried to look presentable, in case someone "happened in." She never knew who the someone might be—she had few unexpected callers—but she liked, always, to anticipate surprise.

Leota bathed slowly, using very warm water, and then spent an hour over her toilet, paying especial attention to the ovals of her nails, her eyebrows, going close to the window and pulling out a stray hair or two, using miniature tweezers. She put on her best dressing-gown, of orchid meteor, trimmed with bands of white swansdown. She always kept it in the closet with her evening things, carefully swathed in white. It had long, loose sleeves, weighed down with big tassels. Leota wanted an Italian house-gown of blue velvet, trimmed *with dull gold*, but she could never af-

ford it, and, though she felt it was made for her—little fat women can't wear those things—spending a couple of hundred dollars on a gown no one would ever see—but Will—was not Leota's idea of luxury.

She telephoned to her favorite confectioner and ordered, to be sent out at once, a five-pound box of expensive chocolates with rich cream centers, of which she was especially fond. She lay on the couch, then, and read a novel she had started the day before, musing pleasantly between paragraphs.

She ate a salad for luncheon, and, when the candy was delivered in the afternoon, ate over a pound of it.

Late in the afternoon she telephoned to Aline Buell, one of her best friends, gossiping for half an hour.

It was splendid—being alone—not having to invent conversation at dinner—being able to do what she really wanted—

At six, unconsciously, she found herself glancing at the clock and wondering when Will would be home. How stupid—that's what habit had done for her! A little, watching wife! She'd get over that in a day or two!

Dinner seemed rather a lonely meal. Will always brought home tales of the office, of the outside world, stupid things, but alive with commercialism, activity. Dinner was good, though. Leota had told Freda to prepare a number of dishes Will didn't like, a salad with a rich Russian dressing, fruit pudding with a heavy, thick cream sauce.

After dinner was pleasant enough. Leota trailed the orchid dressing gown into the living room—she liked the effect of it against the terra-cotta colored rug and the black draperies. She played in her usual uncertain way, and sang some sentimental things she remembered from her girlhood, "Spring Rain," "The Gypsy Trail" and a song that started "Sometimes between long shadows on the grass," the name of which she had forgotten. It wasn't too late—at thirty-two—for love and life—

Leota woke up late the next morning and had Katie bring her breakfast to

her bed. Leota didn't really enjoy eating in bed, for she liked to bathe before she ate—and, after a bath, what's the use of getting back into bed again? Besides, her tray was too small to hold the needed breakfast things and tilted easily. It was of wicker, with a glass top, and had pockets for mail at either side—one of Will's attempts to buy her a luxury. Leota munched toast contentedly enough, though, for eating in bed represented a triumph of doing what she wanted to.

She was sorry there wasn't more mail. Reading letters in bed seemed so much a part of the luxury of breakfasting there. There was a note from the chairman of the publicity committee of the bazaar appointing Thursday as the day for a meeting, a luncheon invitation from Irene Sears for the following Wednesday "to meet Mrs. Updyke." She didn't like Mrs. Sears, she had never heard of Mrs. Updyke, she was tired of women, anyhow!

She got up about eleven. The weather was clearing. At her desk she wrote several notes in her large, vertical, angular writing on her light tan paper with "L F C" in an elongated monogram in green—she had always regretted that neither her family nor Will's had a coat-of-arms. Only fear of committing some error kept her from appropriating one.

The notes were necessary ones—to out-of-town relatives, mostly. Then she took the first step in leaving the cage—she wrote to Claron Wilmott! Of course Wilmott was a bachelor and popular—he received many invitations. Still, hers— She wrote that Will had gone to England and asked him "to help cheer her up" during his absence, unconsciously lapsing into the intense phraseology of her girlhood. During her married life her notes had been stilted, conventional, as if Will were looking over her shoulder. She often asked him to read the letters she had written, "to see if they would do," and Will disliked all written expressions of emotion. She wrote, then, to a young chap she knew, Howard Denning. She

had met him at dinners, during the last few years, and he had, well, made love to her—in public and quite discreetly, of course, little nods and smiles and flatteries. It might be pleasant to see him.

Then—why not? She could write to Jeddy if she wanted to. She tore up half a dozen sheets of paper, getting the letter started. Then she remembered she had seen his name in a newspaper just a few days before. She wrote, finally:

Wednesday.

Dear Jeddy:

Only yesterday your name flashed to me in one of the newspapers. You knew I was here in New York? Won't you drop in to tea, one day soon, to take up some of the broken threads in a friendship that has always remained very dear to me?

*As always,
Leota French Clifford.*

She hoped it sounded cryptic, alluring.

She telephoned then to Laurence Haines, at his office. It didn't seem right, sending a note to a married man. Why, he might even show it to his wife and she would laugh at it—Leota knew how women were.

Leota was quite nervous when she heard Haines' voice over the telephone. She felt as if she were doing a devilish, unheard-of thing.

Haines seemed quite pleasant, undisturbed. So, Will Clifford was in England! Indeed, he would come and cheer her up—never had a more pleasant task been assigned to him. What about going to dinner with him, instead? He was lonesome, too. Yes, Mrs. Haines was visiting her mother. How nicely the two departures fitted in! This was Wednesday—how about Friday night? Fine—he'd call a little before seven.

She had a dinner engagement—with a married man! The cage door had opened. This was freedom, indeed!

In the afternoon, Leota had an engagement with Mrs. Hill, a pretty little blonde whom she had known for sev-

eral years. They spent a couple of hours shopping and then went to an exhibition of etchings Mrs. Hill had heard discussed. Leota didn't "see much in them," but tried to talk about etchings as she looked at them. It was a usual afternoon, but the thought that she didn't have to be home to dinner in time—or at all—that anything might happen—the engagement she had made, the notes she had written—made it all seem wonderfully pleasant.

Mrs. Hill persuaded Leota to come home with her to dinner—no use eating alone. No, there wouldn't be any other company, just she and Jack. The children could eat with the family, too.

Leota liked children only occasionally, they were so messy and tugged so at one's clothes—she never knew what to say or do to them, but Billie and Margaret Hill were plump and blond and pleasant. It wasn't exciting, but there was nothing else to do just then. She telephoned Katie to tell Freda not to prepare dinner for her.

Leota got home at ten. Jack Hill took her home, and even this slight deviation from the other dinners at the Hills', when she and Will had gone home together, was pleasant. Leota found herself smiling, personally, at Jack, as if he were a real man, not just a husband. When his wife wasn't along he was quite a jolly, talkative fellow. Of course he was too conventional—satisfied with living as he did—the way Will did—coming home to dinner every day. That wasn't life.

The next afternoon Leota went to the charity bazaar committee meeting. She got up late, spent several hours of the morning over her toilet and the meeting was tiresome, lasted the whole afternoon. She brought Virginia Allen home to dinner with her.

Will didn't like Mrs. Allen. He thought she talked too much and disapproved of her actions and because she was divorced—the divorce having been accompanied by publicity not at all favorable to Mrs. Allen. Leota always *wished she knew her better*—had felt

that this big woman who laughed at public opinion and still kept her own position must really be worth knowing, charming, if you got beneath the surface.

So, at dinner, Leota tried to show to Mrs. Allen how fully in sympathy she was, how dissatisfied she, too, was with the conventional, humdrum life she had to lead—that she, too, longed for freedom.

But Mrs. Allen refused to open her soul. Even after dinner, as they drank their coffee in the gold-colored light of the living-room, Mrs. Allen refused to accept Leota as one of the free, refused to give more than correct, conventional platitudes about life.

Finally, Leota learned the truth. Virginia Allen had had a change of heart. She was no longer a defier of convention. On the contrary, she was planning a series of conventional acts and entertainments which would take her back into the graces of the disapproving. She was to wed a certain Mr. Montrose, it seemed, and, as Mrs. Montrose, she hoped to occupy an important and secure position in society. She had accepted Leota's invitation to dinner because Leota represented conventionality. Now she was almost afraid of Leota's ideas. Her conversation was heavily correct, stolidly domestic. Leota was dreadfully bored.

CHAPTER VII

ON Friday mornings, Leota attended a series of musicales at one of the larger hotels. These were conducted by a tall, meager-looking woman, who spent an hour of each morning talking on a musical topic, referring frequently to her notes, hesitating, repeating. After the lecture singers or pianists would give selections from the composer or opera under discussion. Leota felt that it was a nice thing to attend—she was able to keep up with things, have a real understanding of music—meet really nice people, too. This Friday she dressed languidly. At first she couldn't decide to go at all. Still, there was

nothing else to do. She chatted pleasantly with Katie as she dressed.

Just before she left and sooner than she had dared expect them, the postman brought two letters. She opened them nervously. Claron Wilmott and Howard Denning had both written to her—Wilmott asked to be allowed to call the coming Monday evening, Denning assured her of the pleasure the note had brought him and said he would drop in to tea in the near future. Notes from two men and a dinner this very evening with a third! Leota tossed her head in a spirit of deviltry and added a bit more rouge to her lips. This was living! Perhaps, even, something would happen this morning—a musician who was to play might be famous and handsome—might find her eyes in the crowd, ask to meet her—

The lecture was on old English ballads. They were sung by a group of fat women who looked just alike, with red faces and quivering chins.

Leota had luncheon at Mary Elizabeth's with Mrs. Buell, who also attended the musicales. She hurried home, rather early, to prepare for the dinner engagement.

At home she undressed rapidly and tried to take a nap, so she would look fresh and rested, but she couldn't go to sleep. She lay on her green enameled bed, musing of this evening, of other evenings, of things she might do. Of course she really wouldn't be—exactly untrue to Will—that wouldn't be fair—still, there were thousands of things—she could have delightful times—the whole world lay before her to be unfolded—

She took a long slow bath, adding unusual quantities of her favorite toilet water, lathering herself unnecessarily with the oriental scented bath soap she always used. She dried herself slowly, examining her smooth skin, fixed her nails, massaged, powdered, darkened her lashes and brows, reddened her lips and cheeks, spent half an hour brushing her hair, admiring her face, front view and profile, in the mirrors of her dressing table.

She put on one of her favorite gowns, black and green shimmering satin, cut rather low, and very plain. She was dressed half an hour too soon and spent the time at the piano.

Katie answered the door. Leota stood, quietly, near the piano, as Haines entered. She knew the gold of the grass-cloth made a good background for her.

"This is good of you," Haines said, quite low, as he came toward her. He took her hand and held it unnecessarily long. How lonely he had been!—how she had saved his life! His wife hadn't been well and now she had gone away for her health and no one would take pity on him and then he had received the charming little note—

Leota was quite thrilled. This was wicked—forbidden—to entertain, all alone, a married man, go to dinner with him—

"We'd better go out and eat," said Haines. "I'm hungry as a bear."

The expression somewhat shocked Leota. It was one Will used frequently and she had always disliked it, so commonplace. Surely Haines could have been more interested in her—still, it was dinner time—men were alike when they were hungry.

She put on her hat and coat and they went down in the elevator. She had thought that of course Haines would have a car, but there was none waiting. She hesitated just a moment at the door but he took her arm, which annoyed Leota, though she liked to dream of someone holding her arm, very closely, late at night. Haines led Leota to the nearby subway entrance. He neither apologized nor explained—evidently he thought it quite all right. She couldn't tell him that she hated subways, except occasionally in the day time, that she never rode in them with Will. There were no seats. She had to stand, people pressing against her, hardly able to keep on her feet, and she had worn thin satin evening slippers.

They got off at Times Square. Haines mentioned a restaurant he had decided on, as if, in choosing it, he had

shown marked originality. Leota did not raise an objection to his choice. The restaurant was one of Will's favorites, where she and Will had dined the last night Will was home.

In the restaurant Haines waited, hesitatingly, until the waiter piloted him to a seat. He let the waiter take care of Leota's coat. Then, when they were seated, he fumbled, hesitated over the menu just as Will would have done. Leota wanted to grab the card out of his hand, shake him. What was the use?

She looked at Haines critically as he ordered, as he consulted the waiter and found that "the filet of sole is very good tonight, sir," while he consulted her in regard to vegetables, ignoring a salad, pointing a red finger at an especially interesting item.

Why, Haines wasn't as good looking nor as distinguished as Will, even. Of course he was probably more fascinating, always taking women out to dinners, being misunderstood, all that. But his face was unpleasantly big and shiny and red and he wasn't "finished" about things any more than Will was.

Will would have ordered just the same dinner, plus the missing salad—Leota loved salads. The music was the same.

"What are they playing? It sounds familiar, but I don't seem to remember the name of it," Haines asked. Will would have asked that, too.

But the dinner was good. Leota ate heartily.

Haines began to talk about himself, his artistic ambitions, his wife. His wife—didn't understand. They had been childhood sweethearts, grew up together. He had gone away to school, then into the world, changed, grown. She had remained the same, a nice little small-town girl. He had seen how things were, but she hadn't. He had been in honor bound—what could he do? So he had married her and they had drifted farther and farther apart. He was forced to keep in the rut of commercial things because his wife was *extravagant*—she used all he could pro-

duce, but his soul called out for other things. His art—that was what counted, that and his friends—at least he was allowed those—and nod—Mrs. Clifford.

His voice grew tender, low.

Leota had expected to be thrilled by Haines. She had heard other women describe him as fascinating. She felt that the things he was saying should have thrilled her. They left her curiously cold. She felt a sympathy for Mrs. Haines, such an indefinite, mouse-like little thing, always pleasant and smiling. Why, she knew Mrs. Haines wasn't extravagant; she wore cheap ready-made frocks Leota wouldn't have worn. Being left at home while your husband talked about art and took other women out to dinner—she was out of town, now, but Haines took other women places even when she wasn't. Of course Will was a dreadful bore, but, if he did such things—

Haines tipped the waiter rather a smallish amount, Leota noticed, and he let the waiter adjust her coat.

Haines had tickets for the theater—a musical comedy that Leota had not seen. It resembled dozens she had seen in every single particular. The *pièce de résistance* of this particular opera was a song, "Cat, Cat, Cat," eight members of the chorus carrying live kittens. Haines thought this number "great" and hummed the music between the acts.

After the theater, Haines suggested, with a great show of inspiration, that they go to a well-known roof garden, similar to the one Will and Leota had attended on Monday. Leota had been there frequently, but she had not seen the newest *revue*. She liked roof-gardens, the color, the people, the smell of food and drink, tobacco and perfume. She had hoped that someone would see her and notice that she was not with her husband, but it seemed to her that Haines was rather afraid of recognition. He asked, rather nervously, "Is that tall fellow John Fredericks?" Was it possible, in spite of his talk about his rights, that Haines

was afraid of gossip and Mrs. Haines?

Haines was interested in the performance and, when the chorus girls, dressed as drummer boys, gave miniature drums to a favored few, he did all he could to attract attention to himself. He had to content himself with a pair of drumsticks and spent the rest of the evening keeping time by banging them on the table or applauding with them. Will couldn't have behaved more fatuously.

Leota noticed, too, that, as Haines drank, he moved closer to her and she had to grab her hand away to keep him from holding it under the table. He grew even more confidential, telling her how fine she was, how he knew she was misunderstood, what a shame it was that wives and husbands made such mistakes when they chose their mates. "Fate—that's what it is—fate. Deed is done. You can't undo it—circumstances—you just got to suffer, suffer, suffer, in silence—in silence."

In the taxi on the way home, Haines sat very close to Leota and told her what a wonderful little woman she was. If he had not used the phrase "wonderful little woman" Leota might have liked his praises better. It was the phrase that fell easiest from Will's lips when he wanted to say something nice. Haines was not even as clever as Will. Why, Haines was not even sincere.

Leota had a key with her—it had seemed so foolish to disturb Katie or Freda. Besides—she had hoped to be in a mood where Katie would have been an intrusion.

Haines opened the door and went with Leota into the private hallway of the apartment. Almost before she was aware of it he had put his arms around her and was kissing her. Leota felt his moist, fat cheek, his thick lips. She pulled away rather ungracefully.

"What do you mean?" she said, "what do you mean?" The phrases sounded stupid, meaningless enough. She couldn't think of anything else. Did he think because she had allowed him to take her to dinner—to the theater—

"No harm meant," Haines said. "Thought you were a good fellow, understand me. You wrote me a note, didn't you, asking me to cheer you up and all? And now you get sore. Remind me of my wife. You never can tell what will please a woman."

He stood there entirely unabashed, a bit puzzled by Leota's actions, but quite sure that his course had been the usual, expected one. He'd taken her to dinner, hadn't he? Spent money for food and the theater and a roof show—not to mention a taxi home. And now, because he tried to kiss her—

He straightened up with an attempt at dignity and said a stiff good-bye.

CHAPTER VIII

LEOTA cried herself to sleep. That stupid fellow, Haines! If Will had been here—he'd have told him a few things. Haines, with a dear little wife, acting that way the first time he was alone with another woman! And the things he'd said about his wife—awfully disloyal! At least, no matter what she thought, she never said things like that about Will. Such a stupid evening—might as well—or better—have been spent with Will. Of course, it was because Haines was married. She was through with married men. They were probably all alike. But, imagine Haines taking her out—one evening—and wanting kisses in payment. Still, there were other men—a world full of them.

The next morning Leota went down town. While she was buying some gloves at Altman's, she remembered that just a few blocks away was Allan Frederickson's decorating shop. She'd go in and see him, just a little chat. He'd suggested, so often, that she drop in, go places with him. Frederickson was a dear, a gentleman.

Frederickson and Oakley's "Shop of The Periods" was in Madison Avenue. It occupied the third and fourth stories of an old brownstone front house. Down stairs, a well-known corsetière held forth, her pink offerings flirting

with the Italian colors displayed in the upper windows.

Leota ran up the narrow stairs. A girl, with severely parted hair, wearing a purple and orange batik smock, received her, telling her Frederickson would be in soon. She spent the time, after looking into a mirror to be sure her hair and face were smoothly presentable, examining the furniture that stood around, highly colored reproductions, mostly of French and Italian things. She turned as she heard Frederickson's voice.

"This is a real treat, I assure you. And what can I do for you, my dear Mrs. Clifford?"

Frederickson had been born in Iowa, but his affected, high voice and his extreme English accent gave no clew to his native state. He walked with a bit of a spring and was always gesturing with long, slender fingers. He had a real love and understanding of beautiful things, of color, a "feel" for antiques, but this was overshadowed by a commercialism and shoppiness that were always in sight when there was any chance to make money. He was quite a snob, too, and liked the intimacies with "the best people" that his trade afforded him. He delighted in talking about various society leaders he had met and of having teas and dinners with them, but he was not above any friendship that could help his decorating shop. His intimate friends were usually decorators and artists and he preferred those who were rising, who might help him.

Leota shook hands with him.

"I was so bored and I remembered what fascinating things you always have here so I thought I'd run in and see you."

"I'm awful glad you did. Have you seen this dear little chair? You'll love it. The little-enameled knobs go wonderfully with your rug, don't they? How is your home? You do care for it as much as ever?"

Leota said that the apartment was still satisfactory, that she'd think about the chair. Then.

"Why don't you come in some day for tea and see for yourself?"

"I'd love that. May I really come? You've always been such an inaccessible person. I remember you refused to go to a real tea party with me."

"That was different. Mr. Clifford was home. You see, he's in England now on business and I—"

"Then you could go with me now?"

"It would be awfully nice."

Leota, when, with Frederickson, adapted his speech, his rising inflections, supercilious expressions, English accent. Now, her "awfully nice" was as artificially toned as Frederickson's own speeches.

A tea, it seemed, was to be given by Hartwell Miles in his studio in Gramercy Park. Miles was a sculptor and had just finished a head of Frederick J. Ray, the Western banker. The tea was to exhibit the head and Mr. and Mrs. Ray were to be there and perhaps a dozen other wealthy patrons of the arts, whom Miles had his eyes on. But there would be some real people there, too, not the fakers or half-starved failures of the Village, but real artists, successes, another decorator or two, a painter who'd just returned from France, a well-known poet who had just published his third volume of verse and was nearly making expenses.

Leota listened interestedly. It was just what she wanted—to meet people who were really doing things. Of course she'd go. Tomorrow at four, then—

She left the shop and hurried home, though there was no reason for hurrying. Tomorrow a tea with Frederickson, on Monday Claron Wilmott was coming to call—a wonderful time—a real deliverance from boredom, convention.

But now it was Saturday and Leota felt that there ought to be something special to do. She knew it was awfully middle-class, parties on Saturday night, but when Will was home there was always something—he could sleep late on Sunday, so he liked to go out Saturday nights—usually two or three couples

went to the theater with supper afterwards. Of course that was stupid—still, it was something. Now no one invited Leota to go any place. She rang up half a dozen of her women friends, to tell them that Will was away, to gossip, hoping they would include her in some pleasant party. No one did. Of course, after she got started there would be a lot of invitations—the people who mattered just didn't know that she was free.

There were places she could go alone—free people did that—it would be rather splendid going alone—not being tied to a stupid, masculine escort. In Greenwich Village you can go to a restaurant alone and all kinds of fascinating, famous people talk to you and you talk to them and everyone gets acquainted and smokes. Leota had heard all about that. She had gone to the Village but always in groups of four or six, "slumming" as her crowd expressed it. She knew that her group had always stamped itself at once with the terrible curse of being "uptowners." Still, everyone else, with the exception of a very occasional greasy, heavy eyebrowed man and short haired girl in a dirty smock, had stared and been well dressed, too. Well, after she found out about things, she would go alone to where artists and musicians and writers gathered, would mingle freely, hear clever, scintillating conversation, make genuine, unhampered friendships.

Leota telephoned to Roberta Miller. Roberta was so sorry, but she was just getting ready to fly to a Spring weekend house-party some friends were giving in a shack in New Jersey. If she'd only known a day sooner, she might have been able to include Leota! She was afraid it was rather impossible, now. Glad to hear Leota was free to go places, to breathe for herself. Monday? Oh, if Leota had an engagement—and she'd be busy Tuesday and Wednesday. What about Saturday—a week from today? Leota had better plan to stay all night—awful bother going home late, so far up town. They'd have dinner and then find something in-

teresting—always something going on, and then Leota could have breakfast with her on Sunday and maybe go some place Sunday, too. All right, around six, then, a week from tonight.

Leota wasted the rest of the day as she always wasted her time, reading a few pages of a book she had picked up down town—she had heard it had some exciting society scenes in it—playing the piano. She went for a short walk late in the afternoon, eyeing every man she passed with a new interest. She saw no one she knew nor who attracted her. She ate dinner alone. It was rather lonely. Of course, later—

She spent the evening as she spent the afternoon, restless, dissatisfied. She really didn't miss Will—it wasn't that—it was splendid being free. But things ought to happen. Jeddy hasn't answered her note. Of course it was quite possible he was out of town or the note had been delayed—she had sent it to the business address she had found in the telephone book. She hadn't heard from Denning again. It wasn't as if she had written to men who weren't interested in her. These men had been. If she only knew more men—the right kind. The rest of the men she knew were so stupid, heavy—worse than Will.

CHAPTER IX

FREDERICKSON called promptly at four, on Sunday. Leota had put on her most artistic afternoon gown, one she was sure he would admire. It was tan, with an embroidery of colored wools and wooden beads. Frederickson did like it and said so.

"You're quite exquisite that way. I see you are living up to the color-scheme I planned for you. You are quite perfect against that gold background. Women like you, with brown eyes and hair and fair skins, ought always to go in for green and gold and terra cotta. You still like the way I did your apartment?"

"Quite a lot."

"Awfully glad. It is good. This chair ought to go nearer the lamp, so—"

Frederickson rearranged a chair or two, tossed cushions about, patted one, decided that an embroidered affair was "impossible" and must be put away, immediately. His long, white fingers arranged the things on the table, the few books, the framed photograph.

"Did you see those new candlesticks when you were in, Saturday? I'm so sorry I didn't call your attention to them. You ought to have a pair with black candles in them, right here. Awful nice, polychromed, lovely colors. And some new book-ends to go with them. These are awful—hide them away at once—worse than Victorian."

They walked for half an hour, then climbed on a bus. The weather was fine, sunny, with a fresh, pleasant Spring breeze.

Leota liked Frederickson. She didn't know exactly what to say to him, he cared about so few things and she was afraid that her conversation would show her terrible lack of knowledge about decoration—she had read Frank Alvah Parsons and a couple of chapters in R. Davis Benn's "Style in Furniture," but had given it up when it got to be a little hard to understand. She could impress her friends with her knowledge but didn't know enough to talk with a real decorator. She listened attentively when Frederickson told of a home he was doing on Long Island, rather ordinary people, really, whom he had to fight with, before they'd let him use anything good.

Leota remembered, then, how difficult to talk with Frederickson had always been. Decoration seemed to be the only thing he knew or cared anything about. If you let him talk about his interests it was rather confusing and a dreadful bore, if you talked about what interested you he didn't seem to hear at all. Then, too, the knowledge came to Leota that there really wasn't anything she was interested in—or knew anything about. Even if there had been—

Her feet hurt. She had stumbled, Frederickson had taken such long steps. She knew she oughtn't to wear French *heels* for walking, but sensible shoes are

so terribly looking—she didn't know anything about Gothic Art of the fourteenth century—

Hartwell Miles' studio was on the top floor of what Frederickson called "a lovely old home" which had been "done over awfully well," a few years before, into studios and apartments. Miles' studio extended across the front of the house, with the living rooms in the rear. The studio was a big, high-ceilinged room, with an immense skylight across the front and part of the roof. The walls were painted a light putty color and there was a big fireplace, pleasantly ablaze, though the day did not especially call for it. But Leota knew the value artistic people put on fireplaces. The walls were nearly bare. On one side an artist had sketched a huge head in charcoal, on another side were several smaller things, done in color on the wall. There were a few framed things, too, bright landscapes done in oil. The furniture consisted of several couches, velour covered, several Italian chairs, two of the favorite Dante model, and two hour-glass chairs. There was a rather handsome oriental rug in reds on the floor and a long Italian table stood near one wall. In the center of the room was a small stand bearing the bust of a man. Four smaller stands stood around the room. On a sixth stand was a group of odd-looking pottery, in reds and purples, with an uneven glaze.

Frederickson did not ring. He opened the door. The room seemed very full of people to Leota, though later she found there were not over twenty. As many more came in during the next half hour. Frederickson called, "I say, Miles," in a high, affected voice.

Their host came toward them. He was a slender little fellow with heavy reddish eyebrows and a soft looking, pointed light red beard. His hair was combed so it would stand out, around his head, and, as it was starting to recede the effect was that of an uneven halo.

Leota was introduced and was offered a slender, yielding hand.

"So glad you came," Miles said, graciously and called, softly, "Juliet."

Juliet was Mrs. Miles. She took long, swinging, slow steps toward her latest guests, whom she welcomed with a cordial drawl. She wore a trailing gown of blue-green chiffon which fell in straight lines from shoulder to hem. Leota noticed that it was badly torn and quite dirty around the bottom, but that Juliet never lifted it, even when it was being stepped on.

Leota left her coat in a tiny bedroom, which contained a lovely mahogany chest of drawers and, in a dark corner, a small table of golden oak—and Frederickson had taught Leota that to possess golden oak was almost a criminal offense. She powdered her nose and carefully puffed out her hair before going back into the studio.

Leota found her host, hostess and escort deep in conversation with a group near the fireside, so she joined them. They nodded but did not interrupt the rather pompous fat man who was talking. Leota was introduced to few people. She found that, if you had anything to say to anyone, you said it. She found, too, that it was quite unlikely she would have anything to say.

"Have you seen the head?" a greyish-looking man asked her.

"No, I haven't," said Leota.

The man led the way to the center of the room, as if to a great discovery. A group of people parted so they, too, might admire.

"There," said the greyish-looking man.

"The head" was the bust of a man of about sixty, a pouchy fellow, with small eyes and rather a sneer, a double-chinned person with neat hair."

"How do you like it?"

"It's awful nice," said Leota, in her best artistic manner.

"Wonderful," the man agreed. "He's caught so much—the spirit, the tone. Who other than Hartwell Miles could have taken a man like that, an ordinary looking Western banker, mind you, and show his soul, quivering, to the world.

A real unveiling—that's what it is. Miles can catch his butterflies."

"I—I like it a lot," said Leota.

The other heads received careful attention, too. Whether sold or not, Leota did not know, but they were of famous people, a dancer, a popular novelist, a composer, a statesman. The pottery was the work of Juliet Miles and praise of these pieces was extravagant. The glazes rivalled in color, it seemed, those on the tiles of the French sixteenth century.

Leota watched the people, interestedly. They were rather sharply divided, it seemed. Either they were artistic, in the way New Yorkers take to show temperament, or they seemed a bit floridly over-dressed. The other guests were introduced, almost formally, to the over-dressed ones. They were treated perhaps even a bit too graciously, but they seemed little at ease, even when quite proud and patronizing. Mr. Ray, the western banker, and his wife came, late in the afternoon and took their places, definitely, with the over-dressed ones. The artistic guests buzzed about them, praising the head and Miles' interpretative work, flattering, almost cooing. Leota talked to bejeweled matrons, to slim, bobbed-haired girls or slender, effeminate looking young men and soon got to the bottom of it. The over-dressed ones were the patrons of the arts, of course, and it was well to bend to them, to listen to all they said, to agree with them, to flatter their tastes, to bring sketches for their approval, to laugh at their witticisms, for, only in this way, would the patrons of the arts fulfill their missions as patrons.

The conversation was of art but the touches were light, deft. Art was beautiful, inspiring, a high point at which to aim, something to worship. Hartwell Miles' work was taken with great seriousness. Each head came in for half an hour's serious discussion and praise. Groups continually gathered about them. Each of the bits of pottery was praised separately. A rather tall man with long, oily hair, began to speak of his trip abroad, and

Leota knew as his voice grew loud, insistent, that it was planned that he should give an informal "talk." The others grew silent, as he told them that in America really the best, the new, the real art was to be found. The artists here were doing more to uplift real freedom of expression than those of any other nationality—we were the bud, the flower of the coming generation—and Miles was among the highest of these.

"In art, in literature, the older countries have had their day. We of the newer generation of America are triumphing. We are carrying the torch of freedom of expression in every medium. We of the newer generation are the renaissance. Few of the publications are open to us, yet even now we have the *New Republic*, the *Liberator*, the *Pagan*. Few of the art shops have broken away from the iron hands of tradition, of ugliness. Still, one at a time, the doors are opening, as doors must open to beauty, to truth, to newer thought, that we of the new generation are bringing."

A rather well-trained butler—Leota knew that he was hired for the occasion—brought in the tea things. There was an enormous tea, then, with hundreds of tiny sandwiches, filled with a variety of chopped fillings, rich little cakes, well-prepared drinks.

"I hope Miles got a lot for that head," thought Leota, "neither he nor his wife looks awfully prosperous."

The guests ate sparingly, nibbling daintily of the sandwiches, as they prattled nicely about art, about "their work," the artistic half of the crowd flattering, admiring, being gracious to the over-dressed half, who, in turn, a rather bewildered turn, asked questions concerning arts and artists, talked of themselves, their homes, their tastes, their business, their prosperity.

Then the guests started to go. Leota noticed that the "outsiders" made the first move. In less than fifteen minutes they were all gone, after many pretty adieux, hand shakings and compliments.

"Shall we go?" asked Leota of young Frederickson, who was seated on a couch in a corner, talking, with gestures, to a girl in black and gold.

"Oh, dear, no," said Frederickson. "I want you to know all of these charming people better."

Leota had felt rather bored, out of it. The "rich folks" had evidently guessed she was not artistic, the artistic folks must have known she wasn't rich. No one had paid much attention to her. Now she hoped things would be better.

To Leota it seemed as if these people had been acting in a play. Now the play was over, everyone suddenly relaxed, grew comfortable. The women all started to smoke, taking pillows from the couches and arranging themselves gracefully on the floor, near the fireplace.

Miles said something to Frederickson about Leota. Frederickson laughed his pleasantly affected, high laugh.

"Oh, Mrs. Clifford. Quite jolly. Husband's in England, so I told her I'd look out for her today. Known her for years. Did her apartment last year—oh, yes, up town, but all gold and black and dull red, quite nice."

"Pass the sandwiches, Gig," said a girl in orange to a lanky youth with a loose tie.

"I'm glad the affair passed off nicely," sighed Juliet Miles, as if she were all alone.

Everyone grabbed the sandwiches and ate rapidly. Leota was glad they were going to be eaten, but she did hope she could reach them before they were all gone. The butler had vanished. Leota secured quite a pile with shredded chicken in them, so she was quite satisfied. All seemed proud of their ability to "pig"—pig, as a verb, seemed a favorite word—so nobody noticed Leota.

The conversation, though still artistic, became more personal, shoppier. Miles had secured the Rays through Gig Morton, the tall boy, who, of course, had got a commission. If you brought a patron of the arts to an artist and the artist got an order, you received a commission. Miriam Young had

brought the Van Horns to the tea. They had bought three paintings from her, in less than a year, but were tired of paintings now, so she was "handing them over." The Greenes had had their country house done by young Burkley, a rival of Frederickson, and had been invited to the tea because they "loved to meet such artistic people" and because Mrs. Greene, if properly flattered, might find that a head by Hartwell Miles was the one thing needed to complete her home. If you were rich and met one artist member of the group—and took advice—you could have your home designed, the grounds chosen and planned, the home built and furnished, your portrait painted, your gowns made, all by the "newer artists" whom your first artistic friend was lucky enough to know and kind enough to introduce you to.

This amused Leota, but she was not entertained in the way she had expected to be. She was rather annoyed at being disillusioned. Although not rich enough to be a patron of the arts, she would have preferred worshipping.

On the whole, the conversation did not interest her. No one attempted to draw her into it. She could have said anything, if she had found space for it, but she didn't have anything to say. The conversation was about art, mostly about painting, sculpture, decoration, about statuettes, book-covers, old chests. Nothing was explained, defined. It was taken for granted that everyone knew about everything under discussion, just as, when the conversation became more personal, and a bit catty, it was taken for granted that everyone knew all of the little personal jokes and the people talked about. You could say anything you wanted to about a person, no matter how frank, it seemed, though you might be called "snooty"—another favorite word—when you got through. Those who had been nicest, when "company" was present, became cattiest, now. Though everyone wasn't catty. Gig had his arms around the girl in orange and held her cup, as she drank. Juliet Miles stroked the hair of young Burk-

ley, though he didn't seem to enjoy it a great deal, he had black, sleek hair. It was artistic enough, Leota admitted, though rather a bore, on the whole.

It was quite dark when the guests started to go, "to get some real food to eat," they admitted. Frederickson and Leota took a bus again. A cool wind had risen and it was no longer pleasant on top. Inside it smelled of petrol and made Leota slightly ill.

Back in her apartment, Leota suggested that Frederickson stay for supper and he accepted hastily. It was Freda's afternoon out, but Katie prepared an acceptable salad and there was some cold meat and a good cheese. Frederickson seemed to enjoy it.

During the meal it was easy enough to find things to talk about, the people they had seen during the afternoon, the theaters they had attended. These were the first of Frederickson's friends Leota had met, and, though he called them "charming," Leota was surprised at the little personal, cutting things—"snooty" things—he said about them, how they "lifted" customers, how little some of them knew about their work, things about their domestic life. After supper, the conversation dragged into silence. Leota found Frederickson rather shabby. Now that he was not working on her apartment and could not talk about draperies and color, they had no bond. Leota knew and cared little about art and decoration, about Frederickson's commercial progress. He cared about little else. Leota brought out a big box of candy and they ate a lot of it. She tried playing on the piano, but Frederickson was not interested. At eleven he thought he had better go and Leota agreed with him. He shook hands, warmly, and said he would come in to dinner, soon.

Leota had had no idea that people could be so difficult to entertain. The reception had been interesting enough—but afterwards! Frederickson talked enough, if you encouraged him, but he said such conceited, uninteresting, boring things. Still, there were other men

—Wilmott for one—he was to call the next evening.

CHAPTER X

LEOTA spent Monday down town with Aline Buell and a friend of theirs, a Mrs. Rutherford. They had luncheon at the Tally-Ho, chocolate at Page & Shaw and tried on hats in every shop from Wanamaker's to Tappé's. Leota was tired when she returned home, so she undressed and bathed, eating dinner in a loose boudoir gown and dressing afterwards. She was just finishing her toilet when Claron Wilmott called, so she kept him waiting a few minutes in the living room—purposing drawing out the final details of her toilet, fingering the various ivory and silver things on her dressing table, rubbing imaginary bits of powder from her eyebrows, touching her lips once more with her lip-stick—so that her entrance would be more effective. She wore black and had added a flat gold rose to her bodice.

Wilmott was delighted to see Leota, he told her. He held both of his hands out for her hands and shook them long and heartily. Then, after waiting, with effect, he handed her a box of candy.

Leota was really pleased with the candy—though it was a small box of a kind she did not care for—she liked the idea of getting candy from a man other than her husband.

His presentation over, Wilmott assumed charge of the conversation, telling Leota how pleased he had been to hear from her, how busy he'd been all week, the number of invitations he'd had, the places he'd been.

Wilmott liked to pose as a man-about-town, a prosperous bachelor, a good catch. He was about forty-five, but thought he seemed younger. He was rather fat and florid, with light hair which he parted nearly in the center and whisked up smartly at each side. His skin seemed darker than his hair. His cheeks, which had been quite full early in life, were beginning to pouch and under his chin he was beginning to be quite flabby. He had fat, red hands

and on the backs of them was a quantity of light hair. He was rather a smug fellow, with the conceit that a presentable bachelor who is capable of filling in at dinners and theater parties so frequently acquires.

He sat, now, one leg slightly over the other, bringing well into view his patent leather shoes and tan spats. He wore a grey sack suit with threads of red, blue and green running through the material.

He told Leota of his activities during the past winter, of his popularity, his tact.

"So I said to myself, 'if Mrs. Clifford asks me to come to see her, I'll come, no matter how busy I am. I don't know a finer little woman and that's a fact.' So I telephoned Mrs. Johnson and told her I had a business engagement, out of town. Indeed I did. Not that Mrs. Johnson isn't a fine woman. Indeed she is. And so is Annabelle. But I don't want to get in too deep with them, I don't want to get married. That's a fact. Not that Annabelle or the Johnsons have said anything, you understand. But you can't guess how careful a man's got to be, these days. And, while there are charming women like you who will give a man the honor of calling on them there's no use getting married, now is there? Annabelle Johnson is a fine girl, a fine girl. She'll make some man a fine wife. Only, when I saw how the land lay, asking me to dinner every week or two and to go the opera, not to mention a visit to Greenpoint, I felt I ought to call a halt. Not that I don't enjoy going with them—but there is no use giving the little girl a false impression, raising false hopes, all that. You know how I feel about things. Why should I marry, anyhow? I've got a fine apartment, my own boss, go and come when I please, my club when I want it. Not that I don't think a lot of women—you know I do, Mrs. Clifford. That's what I always say—I love the women—I love all of them. That's why I don't marry—I love the women too much, couldn't choose one from among so many."

He uncrossed his legs, ponderously,

coughed, moved over to the couch where Leota sat, seated himself near her.

"Is he going to make love to me, hold my hand?" thought Leota. She knew well enough that he was. Well, why not? Wasn't that what she wanted, to be made love to by a man not her husband? Hadn't she thought of Wilmott as a most attractive fellow, a popular bachelor?

Sure enough, Wilmott picked up one of Leota's hands, turning over the palm and looked at it, muttering "a good hand, a good hand," then, "such a nice little hand," and squeezed it between his own. Except that it was less painful, the experiment proved about as thrilling as having her nails manicured. Leota drew her hand away and pretended to arrange her hair.

"Now don't get angry, Mrs. Clifford, Leota. I don't mean a thing. Not a thing. You know me too well for that. I like you, my dear young lady, I admire you. That's all, no offense."

"I'm not offended, Mr. Wilmott," said Leota.

Wilmott did not move from his position on the couch. He talked, again, about the past winter, his plans for the summer, the plays he had seen and enjoyed, told what he thought of them. He was fond of the theater and could predict the success of a play from the opening night, every time, it seemed. Then, Leota felt his arm go around her, felt his hand press her toward him, heard him rumble, "Dear little girl, what a dear little girl you are. I love the ladies," felt his face against her, his lips.

Leota stood up, as languidly as she could and went toward the piano, sat on the bench and played a popular air, then turned toward Wilmott, smiling again. There was no use getting angry. Why be the indignant female and hiss "How dare you?" It had been her own fault. If being made love to by a popular bachelor seemed humiliating instead of thrilling—

Wilmott took his rebuff calmly enough. After a moment he returned to his old, cheerful manner, a bit re-

served, dignified, perhaps, to show Leota that other women considered him desirable, that it was she who was in the wrong. Leota tried to listen attentively to his stories, nodding her head and smiling.

Leota had told Freda to prepare oysters à la Thorndike and coffee, and to have them ready at ten. She had thought it would seem so cozy to have a bite to eat at that time. Katie, in a very fresh cap and apron, came now to tell her that the oysters were ready.

The chafing-dish and percolator were on the table when Leota and Wilmott reached the dining room and they both ate heartily of the oysters. This led Wilmott to tell of the numerous dinner invitations he received, how hard it was for him to refuse anyone and how impossible it was to accept them all—a bachelor in New York, it seemed, a popular, eligible, good-looking bachelor, was invited to dinners every evening, his only difficulty being to pick the most desirable dinners.

Wilmott left at eleven, after a hearty good-bye. He pinched Leota's cheek playfully and told her she must "get over being so touchy." He said he'd be glad to come to dinner any night she'd say, in spite of numerous engagements.

Trying to fall asleep that night, Leota went over the affairs of the week—for it would be a week, tomorrow, that Will had gone. An exciting week, yet it hadn't been happy, nothing had gone just right. Of course it had been pleasant, being free, the long mornings of wasted time, of chocolate eating, still, these were things she could do, had done, when Will was home. Of course, Wilmott was dreadful. Still, other men had put their arms around her—years ago, before she was married. It wasn't that. It was the lack of feeling, Wilmott's calm assurance that every woman would yield to him, that he was charming, popular, Wilmott's opinion of her. After all, she had flattered him whenever she met him, had written him a note. She had been a fool. Oh, well, there were other

men besides Haines and Frederickson and Wilmott. Denning for one—he hadn't called yet—he was good-looking and young—she might meet other new men, too—and there was Jeddy. After all, only a week had passed.

Leota wasted Tuesday morning, as she wasted so many mornings. In the afternoon she went downtown, alone, and did some necessary shopping; towels she needed, a new crêpe waist, some caps for Katie. She ate dinner alone, rather grumpily. She had a good appetite, after being in the open air, but she admitted that it was rather a bore, sitting at the table all alone. At least Will was a good listener, really interested in what she was saying, nodding at the right time, laughing at her little jokes. She went to bed early—what else was there to do?

CHAPTER XI

WEDNESDAY was the luncheon Irene Sears was giving for her guest. How silly to give a luncheon at home! It's far more interesting at a restaurant.

The luncheon was at one—and Leota arrived there as she always arrived, a few minutes late but not quite the last. It was the usual luncheon, the hostess nervously gracious, with one eye on the extra maid, the guest of honor chirpy, smiling, the other guests a bit affected, assuming an air of indifference and nonchalance, but ready to chatter, friendly, once the ice was broken. Leota knew most of the guests. She liked the things to eat, all but the eggs with the extraordinary sauce and the size of the frappé. Why will people serve eggs at luncheons and ices in miniature? She invited Irene Sears and her guest to have luncheon with her the following Thursday and to go to a matinée.

Leota ate dinner alone that evening and the next. Three dinners alone! Who could have imagined that Will, plain old Will, could have been so exciting, someone to look forward to, to question about the day's happenings, to talk with?

The music lecture on Friday seemed

more tiresome than usual. Leota was glad there was only one more left, for the season. Each one seemed poorer than the last, but you might as well go, if you're paying for them. Now she couldn't even make fun of this one to Will. It had been lots of fun, laughing over them at dinner.

Leota greeted Saturday with a real quickening of emotion. Here, at last, was something definite to do. All week there had been nothing but the usual day-time engagements with women, shopping, gossiping. But now she was going to have a real adventure, staying all night with Roberta.

Leota went to a matinée with Aline Buell, taking her smallest travelling bag, containing her toilet things and a gown, with her. She hoped things would be all right at home, she'd never been away this way before—both Freda and Katie had promised to stay in, but you couldn't tell what might happen.

After the matinée she and Aline had ice-cream and sat chatting until half-past five, when Aline had to go home to dinner.

Leota took a bus to Roberta's, getting there a few minutes before six. Roberta had just come in. She greeted Leota warmly.

"So here's the little uptown mouse, ready for a vacation. That's fine. Here's your bedroom," pointing to a couch in the front studio room. "Sit down and take off your coat, I'll be ready in a minute. Some luck, little one, the crowd's going to be at the Wet Rat. We're all to eat dinner there, Dutch treat, you know. Something interesting is bound to happen."

Roberta ran around, changing her neat shirt-waist for a more artistic creation, a blouse of purple, with splashes of yellow painted on it. Roberta did nothing artistic, but she liked to pose as artistic, creative, and spoke of her chemistry position as if it were quite important. She had chosen a "studio" instead of an ordinary apartment to further this conceit. It was a grubby enough place, in a made-over building which had far less artistic charm than

the studio occupied by the Hartwell Miles'. That had been, definitely, Gramercy Park, this was "the Village."

The "studio" was of medium size, but was strewn with dozens of meaningless articles, an odd hat, an empty straw-covered claret bottle, shoes. On the tables were perhaps fifty magazines in various stages of disintegration, covers gone, ragged edged. The walls, originally yellow, showed unfaded squares where pictures had been. They were hung now with weird examples of modern "art" and huge posters, announcing balls at Webster Hall and lectures by radicals, vividly colored, slightly torn. The furniture was kitchen stuff, cheap chairs and tables, painted in bright, cheap, disharmonizing colors.

Off the studio was a tiny kitchenette—a gas burner with two holes, a small ice box, a row of pots and pans hanging on nails above the stove, a tiny cabinet of dishes and provisions. This was separated from the studio by a brown screen, also ornamented with posters and new "art." A bathroom, containing an old tin tub, whose latest coat of enamel was beginning to disappear, and a tiny bedroom with a single iron bed and dresser, completed the studio. Curtains of a brown material resembling burlap hung at the windows and the couch was covered with a strip of blue velvet, which did not quite reach to the back, the deficiency being concealed by half a dozen cushions in a row. A woman was supposed to clean the apartment while Roberta was at work, but as Roberta was not particular this was often neglected.

Leota knew she ought to see more beauty in Roberta's apartment than she did. She admitted it was smug and uptown to prefer cleanliness and order and a pleasant view from her windows. Roberta couldn't afford those things, but she said other things were more important—freedom, doing what you liked, even having an affair. This wasn't a cage, at any rate.

Roberta was a pleasant-looking girl, a year or two younger than Leota. She was of medium height, rather fair,

and inclined to be a little too stout. She had a good color, a short, upturned nose with frank nostrils, a flabby mouth and weak chin. She went with people younger than herself, usually, and liked to think that she was "just a girl."

"Come on," she said. "We're to meet the others at the Wet Rat. Seems good to you to get away, doesn't it? Don't see how you stand it, never getting out or meeting people or seeing anything."

"Oh, I do get out," Leota found herself unexpectedly defending her mode of life, "I go to see all the good shows and go to all the restaurants and roof gardens and go to luncheons and dances and—"

"Oh, things like that," dismissed Roberta. "I mean real things, people who think. Wait till you see our crowd to-night."

Leota wanted to see them, wanted to be convinced.

The Wet Rat was one of the newest of the Village restaurants, Roberta told her, on the way over. The common herd, the up-town seekers for novelty had not yet found it. It still belonged to the sacred inner circle of thinkers.

Before she became conscious of her thoughts, Leota wished Will was with her. Will would so have enjoyed these people—he always spoke of them as "a little group of serious pikers." Then she remembered—Will, indeed! Because Will was a scoffer, who did not believe in free thought, in self-expression, must she bow to him? Had married life enslaved her so that she could not think alone, that she must see things through his eyes? Why, she could be free, as free as Roberta. This was real—living—

The Wet Rat looked to Leota like the average Village restaurants she had seen. But of course it was different. She'd soon see that.

The restaurant had been, originally, the basement of an old house. The various pipes still showed, on the ceiling, but the ceiling and walls had been painted a bright blue, ornamented with yellow stripes. The tables and chairs

were the usual kitchen variety, painted red and black, and the tables had a paper napkin at each place, in lieu of table cloths. You could see into the kitchen, from the open door at the back, but, after one look, Leota decided it was just as well not to.

A rude, ill-mannered girl, with a rough, unpleasant voice and oily-looking hair, cut short like a cap, was the proprietor. She nodded to Roberta and called, "The crowd's over there, Miller."

They passed through narrow aisles of tables to a long table near the rear, where about ten people were already seated.

"Here's Roberta," "Hello, old sport," "Hello, Miller," members of the group called. Leota was introduced all around, not as "Mrs. Clifford," but as "A friend of mine, Leota Clifford." There were no titles in the Wet Rat, it seemed.

After much moving and chair scraping, places were made for Roberta and Leota, and Leota had a fairly clean paper napkin in front of her and a knife marked "The Blue Bird" and a bent-tined fork engraved "The Happy Cricket." She looked around at her new acquaintances. The men looked as if they might be clerks or bookkeepers. They were fairly neat but poorly dressed. One had rather long hair and all but one was smooth-shaven. Four of the women had on the plain shirt-waist-and-skirt outfit of the average saleswoman or office worker, one wore a smock of bright red crêpe, not very clean, another a dress of pale blue, trimmed with many ruffles, the sort of dress a small-town belle would have delighted in.

Ordinarily, Leota would have felt rather sorry for this group, because they were not more prosperous. But she saw that sympathy was out of place, that they were all self-satisfied, conceited, superior. The conversation was rather loud but not at all remarkable. There was the news that "Jim thought he had sold a story to *Munsey's*," followed by sarcastic references to Jim and his writing ability. Someone else they

knew had had an article in the *New Republic*, three weeks before. This was discussed at length as if it were epochal. They talked of other writers they knew, of mutual friends, repeating bits of scandal. They agreed that the food was "the best in town for the price." A few acquaintances came to their table to talk, but the conversation was commonplace—the whole affair reminded Leota of the suppers she had had, years before, at the Young People's League, in the basement of the church, in Westmont. Yet, these people were supposed to be "living their own lives," "creating art," things like that. Roberta had even told Leota that several of these people were living in domesticity unfettered by the marriage bond, that they had nobly "thrown aside convention." To Leota, the dinner, even the famous "beef stew" which they all had advised her to take, was absolutely inedible, so she nibbled on a bit of heavy bread. She was awfully hungry. The cigarette smoke hurt her eyes. There was no ventilation.

The crowd talked on and on. Leota listened wearily, to hear, for the third time, about the story one of the group had sold, a full year ago, to a second-rate magazine. She found that many of the group had inartistic positions by which they earned their livings, and, though they talked of success, they seemed to lack all definite aim. Everything they were doing, writing or art, no matter how small, was wonderful, brilliant, new, and the work of all others, especially people who had achieved success, was banal, stupid, commercial. They were fearfully in earnest. Most of them had come from small towns and still retained their small-town mannerisms. Instead of being worldly, cultured, clever, as Leota had hoped they would be, outside of a few affectations they were more provincial than she was, wrapped up in their own narrow little set, prejudiced, rather dull. As far as Leota could tell, they had produced nothing in any line which, even if "discovered," could make them famous in any way, though they were all

looking forward to fame, as their natural due.

At ten Leota asked Roberta if they were to stay much longer, her head was starting to hurt badly. Roberta suggested they go to the Brevoort, there was always a good crowd there. Two of the men and the girl in the red smock offered to accompany them. The rest of the crowd declared they were "broke" and would "go up to Gertie's." The party at the Brevoort would, of course, be Dutch treat, as all Village parties were.

CHAPTER XII

LEOTA liked the Brevoort. She went there frequently with Will and some of their friends, driving down after the theater. How often she wished she had known some of the distinguished-looking people she saw. She had always felt a bit out of it, middle-class. Now she was with people who would know everyone.

They found a vacant table in the middle room. Leota liked that, they could see everyone who came in. The people at her table nodded to others. They pointed out Jefferson, the magazine writer; McManus, who had had a serial running in a popular weekly. Then, Ardley Dupont went through, stopped at their table! Dupont was one of Leota's favorite writers of fiction—he wrote wonderful things about glowing nights, heart throbs, moonlight on silver water, passionate kisses. She could hardly believe it possible when she was introduced and heard his name. He was a pompous, fat little fellow, with a bright eye and a perkily held head. He was glad she liked his last book—his next would be out in a week or two, the best thing he'd ever done—advanced copies had gone to the reviewers and were getting wonderful notices. He was sure of himself, smug, vain. Leota noticed, too, that her new acquaintances, who had said they despised commercial successes, hung on his words in a worshipful attitude. No, he couldn't wait, not even for one drink—a whole

table of friends waiting for him. He bowed sprightly, was gone. She had met a real writer at last, and, remembering the real thrills the books had given her and their smug, bantam-like author, she was sorry she had.

Leota's crowd ordered many rounds of drinks and she ordered a chicken sandwich, too. She didn't care much about drinking, but the people began to seem a little brighter, gayer. Three others joined their party, a thin, tired woman whose husband was a lecturer; two men, both thin, pale; one sold bonds. They were full of the Revolution.

"Do you know what is going to happen, what is already happening, as we sit here in idleness?" one of the men asked Leota. Leota couldn't imagine.

"Revolution," said the man. "The People won't stand a bit more. Why should they? Why shouldn't they have everything—instead of the millionaire and capitalists having everything? This, all this," he motioned with thin hands, "will fall. It is getting ready to topple, even now. Why shouldn't it? This thin layer of civilization is on the edge of a mighty volcano—you can hear the rumbling. A year from now, six months, this will all be gone."

"I don't think so," said Leota. Not thinking so seemed the best way to get rid of so unpleasant a thought.

"Bah—what *you* think! What do *you* know? It will come. In a few months we will not be here. This will be gone—all gone."

Leota wondered how she had gone on, not knowing what was about to happen. She grew cold and shivered. Maybe it was on account of the drinks.

They talked of the revolution for an hour. There were more drinks. Leota noticed that Roberta was gayer, was talking, gesturing.

Leota glanced around the room. There, at a table close by, were the Hills and the Kennedys. She smiled at them brightly, then looked at the reflection of her own table in the mirror. Leota wasn't really a snob, she felt. Yet she was rather ashamed of this

company, these cheap-looking men, untidy-looking women. How clean and correct the Hills and the Kennedys looked!—why, Will always looked correct and clean, too. Of course, now she was with real thinkers, Bohemians, she ought to feel beyond the thought of superficial appearance. She wondered what her friends were thinking about her. Of course she could tell them, later, what a wonderful time she had had, make them jealous of her freedom . . .

When the waiters began piling chairs on tables and the lights flickered, her crowd was ready to go. Each person made an attempt to pay for himself, but Leota knew that her bill was larger than the drinks and sandwich she had had. She didn't mind that—Will was generous with household money. But she did feel embarrassed as she paid it—she had never paid for a meal while men had been present or at night—she didn't know whether or not she should tip. She gave the waiter a tip of fifty cents and he thanked her, so it must have been all right.

The group went with them to Roberta's studio and all came in. Roberta brought out some whiskey and some rather warm soda and they drank it out of dull-looking glasses. One of the men stretched out on the couch and fell asleep. The girls sat on the floor. Roberta had stopped being gay and was silent and a bit sullen.

At half past two the crowd left. Leota was tired. They had all been so, well, rather mussy. Even their jokes had been unpleasant toward the end and the men put their hands on your shoulder, touching you, saying things not at all respectful. Leota started to undress slowly. She felt as if she were doing something wrong to stay. She wished she'd decided to go home.

Roberta started to cry. Leota, trying to cheer her up, made her tears flow faster.

"You don't understand," sobbed Roberta, "you don't understand anything. Here I am, poor girl, all alone in city, no one, no one."

"That's all right," Leota soothed. She

was not used to people who had been drinking. Will never drank much and you couldn't tell he'd ever had anything. "You'll be all right in the morning."

"I'm a poor girl, all alone, nobody loves me. You're so stupid, you think I'm a bad, bad girl."

"Why, I don't at all," said Leota.

"And Charlie, he went away."

"But you sent him away. You told me so, last year. You were both free, so when you found you no longer loved, you separated without the blackness of marriage or divorce."

"Never sent him away. He went. He said we were all wrong, got religion and all that. Didn't want freedom of youth. Called me old girl, married girl of nineteen, bond of matrimony. I don't know a man, nineteen, to marry. He don't like the Village any more. I'm all alone in cruel city, all alone."

Leota cheered up Roberta a little and got her to bed. Then she made the couch into a bed as best she could, with the gray-looking sheets she managed to find under Roberta's directions. They looked unpressed, unsanitary. She hated to crawl in between them. Why had she left her own apartment for this sort of thing?

She waked up about ten on Sunday. Roberta was still asleep. She tried to clean up some of the numerous cigarette ashes, to get the smell of smoke and liquor out of the room. Her head still ached. At twelve, after an unpleasant and not very successful effort to bathe and dress, she waked Roberta.

Roberta was more cheerful than she had expected to find her. She'd be all right if she had some coffee. Leota puttered around the kitchenette and made some as good as she could and Roberta, unbathed, came into the studio for it, wearing an untidy pink kimono. There was also some stale bread and preserves, though neither of them cared for those.

Roberta retold the story she had hinted at, the night before. She and Charlie had separated, not so much because she had wanted to go her way as because he had wanted to go his. Roberta admitted this was the way things

should be—personal liberty. Charlie was forty and was getting ahead in business. Freedom no longer appealed to him. He wanted to settle down, a home and a position, his own friends. He didn't want to be laughed at for the nonsense of his youth. He was married now and didn't come to the Village. And Roberta, though she stoutly maintained that she was "free and had a right to live her own life," felt that life was not being awfully kind to her.

Leota was amazed to see, though Roberta wouldn't admit it, that Roberta envied Leota's life, stupid, uninspired, up-town, middle-class, cared for. Roberta insisted that Will was a bore, that Leota was "wasting herself, never lived or felt"—but she knew that she, herself, was getting on, she didn't want to keep on working as a chemist always, paying for her own meals, spending a lot of time alone . . .

Leota left, after she'd helped put the studio in order. Someone telephoned, asking Roberta to go to a party that afternoon, and Roberta, accepting gleefully, wanted Leota to go along, promising another "good time like we had last night." But Leota said she had a headache, which was true enough. The ride seemed dreadfully long.

She took another bath and washed her hair as soon as she got home and gave Katie directions to have all of the things she had worn washed immediately or sent to the cleaners. They were definitely unwearable. She spent the rest of the day lying down or trying to read a little. She was quite tired.

CHAPTER XIII

A WHOLE week passed, a usual week, except that Leota ate her dinner all alone and spent lonely evenings too full of novel-reading and chocolate-eating. There were two committee meetings, and on Wednesday she went to a matinee with Aline. Thursday she took Irene Sears and her guest to Sherry's for luncheon and then to the matinee and to tea. Friday morning was the last musical lecture of the season and

later she and Aline and a Mrs. Halpin spent the day shopping. Saturday was the loneliest day of all, a long day of nothing to do.

Sunday afternoon Howard Denning called. He was a nice boy, even Leota had to admit that. They had tea and then talked. But Denning, with his little flatteries and jokes, his gay little efforts, wasn't very exciting. At a dinner party, with other people around, even sitting in a box at the theater, he decidedly had his place. But, having him all alone, with his little presumptions that he was desirable, even necessary, wasn't pleasant. Leota was rather glad when he went away. What was the matter with men, anyhow? It couldn't be altogether her fault. She wasn't ugly nor old nor terribly stupid. There must be men, some place, wonderful men. Then she thought of Dr. Stanton and Jeddy.

Dr. Stanton was wonderful, awfully popular, almost too popular, people said. But he liked her, Leota knew that. He'd told her so. Not because he was her physician—her regular doctor was an old gray-haired dear—she had just had Dr. Stanton for nerve trouble, last year. He'd asked to call, take her to dinner, then.

Monday morning Leota rang him up. He seemed surprised, when she told him she was "just lonely and had thought of him," but when she asked him to come to dinner "any day this week you aren't busy," he accepted quite promptly for Wednesday. Still, that wasn't enough. Leota wanted something even more exciting.

Here, three weeks of her freedom were over. Cablegrams from Will told her that he might be home even a little earlier than he had anticipated. She hadn't lived, broken away from the commonplace, escaped—she must do something . . .

She thought again of Jeddy. These other men—she had no bond with them. Frederickson, his friends, the unwashed, stupid acquaintances of Roberta—Haines—Wilmott—but Jeddy was different. Still, she had written him

a note and he hadn't answered. Maybe he hadn't received her note. That was it, of course. Often, Will complained because he didn't get his mail, someone else in the office had opened a personal letter or something—

Half a dozen times she found herself near the telephone. At last she looked up his number in the telephone book, gave the number to the operator. An impersonal woman's voice answered, with the usual, "Wait a minute, please," another woman's voice, cool, distinct—his secretary, of course—"who wished to speak with Mr. Hallidan?"

"Mrs. Clifford," said Leota, then she remembered that maybe Jeddy wouldn't remember her last name, "Leota French Clifford," she answered. A pause, a click, then a man's voice, calm, rather formal.

"Good morning. This is Mr. Hallidan."

"Oh, good morning. This is Leota—Leota French, you know."

"Good morning," briskly cordial.

"I—I wrote you a note, did you get it?"

"Why, yes, I did. Awfully glad to hear from you. I've been awfully busy, you know. I've been expecting to call on you."

So—he had got her note, after all. She went on, rather limply:

"I just thought it would be—be rather nice to see you again. It's been so long—"

"I should like to see you, I'm sure."

"I'd like you to call, come in to tea, some afternoon."

"I'm rather busy for teas, but I'd be glad to."

"Any day this week?"

A pause then.

"Yes, this week will be all right. Thursday?"

"Thursday will be splendid. You'll call, then?"

"Yes, good-bye."

Leota left the telephone rather dazed, muttering the words she had used, wishing she had said something else. Then a solution came to her, a comfortable solution—he had been telephoning from

the office, of course—how could he be anything but politely formal, a married man with his secretary right at his elbow. Of course it was that. How stupid of her—all these years—she was to see Jeddy on Thursday.

But this was only Monday. The day dragged.

Leota decided to eat alone that evening, in the Village. That's how other women met people, not anything as vulgar as "picking up," of course, but people who did things—if you went to artistic places—

Leota put on her dark tailored suit and her plainest hat. She chose The Monk's Cave, a place she had heard mentioned at Hartwell Miles's tea and when she was with Roberta. Everyone who counted went there, sooner or later. She knew where it was, too.

Leota called up the garage. The car arrived promptly and she got to the restaurant just about six. It was another basement restaurant but nicer than the Wet Rat, with brown walls and tables. Leota shared a table with three others. She knew no one. Little groups came in, but they talked only among themselves. Leota tried to say something pleasant to those at her table. They coolly ignored her. She felt uncomfortable and ill-at-ease without an escort. She hurried through her meal and went home.

But Tuesday she was lonely again and decided to try dining out alone once more. She chose The Blue Plume, a cheerful little place with yellow walls stencilled with strange birds in blue hangings. There was clean linen on the tables—and napkins. Leota looked around, but, when no eager acquaintances beckoned, she chose a small table against the wall. The food was quite satisfactory. Leota looked around, interested, but no one spoke to her. The diners, in twos and fours, were quiet, decent, rather dull looking. They did not seem to want to make friends.

Finally a man came in and took the seat across from her. He was not bad looking, with grey hair, a thick mus-

tache—he might have been anyone—oh, quite likely an artist.

"All alone?" he asked.

"Yes," said Leota. "It's pleasant here, isn't it? Quite nice."

"Yes, I like it. Come here often."

His voice seemed rather uneven. He ordered a cup of coffee. "Never saw you here before."

"I've never been here before."

"Newcomer, eh? New in New York? Better get acquainted."

Leota couldn't quite place him. His voice was thick, unpleasant. Had he been drinking? It was quite early to be drunk, just half-past six. Still, he was peculiar. Leota hurried through her pastry and demi-tasse, called the waiter, paid her bill.

"Not in a hurry?" asked the man across the table.

"Rather."

"Don't want to wait for me?"

"I'm afraid not."

She hurried out. She had ridden down on the bus and there was no taxicab in sight. It was rather dark. She hesitated. The man came out of the restaurant, grabbed her arm.

"Oh, there you are. Afraid you'd give me the slip."

"Let me go," said Leota.

"There, there, don't take it so hard, young lady. No harm meant, no harm meant. We're old friends, ain't we, old friends? Come, let's go some place and have a drink, nice little drink—"

Leota pulled away, frightened, started to run down the street. A taxi passed. She hailed it, climbed in. She couldn't see the man when she looked out. Her heart was beating frightfully. Of course there wasn't anything to be afraid of, so early in the evening. Women ate alone every night, nothing happened to them—Roberta made her friends in restaurants—Roberta—in the future she wasn't going out alone, after dark. It was quite all right, of course, only—well, she wouldn't try it.

CHAPTER XIV

WEDNESDAY Dr. Stanton arrived promptly at seven. Leota was ready to

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receive him and he squeezed her fingers, bowed low over her hand. She remembered now what wonderful manners he had. He was so complete, finished, his smooth brown hair, his pointed beard, his good-looking boots.

He led the conversation to mutual friends, saying something courteous and pleasant about everyone. He told Leota how splendid she was looking, inquired politely after Will. When dinner was announced he took Leota's arm with an assumed, pompous gaiety and marched into the dining room.

The dinner was good. Leota was glad of that. After the soup, Dr. Stanton relaxed a bit, told Leota about some of the cases he had been attending.

"Science is marching ahead these days, my dear young lady. Different methods for everything. The women have more time to get sick, too. Anything wrong—they send for me. Not because it's me, of course, but they like having a man around, in their bedrooms, delicious impropriety, yet quite permissible. How they do try to charm me! And the things they tell me! Now that I've gone in for psychoanalysis the cases range from compound imagination to real insanity, with ego-centrism at the base of most of them. I can't tell you her name, of course, but one of my patients . . ."

Dr. Stanton launched into a case—a woman who hated her husband, had had several affairs but had maintained an outward semblance of domesticity. Now she had a bad case of nerves, wanted to leave her husband but had no place to go. So now she was being analyzed, to make her like her husband well enough so she might continue to allow him to support her.

"She'll stay with him, of course. She has no money nor ability to do anything and no one else wants her. The poor husband is fond of her. She's a cold proposition—she's looking forward to the time when her husband has enough money to give her alimony—she'll leave him, then. Laziness and a vacant mind, the thing that's the matter with most women who have nerves. She likes me

to talk to her, flatter her with the usual patter. Man's a fine fellow, if he were left alone. Another case, Mrs. G. is in love with another man—sometimes the cases are transparent, a few simple dreams to interpret, an easy solving—some cases, really serious, paranoia, dementia precox, ego-centricism magnified—that's what we're trying to prevent."

Leota listened. She liked this. Then, Dr. Stanton, interested in his work, quite sure he had an interested listener, went deeper into his pet subjects, he left psychoanalysis, with its interesting cases of husbands who hated their wives, complexes, repressions and neuroses and went deep into blood cultures, tissue transplantations an interesting case of advanced contracted kidney—really remarkable to have had the advantage of attending it—and Leota lost her appetite for dinner. She couldn't eat another bite. It was foolish of her, of course. The things Dr. Stanton told were things she shouldn't have felt so squeamish about—she should have been broad-minded, she knew—but sentences—tuberculous effusion, old pleuritic adhesions—well, dinner was spoiled.

Dr. Stanton enjoyed his dinner. He talked as he ate, the influenza epidemic—complications not ordinarily found—a bloody mucopurulent discharge—patient recovering all right, now—another case, a little child, slight perforation in anterior fold of left ear—

Of course, she should have felt flattered, Leota knew that—wasn't Dr. Stanton being confidential, telling her about his most interesting cases—but her appetite for an awfully good dinner was spoiled.

After dinner, in the living room, Dr. Stanton played the piano. He played quite well, much better than Leota. Then he talked about his work again, the women who came to him, stupid, ego-centric, self-centered, wanting to get away from the real issues of life, women who hate their husbands because the husbands are not earning enough money, haven't enough sex attraction, women who haven't brains

enough to have outside interests—

Leota saw all women as Dr. Stanton regarded them—on pins in a laboratory, not pretty and clever and human, but cases—interesting or dull. He told her the sorts of things he was compelled to tell his patients—similar to the things he had told her last year—soothing them by trying to get them interested in other things, away from themselves, flattering them into normality, trying, as a priest might do, to patch up family quarrels, to bring together the broken edges of pitiful little domestic groups. Cases—cases— A—Mrs. C.—why, Dr. Stanton wasn't human—he could see right through her, through her miserable little conceits—see if her heart was all right—her kidneys—her lungs—her brain—she was just a chart to him, a case, ready to cut into.

"It has been delightful of you to let me come to see you," he had risen and was bowing over her hand again.

"It is so good to get away from the woman with a problem, to meet a charming, normal person like yourself, healthily alive. I did enjoy our little chat. You'll have dinner with me next week? I have several confinements due during the week—I dare not make a definite engagement now—may I 'phone you Monday or Tuesday?"

Was she like those other women—a nothing, a problem, a Mrs. C. who hated her husband?—Leota went to sleep in an orgy of cases, blood tests, operations.

CHAPTER XV

It was Thursday afternoon. Jeddy was coming to call. Leota retouched her eyebrows and lips for the dozenth time. She turned her head to the right, wondered if she were really getting lines under her chin—wasn't there really a wrinkle on the side of her face near her ear? They say the first wrinkle comes there. Did the tiny wrinkles that were around her eyes and mouth show, if one didn't look too closely?

She was in a fever of excitement when the bell rang. She powdered

nervously again, put down her long-handled, monogrammed mirror, when she heard Katie answer the bell. She had been so afraid the telephone would ring instead—that he wouldn't come—what if—now, maybe he did care a little—

"Jeddy," she said, with her gayest smile, as she went forward to meet him.

The eager boy she had visualized all these years was gone. She saw a tall man, with rather a tired, lined face, who looked older than his thirty-five years.

"How do you do, Leota," he said, rather solemnly.

"Shall we go in here?" said Leota, leading the way into the living room. She was rather ill at ease, she found. She didn't know just what to say. She had planned things differently.

"It's—it's good to see you again, Jeddy, after all these years. Were you surprised to get my note?"

"Yes, yes, quite surprised. And how are you and—and Mr. Clifford. Quite well, I hope. Is he at home today?"

"Oh, no, he's in England, you know, on business."

"He isn't here—at all?"

"Why, no. Now tell me about you. What are you doing? How is the world treating you?"

Gradually, Leota saw that Jeddy relaxed. She breathed a bit easier. When Katie came in with the tea things she served tea prettily and was able to eat quite a number of little cakes—she always served the kinds she liked best and had tried to have an especially nice tea for Jeddy.

There was little to talk about. Jeddy hadn't seen anyone from Westmont in months—in two years to be exact—no, he didn't get the Westmont papers—one grows so away from one's home town, doesn't one—it was years, now—

As he talked, Leota knew what had been the matter. Jeddy had dreaded coming—he had been, well, afraid. Jeddy was getting ahead, socially. He felt that he was quite above Leota, he didn't want anyone from Westmont clinging to him—holding him down, an

old sweetheart might be dangerous. He had come to tea to find out what Leota had wanted, he was worried at her note, her telephoning. Now that he found Leota had no real motive except friendliness he was relieved, though still the snob and the climber.

As Leota saw how Jeddy felt, she rose to an appreciation of her position, of Will. Why, Will was worth two of Jeddy, quite as good looking, manners as good, too, not nearly such a snob—and Will's position, clubs—why Will—

Usually Leota did not brag, she never thought of it. Now she felt herself saying little things, things about Will, about the people who entertained them, about the decorator who had done the apartment, conceited things, insufferable, of course, but the things Jeddy understood.

"I had been so interested in seeing you," she said, smiling, "to see what the years had done to you. There ought to be an old-home week in Westmont, when we could all go and see old friends—and then be glad that things happened with ourselves the way they did."

She was glad when Jeddy went away.

But, after he had gone for a little while, she cried. It seemed, now, that she had been wanting to cry for weeks. Yet, at first, she didn't know what she was crying about. Not because Jeddy had turned out to be so impossible. Why, he had always been hard, a bit climbing, selfish, not especially handsome. Not about Jeddy, not even because there were no more men to be nice to her. It wasn't that—for Denning had telephoned yesterday, while she was out, Frederickson had telephoned the day before, Dr. Stanton would telephone, Wilmott, even, had written a note—they wanted to be entertained, invited to dinners. She had run after these men, she knew. There were none of them who really cared for her, who were interested, sincerely—there was no one, any place, who really was interested, but Will.

—No, she wasn't crying about Will, about the cage. For, now, there wasn't

any cage—she could be free, if she wanted to. It wasn't because she was just a case, one of Dr. Stanton's selfish, stupid women. It was more than that. She knew she was selfish, self-centered. She knew she couldn't earn her own living, except in some terrible, scrubby, way, if she tried. She knew she had no artistic knowledge or ambition, didn't like artistic people, had nothing to say to them. She knew she hated the kind of life Roberta led—the ugliness of it—she knew Will bored her—but—why, that was it, of course.

Will did bore her—she was caged—but she was used to it! Now Will wasn't here. It was Will she wanted—stupid, heavy, of course, tiresome certainly—but she hadn't anyone else. No one else interested her or was interested in her, for that matter. Why, Will did so much—little things—flowers, candy, this apartment—he wanted so little in return. Will, patient, kindly, what if he were dull—why, even now, in England, there were other women, anything might happen—what if she had to be alone, free—

Why, of course she was caged—but she needed the cage, its comforts—she would be helpless outside—she had no wings—she couldn't fly—the cage was the nicest thing she knew.

CHAPTER XVI

Two weeks more, alone, no one to tell things to at dinner, no one to tease, to talk to, interested, flattering—two weeks more—

Well, there was Will's sister—she was like Will, dependable. She would listen, when Leota talked. She knew she couldn't stand it—this way—eating with awful men or in terrible restaurants—or all alone, at home.

She dried her eyes. What if they were red—there was no one to see—She walked over to her desk, pulled out a sheet of monogrammed paper, started a letter:

Dear Ida:

As you know, Will is in England and it will be several weeks before he returns. I think it would be jolly if you. . . .



THE FRUITS

By Dorothy Burne

THE old folks murmur and shake their heads
 And they say, "You'd best beware,
 For though the blossoms of Love be sweet
 Love's fruits are sorrow and care."

But I laugh as I shake the boughs of Love
 Till the blossoms drift at my feet;—
 For how can Love's fruits be bitter
 When the blossoms are—oh—so sweet?



THE CHAMELEON

By Thomas Beer

MY first meeting with Angelica was pleasant, although not seemly. She advanced into a half-moon of firelit relatives with rather a swagger, complaining loudly of a shortage in nightgowns. Angelica was seven at this time and more than inclined to stoutness.

The relatives smiled with some restraint, rattling their after-dinner coffee cups. Angelica's mother moaned and I giggled. A horrified, pursuing nurse wrapped Angelica in something and took her away. I think she was spanked on the stairs. Certainly, she yelled and if this was one of her earliest impersonations, it was almost perfect. She sounded exactly like an irritated steam engine.

This led me to remember Angelica. The next time we encountered each other was in my fourteenth summer. Supported by her parents and her brother, the virgin came to stay a week and I admit that she alarmed me. The Kenyons were jolly, emphatic, handsome people and they burst upon us in a rather tumultuous fashion, with several attached dogs. But Angelica gave me a flaccid hand and said, "Ah, yes, how d'you do!" in a tone of weary sorrow. Her hazel eyes wandered desolately off past my head toward some unguessed point of the library and fixed themselves on it, with a bitter, baffled flickering. She coiled herself into a basket chair and ate only five cakes at teatime.

"What on earth's the matter with the kid?" I asked her brother Hamish, when we were going to bed.

Hamish responded, through his undershirt, that nothing was wrong.

"But she acts as if she'd lost her last friend," I argued.

"Oh—that. Oh, she's doin' Mrs. Varick," Hamish grinned.

"Who's Mrs. Varick?"

"She's a friend of mother's. She's English. Her husband's explorin' the North Pole—or South—anyway, he's been gone a devil of a while and she's worried. She was stayin' with us."

The next morning, I discovered Angelica on one of the garden benches, her ankles straightly crossed, staring in a ghastly manner at a rosebed. At small intervals, she passed a hand across her brow, then drew a little smoke from one of her father's cigarettes into her mouth and puffed it out again.

As she had not heard me and there was no other possible witness I excused her of any attempt at showing off and sat hopefully down on the turf and waited for her to be sick. But she was, perhaps, hardened to the taste of tobacco.

I grew restless presently and strolled up.

"H'lo, Angelica," I remarked; "want to play tennis?"

She drew her gaze from the roses and lent it to me briefly.

"I don't care about sports, Donald," she sighed.

"My name's Roger," I snapped. "An' you know it!"

"Is it?" said Angelica, dreamily. "It doesn't matter."

She selected another mark and stared at the greenhouse.

There has always been an utter sincerity in these passages. I looked at Angelica with awe and backed off. She

maintained her lamentable posture, even when she knew I was gone.

"Oh, soon as she finds somebody else," Hamish assured me, "she'll cut it out. She does, y'know."

"But—what does she do it for?"

"Dunno," said Hamish, carelessly. "Lasts about a month."

I think it was her choice of the garden as a solitude which launched the next phase. It happened that our neighbor was an artist of the successful sort. He worked out of doors, very often, and had a booming, pleasant voice which frequently swept over our hedge and as his servants were all male and his wife very deaf, he allowed himself quite a free choice of phrases. Also, he often whistled.

It was the whistling in the upper hall that drew my attention to one of Angelica's most startling effects.

I knew she was upstairs, getting ready for luncheon and I was sitting on the stairs, as the guests for this shindig—a very staid lawyer and his wife—bored me fearfully. Angelica began to whistle "Sole Mio" in a luscious series of slides, squeezing all the melody from the thing to the last trill.

Hamish, in the hall below, raised his head, interested and suspicious.

"Is that the kid? She's got another one!"

Angelica stamped down the carpetless treads, her hands in her skirt pockets, at a jaunty gait and gave me a friendly kick in passing.

"When the blue hell do we eat?" she inquired, using a note of her lower register. I gasped. Hamish choked.

"Kid," he said desperately. "Cut it out!—anyhow don't talk!"

But she stalked into the library like an entering heavy-weight champion, and we began to expect the worst, directly, as luncheon commenced.

I think it was during consomme that the first eruption broke. The topic of boarding-schools had drifted to the surface of the tedious meal and Judge Brinkley turned his legal beams on *Angelica*.

"I expect you'll be going away to school one of these days."

"Damned if I do," said Angelica, barytone. "Heifer paddocks! They—"

I don't think Judge Brinkley quite caught her sentence. There was a wavellet of dismay. I gripped the edge of the table and sweated apprehension. Mrs. Brinkley got the next jolt. She may have been curious about the child.

"Have you a governess, dear?" she asked.

"Yes and—Jesu Marie!—of all the damn'd nuisance! She—"

"Angelica," said Mrs. Kenyon in the dry voice of doom, "go upstairs at once."

Angelica swung on her heel in the doorway and pointed a thumb at her parent.

"You're the hell of a mother, you are!" she shouted and vanished. She whistled the hoochie-coochie ascending, and the success of her performance is still remembered by our cook, who crosses herself when Angelica is mentioned.

II

It was an evil day for the Kenyons when some misguided friend took Angelica to see Bernhardt in "La Tosca." Of course, she went stage-struck a dozen times. I forgot who was the model voluptuary of her worst offering. We had been doing the London theaters one June and from some enchantress she inhaled poison which burst into a rash of clothes in Paris. Hamish was the liberal fool, then. He was stupid enough to give her two thousand francs. It served. There was a positive swirl of turning persons in the Ritz lounge when she came down to dinner and Hamish went white.

"My—soul!" he muttered.

It was very awful. This was when the female shape had its most thorough exposition and some depraved dress-maker had seized Angelica for an advertisement. She tottered along, her head bent backward so that it suggested a disease of the neck and seemed to be

inspecting the rear of her right shoulder. Her body glimmered in a wrapping of purple satin and a profuse bloom of orchids grew on the middle somewhere, almost dwarfing a colossal fan of ostrich feathers. Several people rose in far corners and a number of cocktails spilled.

"Kid," said Hamish, between his teeth, "I won't go into the dining-room with you. That's flat! Go up and take that thing off, d'you hear?"

She gave him no particular heed, as I recollect it, but advanced on me, her naked arm sliding out like a serpent.

"So sorry, old thing," she declared, "but my beast of a maid's ill. I think the brute takes drugs. Shall we go in?"

She continued this sort of rubbish through half of dinner. Hamish fidgeted and writhed. Angelica had no maid, nor most of the other appanages she mentioned. These included a "place" in Scotland.

"Well, we're going to Switzerland tomorrow," Hamish groaned. "I can't stand this."

She gave him a look of satiate disgust and a dozen people chuckled.

"Switzerland's full of ghastly objects in June," she said. "Americans and that sort of thing. One can't go there."

"One can," Hamish granted.

Our progress across France was a nightmare. Angelica hung herself with a batlike cloak of some slippery black stuff and painted her face arsenic white. Veils hid the innocuous yellow of her hair. She smoked cigarettes constantly in the station restaurant and five men tried to follow her into our carriage. At Basle, a fat Italian sent Hamish his card with an offer to buy her for fifty thousand lire. Fortunately, Hamish cannot read Italian. The worst was the episode of Max von Nilstadt.

While I think badly enough of German manners, in the princely sort, I have never blamed Max. He was a harmless young idiot with a bleating voice and a small court of tutors and equerries. I believe he was in exile after some scrape.

Angelica, in a cerise affair covered

with sequins, dawned or exploded in his history on a terrace full of dowdy women, by moonlight. I remember that his jaw dropped.

"For the love of Pete," said Hamish, "stop looking at every man you see!"

"There's nothing else worth looking at, old dear. Women are such rotters, aren't they, Roger? I say, we might have a brandy and soda before we feed, what?"

She vented this wish immediately in front of the table where Max was experimenting with a cocktail. She gave it a very proper British twist. It sounded like all Piccadilly bottled.

"You little fool," said Hamish.

Max gazed upon her from a hundred angles until ten o'clock. He spied from behind palms and trickled out of doors in our wake. Hamish dragged her off to bed, then, and sat on mine with his head in his hands. We agreed that, some time, she would get into trouble. The prophecy came true in about five minutes. Angelica gave a well-developed merely American shriek, across the corridor.

Her account of the matter is that she only thanked Max for getting out of her way on the stairs. She confessed to having gone down again to buy some cigarettes. At any rate, we found him with his shoulders painfully jammed through the door and bleating. Angelica, leaning on the inside of her defences, was pounding his face with one hand and holding the doorknob with the other. Hamish extracted him by the coat-tails and slung him a few yards. I think he was glad to get away. We left next morning and Angelica imitated nothing for some months.

III

I HAVE never forgiven her exploit in the character of an empress or something equally stately when I took her to a ball at college and Hamish still cherishes a stiff finger he got, removing her from some objectors at a mass meeting when she was a socialist. The trained nurse imitation succeeded her

autumn at the Horse Show when she was aping Mrs. Rodney Bent. However, she met Mrs. Bent's brother-in-law, Randolph, at this time and there ensued a normal career, quite natural, of characterizations. Many girls in love turn actress. Angelica was coy and cold and pensive in quite the ordinary way. She had Randy running and trotting after her about town and the Kenyons were pleased. Hamish was delighted.

"You know," he said, "a husband won't put up with some one different at breakfast every morning."

"We've put up with it," I warned him.

But the early days of the engagement passed without any dangerous symptoms. I lit the fire, myself, one afternoon while the trousseau was making. I met the girl for lunch and she looked fagged. So I took her to see Estelle Warren in "Pariahs."

Perhaps the change in her hair should have warned me. She began to arrange it in some fashion that hid her ears and presented nothing to the glance but smooth sweeps of yellow. Also her smile developed a sidelong, wistful droop. I thought it very pretty. The typhoon, of course, leapt on us at the last and worst second.

They were to be married in the country and I arrived an hour before the ceremony, went up to dress in Hamish's room and was surprised at not finding him. I was lacing my boots when he rushed in livid and silent with anger.

"You can take those things off," he managed after an evil moment, "there won't be any wedding. She's gone mad!"

He tore his gloves up, methodically, and threw them in the fireplace.

"As good a fellow as any girl could want—even if he is rich. Well, go look at her—"

"Oh," I said hopelessly, "I may as well—"

I found Angelica in a loose and lovely chamber robe, embroidered in gold threads with queer tassels. It was very familiar, in some way. The maids and Mrs. Kenyon were huddled in a corner, *cheeping and sniffing*.

Angelica, one arm spread on the keyboard of her piano behind her was trailing a cigarette in curves in the air. She gave me the sidelong smile.

"Now, what are you up to?" I demanded.

"Nothing. . . . But I've been awake all night. . . . thinking." Her voice paralyzed me. "And I can't go on with this. . . . I can't go through with it!— If he was poor and we had to struggle I could go on with it, then— But this won't be a marriage. . . . A sort of petted slavery—a tame cat's life—A—"

"My God," said Hamish, slamming the door, "they can hear her downstairs!"

"And he'll get sick of me," she gulped, getting a hand on her throat; "nothing to look forward to—years of it—years of it!"

"As good a fellow as a girl could want," Hamish choked. "Oh, kid, you"—

"Can't go on with it—"

"Angelica," I said, "stop acting! You've got to be married in half an hour," Hamish yelled. "She— Do you mean what you're saying, you damn little ass?"

"But—she's not acting."

Angelica had reached the point where Miss Warren sobs in the third act. I really wanted to see her do it but Hamish is practical and the strongest I know. He got hold of her wrists and began shaking Angelica so that the sob, having commenced contralto rose into a soprano squeal.

"Ham—let go—let go!"

Hamish went on shaking his sister. Her hair fluffed out of its secret fastenings and tossed about charmingly. Her great sleeves beat like the wings of copped moth. I think she tried to kick him. I was laughing too much to interfere.

"Ham! Ham—Oh, *please!*"

"Will you be—good, damn you?"

Angelica dropped on her knees. She said afterward that she was getting seasick. I know she was frightened.

"Oh, please, Ham! . . . I've got to dress!"

"You'd better—you pup!" he grunted, and let go.

She made the most beautiful bride I have ever seen but I have never been able to show Hamish the humor of this act. He is still suspicious and keeps waiting for an outbreak.

Indeed there have been mild spasms, but never useless, although she nearly broke down imitating a perpetual motion machine when the Red Cross started feeding troops at the stations. Her impersonation of a perfect Optimist was all that kept the Kenyons going after Hamish was announced seriously wounded at Cantigny. I gave her credit for it, the day he landed and telephoned me from Hoboken.

"Well," he said, "I suppose she's imitating a rocking horse to amuse the baby?"

"Your nephew," I stated, "is too young to be amused. She has to amuse Randy to keep him from reading the income tax."

His parents were in the South and I knew Hamish longed to see her more than anything else in the city. I told the driver to take us there and sent up

only my card. I own that I was faintly afraid Angelica might improvise a part for him. She professes that one of her teeth never recovered from her wedding day. By and by we heard her singing upstairs.

"French," said Hamish. "She doesn't think she's a vivandiere, does she?"

But he listened.

She sang, softly and graciously, an old foolish song about not going to the woods since the laurels are cut down—*"Nous n'irons plus au bois, les lauriers sont coupés."*

I knew she was singing to the baby, in her white arms, since so softly, and she turned the landing post with her head a little bent. Queer, that she came down with her hair flowing under a draped veil. It had just been washed, actually, which accounts for the gray robe. But the window behind showed through the hair and the veil and made a golden mist and her face was grave, almost sad and her eyes obscured. She did not need a circlet of tawdry flame or stupid cherubim.

Hamish gave a thick sob.

This was, I think, the best of her imitations.



THE FLORENTINE LADY

By George Rowley

BRING me the mirror Benvenuto made
Of gold and amethyst and polished jade.
And I will dress my hair so that my face
Fits like a picture in the mirror's space.

Last night, he bragged of Venice when he came . . .
Once, after Naples, it was much the same . . .
I know his ways—so well! Bring me the glass,
And I will change my hair, and let it pass. . . .



CALAMITY

By John Hamilton

I

MY window was closed against the storm.
Snow flakes beat upon the panes,
So soft, so white, so lovely . . .
I opened my window an inch or two to admit a few of the beauteous
particles—
I caught cold and almost died.

II

I had shut my heart against love.
A woman, who smiled with half closed eyes, touched me with her slim
fingers,
So soft, so white, so lovely . . .
I thought: "I shall kiss this woman and go away"—
She married me.



WOMAN OF DREAM

By David Morton

Still must my heart lean toward you in the dusk,
Woman of Dream, whose heavy hair is musk
Of roses blown in some old flower time,
Whose eyes are summer, and whose lips are rhyme.
More musical than music heard at night,
Your voice drifts past me, and your image, white
And frail as lilies lidded on a stream,
Lies ever on my heart, Woman of Dream.

We have no part with time, no league with place:
Old centuries awaken in your face,
And all the opiate sweetness of the South
Stirs indolent and drowsy at your mouth. . . .
Woman of Dream, all else is dream but you:
The world is lies, and you alone are true.

THE FOREIGNER

By L. M. Hussey

I

FARINELLI was born in Naples, and before he made his escape to the United States he spent most of his time out in the Bay. He was the captain and the crew of a little sailing vessel, a clumsy example of a trawler. The boat was badly designed and a stiff breeze was a hazardous thing to manage, yet this never concerned Farinelli, who had something of an indifferent soul. He was employed by the owner to take the more adventurous variety of tourists out through the Bay to Capri, and then, with the continued favour of the gods, to bring them back again. Until the time of his flight he had successfully achieved this purpose several hundred times.

Then, through an absurd misfortune, he got into trouble with the Neapolitan police. A month or two before, he had met a young radical of some sort in a wine shop, a fellow whom he found with plenty of money, generosity and an agreeable disposition.

Farinelli, who had no concern with political ideas, understood very little of the doctrines expounded to him; but with an unconscious ear for eloquence he liked to listen to the young man's conversation; he was a person of more words than Farinelli. Then one day he was invited to attend a meeting of the radicals, and he consented from the pleasant prospect of being in the company of his new friend.

He knew nothing about the manœuvres of the society, and was wholly ignorant of the fact that the Secret Service, having had all these people under surveillance, had determined to

arrest as many of the members as possible. He met his friend one evening in the wine shop and they set out together for the third-floor room over a restaurant, where the meetings were held.

They entered the place by way of an alley, went up a flight of back stairs, and passed into a room at the end of a dark, narrow hall after a conspiratorial series of knocks on the door. There were more than a dozen men in a very small space and they all seemed preoccupied with some extremely weighty concerns.

Farinelli was introduced; they clasped his hand eagerly and called him companion. His naive soul was pleased with the friendly warmth of this greeting.

One after another they talked, sometimes with a great degree of fervour, and he admired the ease with which most of these men composed sentences. Speech was not a facile thing with him, and for the most part he was shy and inarticulate. They produced a demijohn of sour wine and everybody was free to fill his glass out of the bottle; Farinelli drank freely with the rest.

They had all been talking together for more than an hour, when he was startled by a sudden explosive noise like the detonation of a small bomb.

He dropped his glass and turned his head quickly; he was in time to see the splintered door fall inward and in another instant the police were in the room.

The others understood the significance and the consequences of this raid, and were on their feet immediately.

While he was still seated he saw a heavy chair, flung from the opposite end of the room, strike the first unformed intruder like a grotesque projectile; the man fell back into the arms of the one directly behind him and the two went down together. Then the fight ensued with a startling suddenness.

So far no one had concerned himself with the two windows at the end of the room, and Farinelli was the first to reach them. He only vaguely understood the meaning of the raid, but he fully apprehended the necessity of escape. His own innocence would mean nothing if he were taken by the police.

He raised the sash with an impetuous violence; the glass broke and fell in a sharp little shower over his hands. He thrust his head out and looked up and down. Overhead was a ledge, running below the roof, that he believed he could reach by standing on the sill.

He pulled his body through the window, clinging by his fingers to the window frame. Releasing his hold for a precarious second, he instantly raised his arms and by good fortune they were long enough for his hands to grip the projection. With a raised boot he pushed down the empty window-frame and placing his foot on top of it, raised himself up. He could now grasp the edge of the roof and in a moment he was on top of the house.

For a few seconds he crouched there, panting and motionless. He peered over the roof; down in the yard he could make out a small group of dark figures and from these came the reports of revolvers, with little jets of ominous flame in the blackness. Several bullets flew close to his head; he heard the high-singing notes of their passage.

For a moment he thought that he must be the target; in another instant a man's head came up over the eaves and he understood that they were firing at this second fugitive. The face rose up out of nothingness, startling like an apparition, distorted like a tormented ghost. The two stared at each

other for the briefest second. It was his young friend.

For a short space they were motionless, two prone figures on the roof, amorphous and inanimate in the darkness, like sinister drift-pieces awash on a threatening shore. His friend was the first to speak.

"Crawl back!" he whispered. "We've only a few minutes!"

They crawled on their hands and knees and the sharp cinders, loosened from the binder of tar, cut into their flesh; they were oblivious to the pain.

"I foresaw this sometime," muttered his friend. "I made plans for it. Crawl to the edge on the other side. We can drop down to the next roof. There's a window we can get in by. I think we'll have luck. . . ."

No more words passed between them. The drop to the adjoining roof was only a few feet. His friend, acquainted with the way, let himself over the edge clinging to the cornice; in a moment he disappeared through the window beneath.

Farinelli followed; now he could hear the thump of his heart underneath his coat. He lowered himself into the room and the other was waiting for him inside.

"I think we're safe here," his friend said. "We can stay here as long as we have to—a week or two if that's necessary. Why didn't I know these damn fools hit upon tonight? They certainly have descriptions of me, and probably of you too. I can get some money brought here. . . ."

Farinelli made no reply. His mind was stirring with a sullen resentment; now he was marked, like a criminal, and liable to arrest anywhere. He had done nothing, he understood nothing. His position was intolerable and incredible, yet he comprehended its grotesque and sardonic fact; he knew the police and he had no illusion that his fundamental innocence would in any way protect him. Inasmuch as he was a man who scrutinized only the primary facts of the life that came to him, never analyzing underlying causes and

motives, he was saved in these hours from a more flaming and disastrous anger. He began to accept the new conditions that were imposed upon him with a dumb and fatalistic resignation.

These two spent three weeks together in the small room. During this period Farinelli's friend elaborated a plan for flight to the United States. At first this seemed a very radical measure, but a final confession from the other man made it appear more reasonable.

"It won't pay for any of us to get caught," he said. "I had a revolver. I shot two or three of them."

The idea of emigration then took on another complexion. Farinelli, having no schemes of his own, consented to go. The money was being supplied him. He cut off his moustache, but let his beard grow. A new name and the birth certificate of a dead man were secured for him. The plan was to make their way separately to Venice and meet there.

One morning they kissed each other on the cheeks and separated. Farinelli never saw his friend again; he disappeared completely and obscurely, as a phantom might vanish out of sight; he went out into the crowd in the early hours of the day and was gone, so far as he concerned Farinelli, forever. What became of him? Farinelli never knew . . . the police . . . an unguessed, tragic accident . . . merely a change in plans? The knowledge of this fate was denied him.

He sailed in the steerage of a small transatlantic steamer. Some of his companions in the passage were honest men with their wives and their children, transparent in their aims and purposes; others, like himself, were enigmatical and unknown, false in their names, inscrutable in their goals, traversing the sea to a new land, the fathomless sea that in itself was the symbol of their sinister and incalculable exodus. They came into New York and for a time were herded together in the quarantine. Then Farinelli found himself liberated in a tumultuous and

unknown city, surrounded by an uncomprehended clamour, knowing nothing of the speech that entered into his ears, and abandoned, like flotsam in a current, to the unguessed destiny of his fortunes.

II

HE made the acquaintance of an honest fellow who had come from a little town on the Adriatic in the state of Abruzzi. He was here with his wife and a vociferous colony of small children; he worked as a labourer on the railroad.

Farinelli rented the part of a room from him and through his assistance secured a job at the same work. The two went out together early in the morning and returned after dark.

Inasmuch as Farinelli had no one to care for but himself, and no one to save for at home, he now had plenty of money. His business was to shovel up the cracked stone ballast of the tracks and level it off.

At first the nice requirements of the section boss annoyed him; later he took a certain pride in making an exact alignment of the outer edge of small stones until, looking up the track, each stone lay within a precise line, as if it had been placed there by a mathematical measurement. But essentially there was little joy in this work; often he thought of the blue transparency of the Neapolitan sky, the aquamarine Bay, the approach to the cliffs of Capri, with white breakers rolling up like intricate lace on the sun-drenched rocks. Already he was planning to go back; he waited for the opportunity of return with the illimitable patience of his unemotional heart.

The winter came, and these were his most disagreeable days. He was unused to snow, to wet, to hostile cold winds, to skies overcast. His natural taciturnity increased, he made no friends, he talked to no one, he suffered from a dumb nostalgia. But he was a reliable labourer and during this season, when repair work was at a mini-

mum, he was kept in employment clearing the tracks of snow.

March came; it rained every day, but there was the indefinable promise of better weather suggested in the air. The old work began again and the section was shifted further out of the city. His landlord moved to a little town in New Jersey and Farinelli went with him. Now they occupied a small house, an ancient frame structure, full of minute, pestilential bugs, with which they shared the building in unconcern. Here Farinelli had a room to himself.

He worked every day as usual. He thought very little about himself; he had little to say to anyone. Thick and square, like a Roman soldier, swarthy of face, with his jetty hair and his jetty eyes, he had the appearance of a brigand, he looked romantic and suggestive, the entertainer of intrigue, the enactor of obscure and unrelenting vendettas; yet his appearance lied, his simplicity was childlike.

He accepted all the new conditions of his life like a fatalist, without question, with nothing save a vague and wordless regret. He only occasionally felt the immense difference of his new environment that in such moments expressed itself to him not so much in the novelty of his physical surroundings—the appearance of streets, the character of buildings, the minutiae of customs—as in an underlying apprehension of hostility to him in all these alien people with whom he mingled.

Sometimes when groups of small boys jeered at him because he was a foreigner, when a passing man stared at him inimically, when a woman looked at him with a mingling of pity and contempt, a certain brief fear came into his heart, the fear of the unknown, the terror of incalculable and uncomprehended forces. But usually his mind was aloof from such qualms; he worked hard all day, he ate heartily in the evening, played a little while with his friend's children, helped drink a kettle of beer at bedtime, and slept through the night with a sound dreamlessness. He had very few diversions,

there were none in particular that he desired.

Farinelli enjoyed the hour of liberation at night better than any of the other moments of the day. Next to this he appreciated best the half hour at noon, when he was free to go off by himself, eat his lunch, lie flat on the ground, his back in the grass, his face in the sun. At these times he often thought of his old life.

One day in the summer, sitting beneath a tree, he had just opened his rectangular tin box and spread his lunch at his side, when he heard a step behind him. Someone stopped; there was a soft, sibilant intake of breath.

Farinelli turned; he was surprised to see a girl staring at him. Her clothes were mussed and disheveled; there was a rip in her skirt; her shoes were muddy; her yellow hair was loosened and half hung down over her neck, as if someone had recently shaken her. There were smudges of dirt on her face, which was young, childlike, and singularly devoid of expression.

She stood motionless, looking at the man in the grass blankly, like a badly cared-for image from a wax-works. Farinelli looked back at her, expecting her to speak.

"*Comme?*" he asked at last. "*Di cosa si tratta?* What you wan', Miss?"

Now she began to smile at him, coaxingly, ingratiatingly. Her white, even teeth made an ivory line between her curved lips. She put out her hand in a hesitant gesture; she withdrew it; she continued to smile.

"What you wan'?" he repeated.

She seemed to overcome an obscure reluctance, an uncomprehended fear. She moved forward swiftly and sat down beside him.

"Give me something to eat," she said.

Farinelli was surprised and shocked. He was elemental enough to understand the simple urgency of her appeal. This was a circumstance, a condition, within his comprehension and experience; at other times he had been hungry himself.

For the moment he allowed himself no questions; he was naive enough to give action the ascendancy over curiosity. He broke off a large irregular piece of bread, selected a lump of hard cheese, put the cheese on top of the bread and handed it to her. She took it, held the bread in one hand and the cheese in the other and began to eat immediately. She said nothing and the man, forgetting about the rest of the food, sat and watched her.

Her presence and the cause of her condition were incomprehensible to him. He had very little imagination and was unable to postulate upon the mystery of her arrival, her evident hunger, her unkempt appearance, the singular innocence of her manner.

He examined the external details of her person and they told him nothing. He was a poor estimator of ages—he thought she might be between seventeen and eighteen years old. He saw that she was pretty and this pleased him. She had round, smooth cheeks, very fair, very pale. Her hair was abundant, the colour of yellow wines. Instead of the expected blue, her eyes were brown; they contrasted with the pallor of her face and the fustic brightness of her hair. She had the full lips of a child.

He examined the external details of all the bread and cheese and then he gave her what was left. She ate this too, somewhat more slowly, with less intent eagerness, pausing occasionally to smile at him. When she had finished he handed her a tin-cup full of water; she drank half the cup and then gave it back to him. Dropping her hands in her lap, she sighed with content.

"I feel better now," she said.

Farinelli knit his brows over the difficult business of talking to her in English and began to question her.

"I like to know why you here?" he asked. "Why you have nothing to eat this way?"

"I don't know," she said.

"Ah? Who are you? Where you live?"

Her mouth drooped; she twisted her lips into a grimace of helplessness; her eyes looked at him with appeal, as if in remonstrance and in pleading.

"Oh, I don't know," she said. "Please don't ask me all these things. I don't know. I'm very tired. Don't you like me?"

It was a direct question; he was suddenly regretful that he could have worried her; he hastened to answer.

"Yes, yes," he said.

Her head dropped a little to the side; she touched her cheek with her small hand in a gesture of weariness.

"I'm terribly tired," she said. "Take me home with you. I want to sleep."

Again his curiosity was mastered by the appeal of her elemental necessities. He set motionless for a moment, thinking. She looked at him trustfully, waiting for him to speak, waiting for him to act.

In the silence of the noonday he heard sharp metallic sounds not far away; the men were beginning to work again.

Suddenly he stood up, straightening his hat that had been tilted over his eyes.

"You wait," he said. "See? You understand? You stay here!"

She nodded obediently. He looked at her a moment, hesitant, not sure that she had heard him. Then he hurried off through the grass toward the railroad tracks.

He looked back over his shoulder and saw her still seated underneath the tree, her hands in her lap, her head bent forward a little, her shoulders flexed, her body motionless, her attitude one of dumb patience. Half in the shadow of the leaves, half in the gilding sunlight, she looked pitifully fragile and alone.

Farinelli ran down the short declivity to the tracks and she was lost to his sight. He approached the group of labourers quickly. The section boss was standing with his hands in his pockets, a cold pipe in his mouth, watching them.

Farinelli hurried up to him, took off

his hat, and began to talk volubly, in his own tongue.

"I mus' go this afternoon," he said. "Excuse me this time. You see, it is so necessary; it is ve-ry important. Certainly, I be on time as always to-morrow. You see, I can't stay no more today."

The boss looked at him for a moment in silence. Farinelli was a good man.

"All right," he said.

He returned his hat to his head and half running, went back the way he had come. He was uneasy lest the girl, misunderstanding his departure, should have gone away. He felt obligated to assist her. Her helplessness, whatever might be its cause, aroused his compassion.

He ran up the bank from the track and looked eagerly across the tall grass toward the tree. She was sitting where he had left her, half in the shadow, half in the sun.

III

BECAUSE her father was a man of some prominence, the disappearance of the girl had been followed by a considerable public furor. The newspapers published her pictures; private detectives search for her; the police, under accusations of inefficiency, were active.

Several theories were advanced; the most favoured had a sinisterly romantic character. It was assumed that in some way she had been enmeshed in the underworld, entrapped and enslaved, a victim of the exploiters of young girls. This hypothesis made agreeable newspaper copy.

Everyone knew the facts, so far as they were known, of her disappearance. She had recovered not long before from a severe illness and was in the habit of walking out every afternoon for the sake of exercise. One afternoon she left her home as usual, and by nightfall she had not returned. Since she was never absent in this way, inquiries were begun at once. All her acquaintances were telephoned; no one

knew anything of her whereabouts, no one had seen her.

In the morning the police were acquainted with the case; by the afternoon the newspapers published the first facts.

Several days of futile search passed and hypothetical analogies were drawn; the histories of other cases were re-vised; the facts connected with other young women who had vanished were recalled. As a reward, a large sum was offered for any information concerning her condition or whereabouts. This availed nothing. More than a month, a month of rumours and false hopes, passed without the slightest word of authentic information.

And then, as suddenly as she had vanished, she was discovered. It was assumed that she had passed through experiences so dreadful that they had unbalanced her. Specifically, she was sane in every way, save that she recognized no one, her father, her mother, no member of her family. In this respect her memory was gone, utterly.

But the actual fact, unknown to any person, was that she had suffered this loss of all knowledge of herself on the very afternoon of her disappearance, and it was the fact itself that accounted for her vanishing. Doubtless the sudden onslaught of this condition was a sequel of her illness, some unguessed pathological reaction of the disease upon her nervous system. Or, as such attacks sometimes are, it may have been unaccountable, an inexplicable catastrophe, an unfathomable malady.

She was walking along the street, slowly in the summer afternoon, in the full knowledge of her identity, her condition of being, her relations with the material world when, as if an unseen and sinister hand had sponged the faculty of recollection from her mind, she knew none of these things. She scarcely appreciated a change; only a vague sense of emptiness and bewilderment. She could not understand why she was out on the street; she wondered where she was going.

She paused, frowning a little, hesitating, looking about her. No reason for her immediate surroundings came to her mind. She began to walk on again, more slowly now, puzzled and speculating. A suburban trolley passed her and it occurred to her suddenly that she wanted to go out into the country. The idea satisfied and relieved her; she concluded that this had been her intention all the time.

She waited at the corner for the next car, and when it came she got on quietly and took a seat. She looked out of the open window, enjoying the motion of the car, the passing streets, and, presently, the appearance of detached houses and fields of young grain and yellow hay. She quite forgot her momentary perturbation. She rode to the end of the line and got off the car with no specific purpose.

She began to walk, passing through a suburban town to the open country. To stroll along the road delighted her; she liked the freedom of it, the sweet smell of the air, the warm sunshine. It amused her to see the little clouds of dust kicked up by her feet as she walked. She could not remember having done anything like this before; it was novel, it was agreeable.

The sun went down behind the fields and the warm twilight settled about her like a garment. She was walking much more slowly now; she was growing tired. Presently she came to an orchard full of small peach trees, and climbing the rail fence she picked some of the peaches and ate them eagerly. They did not entirely satisfy her, but no place occurred to her where food might be secured. Now it was growing dark. She sat quietly for a time, under the trees, wondering what she wanted to do.

After a time she got up and crossed through the orchard, making her way toward a clump of woods that was visible to her not far away. She found the woods dark and this frightened her a little, but at the same time the utter still of the place charmed her and she was anxious to draw in full breaths

of the pleasant air that smelt aromatically of the earth.

She followed no path, but pushed through the low underbrush, pausing now and then to disentangle her skirts from the thorns of blackberry bushes growing wild in long tenacious brambles. Presently she came to an immense hemlock that lifted itself straightly from the earth and the bushes, topping the other trees like a sentinel. All the ground around this tree was soft and matted with fallen needles, a thick pad of them, the accumulated, uninterrupted deciduary of many years. The needles yielded noiselessly under her feet; she sat down with a tired sigh. It seemed remarkable that she had come so far, that she had not noticed her immense fatigue. She lay prone on the bed of needles and in a few moments passed into sleep.

It was late in the morning when she awakened and she was aware immediately of an insistent hunger.

Now it began to trouble her that she was in the woods; surely she had some place to go, had some means of securing food. She left the hemlock tree and pushed through the brambles again and after a few minutes of walking came to the edge of the trees. The prospect opened out into a field, and across the plowed land she could see a man working. He was accompanied by a large dog and the animal, scenting her presence, came bounding through the furrows, barking. His rush frightened her and she fled back into the woods, her heart beating fast, her face blanched, regardless of the thorns and bushes. Now the dog was no longer barking, and she sat down on a fallen log, taking in her breath in quick nervous gulps.

She felt immensely alone, unaccountably deserted, in some unfathomable way left without friends or protection. She began to cry, and the tears ran down her cheeks and dropped to the ground that sucked them up eagerly as if to hoard and treasure the evidence of her distress. Then, as her eyes grew dry, she stood up again and

began walking through the woods in the direction opposite to the man and the dog.

Once more she emerged, and this time, sitting in the grass underneath a tree, she saw a man eating. She felt reassured. He would help her, he would give her food. She approached him quietly, and stood behind him a moment, looking at the pleasant sight of white bread and yellow cheese laid out beside him.

Then he turned his head and spoke to her.

IV

IN his simplicity, Farinelli regarded her as an gift of God. He accepted her advent absolutely, with scarcely a question, with little wondering. She came to him asking for food, relying on his compassion, yielding herself to his protection, and she was pretty and she gave him her smiles.

He only half apprehended certain singularities of her mind. She could not answer the inquiries he put to her; she could give him no data concerning herself; she said nothing about her past. But inasmuch as his English was quite rudimentary, the barrier of language restrained him from any ardent pursuit of her history and his own tendency to accept without argument the gifts of whatever single moment led him to pass lightly over her peculiarities. She was a pretty little woman; she looked at him with trust and affection; he was content.

That first afternoon he took her home with him and she sat quietly on a chair in the kitchen whilst he held an unusually voluble discussion with the wife of his friend. Presently they agreed upon terms for another room; three small children were shifted temporarily into the parlour and she was given possession of a small, cubical space that was entirely her own.

At this period Farinelli had no definite plans for her; his arrangements were temporary; he hoped to find out something about her. But the days

passed and he knew no more than in the first moment of greeting her. Meanwhile these two grew in intimacy.

She was always eager for his return in the evening, and after a few days he found her waiting at the corner for him. When she saw him get off the car, she smiled with the sincere delight of a child; she slipped her hand through his arm; she walked at his side. He was proud of her prettiness and touched by her pleasure. With her, he used the endearments and diminutives he had always imagined for the woman whom he should love. He called her "tesor mio" and "carina," and spoke of her little hands, the "manina." She asked him to explain the meaning of these words, and so far as he was able he framed their English equivalents. She was eager to learn his language; he purchased a primer full of pictures that bore some resemblance to life with the corresponding Italian words beneath them. In the evening she sat close to him at the kitchen table and gave these words a quaint pronunciation, forming them into droll sentences that made him laugh.

At the end of the first week he went to church and gave the *padre* some money for Saint Giuseppi, whom he thanked for guiding him to America. He lost his nostalgia; for the first time he was glad of his coming.

His mind went back in retrospect to his days in Naples, to the cause of his flight, to the seeming meaninglessness of his apparent misfortune. He almost achieved some philosophical thoughts; he developed a certain wordless awe of the divine providence; he seemed to sense the foresight and the inscrutable perfection that a higher power ordained for his life. He marveled at the appointment of his destiny. The visit to church and the acknowledgment of the graciousness of his saint marked the stirring profundity of his groping thought. It was the first time he had admitted the faith since his arrival in an alien land.

After a week had gone by he became uneasy lest some claims should arise

that would take her away from him. With the passing of another week he was more assured; his superstitions gave strength and comfort to his assurance; he felt certain that she was his.

One evening as she sat near him endeavouring to shape her unused lips to the saying of strange words, he buried his fingers in her golden hair and kissed her. She returned his caress, she touched his cheeks with her soft hands, she pouted her lips for his further kisses. Her touch warmed his blood as if it communicated to him the living essence of all fragrance. He held her face close to his, and endearments passed his lips in a low continuing murmur.

*"Amata! Tu sei mi' unica amore!
Diletta mia! T'amo, tesoro mio, t'amo!"*

It was with difficulty then that he made his wish evident to her understanding; he wanted her to marry him; at last she comprehended and like a pleased child she was acquiescent to his desire. Then, in a loud voice, he called his friend; he explained; they embraced each other. They produced a quart of red wine and drank it up together in celebration of the occasion.

Farinelli planned to take her to the city for the actual ceremony with also the additional idea that they could spend a few days there together. His friend was to go with them, and for the time they fixed an early day the following week.

Farinelli was boisterously happy; he flapped his friend on the back a dozen times; the two made a private bet as to the sex of the first child. The next day he made arrangements with his boss for a free week.

The trio took the train early in the morning and at their arrival in the station Farinelli with the girl separated from his landlord for a few hours with a subsequent meeting-place arranged. Together they walked out to the street, their arms linked. The air was warm, the sun caressed them both with the air of a gilding benediction.

Farinelli walked with his head thrown back a little, with his delight

evident in the smiles that returned constantly to his lips. For the first time he felt a comradeship and a sympathy in the crowds through which he passed; the sense of an incalculable hostility, of something vaguely inimical, of separation and contempt, passed from his apprehensions. He was glad to be here, in this city, in this land, with one of its women whom he loved close to him, touching him, listening to the words he spoke to her. His future seemed luminous, his destiny assured, his fate agreeable with delight, under the presidency of powers more astute than his divining. Every now and then he bent his head to his companion and whispered some word that brought the touching payment of her smile.

They had walked five or six blocks together; they had just crossed the street and were stepping up the curb; a heavy man lounging against a store window stared at them. His first glance at the girl surprised him; he looked at her intently, unbelieving. He had examined a dozen photographs of her when her father had first come to his agency and enlisted his assistance.

Then he turned his eyes quickly to Farinelli and her companionship with a foreigner convinced him. This must be the man responsible. They passed him; they had gone on a dozen yards or more before he straightened his body, clapped his hand to his hip to assure himself, and then strode after them.

He walked past the two and stared at the girl's profile for further assurance. No, he felt no doubt whatever. He stopped suddenly, turned around, and confronted Farinelli. The latter, surprised, unexpectant of such a manoeuvre from one whom he had not even noticed, almost bumped into him. He flushed angrily.

"What you wan'?" he asked.

The detective grasped the girl's arm; she shrank from his touch. He thrust his hand down into his back pocket.

"Stand out there!" he demanded. "And by God, don't try to get away!"

Don't try any games! Your's are done!"

The sight of the stranger seizing the arm of his beloved enraged Farinelli. He paused for no further inquiry. He lurched forward with an astonishing swiftness and agility, striking the face of the man in front of him with both his closed fists. He seized him about the body, he threw all his weight upon him; the two went down to the pavement together. A crowd closed in at once.

"Get him off!" screamed the detective. "That's the Farnum girl: look at her! I've got the man!"

Further utterance was impossible to him. Farinelli, his tensed muscles oblivious to the hands that sought a futile grip at his throat, seized the head of his antagonist in his enraged grasp as the preliminary of beating it on the pavement. Three or four men in the crowd stared at the terrified girl.

"The Farnum girl!" somebody cried. "Yes, look at her! That's her! Get the foreigner on top! The foreigner!"

"The foreigner! see; it's the foreigner!"

There was a brutal and appalling rush for Farinelli. In an instant he was torn away from his antagonist; a

dozen new men, unknown to him as the first, unfathomable in their ferocity, attacked him. From the mob incomprehensible threats beat into his ears like the malign and savage turmoil of an inferno.

Madly, insanely, in a final desperation, with all the fury of his young strength, he sought to liberate himself from the enraged assailments that gyrated about him. For a second he was erect, the vortex of a maelstrom. In that moment, as in the swift vision of a drowning man, his old beliefs in this people's hatred and hostility, in their grotesque enmity, in their inscrutable malignity, came back to him in a heart-rending revelation.

With the passing of another instant he was thrown to the pavement; they beat his face with an unleached savagry; they tore at his motionless hands; they kicked his unresistant body. When the police clubbed back the mob he lay tragically inert, a foreigner, unrecognizable, unknown. The girl, amazed, terrified, supported by a tall policeman, stared down at him.

In the morgue no one was ever able to identify his body, but the case aroused a brief public agitation against criminal aliens.



A WOMAN'S heart is like a palimpsest. After the last man has written upon it you can still discern faint traces of her first lover's imprint.



TRAGEDY: To be a night-blooming cereus, which blossoms only once a year, and to be all alone that night!



A WEDDING ring is woman's *croix de guerre*.



THE GARGOYLE

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

I

"I SAY, don't you feel silly?"

He had meant to whisper but his vocal cords had played him false. He must have bellowed. The words seemed to echo and re-echo through the silent room.

The woman who sat beside him on the couch responded sweetly, "I am so glad to hear your voice. I was beginning to feel hysterical."

"So was I," he agreed. "What would people have said if we'd set up a giggle? I snort when I laugh, and that's so vulgar."

"This is a test of one's nerves," she said. "It's much more trying than a funeral."

He shifted his position and readjusted the pillow at his back.

"You are fidgeting," she protested. "You mustn't. If you don't stay perfectly still you will be a wreck at the end of an hour."

"This couch is so uncomfortable," he explained. "The springs don't work."

"They work beautifully over here," she replied. "You *are* fidgeting; don't deny it."

"I think I'll lie down flat on the floor," he threatened. "We're all blind; nobody would see me. But you must promise not to peek."

"I don't hear a sound," he announced suddenly. "Perhaps we are the only ones here. You don't suppose we've been forgotten, do you? It may be the middle of the night."

"We haven't been here fifteen minutes. Other people have enough self-control to keep quiet." She was stern.

"You have no imagination," he com-

plained. "Or else you've got your eyes wide open. That would be dishonest."

He raised his right eye-lid a trifle and peered at his companion. He could see very little, except that she hastily snatched a handkerchief from her lap and covered the upper part of her face.

"Aren't you ashamed?" He spoke in hurt tones.

"I *knew* you were spying," she returned.

They laughed. His lid dropped back into position. They sighed.

"Will it never end?" She was plaintive.

"This business gives me the queerest sensations," he mused. "I can't believe I'm still inside my body. I seem to be floating around without it. Wouldn't it be terrible if I never found it again? Clothes are so awfully expensive today; I shouldn't like to lose this new suit."

"What was that sound?" She interrupted his flight of fancy.

"I'm afraid I yawned. I'm awfully sorry." He was contrite.

"Are there really other people in this room?" he asked.

"How should I know?"

"Oh, come, you *did* peek. Please tell me."

"The room is full," she let him know. "What must they think of us?"

"I don't care." He chuckled. "I think we're very amusing."

"We are certainly ridiculous," she said.

"Do you know, I have never acted like this before?" His voice betrayed bewilderment. "I can't account for it. In another minute I may find myself

proposing; and it is possible you're an adventuress."

"Adventuresses often have weak eyes." She was non-committal.

"I wonder if this stuff could make a man drunk," he ruminated.

"I haven't a doubt of it," she replied.

"I hope you'll forgive me," he pleaded. "I'm not always such an ass."

"We both have much to forgive," she assured him.

The sound of approaching footsteps brought them a pause. The man heard a polite whisper, followed by a creak from the couch. His companion had evidently risen.

"*A bientôt,*" she murmured and was gone.

He smiled contentedly and settled back once more in his corner. Stretching his legs straight out in front of him, he yawned.

The next moment, it seemed, he was roused by a tap on the shoulder.

"The drops have been in your eyes for over an hour. Would you please step into the office?" said a voice.

He stared up in the direction the sound had come from and made out a white-clad figure.

"Have I been asleep?" he asked.

The nurse smiled at him through the yellow haze that enveloped everything.

"Stupid of me!" he exclaimed, and followed meekly in her wake.

II

THE man broke into a broad grin at the moment when the oculist's eye was glaring into his own from a distance of about a quarter of an inch. He had caught the sound of the woman's voice.

"Very well," she was saying, "next Tuesday at eleven."

"Thank you, Miss Delano," responded the nurse.

The next morning he called her. He had ignored the telephone directory.

"Of course," he had reflected, "a woman with such a well-bred voice would never have her number listed."

Central threatened to be stubborn.

"We have strict orders," she protested.

"But this is a matter of life or death," he urged melodramatically.

Central yielded.

His "Good morning, Miss Delano," was rewarded by a laugh from the other end of the wire.

"Why have you trapped me like this?" she said. "Things went quite far enough yesterday. I should never have acted so if I'd thought—"

"You knew I was going to keep after you," he returned.

"How rude! But I *was* brazen; I suppose I must abide by the consequences."

"On the contrary, you were kind," he corrected her. "I was scared to death. You soothed me and before I knew it I was having a wonderful time."

"Don't gloss things over, please," she said. "It was a disgraceful pick-up, nothing more."

"Lay it to the belladonna," he suggested.

"I have been trying to, but my conscience won't hear of such an excuse. It is sticking pins in me at this instant. I must ring off."

"Oh, no!" He was ardent.

She relented.

"Are your eyes beyond repair?" she asked.

He settled down for a long chat. "My sight is perfect," he said. "I could read every letter on the placard with both eyes. It was most humiliating."

"And you're not to wear glasses?" She seemed anxious.

"Only to read with; and I never read."

"I am to wear spectacles all the time," she complained. "I am sorry I consulted the wretched man. I might have gone blind so gracefully."

"It's better to be blind than spectacled," he agreed. "Don't wear them."

"But nothing is so bad as to feel you've wasted money. I must put them on and go about hating myself till I die."

"Sometimes spectacles are becom-

ing," he ventured, in the hope of consoling her.

"Yes, particularly with a low-cut gown," she replied.

"Let me see you with them on," he said. "I will be frank."

"Thank you, I prefer to remain only a voice, so far as you are concerned."

"Oh, come, are you going to make this a disembodied courtship?" he pleaded.

"Of course." Then "No!" She caught herself up. "I mean to end things *now*. You mustn't call me again."

"Very well." He laughed.

For reply, she hung up the receiver.

III

FOR over a month they talked to each other every day. The conversations became more and more intimate and of ever-increasing length. They argued over politics and music; they discussed marriage and divorce. They even wrangled about dying: he was afraid to die, but wanted a smashing big funeral; she considered it ridiculous to have fears on the subject and vulgar to be buried with pomp.

Then they fell ill at the same time. He kept to his bed five days; she did not get up for a week.

"I think it was a sign from above," he insisted. "We should get married."

"Nonsense!" she returned. "Tuesday was stormy and cold. You rode and I shopped. Neither of us should have expected to be well on Wednesday."

"I was all right in forty-eight hours," he confessed; "but it was so jolly to lie in bed and talk to you all day."

"You are sending too many flowers," she reminded him; "the house won't hold any more."

"When am I to see you?" he kept asking. "You are like sweet Echo, sweetest nymph—and all that."

"I thought you never read?"

"I learned that by heart in prep school." He was unabashed. "I don't remember any more of it; those four

words stuck somehow." He returned to the attack. "When am I to see you?"

"I don't know," she parried. "I am content."

"You can't hold me off much longer," he said. "I'm planning to spend my days on your sidewalk; and the first time you come out I will pounce."

"You might have to wait a week," she replied. "I very seldom go anywhere, now the opera is over."

"If I asked you to marry me, what should you say?"

"I don't propose to commit myself before you ask." She laughed. "That is unscrupulous, isn't it? Now you have no chance of escape."

"Good!" He took the cue. "Will you marry me?"

"I can't accept you until I know more about you. You may be disreputable."

"But I haven't time," he said; "I'm at the telephone so much, you know."

"Well," she returned, "I promise to think it over."

One morning she announced, "I leave New York next week for the summer."

His betrayal of disappointment was wafted to her over the wire. It sounded like a wheeze, so distorted had it become in transit. When it left his mouth it was a beautiful sigh.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To Newport. My sister has a house there.

Another wheeze, just like the first, reached her. He had sighed again; but this second exhalation of breath had been of a different sort from the first. If the telephone in his study had been a trumpet, the air would have vibrated with a blast of triumph. A telephone is the poorest instrument conceivable for the transmission of subtly expressed emotion.

"How damned nice!" he cried. "I always spend the summer months in Newport. You can't escape me there. If you're human, you swim and play tennis and eat; and we all do those things in concert at Newport."

"I shall be fortunate if I get there

alive and sane," she said. "It is going to be a terrible train-trip."

"Why? It's not so bad, only a little tedious."

"You don't understand." Her voice held the note of tragedy. "My sister's baby and nurse are going with me. If the child were a girl, I shouldn't mind; but it's a boy and of course fretful and restless."

"What an imposition!" he exclaimed. "I shouldn't do it, if I were you. Is the baby delicate? It might die."

"No, it is healthy enough, but very ill-mannered. Oh, dear," she wailed, "I don't like babies."

"Neither do I." He stoutly supported her.

"My sister has appendicitis," she explained. "She can't be moved yet, but feels the infant has had enough of New York. Nobody is to blame; it's just unfortunate, that's all."

"When do you leave?" he asked.

"On Tuesday next."

"Please call on me, if there's anything I can do," he begged, as if the situation might develop complications that nobody but a man of strength and foresight could tackle.

IV

HE had planned to stay in New York at least a fortnight longer; but after all, he decided, Newport *did* beckon. He had been growing restless, he told himself. Besides, the chivalrous thing beyond question would be to see the poor girl safely through her ordeal. He therefore wired Hill-Top to have his rooms ready on the following Tuesday night. Meanwhile, he continued to call Miss Delano every day.

"When are you moving to Newport?" she asked once.

"I can't quite make up my mind," he lied. "Some time before the end of June, anyhow. Will you write me every day? Or shall we wire each other?"

"But I don't know your address; I don't even know your name," she said.

He could tell by the way she spoke that she was curious.

"That's true," he said, and let the subject drop.

Tuesday at a quarter before one he boarded the train in the Grand Central. "They would never be able to get off on the ten o'clock," he had reflected. "They'll be on this."

The moment he entered the drawing-room he caught sight of a frothy bundle on a trained nurse's lap. A woman with her back to him was bending over the baby and anxiously examining it, as if on the hunt for symptoms.

"That's she," he murmured. "Poor girl!"

He turned to his man.

"I am going to sit in number twenty-one," he explained, pointing out the chair directly across the aisle from Miss Delano's. "Arrange it with the porter, will you?"

He slipped into place without a sound and swinging his chair about proceeded to peer through the window opposite. He did it skilfully; one would have thought his gaze went straight over Miss Delano's head and rested on the throng outside. As a matter of fact, his examination of the girl was an exhaustive one.

Before the train started, he had completed his scrutiny and had found there was but one epithet that adequately described her. She was—ugly.

"What a shame! What a shame!" he said to himself over and over again.

She was extremely thin, almost wizened. Her features seemed at odds with each other; they failed to make up the conventional pattern of the human face. Furthermore, she indulged, every few minutes, in the queerest, most eccentric squint imaginable. It was disconcerting.

They had reached Stamford before he had conquered his chagrin sufficiently to speak.

"Here I am, you see," he announced.

She frowned and winked nervously at him.

"I—beg—your—pardon?" she faltered.

It was obvious she recognized his voice.

"Yes," he went on. "I got a hasty summons. I had to jump on the first train that pulled out."

"Fancy getting a *summons* to Newport," she replied. "Such things don't occur. You are a shameless man."

A smile brought all her irregular features into play and lent them a certain charm. She spoiled the effect by a squint.

He turned his eyes to the baby.

"It's a splendid fellow," he remarked. "So quiet and sportsmanlike."

The infant bubbled blandly in his direction.

"Now that you've run me down," said Miss Delano, "confess you are sorry. You see, I am—ugly."

He felt himself getting red as he protested, "How absurd!"

"I shouldn't have said that," she returned. "It embarrasses you."

She gave him a droll smile; but he had already caught a note of resignation, a hint of bitterness, in her voice. She had read his disappointment.

He began to hate himself for his clumsiness and to admire the woman for her courage and fine irony. He realized with delight, as he returned the smile, that he was liking her better than ever.

"It's going to be a wonderful summer," he remarked.

His enthusiasm was genuine; there was no longer any restraint in his manner.

Within fifteen minutes, the two were gossiping and chatting at a furious rate. He watched every gesture she made and mentally set each down as fascinating. The charm of her conversation was heightened by the accompanying squints and grimaces. She was grotesque; yes, she was ugly; but she was none the less absorbing for that.

Suddenly they were startled by a scream near at hand. The baby had awakened from a dreamless sleep. He had apparently found not by any means to his taste the world upon which he opened his eyes. Being much refreshed by slumber, he was setting to work to voice his complaint again dirt and noise.

The nurse, quite unconcerned, prepared for the fray.

"I had forgotten him!" cried Miss Delano.

"I had forgotten there *were* babies—or anything like that—in the world," replied the man.

The infant lay still for a time and contented himself with yelling; it was evident he was husbanding his strength. If the purpose of the outburst were to worry Miss Delano, it was succeeding gloriously.

"Oh, dear, what shall I do?" she quavered.

The nurse reassured her.

"This is nothing, Miss Delano," she said. "Don't be frightened. He acts this way every day of his life."

Miss Delano gave her nephew a few ineffectual pats and sighed her relief.

"I *was* frightened for a moment," she admitted.

The baby must have heard; rage at his nurse's infamous betrayal of him got the better of discretion. All his resources were called into action. He would show them this was no ordinary occasion; he would precipitate a crisis if it killed him. He proceeded to kick and struggle, to shriek and bounce about. By this means he succeeded in eliciting a look of vague terror from his aunt. Then he played his trump card.

"What shall we do?" cried Miss Delano and turned to the man in horror.

"Oh, I say," he exclaimed. "he's holding his breath."

Even the nurse began to lose her presence of mind. The child, its face already of an apoplectic hue, seemed in the grip of a paroxysm. If the truth be told, he had let his love of a dramatic coup carry him too far. He had lost his lusty breath and was finding it difficult to recover it.

"We are slowing down. Where are we?" gasped Miss Delano.

The man plunged to a window. "Kingston!"

"The child must have some air." Miss Delano started for the door, grasping the nurse by the shoulder as

she ran and dragging her and the baby along.

The train gave a jolt and stopped.

In a moment, the two women and the man were striding up and down the plank-walk outside the station, their eyes fixed in feverish anxiety on the baby in the nurse's arms.

While they still watched and trembled, the locomotive shook itself and tooted a warning.

The infant hiccoughed loudly; the crisis was past.

"Thank God!" said the man in fervent tones.

But the train had begun to move and, as he looked on in bewilderment, sped away with a clatter that sounded like a burst of Gargantuan mirth.

V

"THERE go our bags," cried Miss Delano. "And the child's medicine chest is in one of them."

"My man is wonderful," he replied. "He will see to the luggage. That's not what bothers me."

She got the ominous sound.

"What *does* bother you?" she asked.

"That's the last train for Newport today," he said. "I'm afraid you'll have to stay here at the station while I scare up quarters for the night."

"How ghastly!" She shivered.

"Don't worry." He gave her an encouraging smile. "I'll find something."

He returned in half an hour. The two women were sitting on a truck and swinging their heels disconsolately. The baby, fast asleep, smiled. The expression on his round face was positively ribald; at least, so Miss Delano judged it.

"I've got just the place for you," the man called out as he hurried up to them. "Two big rooms in a farmhouse. The morning sun pours into them, the woman says; and of course there'll be quarts of cream for breakfast."

"You *are* kind," Miss Delano almost whimpered. "I have never *wanted* to die until today. It would be such a

satisfaction first to murder that baby. See it gloat!" she cried.

"Don't be so down," he protested. "I think it's a lark."

"A lark!" She groaned.

"Supper's ready," he went on. "I looked into the dining-room on my way out. Everything will be delicious, I'm sure."

"Then we're not to eat in the kitchen?" She brightened. "Won't you join us? I shall see that little Reggie eats his dinner upstairs."

"I was waiting for an invitation," he admitted. "They don't serve food at my farmhouse."

"You've found a place for yourself, too? I am so glad."

"Oh, I have found the most capital place. Tonight I sleep in a feather-bed—"

"Epic, homicidal, six feet thick," she supplied, and laughed shamelessly at her own pleasantry.

"I am beginning to feel better," she said.

After supper, the nurse returned to her imperious charge; Miss Delano and the man went into the ridiculous sitting-room.

"I shan't stay long," he said—"just a few minutes. That is, until you've accepted me. You *are* going to marry me, aren't you? You'd better, even if you don't love me. We're hopelessly compromised."

She nodded a sage agreement. "Yes, I suppose there is no way out of it." She laughed. "You are absurd. Don't you know I've had designs on you from the first?"

He sat down beside her on the couch with a thump and grasped both her hands.

"These springs don't work either," he said. "Isn't it jolly?"

"It isn't right." She shook her head at the injustice of it all. "You are handsome and sweet; I am, ugly and so cross."

His only answer was a kiss on her queer, crooked mouth.

"I wouldn't let you see me until we

were old friends," she went on. "The whole wicked scheme occurred to me that very first day at the oculist's. I peeked constantly; I saw how beautiful you were. Men *do* run away from me; I was determined you shouldn't."

As he listened, he couldn't but wonder if he should ever have appreciated her if he had not come to love her wit and her voice before he had stood the shock of her physical peculiarities. He was finding something tonic now in her strangeness. What if he had known nothing about her before meeting her face to face? Would he not have thought her weird, perhaps too bizarre to be sane? Would he not have fled in amazement?

"I declare, she's a ripping, oh, an exquisite gargoyle," he told himself.

"How terrified I've been at the

thought of our first meeting!" She shut her eyes at the recollection. "I knew you would be on the train today, of course; you didn't fool me the least bit. I left off my glasses on purpose; even you would have taken to your heels if I had worn them. As it was, I nearly lost you that first terrible minute."

"My God, but you *are* unscrupulous!" He laughed. "You didn't stick a pin in little Reggie, did you?"

"No, the sweet child seems to have felt instinctively that I *must* I be compromised. I suppose even babies have a dread of maiden aunts."

"Tell me," he said, "do the spectacles correct that trick?" She had just squinted adorably.

"Yes," she admitted.

"Then for heaven's sake throw them on the ash-heap," he cried.



APPEAL

By Dorothy Yawger

I HAVE always laughed at women who lose their looks and their freedom for red, wailing mites of humanity. But today at the Red Cross, I bathed a baby for the first time and I tingle still at the memory—the satiny pink body that slid from my hands as I stretched unaccustomed fingers along the wee back; the tiny crumpled fists that beat aimlessly against me; the smooth round head that lolled back as the soft mouth puckered into bubbly gurgles; the pudgy dimpled feet that churned the water into frothy waves and kicked the soap from my fingers; the final dry-pattings and powderings as the little body rolled in gleeful freedom; and, best of all, the feel of the warm blanketed little form cuddled to me as I rocked it to sleep.

These things linger in my memory. I like to think of them. I shall speak to my husband. Perhaps I was wrong.



THE presents of men often account for the pasts of women.

CIRCE

By Louise de Salis

SHE was a plain looking woman who had neither fascination nor charm. But she had all the men.

And the pretty women wondered and wondered.

Until one pretty woman, bolder than the rest, hid in the plain looking woman's house.

To watch her tactics.

She heard the plain looking woman tell her maid that she was expecting two visitors that evening. One at nine o'clock and the other at ten o'clock.

And the pretty woman waited impatiently to see the preparations of the plain looking woman.

What kind of gown she wore!

What perfume she used!

Where was the great allure!

To the pretty woman's great astonishment the plain looking woman did nothing, not even changing the gown she was wearing, which was unbecoming to her.

And no perfume!

There were no rose-colored shades in the boudoir.

And no flattering *chaise-longue*.

The pretty woman grew more and more bewildered.

* * *

The first visitor arrived. A big raw-boned *gauche* man, who had made his money in hides.

The plain looking woman asked his advice on the re-decoration of her rooms, and told him what a wonderful sense of artistic values he possessed.

He went away beaming with self-satisfaction.

The second caller was a thin under-sized man, whose mural decorations had made him famous.

She spoke of her great admiration of clean-cut men whose force was hidden but nevertheless felt, and her dislike of *avoirdupois*.

* * *

The pretty woman crept quietly away, wondering no longer.



IT is a great thing to go through life pursuing one's ideal—it is a greater thing to find one's ideal—it is the greatest of all things to know what to do with one's ideal when one has found it.



LOGIC: An excellent weapon for proving your opponent is in the wrong when you know he is right.



RÉPÉTITION GÉNÉRALE

By H. L. Mencken and George Jean Nathan

§ 1

Mind, Your Own Business.—Woman, with exception so rare that it is negligible, admires intelligence in man only in so far as this intelligence is confined to his dealings and enterprises with other men in the world of men. She has a disrelish for the man who is intelligent in her own presence, in his relations with her. She likes to know that he is intelligent, but indirectly, at second-hand. The man who exercises his intelligence in the presence of a woman may gain a friend or a wife, but never a sweetheart.

§ 2

The Lure of the City.—One of the unexpected by-products of the current rage for prohibition, vice-crusading and other such Puritanical barbarities will probably be an appreciable slackening in the present movement of yokels toward the large cities. The thing that attracted the peasant youth to our gaudy Sodoms and Ninevehs in the late past was not, as sociologists have always assumed, the prospect of less work and more money. The country boy, in point of fact—that is, the average country boy, the normal country boy,—had to work quite as hard in the city as he ever worked in the country, and his wages were anything but princely. Unequipped with a city trade, unprotected by a union, and so forced into competition with the lowest types of foreign labor, he had to be content with monotonous, uninspiring and badly-paid jobs. He did not become a stockbroker, or even a plumber; he became a car conductor, a porter or a wagon-

driver. And it took him many years to escape from that sordid fate, for the city boy, with a better education and better connections, was always a lap or two ahead of him. The notion that yokels always succeed in the cities is a great delusion. The overwhelming majority of our rich men are city-born and city-bred. And the overwhelming majority of our elderly motormen, forlorn corner grocerymen, neighborhood carpenters and other such blank cartridges are country-bred.

No, it was not money that lured the adolescent agriculturalist to the cities, but the gay life. What he dreamed of was a more spacious and gaudy existence than the farm could offer—an existence crowded with intriguing and usually unlawful recreations. A few old farmers may have come in now and then to buy gold bricks or to hear the current Henry Ward Beechers, but these oldsters were mere trippers—they never thought of settling down—the very thought of it would have appalled them. The actual settlers were all young, and what brought them on was less an economic impulse than an æsthetic one. They wanted to live magnificently, to taste the sweets that drummers talked of, to sample the refined divertissements described in such works as "The Confessions of an Actress," "Night Life in Chicago" and "What Every Young Husband Should Know." Specifically, they yearned for a semester or two in the theaters, the saloons and the bordellos—particularly the saloons and bordellos. It was this gorgeous bait that dragged them out of their barn-yards. It was this bait that landed a select few in Wall Street and

the United States Senate—and millions on the front seats of trolley-cars, delivery-wagons and ash-carts.

But now Puritanism eats the bait. In all our great cities the public stews are closed, and the lamentable irregularities they catered to are thrown upon an individual initiative that is quite beyond the talents and enterprise of a plough-hand. In a few months the saloons will close too, and alcoholism will sink to what it is in the country—a furtive sucking of jugs behind the door. Only the theater remains—and already the theater loses its old lavish devilishness. True enough, it still deals in pornography, but that pornography becomes exclusive and even esoteric: a yokel could not understand the higher farce, nor could he afford to pay for a seat at a modern leg-show. The cheap burlesque house of other days is now incurably moral; I saw a burlesque lately that was almost a dramatization of a wall-card by Dr. Frank Crane. There remains the movie, but the peasant needn't come to the city to see movies—there is one in every village.

What survives, then, of the old lure? What sane youth, comfortably housed on a farm, with Theda Bara performing at the nearest cross-roads, wheat at \$2.25 a bushel and milkers getting \$75 a month and board—what jejune rustic, not downright imbecile, itches for the city today?

§ 3

On Friendship.—The chief rock upon which a lasting friendship rests is a strong mutual belief in the same general fallacies and falsehoods.

§ 4

Conservation.—The man who boasts that he habitually tells the truth is simply a man with no respect for the truth. It is not a thing to be thrown about loosely, like small change. On the contrary, it is something to be cherished and hoarded, and disbursed only when absolutely necessary. The smallest atom of truth represents some man's bitter

toil and agony; for every ponderable chunk of it there is a brave truth-seeker's grave upon some lonely ash-dump and a soul roasting in hell.

§ 5

Trivia.—How little it takes to make the beautiful ridiculous: two flies engaged in amour on the nose of the finest Rembrandt . . . Washington's farewell to his men read aloud by a veteran of the Home Guard of 1917-18 . . . a lovely woman engaging an asparagus . . .

§ 6

Exit Papa.—It is amazing that the Sunday editors of the yellow journals have not yet discovered Prof. Dr. Jacques Loeb's "The Organism as a Whole From a Physicochemical Viewpoint." It is a frightfully tedious book—the learned biologist, indeed, is almost as bad a writer as Prof. Dr. Thorstein Veblen—but in it there is some stuff that, properly scared up and made idiotic, would manufacture more circulation than a new Thaw case. For what Dr. Loeb announces, clawed into English, is simply this: that paternity is supererogation—that the female vertebrate may become a mother without the advice and consent of the male. Beginning with fish, he has proceeded up the scale to frogs—and now his laboratory is full of bull-frogs who never had any papa. They are quite normal bull-frogs; they leap and croak like their more orthodox step-brothers; and yet the eggs from which they hatched were never fertilized, save by the laborious professor's unromantic chemicals and darning-needles.

So far, I believe, he has not proceeded beyond the *Ranidæ*, but further progress is a mere matter of perfecting the technique. The principle of the thing is established; the fact of artificial parthogenesis is above dispute. Soon or late some anarchist at the Rockefeller Institute will begin producing fatherless chickens, and then cats, and then colts, and finally, no doubt, Presbyterians. There is no theoretical impedi-

ment; it is all a matter of devising mechanical ways and means. Once worked out, imagine the effect of the innovation upon our domestic institutions, upon the birth-rate, upon property, upon the whole of civilization! Dr. Loeb carefully avoids the subject; he makes no forecasts; he is obviously eager to evade public interest. But suppose some less conscientious investigator takes up the business where he has stopped?

§ 7

Apparatus Belli.—The most loyal and faithful woman indulges her imagination in a hypothetical liaison whenever she dons a new street frock for the first time.

§ 8

The Sinister Art.—The art of criticism, as it is practised by college professors and other such dunderheads, almost always resolves itself into a mere labeling and pigeon-holing. Everything must fit into a category. This novelist, it appears, is a realist—his publisher's clerk has said so on the slip-cover of his last novel. *Ergo*, if he injects some romance into his next one it is out of key, and hence accursed. Bernard Shaw puzzles all of them. He mingles farce and melodrama, satire and tragedy, and so they come to the conclusion that he must be joking. A work of art, like a bulldog, must run true to form; its spots must be of the right shape and they must be in the right place. This is the Polonius school of criticism. One wonders, incidentally, which of his famous categories Polonius would have chosen for Anatole France's "The Revolt of the Angels," or Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

§ 9

On Religion.—The finest of all religions, west of the Orient, is the Catholic. It brings its God closer to earth, nearer to its people, than any other.

The Methodist God is a vague super-Anthony Comstock; the Presbyterian God a vague super-Colonel House; the Jewish God a vague super-Schiff; the Catholic God a simple, kindly, forgiving, generous, beautiful and very gentle and human old man. My own religion, such as it is, changes with the turn of the years: it is the religion of the girl I happen at the time to love. But when I grow too old for love, I shall become a member of the great and gorgeous Church of Rome.

§ 10

Efficiency as Charm.—The most steadily attractive of all human qualities is competence. One invariably admires a man who is good at his trade, whatever it may be—who understands its technic thoroughly, and surmounts its difficulties with ease, and gets substantial rewards for his labors, and is respected by his rivals. And in precisely the same way one admires a woman who, in a business-like and sure-handed way, has gone out and got herself a good husband, and trained him to be grateful for her condescension, and so made herself secure.

§ 11

From the Note-Book of an Observer of Parades.—Why is it that in every parade I have ever seen the floats depicting spiritual allegories are always drawn by brewery-wagon horses?

§ 12

Under the Belt.—The Freudians, in ascribing all the nauseous manifestations of Puritanism to a suppressed sexuality, probably err doubly. On the one hand, they are wrong in assuming that the Puritan is actually the vestal he pretends to be, and on the other hand, they overlook certain more likely (if less romantic) causes. One of these lurks and does its evil work along the digestive tract, between the taste-buds

and the pylorus. In other words, the Puritan is a fellow who feeds badly, and who suffers from it damnably. This suffering transforms itself, by the usual moral process, into hatred of the man who is free from it. All the rest of Puritanism is grounded upon that hatred. Take it away and everything else would disappear, from prohibition to vice-crusading, and from the doctrine that any woman who smokes cigarettes is ready for the fatal eyewink to the doctrine that whoever reads Rabelais will go to hell.

The explanation of such loathsome phenomena as Jonathan Edwards is to be found in the infernal cooking of New England, which is still the worst in the world. The early Puritans, even when they made a feast, feasted upon unappetizing and indigestible food—parched corn, dried beans, codfish, chicory coffee, black-strap molasses, soggy pies, fresh game, clams without butter, hard bread. Their chief delicacy, after venison, was turkey, and they invented the atrocity of roasting it. To this day that atrocity disfigures American cookery. Imagine roasting a fowl that is already as dry as tinder! Only in Maryland, where a few good cooks still linger, is it served properly. There they do not roast it, but boil it, and then serve it with a thick, creamy oyster-sauce. The difference is like that between perfectly broiled tenderloin and fried chuck steak. More remotely, letting metabolism intervene, it is the difference between a gentleman and a blue-nose.

The Puritan suspicion of wine has an obvious origin. One cannot drink wine with garbage: one must have decent food with it. Imagine employing a rich old Burgundy to wash down baked beans and apple pie! Or a delicate white wine, say from the Moselle, to chase salt cod! With such gross victuals the system demands well water—and plenty of it. The gullet must be flooded to get rid of the abhorrent débris, else even a Puritan would gag. The stomach must be helped to dispose of the stuff as quickly as pos-

sible. Add a handful of Glauber's salts, in God's name. A glass of wine, emptied into such a kitchen-midden, would turn into vinegar at once.

But the bad food he eats explains more than the Puritan's distrust of wine: it explains his whole ethic. A man engaged in digesting such things as beans and codfish is necessarily a man in extreme physical discomfort, and so he is a man who regards the world with a saturnine and sinister eye. His neighbor, happier, arouses his envy, and then his hatred. He is ready for indignation, which is the mother of morality. It is but a step to active measures. Ask him to join some idiotic crusade or other, tempt him to harass and punish his neighbor, and he will infallibly do it. And by exactly the same token the man with a sound meal under his belt, washed down with respectable liquors, will *not* do it.

The salvation of the Puritan, now fast becoming a stench to civilization, lies in leading him to eat better food. A hundred thousand competent cooks, turned loose in the United States, would dispose of prohibition in a year, and with it of all the other obscene crazes that now inflame the yokelery. I do not speak theoretically, but by the book. Who has not seen the transformation of an American Puritan in Paris, deposited there by the chances of travel—the gradual bleaching of the blue nose, the timorous appearance of civilized instincts, the final emergence of a fellow almost as decent and amiable as an Italian barber or a French hack-driver? The cause of the phenomenon is plain. It is simply impossible, in France, to get food bad enough to keep a Puritan liver in eruption. Such refuse is utterly unknown to French cookery; to concoct it would be beyond the talents of even the worst French cook.

More than once I have personally witnessed the process of transformation. I well remember a Yale professor in a little hotel near the Opéra, just arrived from Cherbourg. He spent his first morning hunting for a dish of

some abominable American breakfast-food or other—the leavings of a mule stable. Unable to find it, he was forced to content himself with a plate of French *croissants*. For second breakfast he had a piece of sole, capitally done. At dinner that evening he sat down to the first truly civilized meal of his life, with a bottle of sound Côte Rôtie to wash it down. In five days he was in a sort of trance—a quite new man, discovering the beauty of the world, unloading his old fears and qualms, sweating out his theology from every pore, sniffing the sweet air of Christendom. In two weeks, to a day, I met him at St. Cloud, lunching with a Cook's tour schoolmarm from Paterson, N. J. They clinked glasses. They kissed. And it was Sunday afternoon!

§ 13

The American Credo II.—Additional articles in the American credo:

1. That what is contained in the pitcher on the speakers' platform is always ice-water.

2. That all Senators from Texas wear sombreros, chew tobacco, expectorate profusely, and frequently employ the word "maverick."

3. That the meters on taxicabs are covertly manipulated by the chauffeurs by means of wires hidden under the latter's seats.

4. That Lillian Russell is as beautiful today as she was thirty-five years ago.

5. That, when shaving on a railway train, a man invariably cuts himself.

6. That the male Spaniard is generally a handsome, flashing-eyed fellow, possessed of fiery temper.

7. That after drinking a glass of absinthe one has peculiar hallucinations and nightmares.

8. That since the Indians were never bald, baldness comes from wearing tight hats.

9. That all wine-agents are very loose men.

10. That the editor of a woman's magazine is always a lizzie.

11. That a man is always a much heartier eater than a woman.

12. That all the girls in Mr. Ziegfeld's "Follies" are extraordinarily seductive, and that at least 40 head of bank cashiers are annually guilty of tapping the till in order to buy them diamonds and Russian sables.

13. That a college sophomore is always a complete ignoramus.

14. That rubbers in wet weather are a preventive of colds.

15. That if one eats oysters in a month not containing an "r," one is certain to get ptomaine poisoning.

16. That if a dog is fond of a man it is an infallible sign that the man is a good sort, and one to be trusted.

17. That blondes are flightier than brunettes.

18. That a nurse, however ugly, always looks beautiful to the sick man.

19. That book-keepers are always round-shouldered.

20. That, if one touches a hop-toad, one will get warts.

21. That a collar-button that drops to the floor when one is dressing invariably rolls into an obscure and inaccessible spot and eludes the explorations of its owner.

§ 14

Ethical Origins.—The concept of man as the moral animal *par excellence* is full of absurdity. The truth is that man is the least moral of all the mammals, and that what little native morality he possesses is an inheritance from his savage ancestors, and tends to vanish as he grows civilized. No race of men has ever punished violations of the moral code as severely as they are punished by the lower animals. Among tigers, lions, hyenas, jackals, elephants, leopards, cougars and wolves the punishment for adultery is death. This surely beats the Unitarians.

§ 15

Further Rosemary.—Grace Kimball . . . Richard Harlowe . . . lead pencils with a small hole in the ivory top

containing a magnifying glass through which, when one squinted sufficiently, one could see a picture of Garret A. Hobart . . . Tokalon, winner of the Brooklyn Handicap . . . Lou Dillon . . . Dan Patch . . . Edward Payson Weston . . . B. J. Wefers . . . Alvin Kraenzlein . . . Paddy Ryan . . . the Valkyrie III . . . Isabelle Evesson . . . Isabelle Urquhart . . . Jacob Schaefer . . . penny taffy balls containing prize marbles . . . Pawnee Bill . . . Zerlina . . . Serpolette . . . Frank Bush . . .

§ 16

The Puritan Plato.—One discerns, in all right-thinking American criticism, the doctrine that Ralph Waldo Emerson was a great man, but the specifications supporting that doctrine are seldom displayed with any clarity. Despite the vast mass of writing about him, he remains to be worked out critically; practically all the existing criticism of him is marked by his own mellifluous obscurity. Perhaps a good deal of this obscurity is due to contradictions inherent in the man's character. He was dualism ambulant. What he actually *was* was seldom identical with what he represented himself to be or what his admirers thought him to be. Universally greeted, in his own day, as a revolutionary, he was, in point of fact, imitative and cautious—an importer of stale German elixirs, sometimes direct and sometimes through the Carlylean branch house, who took good care to dilute them with buttermilk before merchandising them. The theoretical spokesman, all his life long, of bold and forthright thinking, of the unafraid statement of ideas, he stated his own so warily and so muggily that they were adopted on the one hand by Nietzsche and on the other hand by the messiahs of the New Thought, that lavender buncombe.

What one notices about him chiefly is his lack of influence upon the main stream of American thought, such as it is. He had admirers and even worship-

pers, but no apprentices. Nietzscheism and the New Thought are alike tremendous violations of orthodox American doctrine. The one makes a headlong attack upon egalitarianism, the corner-stone of American politics; the other substitutes mysticism, which is the notion that the true realities are all concealed, for the prevailing American notion that the only true realities lie upon the surface, and are easily discerned by Congressmen, newspaper editorial writers and members of the Junior Order of United American Mechanics. The Emerson cult, in America, has been an affectation from the start. Not many of the chautauqua orators, college professors, vassarized old maids and other such bogus *intelligentsia* who devote themselves to it have any intelligible understanding of the Transcendentalism at the heart of it, and not one of them, so far as I can make out, has ever executed Emerson's command to "defer never to the popular cry." On the contrary, it is precisely within the circle of Emersonian adulation that one finds the greatest tendency to test all ideas by their respectability, to combat free thought as something intrinsically vicious, and to yield placidly to "some great decorum, some fetish of a government, some ephemeral trade, or war, or man." It is surely not unworthy of notice that the country of this prophet of Man Thinking is precisely the country in which every sort of dissent from the current pishposh is combated most ferociously, and in which there is the most vigorous existing tendency to suppress free speech altogether.

Thus Emerson, on the philosophical side, has left but faint tracks behind him. His quest was for "facts amidst appearances," and his whole metaphysics revolved around a doctrine of transcendental first causes, a conception of interior and immutable realities, distinct from and superior to mere transient phenomena. But the philosophy that actually prevails among his countrymen—a philosophy put into caressing terms by William James—teaches an al-

most exactly contrary doctrine: its central idea is that whatever satisfies the immediate need is substantially true, that appearance is the only form of fact worthy the consideration of a man with money in the bank and the old flag floating over him.

Nor has Emerson had any ponderable influence as a literary artist in the technical sense, or as the prophet of a culture—that is, at home. Despite the feeble imitations of campus critics, his manner has vanished with his matter. There is, in the true sense, no Emersonian school of American writers. Current American writing, with its cocksureness, its somewhat hard competence, its air of selling goods, is utterly at war with his loose, impressionistic method, his often mystifying groping for ideas, his relentless pursuit of phrases. In the same way, one searches the country in vain for any general reaction to the cultural ideal that he set up. When one casts about for men that he moved profoundly, men who got light from his torch, one thinks first and last, not of Americans, but of Nietzsche and Hermann Grimm, the Germans, and of Tyndall and Matthew Arnold, the Englishmen. What remains of him at home, as I have said, is no more than, on the one hand, a somewhat absurd affectation of intellectual fastidiousness, now almost extinct even in New England, and, on the other hand, a debased Transcendentalism rolled into pills for fat women with vague pains and inattentive husbands—in brief, the New Thought—in brief, imbecility.

This New Thought, so highly characteristic of American superficiality, now almost monopolizes him. One hears of him in its preposterous literature and one hears of him in text-books for the young, but not often elsewhere. Allowing everything possible, it would surely be absurd to hold that he has colored and conditioned the main stream of American thought and American literature as Goethe colored and conditioned the thought of Germany, or Pushkin

that of Russia, or Voltaire that of France. . . .

§ 17

On Youth's Ideals.—Richard Brinsley Sheridan, probably more than any other man who ever lived, combined in himself all those qualities which go to make up the young girl's ideal. The young boy's ideal is ever a composite of Buffalo Bill, Theodore Roosevelt, Nick Carter, John L. Sullivan and the driver of the neighborhood hook-and-ladder. Thus, at the tender age of twelve, does woman already begin to suggest the superior acumen which she exhibits in adult years.

§ 18

Amicum perdere.—One of the most mawkish of human delusions is the notion that friendship should be eternal, or, at all events, lifelong, and that any act which puts a term to it is somehow discreditable. Nothing could be more preposterous. The fact is that a man of active and resilient mind outwears his friendships just as certainly as he outwears his love affairs, his politics, his epistemology and his under-clothes. They become threadbare, shabby, pumped-up, irritating, depressing. They convert themselves from living realities into moribund artificialities, and stand in sinister opposition to freedom, self-respect and truth. It is as corrupting to preserve them after they have grown fly-blown and hollow as it is to keep up the forms of passion after passion itself is a corpse. Every act and attitude that they involve thus becomes an act of hypocrisy, an attitude of dishonesty. . . . A prudent man, remembering that life is short, gives an hour or two, now and then, to a critical examination of his friendships. He weighs them, edits them, tests the metal of them. A few he retains, perhaps with radical changes in their terms. But the majority he expunges from his minutes and tries to forget, as he tries to forget the cold and clammy loves of year before last.

§ 19

Definition of Dramatic Critic.—One who has still not sold his play.

§ 20

The Unknowable.—The effect of science is to make mankind vain. Penetrating so many secrets, we cease to believe in the unknowable. But there it sits nevertheless, philosophically licking its chops. Why is the so-called science of sociology, as ardent young college professors expound it, such an imbecility? Why is a large part of economics? Why does politics always elude the classifiers and theorizers? Why do fashions in metaphysics change almost as often as fashions in women's hats? Simply because the unknowable casts its black shadows across all these fields—simply because the professors here

attempt to label and pigeon-hole factors that are as elusive and intangible as the way of a man with a maid.

§ 21

Definition.—Laundry: A commercial enterprise, the prosperity of which is conditioned on its ability to remove black dirt stains from shirts, collars, underwear, handkerchiefs and towels, and to supplant them with brown iron stains.

§ 22

A Hidden Cause.—Many a woman, in order to bring the man of her choice to the altar of God, has to fight him with such relentless vigilance and ferocity that she comes to hate him. This explains the unhappiness of many marriages. In particular, it explains the unhappiness of many marriages based upon what is called "love."



EX TENEBRIS

By Charles Recht

NOW quiet are the avenues of the earth,
 And Death, that grew so commonplace to all,
 Shall now resume his tragic mien. Rebirth
 Has come to us. Today we dare recall
 The infinitude of beauty—the wild shore
 Where the surf surges with reminiscent beat—
 Torn sunset—starlit lake—the antique lore
 Of Love's old iliads. We dare repeat
 Gossamer fables dipt in magic hue
 Of fragrant Orient. Or, perchance best,
 Weave into song the dearest dream—of You
 Who summarize the beauty of the rest.
 All this new wisdom about women lies,
 Pagan Eros laughs at Christian year;
 We men are to labor and idolize,
 Women to smile—as you do now, my dear.
 I shall not write of battles or despair
 Of man's folly. Let me immortalize
 The rebel gold of your tumultuous hair,
 The peace-entreating intrigue of your eyes.



A KISS FOR THE OLD MARQUIS

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

I

CARÈNE and Pompey Gilfoil were in Naples. Carène had looked at the bay from their hotel, from the shores all along to Pompeii, and from the arid slopes of Vesuvius. Her humour was laconic. Pompey, on the contrary, found enjoyment in viewing the storied ruins and loitering through the shops, purchasing specimens of Neapolitan art in lava and nice little sketches of the South Italian seaport—famed for its follies and its sky-blue water.

Carène stood by a window of their suite, looking out at the night. The bay was surflless and every star shone in the heavens.

Pompey was reading aloud from a quaint volume he had just acquired; in his richly modulated, rather ponderous voice, he was reading her the love-story of Pergolesus, who, at the age of twenty-two, had died in Naples as he finished the last verse of his *Stabat Mater*.

Tracing a star on the window-sill with the tip of a slim forefinger, Carène's apathy had a fleck of tears; a whim, a mood, a what-you-will, had led her to suggest Naples to Pompey—ever so many years before, a great-great aunt of hers, a French *duchesse*, had sent vagrant footsteps echoing down the shady side of family history by making Naples her playground for an *affaire du cœur*, and Carène had foolishly hoped that she and her banker-husband might play at being lovers on the ground famed for picturesque follies. *Hélas!* in the dreamy, sky-blue seaport she had for a *vis-a-vis* a husband in cheerful pursuit of the commonplace!

Pompey's well-balanced voice read of

how young Pergolesus and his beloved once knelt together at the passing of a *Corpus Christi* procession; sacred implements and symbols, canopies, swinging censers, tapestries of scarlet—

A sigh fell from Carène's pouting lips. She wilfully meditated upon the love-affair of her unholy little *duchesse*, who, at twenty-two, had run away from her *duc* with a *gay marquis*—relinquishing all for an idyl in Naples. Her forefinger idly traced a *gay figure* on the window-sill, an indefinite conception of a lover, young, playful, dreamy. She wondered—half yawning—if there were such a playfellow in Naples, or in all the world. *Comment donc!*

She said to Pompey, quite gently:

"Suppose you stop reading about Pergo and come look at the stars—they are so bright this evening."

Pompey came to the window with his finger in the leaves of the romance.

"What a jolly old city this is, with all its mummified loves!" he exclaimed, standing beside her.

"Are all of them mummified, none of them living?" she shrugged.

"I know of one that's very much alive!" laughed Pompey, looking at her.

"I know of none," she sighed.

"That's somewhat unkind of you, my dear." Pompey went back to his chair by the reading-lamp.

She lighted a cigarette.

Blowing circles of smoke and breaking them with her fingers, she turned from the window. She sat among the cushions of a divan and smoked restively. "Read of Pergolesus, *mon cher mari*. And, tomorrow, let us leave Naples and return to New York—where the stars are less obtrusive."

Pompey watched the circles of cigarette smoke rise above her shapely head.

"I'm sorry you're not having a good time in Naples," he said, soberly; "is there anywhere else you'd like to go, Carène?"

"No place on earth, Pomp." She put a cushion behind her head.

He found his paragraph on the page of his rare volume.

Before taking up the broken thread of the story he said, equitably:

"If you wish, we'll start for home tomorrow, dear; so don't fret about the Neapolitan stars."

Carène finished her cigarette and lighted another. After a while she turned her head so that she could see the stars. *Ah, l'étoile délicieuse!* She framed little smoke-kisses that floated to no one from her lips.

A modified knock on the door was followed by the appearance of Carène's maid, with a missive in her hand.

"What is it, Witherspoon?" asked Pompey.

"A note for Mrs. Gilfoil, sir."

The animated automaton that Carène had brought with her from New York moved forward with the letter.

Carène held out her hand for an envelope of superfine texture.

She put aside her cigarette and sat up among the cushions of the divan to examine the missive. The handwriting was that of an old person, for it had the curls and quirls of another mode. She turned the envelope over on her palm. The seal bore the crest of a marquise.

"Is anyone waiting for an answer, Wither?" inquired Carène.

"No, Mrs. Gilfoil; the messenger did not wait."

Witherspoon withdrew. Carène broke the seal of the envelope.

"*Madame*"—the word was the perfection of elaborate chirography—

I have learned by a happy chance of your presence in a hotel on the Via Chiaia.

Because I am a very old man two fingers from death, and because, in my

youth, I knew your charming great-great aunt, Antoinette, Duchesse de Brazac, I am making you acquainted with my presence here. I have been living in the Villa Ricordo on the Chiaia for a number of years.

Madame, the old may ask favors of the young, may they not?

Will you favor me by having Monsieur Gilfoil bring you some morning to my villa—that I may have the exquisite anguish of beholding you, also, that I may put into your hands the only memento I possess of one whose memory I dare to cherish?

I fear, Madame, you are not my friend. But I am

Yours,

Edouard Verdier.

(Marquis de Guimauve.)

Carène read again this unexpected communication penned in a very old and shakily gay handwriting.

Colour came and went in her face. She sat quite still on the divan. Edouard Verdier was no other than the *marquis* who in the long ago had been the lover of her great-great aunt, *la petite duchesse!*—he was no other than the titled playfellow of the shady idyl in Naples!

"Who is your note from, dear?" asked Pompey.

Her lashes remained on her cheeks. Quivers of colour vivified her face.

"From a poor dear who shouldn't be a friend of mine—but is," she murmured.

Pompey was surprised. "Are any of our friends in Naples, Carène?"

She was contemplative, still looking down.

"The dear is but two fingers from death, Pomp, and wishes to see me."

She read from the note, in her charming voice, "—that I may have the exquisite anguish of beholding you—"

Her lashes lifted, disclosing sparkling eyes.

"Isn't that nicely phrased?"

"Why 'exquisite anguish'?" smiled Pompey.

"Isn't it always anguish for the very

old to behold the very young?" she reproached.

"It may be," he admitted, smile ebbing—Pompey was some years older than his lovely French wife.

Carène rose impulsively, and, in her captivating way, laid her cheek for a second on his hand. Then she put the note back into its envelope.

"I cannot refuse so nicely turned a request," she declared, and glanced at the clock.

"Shall you go this evening?" inquired Pompey, comfortable in his chair by the reading-lamp.

"Of course. The poor dear!"

She tucked the crested envelope into her girdle—and crossed the room to ring for Witherspoon.

"What a bother!" commented Pompey, putting his book aside.

Carène went toward her bedroom.

"Yes, isn't it?" she agreed. "But you shan't be bothered with the dull old darling—I'll take Witherspoon with me, the villa is not far."

She switched on the lights at her mirror.

"Send Witherspoon with an excuse," suggested Pompey; "tell your old lady friend we're leaving tomorrow, and you're packing tonight."

"Fie on you, Pomp!" — Carène opened her jewel-case—"bidding me lie to one who may soon be able to inform *le bon Dieu* of the fib!"

She selected *fleur-de-lis* earrings and a tall coiffure-comb that had once been worn by the Duchesse de Brazac. Going to her clothes-closet, she contemplated the gowns there.

"Which of my frocks produces exquisite anguish in your breast, Pomp?"

"Your most expensive one, dear," he laughed.

Witherspoon came in answer to the ring.

"I'm going on an errand of mercy, Wither," said Carène, "and you are going with me. I'll wear my old-gold brocade."

"Yes, Mrs. Gilfoil," replied Wither-spoon, moving to the closet and taking the desired frock from its padded hang-

er. The old-gold brocade was sleeveless, with square neck and looped train, and a band of seed-pearls running from the left shoulder to the hem.

Carène had her hair dressed in a golden swirl and topknot—the tall coiffure-comb and old-fashioned earrings added a touch of piquancy to her youthful face. The wrap she selected was sky-blue chiffon beaded with seed-pearls. In adventurous spirits, she returned to the drawing-room of the suite—Witherspoon following.

"*Au revoir, mon bibliophile,*" she said, stopping to pat the volume of romance in Pompey's hands.

"By crickets," said Pompey, "this seems a cheerless way for you to spend your final evening in Naples, Carène!" His handsome face puckered sympathetically.

Carène smoothed away the puckers with her fingers. "But then, you know, most of our evenings here have been cheerless, *mon cher*—and final evenings anywhere are apt to drive one wild."

She put her arms into the wrap that Witherspoon held for her.

With a volatile treading of her costly high heels, she left the suite, accompanied by her maid.

II

FROM the wide spaces of the Chiaia, the starlight seemed to slope sharply down to the brilliant bay. The straggling old city of steep and tortuous thoroughfares, of stair-canyons and storied heights, was glamorous in the deep blue of the night.

They reached the Villa Ricordo.

Carène said, civilly, to her maid:

"Wither, you may find yourself a romantic step to sit on while I make my call. Look at the stars, and thank them that your visage saved you from having a lover."

"Where shall I find the step, Mrs. Gilfoil?" asked Witherspoon, woodenly.

"Follow your nose, *folle*. It cannot lead you to a misstep!" Carène snapped her fingers. "You may wait for me here, Wither, if it pleases you to stand

like a blockhead under the stars," she added with a laugh.

She turned her back on her maid.

Carène looked up at the marble pile where the Marquis de Guimauve—once the playfellow of the little *duchesse*—had been living for a number of years. Colour again tumbled into her face. Her delicately audacious nostrils quivered. Her hands flew together, with a gesture of expectancy.

Since the day when she had first heard the sorry tale of Antoinette de Brazac from the tongue of a garrulous *bonne* certain sorry tendencies in her own nature had condoned and defended the wayward one who had put the blot on the family escutcheon. The same *bonne* had taught her to lisp, "*Le vice est odieux—la vertu est belle.*" And under her baby breath she had stubbornly whispered, "*Ma tante est belle!*"

Tonight she was poised before a Neapolitan villa that housed the old *marquis!*

She was to meet the gay and witty playfellow of Antoinette!

She could almost fancy herself Antoinette, loitering under the love-stars at the palpitant threshold. She even thought of the betrayed *duc* erasing a frail young image from his mind. Under the stars, at the entrance of the villa, she was imbued with the spirit of her little great-great aunt—so long dead that she might be part of the star-dust!

Feeling so like Antoinette, she wondered by what simple way she might cross the threshold of the villa. She could not, as a ghost of Edouard Verdier's youth, ring his bell, and send him her name by a servant!

She ascended the steps of a low balcony, and entered the villa by a window open to the starlight.

Ciel! she was within his house! She flung her train over her arm and crept forward, through big, dark rooms. Soon she came to a lighted portion of the villa. Her hands flew to her heart. She heard a feeble old voice behind the drawn, plum-colored curtains of an archway:

"*Fermez la fenêtre, j'ai froid.*" It was only a whimper.

She heard the footsteps of his *valet de chambre*, and the closing of a window.

"*N'y a-t-il pas de lait chaud?*" quavered the aged voice.

The footsteps of the valet sounded again, and were lost in the distance.

Carène slipped through the hangings of the archway.

The room was lighted by candelabra of wax tapers—they shed a glimmer not unlike starlight over a bag of bones huddled in a huge plum-coloured chair.

The old *marquis* felt the draft on his hairless head.

"*Zut!*" he cried.

He turned his head, and saw her.

"*Toinette!*" he faltered—staring.

He gathered his wits with difficulty—he was very, very old.

"*Depuis quand etes-vous ici—comment vous appelez-vous?*" he managed to say.

She approached his chair, holding out her hand. "*Je m'appelle Carène.*"

"*Ah!*" said the old *marquis*, taking her hand. "I know you now. You are her great-great niece, and the image of her."

His scant, arrogant eyebrows lifted, in lieu of a bow. "Forgive me that I do not rise, Madame. I cannot, for I am quite tottery."

"Pray do not think of rising, Marquis," she begged.

She seated herself in one of the gigantic chairs—the fleur-de-lis earrings glinted in the candlelight and the soft illumination struck rainbows from the tall coiffure-comb.

"I received your note this evening, and have come to see you," she told him in her slight young voice.

The old *marquis* shook a trembling finger, on which a ring hung loose.

"*Ta! ta!* where is your good husband?" he said reprovingly. "So beautiful a young creature should not be unchaperoned *à la nuit tombante.*"

She traced nothings on her train with the toe of her delicate slipper. Her retort was light.

"A good husband absent is a better chaperon than a bad one present."

His ringed finger wavered to his chin, and, though he propped his chin in his palm, he could not steady it. Regarding her, his thoughts were *distrain* again.

"Except for your blonde hair, you are Toinette, in all the glory of her youth," he cried. His nose and chin met in a smile that gave his features a gleam of gaiety. "What would you think, my dear, if I said to you, 'This is rash, rash, Toinette. What of the *duc, mon enfant charmante?*'"

He could not control the trembling of his chin, though he fairly held to it with his long, white fingers.

Carène lifted humid eyes. She said, impetuously:

"Tell me of Antoinette de Brazac—tell of Toinette. All my life I have wished to hear her true story, to know the truth about her— Was the *duc* a bad husband, whose presence outraged her? Or was he a good husband and the fault hers? In going away with you, Marquis, did she attain any happiness? What was the true version of her folly, and her end?"

The words were eager, and her young hands seemed on the point of shaking the story of *la petite duchesse* from this shadow of a *gay viveur*.

"*Tout beau*—softly, not so fast," he expostulated, holding to his chin. "*Je suis vieillard. Je perds la tramontane.*"

She was quick with a contrite gesture. "I am always so thoughtless. My *bonne* used to warn me that I would crush a Sevres vase in my path if I happened to crave a soap-bubble on the other side of the vase."

She traced vague bubbles with her forefinger on the arm of her chair.

The words and action put a twinkle into his sunken blue eyes. He followed the foolish trceries of her forefinger. His well-modeled head, nude but for a fringe of finespun white hair, was inclined to nod.

"How often have I seen Toinette draw nothings with her finger, in that abashed young fashion!" he chuckled. "I trust, my child, that there is no sin-

ner like myself in your life. I hope you have a good husband."

"I am the worst sinner I know," laughed Carène. "And my husband is a paragon."

He was alarmed. "Not a bore, my dear?"

"No." She was reflective. "My husband is handsome, attentive, and not devoid of humour."

"And his age?" asked the old *marquis*.

She swerved the trend of the conversation by bending forward to softly touch his hand.

"Let us talk of Antoinette," she said brightly. "You have a memento of her. Show it to me."

"*Mais oui,*" he responded — and opened the drawer of a card-table beside his chair.

While his long hand rummaged through a jumble of cards, chips and dice, he said, half to himself,

"I would not part with it were I not dying. *Zut!* I would not have it thrown out to some ash-heap."

He found a sandalwood fan in the drawer, and spread it open on his knee.

He fondled the fan. His highly bred nose and chin met again in the smile that showed he had been quite magnetic.

"Her own fan!" he crooned. "Here, on the sticks, see, her own handwriting! —six of her *amourettes*, tabulated in violet ink by her fair fingers—until we come to the seventh stick, which tells of her love for me, then six blank sticks—"

Lacklustrous, he stared at the frail memento.

Carène rose to examine the fan.

Standing beside his chair, she scanned the lightly phrased violet folios—the seventh stick was inscribed with the faded words, "*Je l'aime.*"

She looked down, wonderingly, at the bag of bones in the great chair.

The valet entered with a goblet of warm milk for the old marquis.

"*Ta! ta!*" cried the marquis, rousing to wave the mild goblet away. "What a sacrilege! to talk of Toinette while

sipping the essence of the cow! *N'y a-t-il pas de vin, Marc?*"

He found his gold-headed stick by the chair, and shooed the valet off. Putting the point of his stick on the floor, he added, with a tinge of vivacity, to Carène:

"Come, my dear, we will go out to the south terrace and drink our wine. There, we can see the stars she loved, and the bay."

With the aid of his stick, he got to his feet—and was seized by a fit of sneezing and coughing.

How very old he was! The cough threatened to shake him to pieces, and when he sneezed it seemed as if he might never do so again!

Carène seized a medicine-glass on the table, and put it to his lips.

"*Mon Dieu!*" she exclaimed.

She held him up until he recovered his breath.

His nose and chin met in a smile, and he held up two of his fingers.

"I am only that far from death, my dear," he wheezed. "If you will hand me my cloak, and lend me your arm, we will set off for the south terrace."

She put his cloak about him and slipped her arm through his—half of his incredibly light weight fell on the curve of her elbow. The gold-headed stick had the other half of him. She and the stick escorted the old marquis in safety to the south terrace of his villa.

III

ONE could not ask more of the world than the view of the stars and the bay from the south terrace. Myriads of close and far stars, and the bay sweeping out to the open sea. Carène and the old marquis were silent for a time, looking at the blue night that had been beloved by one whose memory they dared to cherish.

The valet brought wine.

They drank a toast to Antoinette.

Edouard Verdier, Marquis de Guimauve, trespasser, dying sinner, tipped his polished wine-glass, and talked of

the naughty Neapolitan episode of his youth.

"Ah," he mused—buoyed by the wine—"those months were incomparable—such sunlight! clouds of chased silver against sapphire heavens, gentle winds that tipped the waves with white—I even remember the multitudinous fleas as a delight!"

He put his chin on his stick and peered down at the bay older even than himself.

"You know, my dear, ours was not the ordinary love-affair. We did not come to Naples to sit on terraces like this and drink rare wine. It was Toinette's choice to love in a simpler way, here by the sea. My dear, we were odd, eccentric—quite mad, the gossips had us. We made our habitation a fishing-hut, down there somewhere."

He pointed vaguely with his stick.

"We dressed like the fisher-folk, lived like them, selling our hauls for a living.

"What a Naples we knew! On the *Fête-Dieu* we were among the humble folk enjoying the music in the Villa Reale, enchanted by the grottoes and little groves, the recesses and fountains, the shrubs and statues—by no chance were we in the carriages on the Chiaia. Ah, they were months! We were playmates in the game of love, told with a new twist. We cooked our own macaroni, my dear. When we had pence to spare we mixed, hand-in-hand, with the merry populace and spent our earnings on some Punch and Judy show. They were months! They were months! And she was a love-playmate!"

He put his chin on his stick again, tenderly chortling.

Carène touched his stick. "What happened then? Why did you not go on playing together?"

"It was only a game, my dear. It could not last."

"Why? You loved each other."

"*A la vérité*. So one day we quarreled and parted."

"What was your quarrel, playing so happily together?"

"I—have forgotten. *Je perds la tra-*

montane. I think—it was about a real fisher-lass, my dear.”

He rapped his stick on the marble slab of the terrace-seat. “I tell you, I was a good-for-nothing! When I heard that Toinette had returned to Paris and thrown herself into the Seine I felt little regret—”

“*Hélas*, she could not return to the *duc!*” reflected Carène, who held the sandal-wood fan in her hands.

He rapped his stick again on the marble slab, continuing:

“I even felt half relieved that her beautiful eyes could not reproach me any more. *‘Il faut s’amuser’* was my motto. It was not until I was old that I really loved Toinette. After wandering from one place to another, from novelty to novelty, from pleasure to pleasure, I came back to Naples, the spot most sentimental in my memory. I shall die here very soon, very soon.”

His head nodded, and his chin sank into the withered hollow of his throat.

Carène spread out the sandal-wood fan. The fragrance of the East Indian wood assailed her nostrils. She thoughtfully studied the love-memento of thirteen sticks inscribed with six *peccadilles* and a seventh *péché*.

“You see, my dear,” said the old marquis, after a while, “what a sorry thing a woman does to play with a mate like me.”

“I see,” said Carène, eyes downcast.

“The trouble is, my dear—a woman is apt to love a playmate overlong.”

“One can never love a good husband overlong, Marquis.”

“Never, my dear.”

There were tears in her eyes. “*La pauvre petite tante!*”

“*La pauvre petite.*”

Looking at her wet blue eyes in the starlight, his wits went wandering back, over the years—again the meeting of his nose and chin showed what charm his smile had once possessed.

“Do not cry, image of Toinette,” tenderly. Between her face in the starlight and the thimbleful of wine in his head, he grew quite befuddled—the poor old marquis.

“*Je te chanterai, bien-aimé,*” he cried. As if his stick were a guitar, he strummed on it. He crooned a love-strain, in Neapolitan dialect:

“*‘Ma n’ atu sole
cchiu bbello, oi ne’,
o’ sole mio—’*”

Suddenly he was leaning forward, as though she receded before his vision. “*Je crains d’être malade, portrait de Toinette!*” He held up a finger. “I am but this far from death, my dear. The old may ask favours of the young, may they not?—favour me by not pirouetting into the dark, before my eyes.”

Carène humoured him, sitting beside him on the terrace-slab.

“The young are apt to pirouette in the starlight, Marquis,” she laughed, and touched his stick to steady his vision.

“Ah,” he said, more easily, “I see you now! Thank you.”

For a minute or two he appeared to dream that the face beside him was in reality Toinette’s.

“I am glad you have come, I have wanted so to see you, *petite.*”

“You told me to come,” said Carène, carrying on his fancy.

“So I did.”

Dreaming of the past, he trembled. He said guiltily:

“I did not mean to be so sweet a child’s destruction!—*bien-aimé*, I did not mean to send you to the Seine!”

He held to his chin, and sought to banish the dream by saying:

“*Ta! ta!* I am talking nonsense. Turn your starry eyes away, my dear.”

But he shivered in his cloak and his flawless false teeth began to chatter—to the complete undoing of his chin.

“You are chilled, you are not so well!” Carène was alarmed for him. “Shall we go within?”

She rose, offering him her hand.

She timed her footsteps to his almost imperceptible progress from the terrace to the plum-coloured room.

He clung to her hand after he was in

his great chair. He confided to her:

"Every night in the year I am haunted by the hope that Toinette might come to me, and the fear that she might! I have had little relief from her beautiful eyes. They have always followed me."

Carène sat on the arm of his chair, hand in his.

"They are love's eyes," she reminded him. "You should not fear them."

"But they are drowned eyes, my dear!"

"Not the Seine, nor any river, was deep enough to drown her love."

"It drowned her young body!"

"And freed her soul to love you forever, Marquis."

"Zut!" he said pettishly. "Souls—I do not believe in souls! If I did, I'd believe in my own damnation."

His arrogant eyebrows lifted. He looked at her hand; and lost his arrogance.

"I did not mean to make her drown herself!" he cried out, as if in torment. "Six of her frailties were merely little skips of youth. I did not mean to make her write 'I love thee' on the seventh stick of her fan. It was mad of her to die because of me! Death comes to us soon enough. She was young to die, young!"

"But, think," said Carène, consoling him, "if she had lived she would have grown old, and no woman likes to do that. Those who die young are never wrinkled or unbeautiful. The world has hardly soiled them."

"The world," mumbled the old marquis, "is a mangle that yellows all our linen." He grew suddenly querulous. "Where is Marc?" bewildered—warming his hand with hers. "I am cold and tired, my dear. I want my night-cap of milk."

She drew his cloak about him. "I will ring for Marc—where shall I find the call-bell?"

He grew petulant.

"Find it yourself, my dear," he snapped at her.

She located the bell, and rang for his valet.

The old marquis huddled chillily in his chair. He missed her hand.

"Where are you?" he said crossly. His voice thinned. "We're not playing a game of hide-and-seek, are we?"

He found her with his eyes, and half whispered, "What sort of game are we playing? Do you know, my dear? I don't."

He watched the candlelight twinkle on her tall coiffure-comb, and swirl of blonde hair.

"It is droll,"—he moistened his lips—"but I wish, from my soul, you were Toinette. I wish you had her hair."

He propped a finger under his chin, and looked woefully witless. "I trust, *ma petite amie*, you are not a charming *diablesse* come to escort me on my journey across the Styx—you are, perhaps, the embodiment of my sins, *n'est-ce pas?*" His nose and chin met in a ghastly, gay smile.

He was afraid this might be true. He trembled quite violently. "*Je perds la tramontane—comment vous appelez-vous?*"

He peered at her as if the room were growing dark.

"Who are you?" His face went ashen gray.

Carène felt so sorry for him that she fibbed to him.

"I am Toinette," she cried. "Do not be afraid, Marquis. I will take you up to God, and tell Him all about you. It is true that you have lived a wicked life. But God is good. We shall yet play together in Paradise."

She took the old marquis by the hand and kissed him.

The kiss made him lose all his terrors.

"*Je t'aime,*" he said, quite innocently. "*Ta! ta! je n'ai pas peur de la mort.*"

He closed his eyes, his hand slipping from hers.

She heard his valet coming. When the footsteps were at the threshold she picked up the memento that the old marquis had given her and passed between the plum-coloured hangings, through the dark rooms, to the window opening on the starlight.

IV

WITHERSPOON was waiting for her at the entrance of the villa.

"The poor dear is dying, Wither," said Carène, gravely.

Under the brilliant stars, she returned to her Kotel.

She entered the suite with a soundless treading of her costly heels. There was scant colour in her face. Her eyes were deep-blue.

She said, without breath, to Pompey, "The poor dear is dying—*hélas!*"

Pompey had finished the romance of Pergolesus and was smoking a cigar over a batch of late mail.

"That's too bad," he replied, somewhat abstractedly. He added, "Here's a letter from Isabel—it's lucky you're ready to leave Naples, for she wants you to be matron-of-honour at little Isabel's wedding."

He handed her a very modern note-sheet from his sister, Isabel McKim.

Carène glanced at the fashionably slant chirography on the page and made

a feint of reading the note as she walked to a window of the suite. She drew off her gloves and pressed her cold hands to her cheeks. Putting aside Isabel's note, she opened the sandal-wood fan and spread it on the window-sill—her forefinger traced the six *amourettes*, the seventh *mémoire*, and the blank sticks that followed the inscription, "*Je t'aime.*"

Beyond the window, the Bay of Naples flashed gaily in the night that seemed fashioned for picturesque follies and youthful adventuring. For love-games. For kisses slight enough to mean nothing, yet sweet enough to mean all, brief enough to be unsubstantial, yet deep enough to haunt the memory, young enough to enrapture the senses, yet old enough to enslave them.

Feeling that something was dying in her—and that the expiring little thing was folly—Carène closed the sandal-wood fan, stick by stick.

Half yawning, she wished herself old as the stars.



THE LONG ARM OF THE LAW

By T. F. Mitchell

AT first he fairly bubbled with good nature. He made it a point to be amiable and never passed a pretty girl in the street without making some flattering remark to her. After a while, though, he abandoned the practice. He found he was losing too many teeth.



AWOMAN always remembers the men who kissed her, and never forgives those who failed to continue.



MERE money will not buy happiness. It takes a whole lot of money.

REMORSE

By June Gibson

SATAN was ill.
"What is the matter?" asked his wife.

"Remorse," said Satan. "A school teacher was sitting on a bench. I passed disguised as a matinee idol, tall, dark, handsome, and she gazed wistfully upon me. She closed her eyes and dreamed of love. She felt a kiss on her

lips and opened her eyes. . . . I am filled with remorse."

"Don't grieve," said Mrs. Satan. "It probably was the top moment of her life."

"No; I am filled with remorse," groaned Satan. "I had unthinkingly changed my disguise. I was a cow."



SONG OF MAD PARSON

By John McClure

A-PASSING down by Bugnall Brig
Below the Devil's Perch,
I saw the fairies dancing
As I went home from church:

-Queen Mab of ghostly beauty
(Of all earth's queens most sweet!),
Her maids that know no duty
But that of dancing feet—

Her maids in gauze and gossamer
And elfin diadems
Weaving in faery circles there
The witchery of dreams!

And I forgot the Eucharist,
And I forgot the day
For Mab, the Beautiful Unkiss'd,
And slim Titania.

Among the moonbeams glancing
Like arrows from the snow
I saw the fairies dancing
On twinkling heel and toe.

ENCHANTERS OF MEN

VIII

A Coquette of France

By Thornton Hall

PROFESSIONAL beauty and supreme woman of business, actress and *fille de joie*; the one woman who reaped a rich harvest of gold from the French Revolution, and dared to snap defiant fingers in the face of Robespierre; who at sixty-five brought an embryo-Emperor, a suppliant for love, to her feet; and when within sight of her eightieth year, was the heroine of a love affair with a man half a century younger than herself—such were a few of the varied rôles played by Marguerite Brunet, before the curtain was at last rung down on the amazing drama of her life.

And yet no woman ever seemed less born to romance than Mademoiselle when she made her obscure entry into the world under the roof of her father, a journeyman pin-maker of Bayonne; or when, after a very prosaic, almost sordid childhood, she was sent for education to an Ursuline convent. Her convent training ended, Marguerite Brunet, now a girl of striking beauty on the threshold of womanhood, was sent across the Atlantic to the care of a distant relative; but, reaching America, only to find that the relative had died at the very hour of her landing, she returned sadly to France. Here again misfortune awaited her coming, for within a few weeks she was left a penniless orphan to the mercy of the world.

But Marguerite was far from losing heart at Fortune's frowns. She had still a relative in Paris who would no doubt give her shelter; and Paris was the one city in all the world which she had always longed to see—the gay, friv-

olous, light-hearted capital where, if anywhere, her beauty and her ambition would have a fair field for their exercise; for already the pin-maker's daughter had dreamed many dreams of a future in which she would be a queen among women.

Thus it was that one day she set out on the diligence to distant Paris and the realization of her girlish dreams, little anticipating the adventure awaiting her there. No sooner had the pretty country girl descended from the diligence, than she was accosted by a courteous stranger who offered to conduct her to a respectable lodging-house; an offer which, in her innocence, she gratefully accepted.

In the company of her guide she was taken to a house which, on entering, she at once saw was by no means a lodging-house, and of doubtful respectability. Shown into a luxuriously furnished room, a maid now appeared with the information that her master was entertaining a few friends at supper that evening, and would be honoured if Mademoiselle would join the party. There would be no difficulty about clothes, she explained, for she had instructions to attire Mademoiselle suitably for the occasion.

Marguerite now realized her predicament—that she had been cleverly trapped for some sinister purpose; but she was quick to make her plans to turn the tables on her undesired host. She allowed the maid to attire her in a beautiful silk gown and to adorn her with jewels; and thus splendidly arrayed she was conducted to the supper-

room and introduced to the brilliant company assembled. During the supper there was no one so gay as the country maid; no sallies of wit so brilliant, no laughter so merry as hers. She was in her element, thoroughly enjoying her novel situation and looking forward to the denouement she had prepared.

At the close of the banquet she rose with flushed face and sparkling eyes, drank Monsieur's health and thanked him prettily for his unexpected hospitality.

Then she continued,

"Monsieur has kindly promised that, when the supper was over, he would provide me with an escort home—one of his guests whose company I desire."

In vain Monsieur protested; his protests were drowned in the clamorous demand that Mademoiselle should announce her choice.

Surveying the company with critical and twinkling eyes she said,

"M. de Richelieu, will you have the goodness to give me your arm?"

"With the greatest pleasure, Mademoiselle," was the gallant answer. "Whither may I have the pleasure of conducting you?"

"To the shop of Madame Montansier, old-clothes dealer, in the Rue Saint Roch."

Thus it was that Marguerite, in her silk and jewels, turned up in the early morning hours, with her gaily-attired cavalier, at the modest home of her aunt, the old-clothes dealer, much to that good lady's astonishment and disapproval. Madame, however, was a kindly soul, ready to play a mother's part to her orphan niece; but Marguerite, after her first taste of adventure, was in no mood to resign herself to the daily duty of haggling over old clothes, as was her aunt's quite natural wish. The news of her escapade and her cleverness in outwitting a notorious *roué* was soon the gossip and amusement of all Paris; and the country maid found herself suddenly famous.

Thus, within a few days of setting foot in Paris, Marguerite had realized

her ambition to win notoriety, if not fame; and, as she had the loveliness and cleverness to take full advantage of it, we soon find her launched as Mademoiselle Montansier (a name of better sound than "Brunet") upon the career of a professional beauty.

II

FOR light on the next few years of Marguerite's life we are indebted to the Paris Special Police Department, whose duty it was to keep a watchful eye on the private lives of actresses and professional beauties, and deliver a daily report of their doings to the King. Louis XV, we are told, "liked to be able to embarrass the members of his Court by displaying an unexpected knowledge of their levities—to be able to nudge a grave nobleman and say to him with a leer, 'Aha! You sly dog! Where did you have supper last night? What sort of a present did you give to your charming hostess? You think I don't know, but I do!'"

These reports, the chief object of which was thus to gratify a King's prurient curiosity, trace Mademoiselle's career from the age of eighteen to the age of thirty-three—fifteen years of pleasure-chasing and luxurious living, punctuated by intervals of obscurity when her doings escaped even the lynx eyes of the police.

In these records we see Mademoiselle, after a year or two of gaiety, running off to the West Indies with an officer who soon wearied of her charms and abandoned her—to live as best she could by opening a milliner's shop. But Mademoiselle had no taste for millinery. Her eyes turned longingly to Paris and the easier life of pleasure that awaited her there. Thus we soon find her back in the French capital, installed in sumptuous apartments, with "two negro servants attired in blue, a footman and two maids" as her retinue.

We read the long list of her admirers, ranging from ducs and marquises to obscure actors, who ministered to her extravagance in exchange for her

smiles; and right merry times she seems to have had in their company.

"She gives a party every day," we read. "The company as a rule drinks heavily, makes a great noise and does not break up until three or four in the morning."

One admirer, we are told, "has given her three hundred louis"; another has presented her with a valuable necklace of diamonds. . . . In such frolicking, living in luxury and surrounded by lovers eager to feed her extravagance, Mademoiselle spent fifteen of the best years of her life, drinking deep of the cup of pleasure, without a care for the morrow or a regret for wasted talents and opportunities. And it was only when her beauty began to fade and lovers to show signs of falling off that her steps at last turned to more conventional, if less amusing, paths.

Through all these years of luxury and folly the call of the stage had been in her ears, but she had never been able to summon sufficient courage and energy to obey its summons. Now that her youth had fled and with it the freshness of her charms, her ambition was to have a theater of her own; and it was when Monsieur de Saint-Contest joined the ranks of her admirers that her opportunity came.

Monsieur was a boy of eighteen, but he was the son of France's Foreign Minister, and thus in a position to be of use to her; and, moreover, he was madly in love and thus a puppet in her hands. When she told the Minister's son that her dearest wish was to have a theater to run, her wish was quickly realized and she was soon saying good-bye to the *vie galante* and was installed at Nantes as manageress of the theater there.

Mademoiselle had at last found her true *métier*, for she had a brain as clever as her face was beautiful. It was not long before, in her capable hands, the Nantes theater became famous throughout France, and this success continued when she took M. Neuville, a handsome soldier turned actor, as partner. So little, too, was the jealousy of M. de

Saint-Contest aroused by this new rivalry that, when Mademoiselle told him she wanted a larger house, he promptly procured one for her at Versailles, and was building a still larger one, at a cost of £14,000, when death suddenly carried him off.

Mademoiselle now had the ball of Fortune at her feet. M. de Saint-Contest had certainly died most inopportunistly, after seeing her installed at Versailles; but she had now a much more powerful friend in Marie Antoinette, Queen of France, then well embarked on that career of gaiety and frivolity for which she was one day to pay so terrible a price. The story of the first meeting of the Queen and the manageress is thus told:

"While watching the performance of the comedians from the Royal box, Marie Antoinette had smelt the onion soup which they were preparing for their supper behind the scenes. It was an appetising odour, and she asked that a basin of the refectation might be sent up to her. Of course Mlle. Montansier served it with her own hands; and that was her opportunity. The Queen was interested in the gossip of the *coulisses*; and the manageress of the theater naturally had the gossip at her fingertips."

To the Queen, so long shut out from the world of pleasure in the dreary seclusion of Court life and the companionship of a clownish husband, this clever adventuress, with her sprightly tongue and her inexhaustible fund of anecdote and gossip, was a revelation and a delight. She must see more of her; and Mademoiselle soon found herself a welcome guest at the Royal palaces, entertaining the Queen with her droll stories and her scandal at the *petits levers*; her partner at the card table; the directress of private theatricals at the Petit Trianon; and generally installed as an intimate friend of her frivolous Majesty, much to the disgust of Louis, who strongly disapproved of such companionship for his wife.

The King's resentment, in fact, was

even carried to the point of ordering Mademoiselle's arrest and imprisonment on a flimsy charge of "impertinence" to His Majesty, a revenge which only provoked a smile from Mademoiselle and the whimsical remark, "Am I not to have any company? Does the King actually condemn me to live alone?" A question which naturally convulsed the Court, and even Louis himself, with laughter.

What could he do with such a woman, whose only objection to a prison was that she would be left to her own company? And thus the irrepressible Mademoiselle was a free woman again almost before her cell door had closed on her.

III

WITH Marie Antoinette as patron there seemed to be no height of success which the ambitious manageress might not hope to attain. She was now directress of a dozen theaters in the provinces; and she conceived the bold project of securing a monopoly of all the theaters in France. It is little wonder that the magnitude and daring of the scheme frightened the Government; but before they could come to a decision the outbreak of the Revolution gave them more serious food for deliberation.

But even the Revolution, with all its threatened horrors, had no power to daunt Mademoiselle Montansier, who transferred her Paris company to the Palais Royal and continued to flourish amid all the alarms of riot and carnage by conquering indifferently with the rival parties. Her green-room was thronged nightly by the Girondins, who rubbed shoulders with such revolutionaries as Barras and Tallien, Desmoulins and even Robespierre himself, who sought distraction from the Terror by making love to the pretty actresses. It was the rôle of the actresses to keep the peace among the partisans; they succeeded, at any rate, in giving them something besides politics to quarrel about. *Saint Just*, for instance, quar-

relled with Vergniaud about Mlle. Rivière, the dancer; while Mlle. Sainval's preference for Louvet brought Mlle. Montansier a threatening letter from the revolutionary who prided himself on his incorruptibility.

"Citizen," Robespierre wrote, "they tell me that the wit of France has taken refuge in your theater—but it must not be exercised at my expense. I respect your pleasures, and I require that you should respect mine. They are few enough, owing to my grim preoccupation."

If anything could have wrecked Mademoiselle's fortunes it surely would have been the terror and upheaval which had France in their grip, but through this time of bloodshed and social wreckage she contrived, almost alone in Paris, to keep her head for more than a year above water. She coquetted impartially with Royalists and Revolutionary leaders, keeping in the good books of the opposing parties and making each her friend. Even Robespierre himself was no match for the woman who had installed her theater in the Palais Royal and kept Paris amused while her streets were running red with blood.

But when suspicion was in the very air she breathed it was not likely that even such a clever diplomatist as Mademoiselle could long escape it; especially as she was on such intimate terms with the hated Austrian, Marie Antoinette. But she was equal even to this emergency, for when she was accused of concealing Royalist arms in the cellar of her theater, she gave a dramatic and conclusive answer to the charge.

She announced that she had organized the male members of her company into a battalion of volunteers to fight the foreign foe. Actors, dancers, musicians, scene-shifters, stage carpenters—eighty-five of them in all—they presented themselves, with Neuville at their head, at the bar of the Legislative Assembly; and Neuville read a patriotic address, demanding that they should all be sent at once to the front, while their directress, with amazing energy

for a woman of sixty-three, proposed to follow them and organize theatrical performances "in the presence of the enemy."

She did so—amid what scenes of enthusiasm one can imagine. The tide of invasion was rolled back over the frontier, Mademoiselle keeping pace with the conquering troops, keeping them cheered and amused with her performances on the very fields of battle; and when at last Dumouriez occupied Brussels, she inaugurated a season in the Belgian capital.

When she returned to Paris, however, it was not long before she found herself in serious trouble. Robespierre had no reason to love her, for he held her responsible for his failure to win the affections of a lady of her company. Danton, who had been her loyal friend, had lost his head on the guillotine; and now, the Terror being at its height, Robespierre was virtually Dictator of France, and did not scruple to use his power to gratify his grudge against her.

Thus it was that Mademoiselle found herself summoned on the flimsy charge of "having built a theater in the Rue de la Loi for the purpose of setting fire to the National Library." She was arrested and imprisoned in La Force, where she lingered for eleven months until her enemies, one by one, having made their pilgrimage to the guillotine, she was at last a free woman.

So far, however, from her spirit being crushed by her confinement, Mademoiselle left her cell burning for revenge. Her character as a patriot had been vindicated; but she must have heavy damages for the losses she had suffered, and these she assessed at no less a sum than seven million francs. And, as usual, she had her way, although only after a long and resolute fight. Harassed as the Treasury was by the claims on it in this time of financial stress, the sum awarded to her was actually a million francs more than she claimed, though the payment was to be made in instalments and in paper instead of cash.

IV

MADemoiselle had now reached the age of sixty-three; for more than forty years she had had as many lovers as might have contented half a dozen exacting beauties; and it was at this time, when she might well have thought that her days of romance were over, that her greatest love adventure was awaiting her.

The man responsible for this belated romance, which narrowly escaped making an Empress of the antiquated Montansier, was Barras, who was then filling the double rôle of her admirer and of friend to Napoleon Bonaparte—still poor and little known, although he had just blossomed into a general, and with his dazzling future still as veiled from him as from the rest of the world.

It was one day in 1795 that Barras, who, after Robespierre's overthrow, was dictator of the Convention, was talking to the young Corsican soldier about his future career, and was suggesting that a well-gilded wife would be most helpful to him at this stage of his career.

"Say the word," he said laughingly, "and give me time to look round, and I'll find such a wife for you."

He had scarcely spoken the words when a visitor was announced, and Mlle. Montansier, buxom and still a handsome woman in spite of her years, sailed into the room. The young officer was presented to her, and in the general conversation that ensued Mademoiselle spoke of herself playfully as a "lonely woman," to which Napoleon gallantly replied that he was sure that any friend of Citizen Barras would be proud of the privilege of protecting her in her loneliness.

"Do you think so?" Mademoiselle coquettishly answered. "Well, I am not at all sure that I should say 'No' to such an offer."

When the lady had withdrawn Barras remarked:

"I was advising you to marry just now: What do you say to marrying Mlle. Montansier?"

"That," said Napoleon, "is certainly an idea worth thinking over. The lady's appearance is entirely in her favor. But—are you quite sure that her wealth is as genuine as her recent misfortunes? When one is thinking of such a serious matter as marriage one must know on what sort of foundation one is building."

The ice thus broken, Barras lost no time in clearing the path to the altar for his young friend. He learnt from Mademoiselle that her fortune was at least 1,200,000 francs; that she was fond of soldiers, and would not at all object to the Corsican as a husband. The preliminaries being thus satisfactory, he arranged a dinner for the purpose of bringing things to a head—and a most successful dinner it was from this point of view. Before the second course was disposed of, the host was almost forgotten in the exchange of amorous glances and sweet words. A few minutes later all the talk was of Corsica and "what we will do there" and "where we will go"; and by the time the coffee and liqueurs were reached the ill-assorted lovers were oblivious of the world in their rapt interest in each other.

But alas for love's belated dream! Before they could meet again *Vendemiare* came, and with it Bonaparte's "whiff of grape-shot" which cleared the streets of Paris and made a national hero of him. He had taken a long step on his journey to a crown, and with that step his point of view was completely changed. A gilded bourgeoisie might be all very well as wife for a struggling soldier, but the man who saw his way to a throne must look much higher for a lady to share it with him.

Moreover, in the interval, he had met Josephine de Beauharnais, who combined rank and social influence with a rare loveliness. From the chestnut hair which rippled over her small, proudly poised head, to the arch of her tiny, dainty feet, the Creole Vicomtesse was the incarnation of all his dreams. There was witchery in every part of her—in the rich colour that mantled in her cheeks, the sweet brown eyes that

looked out between long-fringed eyelids, the small delicate nose, the nostrils "quivering at the least emotion"; the exquisite lines of the tall, supple figure, instinct with grace in every movement, and, above all, the seductive music of a voice every note of which was a caress. It is small wonder that at first sight of such superlative charms the impressionable little Corsican lost both head and heart to them and determined to make them his own.

Thus it was a very different Napoleon who accepted Mlle. Montansier's invitation to a party given in his honor. He was courtesy itself to his hostess, but his eyes no longer looked unutterable things, his lips no longer uttered words of love. He was clearly not happy in his environment; and when his aide-de-camp, Junot, opportunely arrived—no doubt by previous arrangement—to call him away on urgent business, he apologized profusely to Mademoiselle for the necessity which called him from her charming presence, bade her "au revoir"—and took good care not to come again.

Thus it was that the pin-maker's daughter lost her chance of a crown, which, if *Vendemiaire* had been delayed but a month, would almost certainly have been hers. But so far from sitting down to bemoan this scurvy trick of fortune, she threw herself more energetically than ever into her stage work, and tried to forget her soldier lover in the arms of Neuville, whom she at last married, one day in 1800.

V

MADAME (as we must call her) was now seventy, with still more vigour and more good looks than most women of half her years. At seventy-two we find her organizing opera bouffe in honour of Bonaparte's Italian victories, thus proving that she had forgiven her false lover and was generous enough to be proud of his growing fame. Five years later she was opening another theater, and taking an active part in the management of a music hall—so active, indeed, that she lost her heart—for the last time

—to a handsome young rope-dancer, who might have been her grandson.

But even Montansier could not defy Time forever, and from this time we see her rapidly lapsing into old age and infirmities until, at eighty-two, Paul de Kock describes her as "a little old woman, so old, so broken down, so wrinkled, so shriveled up that, when I first caught sight of her, I thought I beheld the fairy Carabosse."

During the three years of life that still remained we only catch one more glimpse of this wonderful woman, and this was at the funeral of Mlle. Ran-court, a famous actress. When the mourners reached the church they found the gate locked against them—the clergy had refused the dead woman Christian burial. In their anger at such an outrage on the memory of their friend, the mourners, after trying vainly to break the gate down, scaled it, lifted the coffin over it, and carried it into the aisle of the church, while an enraged mob howled outside. The curé, however, stoutly refused to conduct the funeral service, in spite of the de-

mands and threats of the mourners.

Then it was that a white-haired old woman, who was praying in a corner of the church, rose from her knees and hobbled towards him.

"What!" she exclaimed, "you would expel the poor woman's dead body from your church? And yet, when she was alive you used to promise her, as you have promised me, that eternal bliss would be the reward of her many acts of charity. Priest, I tell you, you are sowing the seeds of impiety in our hearts."

Such were the last recorded words of Montansier—words, prompted by a tender heart, spoken in defence of a woman who had once been her formidable rival in beauty and in love. And we may truly say that nothing in all her adventurous life did her so much honour as this last act of courage and nobleness which heralded the final ringing down of the curtain.

The ninth article in this series, entitled "A Witch in the Arts of Love," will appear in the next number of SMART SET.



DISCOVERY

By Maxwell Bodenheim

WITHIN your heart is a hidden pool
 Stirred to foam-covered perfumes of motion
 By naked shades of love.
 Your loves bathe in this pool of subdued desires
 And gently frolic 'neath a guardian-moon.
 Then, you become aware of them
 And with soft cries they run to their nuns' robes . . .
 All this I know because
 You smiled uncertainly, and then
 Returned to your frail sternness.



MONDAY AFTERNOON

By Jean Allen

FROM the brisk, swarming street
We climb,
Three flights of winding stairs
To this quiet, thought-filled room,
Gray-walled, with its stretch
Of soft-curtained windows
Reflecting warmth of neighbouring red brick walls,
And filling corners with rosy shadows.
The hearth fire soon is singing.
'Midst the insistent fragrance of spring flowers
You lie, relaxed and supine,
On the scarlet couch,
One tired arm trailing near the floor.
And I
Sit musedly by my green Venetian desk
While my heart expands with happiness:
A sense of gratified enjoyment
Surging near my lips
Because of the loveliness about me:
The scent of roses nodding near my hand,
The Chinese blue of this enamel box
That brings remembrance
Of slow southern seas:
My rows of vari-coloured books
That reach the ceiling,
Friends all, gathered singly on my wanderings,
And sure refuge from all unpleasantness,
The thin, blue, curling smoke
Of my cigarette,
The low sheen of the fire,
The comfort of your eyes
Ah, Love, that we might always keep
This sanctuary of tranquillity,
Your sense of peace,
My captive heart,
And these eight green Chinese gods,
Immutable and smug, intolerant,
Triumphant on the topmost shelf,
Who tell us
Life is but a jest for lovers;
Beauty alone endures.



COMPLETION OF A POST-GRADUATE COURSE IN PHILOSOPHY

By Van Vechten Hostetter

GRAHAME GORDON, the man of sixty who would not grow old, was spending a few days in Denver, for no better reason than that it pleased his fancy. That reason, however, was quite sufficient for Grahame Gordon, which partially explains why he was not growing old.

Grahame Gordon was on his way home after a year in Japan and another year on his Montana ranch. There was no necessity for haste. No wife and no children waited for him. No affairs of business demanded his attention. He had always liked Denver, so he had stopped there, much as a man, finding himself in the neighbourhood where an acquaintance lives, drops in for a few minutes' chat.

Tonight, after a day's tramping and an evening at the theater, Grahame Gordon, with whiskey and soda at hand, sat musing at his open hotel window. The dark quietude of the room, contrasting with the glare hubbub of the street below, conduced to musing.

Grahame Gordon at thirty, having read well and thought deeply, had regarded himself—modestly—as a man of education and intelligence somewhat above the average for those of his years.

At forty-five, having observed life and lived it thoroughly in many and widely variant phases and modes in the principal cities of North America, he had considered himself a man of rare knowledge, keen perception and superior judgment.

Now, a seasoned cosmopolitan of sixty, he examined himself—objective-

ly, almost impersonally, with the same fine judicial attitude that he would have brought to the examination of another man—and found that he was more than broadly experienced and widely read, more than wise. He was a philosopher.

Grahame Gordon had no degrees. (While his school-fellows had been working for them or devising schemes to get them without work, he had decided that they were intrinsically worthless.) He had written no books. He had delivered no lectures. He had carefully avoided being developed into an "authority" by newspaper interviews (a cheap distinction religiously sought by some whose sciolism made him mildly contemptuous and enjoyed by some whose displays of unconscious ignorance afforded him many a quiet and benignant smile).

And yet certainly Grahame Gordon was deeper in philosophy than a few of those who made their living by it, and more a master than those whose minds had collapsed under the weight of their own thought. He felicitated himself upon his ability, so seldom possessed by a philosopher, to take nothing too seriously—not even himself. Professional thinkers, he had observed,—even those who professed contempt for all humanity—stood somewhat in awe of themselves.

Ruminating pleasantly now over his own life, Grahame Gordon smiled blandly and with a kind of amused paternal sympathy upon the youth he had been and at the foolish fears over which that youth had brooded for a miserable year or more. For Grahame

Gordon, before he knew the beginnings of philosophy, had been the prey of a somewhat morbid dread of death and a coordinate horror of infirm and burdensome old age. And, after the manner of phobiacs, he had diligently nourished his fears—a thing more than easy to do because of their reciprocal relation. Combatting one, he had found a morose pleasure in knowing that whatever power to harass was taken from it was given to the other.

He scanned the newspapers for reports of deaths of men and women in their prime. Their dreams were unrealized. Their ambitions were unattained. Their purposes, whether serious, ordinary or frivolous, were unaccomplished. They had wanted and hoped to live, just as he wanted and hoped. All that they had done had been only the preparation for what they were to do. Their book, epic or farce was closed with its best pages unwritten.

He brooded upon the possibility that their fate would be his until it became likelihood. Then he turned and ridiculed his reasonless despair. Those who died before their time were few enough. Those that lived on and on were many. Why should he be among the few? He was sound and strong in body. The possibility of early death for him was remote—yes, too remote. More was the likelihood that his body would go on, living somehow, breathing, hanging feebly yet tenaciously to life long after his brain had begun to decay.

He watched and followed old men of the poor, in their rusty, frayed and shapeless garments, pottering along on their canes. He saw them sitting in the sun on summer days. Some tapped irregularly on the pavement; they had lost even the sense of rhythm. Some had nervous energy and strength remaining to whittle a piece of wood, but had minds too feeble to have any purpose in the whittling. Some chattered in monotonous of petty, almost meaningless incidents and experiences of years long gone, as if those were all their

asthenic memories could retain. Some, the dying skin, yellow or brown or splotched, drying and shrinking on their bones, sat dull or vacant eyed, mumbling incoherently or silent, until their grandchildren came—hating the task—to lead them home.

It was to be like one of these, Grahame Gordon thought, that he was living. There was no joy in them. They were no longer capable of enjoying any pleasure, either of body or mind, either sinful or virtuous. They were disgustingly ugly. They were less able than children to provide themselves with personal care. They were of no use to themselves; to society they were sores on its body, irremovable concomitants of healthy life, best borne by thinking of them as little as possible; to their relatives they were loathsome burdens that should be cast off but could not be. It was immoral even to pray for deliverance, although the relatives could not help longing and hoping for it.

And these old men were not essentially different from the old men of his own class. His grandfather was like them. His grandfather had great wealth, but after a private hearing had been adjudged incompetent to have control of it. He had a nurse who bathed him, dressed him and took him to the club, where he sat gibbering with other rich old men.

And he was resisting and scheming against death, the youthful Grahame Gordon thought, shuddering, to be like these. What a horrible reward if he should succeed! And how horrible it would be to fail!

But the Grahame Gordon of tonight could smile. The youth, realizing the danger of his mental condition, had summoned all his will and attacked both his obsessing horrors at once. He had convinced himself that escape from both was possible and the man of sixty proved it.

For Grahame Gordon, examining himself without passion and without prejudice, knew that he had the body, mind and spirit of forty years. He was not like certain statesmen and men

of great affairs whose retention of mental and physical strength at threescore years and ten was the subject of remark. He knew their ruggedness in the first place was considerably magnified. He knew very well that they did not habitually lead the lives of men of forty.

He knew that a newspaper story and picture of Senator Horace Noble at golf was considered "good stuff" by newspapers, but he knew also that Senator Noble could not play golf for ten consecutive hours as he, Grahame Gordon, had done the last time he was at Southampton. He knew that for twenty years or more before his death at eighty-one, Thompson Mitchel had been only nominally the head of the powerful banking house that bore his name. With a stubborn old man's pride and vanity he had continued his regular hours in his office. This had been with the full approval of his sons, who directed the affairs of Mitchel & Company. For sentimental reasons and for psychological effect they approved. Grahame Gordon had smiled when the morning newspapers, announcing Mitchel's death, had predicted panic in the Stock Exchange. The market was unusually dull at the opening, but improved as the session proceeded and prices advanced generally.

He knew that Grant Campbell, who in an impassioned address when the *Lusitania* was sunk, had moved a mass-meeting to urge immediate declaration of war, had collapsed on the steps of his home and had not left his bed for two weeks. He knew that audiences unconsciously made allowance for Selby, the tragedian, because of his age, and that Selby was literally carried from dressing-room to stage and back again.

But Grahame Gordon had played carefully and skilfully. Death had not beaten him and time had not broken, nor even weakened his defense. He had secured himself from the dangers of matrimony by the simple method of avoiding matrimony. He had not had to worry over reckless sons or foolish

or wayward daughters. His ample patrimony, safely invested, had saved him from all business cares. He had lived, wholesomely, happily. And he was forty at sixty. His physical and mental strength, his easy view of life, his interests were all the same as they had been for twenty years. Even his personal appearance was unchanged. His healthy-coloured but not florid face bore lines of maturity, but none of age. Glasses had ceased to carry any suggestion of years long before he began to wear them. He had been gray at thirty-five.

II

ONLY one thought came tonight to mar Grahame Gordon's tranquil reflections. It was that his friends had not been such masters of life as he. Many of them had died in the last few years. Some had been only the victims of fate or chance, but more had paid the price of excessive indulgences of youth. Grahame Gordon had practiced excess in nothing. In the first few years out of the university many of his cronies had been always beastly drunk or beastly sober; Grahame Gordon had not been either. Grahame Gordon had had mistresses: but they had not had him.

There were other friends who after marriage had been weaned away or barred away from their old associates—which did not matter greatly, for they had grown dull or stupid. Others still had drifted away to nowhere, as friends will who are not too dear.

Those that remained—and they were few enough—were aging. Some had been handicapped from the beginning with bodies and minds less strong than his. Against others the law of compensation was operating relentlessly; they had denied themselves nothing, now they were rapidly moving on to the time when everything would be denied them. They had lost much of the zest for life. The shoulders of the best of them were bent. Their steps were slow. So were their wits. They were no longer the inspiring and wholly sat-

isfying companions they had been to Grahame Gordon, although they were still his friends. On his last visit home he had observed that it was not easy to take them to the theater; they preferred to sit in the club and talk—about the past. He talked of the present mostly, and often of something they knew nothing about. Once that would have been hardly possible. There was a pathos in their feigned understanding.

He had found himself turning to younger men for relief from boredom. It had been a sorry relief. These men were keen, alert, thrilling with life, capital companions for a while—but they were not old friends. They provided a mental exhilaration, but there was little spiritual comfort in their association. Some he had known for several years and spent many an evening with at the opera or in some café, many an afternoon at the track when he could find no one else to go with him; so surely they were friends, yet as surely not like those he had known since university days and after; there was an intimacy, a perfect sympathy and understanding always lacking. His spirit was as young as theirs, his mind as fresh and vigorous, his body even more erect and his step lighter than some of theirs—yet they showed him deference.

Grahame Gordon mused somewhat mournfully upon the fact that, of all the comrades he had once had, only one remained cherished deeply enough to make correspondence worth while. He was thankful for that one. John Emberlie, too, had begun to fail; yet he was fighting bravely, gallantly—and against odds, for he had been the most heedless of the gay—to be the kind of man Grahame Gordon was finding it so easy to be. Well, it would be worth the trip back to grip hands with poor old Emberlie and drink with him again. What a thrill of joy it must have given the old man to receive Grahame Gordon's wire, saying he was coming back.

A knock on his door roused Grahame Gordon from his now less pleasant reflections. It was a bellboy with a telegram.

"It's from Emberlie," Grahame Gordon said as he tore open the envelope. "Good old Emberlie answering. He's the only one that knows where I am."

He adjusted his glasses and stood under the hall light, staring at the message.

Something gripped and pinched his heart.

It was from Emberlie's man.
Emberlie was dead.

III

GRAHAME GORDON had no heart to go back. His grief was great enough without being made more poignant by a visit to the scenes where he and his best friend had made merry so soon after that friend had died. He went to Rio de Janeiro, and thence to Buenos Aires, and thence to London.

It was nearly five years later that he went home—back to New York—impelled by a growing hunger for old scenes and old companions that had somewhat suddenly possessed him.

He found he had not been forgotten. He was greeted at his favourite club and others with wholesome cordiality, but cordiality in which there was an unmistakable deference. There was no one here to call him Grahame, no one to call him Gordon without "Mister" prefixed. Not one of the men he had hoped most to see, withered and feeble as they might be, remained. He was deeply disappointed and experienced a feeling of loneliness, but he was not dismayed; for he was still a philosopher and still young.

For such comfort as it would bring Grahame Gordon set out to visit the streets, cafés and places of amusement where he and his comrades had once been familiar figures. The streets remained, but only the streets. Everything else was changed. Even the great hotels that had not been razed to make room for greater had been altered, rebuilt and renovated almost beyond recognition. Not one of the old attachés was to be found about any of them.

"What ever became of Jimmie

Moore?" he asked experimentally of the bartender in Delmonico's.

The man responded dully that he knew no one of the name.

"Why," said Grahame Gordon, "he used to be the greatest bartender in town thirty-five years ago. Invented the Queens cocktail—you know that?"

"Oh, sure, but I never knew who got it up."

"Well, he was an artist," Grahame Gordon said reminiscently. "I drank one of the first he ever made—and I can almost taste it now."

The man smiled with a professional bartender's good-natured diplomacy.

"I hand it to you," he said. "You must have started good and early."

"Yes," said Grahame Gordon wearily, "I started early," and went his way.

Grahame Gordon found a capable Jap and opened an apartment, which he meant to keep a year before another sojourn abroad. When the end of that year came he found he had no taste for traveling, so he stayed on. After all, there was nothing to see in Europe that he had not seen again and again, nothing to hear. There was nothing to do that he could not do at home. He satisfied himself with three months at the shore. It was as pleasant to be there as anywhere else.

When he returned he set himself determinedly to make new friends as fully satisfying as the old ones had been. His progress was slow if indeed he made any progress. He read every newspaper and every magazine and book that was worth while. There was not a play—good, bad or indifferent—that he did not see, not an opera that he failed to hear. He knew the record and the history of every baseball player and the name of every horse that had showed class or promised to show it. He played golf and cricket. He skated.

In the clubs no wise man, wit or raconteur was more engaging or brilliant than he. Few were his equals. Yet those equals would not meet him on a plane of equality.

With his clear vision he could not

fail to see that they regarded him as in some way different from themselves. The attention with which they listened to what he had to say was too respectful. Their rejoinders were accompanied by something like apologies. He was keen for repartee that gave and asked no quarter. So were they among themselves, but their retorts to him were softened—for him.

Sometimes at the height of some learned and witty debate someone would forget his deference for a minute or two—but then he would catch himself and awkwardly end his remark, thereafter sitting silent and embarrassed. Then Grahame Gordon would wonder if he had actually made any progress toward the position among these men that he had held among men thirty years before.

IV

MONTHS followed months into years and Grahame Gordon, fighting with indomitable courage and undiminished strength, began to wonder if he was not fighting in vain. He wondered if, after all, he was not struggling to accomplish the impossible. If so, then he was willing to resign, for he was a philosopher; but he could not resign while doubt remained, for he was still a man.

Why could he not be taken at his true value? he asked himself again and again. Why must he be regarded according to the number of years he had lived and not according to the qualities and talents he possessed?

What fools men were, he thought, to be so blind to truth before their eyes! But surely they could not remain blind forever.

Surely there were men whose minds were free, men who could be convinced that he was essentially like them. Surely there were men who would let him, even help him, break down the false barrier of mere years and be comrades with him.

But Grahame Gordon, when he was ninety-three years old, had found not one such man. Incredible as it had

once seemed that he should do so, he had retained all the faculties and all the spirit of healthy middle age more than twenty years beyond the scripturally allotted span of life. It had been incredible to him until the demonstration of it was well begun. To everyone else, despite the perfect demonstration, it was still incredible.

Although he still struggled to be taken for what he was, still schemed and planned to come heart-to-heart and mind-to-mind with men who had hearts and minds like his, they still held up the barrier of the years. Another generation had come up now. They were more than deferential. They venerated or revered him. When he approached they fell silent, rose and greeted him decorously and remained standing until he was seated. They listened with respectful attention to all he said; smiled half-fearfully at his dry humor, not knowing whether it was right to smile or not; refused to argue with him, but humbly asked him simple questions.

He wanted to be a fellow with them: they would make him nothing but a patriarch. He wondered what they said of him behind his back. For all their reverence he would have had one of them slap him on the shoulder with a boisterous greeting; but none could think of such a thing.

Grahame Gordon himself had never had the habit of slapping shoulders, but he wondered if anything could be gained by adopting it now. He decided not. It would be regarded—and rightly so, he decided—as a silly old man's effort to make himself appear young. He did, however, put aside his cane. It had come to carry a suggestion of decrepitude. The really old men that sat in the clubs all day hobbled to them on canes. They were the men of whom he had tried in vain to make comrades after Emberlie died. They were too old to be comrades now.

It was when Grahame Gordon was nearing ninety-five that some newspaper sent a man to interview him and get his photograph. He came as near to

losing his temper as his philosophical mind would permit.

"I have no photograph," he said simply, "and I have nothing of importance to say. I'm sorry."

The newspaperman was insistent.

"I told you I was sorry," said Grahame Gordon. "I am a private citizen, minding my own business, and such I wish and intend to remain."

The thought of the practices of certain unscrupulous newspapers flashed into his mind and he added forcefully:

"I warn you that my wish must be respected. Publish nothing about me."

All this the reporter told to his city editor and asked:

"Shall I fake it?"

"No," said the city editor, "not on an old man like that. Let him alone."

A few nights later Grahame Gordon sat in a favorite little room of his at the club, waiting for a young man who had promised to play chess with him. As the time of the appointment approached his sharp ear caught voices in the corridor:

"Come on with us. Everybody will be there. There's going to be a lot of quiet fun."

"No. Sorry I can't, old man; but I've got to play some chess with old Mr. Gordon."

In a few minutes they were at play. Grahame Gordon was sick at heart and half angry. He played mercilessly. He did not stop at beating his opponent. He humiliated him. But still, when they said good night, he was "old Mr. Gordon."

V

IN the weeks that followed Grahame Gordon fought against a bitterness in his heart. Life was so unjust. Surely it was unjust. His judgment of it must be fair. He had fought and won and yet he had lost. He drove away the bitterness, but the knowledge of injustice remained. Now he must become reconciled to that injustice. So he was thinking when he got up one evening to start home. He was seen to stumble

and fall. Half a dozen men and servants ran toward him, shouting. He was on his feet before they reached him. They were greatly agitated and alarmed.

"Are you hurt, Mr. Gordon?"—"Can't I help you?"—these and other anxious questions.

He laughed lightly. "Good Lord, no. Of course I'm not hurt. Thanks. I just tripped over that rug—the edge was turned up."

It was the truth, but as Grahame Gordon strode home through the night he knew that nobody believed it. For many hours he sat in his bedroom, thinking deeply, more deeply perhaps than he had ever thought before.

He thought as a philosopher. He was calm in mind and spirit. There was no bitterness in him now. He sought truth and he was reconciled to it, whatever the truth might be.

"It would have been better, after all, if I had lived like other men," he thought. "It would have been better if I had died like other men or grown old. I have tried to break the law of nature, to destroy it—and I have only violated it. The law stands. Decline and death are as natural as birth and life. Strange

I never realized it before. Science may change the law by gradually lengthening the years of man—and that may solve all the world's problems—but no one man can change it. I have tried to be a normal man beyond the normal time. Impossible—because the world and life and nature will not let it be possible. It would have been natural to die of disease—or to grow old and feeble and die; but I am, after all, what that poor wise fool of an editor instinctively knew me to be—a freak of nature. And what am I to do now?"

That was the question that took the hours to answer.

Grahame Gordon was never seen again in any of his clubs. He dismissed his servant, gave up his apartment and went away. No one knew where he went. Some wondered. None tried to find out.

Some months later a stranger in a far inland town was found dead in his room in the hotel. He had taken a potent poison that had left no unsightly mark or sign on his clean, strong body. The man was apparently forty-five or fifty years old. He had registered as "John Smith, of London." The coroner's jury decided that he had ended his life while temporarily insane.



TH**E**RE are only two kinds of kisses one remembers: those which remind one of cold veal, and those which are like a glass of champagne with a touch of angostura.



SP**O**T**L**I**G**H**T**: a scheme of illumination for showing up impartially all the spots on a vaudeville actor's dress suit.



TH**E** worst thing that can be said about love is that it makes marriage possible.



UN**E**A**S**Y lies the head that wears a conscience.



AN UPLIFT STORY

By Frank La Forrest

DINING, wining and dancing had finally palled on the guests, and as a novelty the hostess suggested a bit of sociological pastime.

Let us go out in the streets, pick up the first drunken man we meet and try and reform him," she suggested.

They sallied forth and after traveling several blocks saw a man lying in the gutter.

They rushed up eagerly, but the hostess' face fell. She did not deny that he was delightfully drunk, but as for reforming him—she held up her hands. He was her husband.



EMOTION BOURGEOISE

By John V. A. Weaver

YOU thought it was the Spring. The river crinkled
Like creamy ribbon in the moon's incandescence.
The stage was set. Here was the very essence
Of middle-class Romance: some far bell tinkled.

And down a warm wind came a sudden flood
Of—lilac! Then you shuddered as my lips
Brushed on your cheek, your hair, your finger-tips. . . .
And, "Don't!" you said, "I'm just not in the mood."

You wrenched away, laughed a self-conscious titter,
Spoke some banal something about the Spring,
Entered the doorway with a little fling,
Leaving me somewhat flustered, somewhat bitter.

Twenty! And May! (And several years ago—
Hell! . . . That the scent of lilac should hurt so. . . .)



WINGS IN THE MESH

A COLLOQUY IN ONE ACT

By Milnes Levick

IT is the living room of a small suburban home, almost paid for. The living room is distinguished from its parent, the parlor, by Mission furniture and a different fashion in accessibility to fresh air: the type is, indeed, a superior triumph of machinery. In this example one may search the furniture, the hangings, the adornments, for a touch of intimacy and find no more than an occasional misplacement of accident or slovenliness. The hornless phonograph holds its station, the chairs stand sentry, the table is a citadel. From immutable positions on the top shelf of a built-in rack two rigid sets and a dozen old novels stare self-consciously through small ornate panes. Below, in tattered envelopes, are the phonograph records, banalities indiscriminately of vaudeville and of the opera. There are pictures, some printed trivialities, a large engraving in the manner of an etching, with anecdotal remarque, circa 1895; a slaty oil painting, work of a deceased aunt; a framed line of photographs, like a row of teeth, showing two children in obvious and slightly varied poses.

The room is of a piece with the bungalow, with the street, with the suburb. Beyond the lace curtains are other houses, precise and patterned, as impersonal as cheap motor cars—rows reaching out for miles.

Upon the table is a woman's hat, now cocked defiantly upon the edge of a handbag. Two long pins are stuck in it at reckless angles; their glass tips glare wall-eyed at the stolid lamp; they thrust themselves forward with wary belligerence like antennae.

By the table is a strait, in which a big chair makes an island, now inhabited by Mrs. Meddock in a dingy house gown. Upon the other side of the room, purposely distant as if to emphasize the atmosphere of tenseness, is her elder daughter, Sophie Stark. The younger, Ruth Henshaw, in street dress like her sister, but hatless, slumps on a settee and the drape of the phonograph box brushes her hair.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Ruth, you're not going to do this?
I won't allow it.

SOPHIE:

That you're just making a fool of
yourself to please him.

SOPHIE:

Why, you're just playing into his
hands. Can't you see. . . .

MRS. MEDDOCK:

You won't throw away your rights
like this?

RUTH:

(After a pause.) See what?

RUTH:

Rights? If it's over it's over, isn't
it?

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Over! Well, of all—

SOPHIE:

How can you talk so?

RUTH:

Oh, I know: what God joins together. Well, I guess he didn't do the joining himself in our case.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

You shan't talk so before me, Ruth, whether you think it's smart or not. My dear, don't you suppose I can see how you feel at heart? Do you think to fool your mother? My poor child—

RUTH:

Not now, mother, please. You don't understand.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But you speak as if it were a joke.

RUTH:

It's harder than you have any idea.

SOPHIE:

A mighty poor joke.

RUTH:

Easy enough for you to talk, Sophie. Your husband—

SOPHIE:

But if you do this he'll only just go on the same way, over and over; it's this woman now; then it will be someone else, and so on, and where will it end?

RUTH:

Maybe; what of it?

THE OTHER TWO:

What of it!

MRS. MEDDOCK:

That's in very poor taste, Ruth.

RUTH:

I'm not thinking about good taste. I'm thinking of life.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

When you've lived as long—

SOPHIE:

Does life mean that a man can go on getting rid of one wife after another as he pleases?

RUTH:

Sometimes, in some places.

SOPHIE:

But if it's like that, we might as well—

MRS. MEDDOCK:

What's religion for, and civilization?

RUTH:

Oh, come: I didn't say Martin would.

SOPHIE:

I'd like to give him a piece of my mind!

RUTH:

Don't you suppose he knows it?

SOPHIE:

Then if he has got some remnant of conscience why don't you—

RUTH:

Not conscience—not your kind of conscience. "Ruth," he said, "I ask you to follow your own mind no matter where it may lead, and if those"—what was it? Oh, "morality mongers"; yes. He said, "If those morality mongers start up like sausage grinders—"

MRS. MEDDOCK:

There is no need to repeat it. I've always known his dislike of us.

SOPHIE:

I'm glad he feels that way.

RUTH:

He called you termagants, too.

(She smiles provocatively. Mrs. Meddock straightens, setting her mouth; Sophie assumes the air of one whose adversary's perfidy has been revealed.)

RUTH:

And he said I must know he had loved me because he'd let me bring him to the family reunions every Christmas.

SOPHIE:

I see nothing for you to laugh at, Ruth.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

(*Whimpering.*) Indeed, I'm not laughing—

RUTH:

Do you think I am?

(*She jumps up; her fingers pick at the thumb of each hand.*)

SOPHIE:

Then why do you give in?

RUTH:

Give in! What good to go on making believe, with nothing but unhappiness? The truth can be beautiful, even if it is bitter.

SOPHIE:

You're crazy.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But there's never been anything like that in the family. Oh, it seems as if everything was coming to pieces. There's nothing right anywhere. Think of what people will say.

RUTH:

It would have frightened me, before. But all that seems so foolish; all these people who talk—they're just like a nest of scurrying ants to me now.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But, my dear! One can't set aside the whole world like that. And you'll find it so.

RUTH:

The world comes after you sharp enough. It's always talking about the divorce evil, and it knows that the trouble's really the marriage evil.

SOPHIE:

One can brazen out a disgrace like—

RUTH:

Disgrace, Sophie?

SOPHIE:

What do you call it, then? Divorce,
SS—July—7

another woman, you can't tell how much more!

RUTH:

It's not disgrace to me, but just trying to keep life honest.

SOPHIE:

I'd call it that.

RUTH:

And I'd call *your* kind of life disgrace.

SOPHIE:

Well!

RUTH:

Oh, don't pretend. You know what I mean. You laughed at me years ago when I said it was immoral for a man and woman to live together if they weren't in love. I think so yet.

SOPHIE:

It's lucky for the world it doesn't agree with you. . . . Besides, Herbert and I love each other very dearly.

RUTH:

Oh, yes. I know: why, you've been together so long you're even beginning to look alike, but is that what love means to you?

SOPHIE:

Maybe you know better than I do what it really is.

RUTH:

Sneer if you want to, but I do and that's why—

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Ruth, don't aggravate your sister.

SOPHIE:

She's not. But there are some things—

RUTH:

Love! My God, what do *you* know of love?

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Don't talk so. I won't have it. Is blasphemy a part of what you're doing?

RUTH:

Oh, your religion doesn't bother me any more—

MRS. MEDDOCK:

We're not church people, it's true, but at least we're ready to acknowledge that it wouldn't do us any harm to go now and then.

RUTH:

Not any harm. It just wouldn't touch you.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Well, things have changed a good deal since I was young.

SOPHIE:

Not so much, mother.

RUTH:

More than you can ever imagine. Half the world's freed.

SOPHIE:

There are rights and duties that go back thousands of years—

RUTH:

To the cave dwellers. We *are* advancing, aren't we?

SOPHIE:

You married so young, and all his ideas—

RUTH:

You can say what you like about him, but he's got more—

SOPHIE:

What's the use of talking this way? Make a fool of yourself. Go ahead. But I do wish you'd pick out some way that wouldn't blacken our name.

RUTH:

The name's all you think of. Did you ever look any further?

SOPHIE:

I hate him.

RUTH:

You're afraid of him.

SOPHIE:

Pooh!

(*There is a hiatus. Presently Sophie renews the attack.*)

SOPHIE:

I don't think you realize what this means. Everyone's disappointed, Ruth, to some extent. One marries for better or for worse. . . . None of us is perfect. I daresay it's hard for Herbert to put up with me sometimes. And he isn't always what I'd like. But we're not rushing off to the divorce court. People don't do that. We have to take things as they are.

RUTH:

But you won't face them. I'm taking life as it comes to me. What's the use of lying when everyone knows you are and doesn't care, except for the amusement of it, because they're too busy lying themselves.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

(*Righteously.*) *Some people—why, your father and I—*

RUTH:

You cried all through the first year you were married. Every day for a whole year. (*Mrs. Meddock stiffens and makes a gesture of reproach.*) I know it. Sophie knows it. Children hear such things when they grow up. At our age parents are human beings. You cried because you were disappointed. Then you stopped. He hadn't changed; you had. You'd started to make a truth out of your lie. You've only made a lie out of your truth.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

(*Wounded, but with a tremor of gratitude for this tardy comprehension; she turns to the elder girl protestingly.*) Sophie? . . .

(*Sophie says nothing; she looks steadily but with constraint at her sister. At seeing her mother forced thus to pay she feels faintly a repressed and jealous cruelty, whose recognition would pain and shock her.*)

RUTH:

I can't make the facts over; I won't

risk what's left by pretending. That's why I'm going to a lawyer tomorrow.

SOPHIE:

Martin's acting shamefully.

RUTH:

His love for—for her, is real. It's as honest as his love for me was. It's bound to be recognized. What's the good of trying to shut it in a closet. I only wish I could. God! I wish I could.

SOPHIE:

But you're letting your whole life be—

RUTH:

It's got to be made over, Sophie: I could lie, but you can't change life any more than you can make the sun set by closing your eyes.

SOPHIE:

You must make your own life.

RUTH:

Have you made yours, or mother her?

"Take the world as you find it," you say, and "make your own life." Which

SOPHIE:

Make the most of your chances at any rate.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

You can force Martin—

RUTH:

Blackmail him. Thank Heaven—

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But how will you live? Your father's getting old; he can't—

RUTH:

He won't have to, mother. But I won't try to compel Martin. There's no need to. Perhaps. . . . No, I don't want any help. I can earn my own living.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Yes, you'll have to.

SOPHIE:

What at?

RUTH:

Other women do it.

SOPHIE:

But you could make him pay. What are laws for?

RUTH:

They're weapons. I love him. He may not love me as he used to, but—
(she puts her handkerchief to her mouth.)

MRS. MEDDOCK:

(Rising, comforts her in silence a moment.) I must go to the kitchen. Your father—

(For a space the sisters, alone, do not speak.)

RUTH:

It will be hard, going to court. The thought of it makes me feel like a shipwrecked sailor in a court of savages.

SOPHIE:

Ruth, you're a fool. I would no more let Herbert—

RUTH:

You knew what you were getting when you married him. You could see the years straight ahead, with never anything around the corner. It used to make me sad to see that you could. And there has never been any corner for you.

SOPHIE:

Is that what you really think? . . .
(Their gaze joins for five seconds.)

RUTH:

Sophie, not you, too?

SOPHIE:

No, Ruth; I won't permit it. And he knows it.

RUTH:

But it doesn't seem worth while. Love is a giving. If one must fight—

SOPHIE:

You're still a romantic girl. Haven't you found out married life isn't love?

RUTH:

Then I want no married life! I can't say it now: it never seemed to make any real difference if we were married or not.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Ruth, do you defend this libertine even now, against your own mother?

RUTH:

If you knew how I want your understanding! Not sympathy, that you'd give a hurt dog, but just a word to make me feel that I wasn't standing all alone in my world.

SOPHIE:

I said from the beginning he had an evil effect on you.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Maybe this is just a lark of his, Ruth. Men go on so sometimes. Maybe he'll come back and you can go on just as if nothing had happened.

RUTH:

As if nothing had happened. . . .

SOPHIE:

If it's possible? Why not wait?

RUTH:

Don't you suppose we have waited till there's no use waiting any longer?

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But how can a man know? You're such a child—

RUTH:

He knows. I know.

SOPHIE:

You're full of illusions.

RUTH:

No illusions. They've all melted.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Maybe when he's had his fling—

RUTH:

I can take what's left?

MRS. MEDDOCK:

A wife should know how to forgive.

RUTH:

Forgive the rain for falling.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

I've seen much more than—

RUTH:

You haven't seen anything, mother. You don't want to. You take little pieces of fact and try to fit them like pieces of a puzzle instead of simply taking them for what they are. You think he's wrong because he didn't lie; you tell me I'm weak, when I'm using every bit of strength I can gather to see it all through without any pretending. It's so much easier to make believe.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Sometimes one has to compromise with life.

RUTH:

You mean let life cheat you.

SOPHIE:

What's all this talk of not pretending? You seem as anxious as he is.

RUTH:

When I came here today I didn't know what I'd say, how I'd explain. I was still numb from it all. But you've made it clear. There's only this way.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

If you didn't sue, what would he—

RUTH:

Oh, that doesn't matter. I suppose I've given him cause enough, if he wants to. Cruelty's so—

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But surely—

RUTH:

Which side gets the decree is just a matter of courtesy.

SOPHIE:

Well, I'm glad you're going to make them pay, anyway.

RUTH:

I didn't say that.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Not? Why not?

SOPHIE:

Why, you just said—

RUTH:

I don't want any spite work. What have I to do with her?

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Hasn't she—?

RUTH:

She thinks she's right.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Ruth, it's your duty; you may save some other wife by making an example—

RUTH:

By frightening some man into cheap little lies, because he hasn't the courage to think it out for himself. I'd feel as if all his sneaking lies were my own sins. They would be.

SOPHIE:

You'll find sentimental charity like that doesn't work in real life. (*Ruth denies the definition with a wave of the hand.*) This crazy notion—now, Ruth: seriously, aren't you going to do yourself simple justice and show them up? Oh, but you should make them suffer, too!

MRS. MEDDOCK:

They ought to be made to pay.

RUTH:

I'm going to do what I think's right.

SOPHIE:

The blame's his.

RUTH:

It's not a matter for blame.

SOPHIE:

There'll be talk, anyway; you might as well.

RUTH:

"If I don't somebody will." And you talk of pride, Sophie!

SOPHIE:

That doesn't shock me. Sometimes. . . . But see where it's brought you. How many couples are what you'd call happy?

RUTH:

Oh, I suppose there never was a man and wife who didn't have plenty of cause for divorce, on both sides.

SOPHIE:

Marriage is a woman's business. You must never let him forget for a moment (*Ruth shudders*) or the first passing fancy—

RUTH:

It's better to let him go than to be forever parading—

SOPHIE:

Well, you're letting him go, without raising a finger.

RUTH:

We've not been happy. Things have changed so completely . . . so slowly, like the hands of a clock. There's so much to look back on, but the beautiful days that seem only yesterday—they were all so far back; three years, four, five. It seemed to me sometimes life had stopped, but it was always going to begin again. Now . . . Life is so funny. . . . I just hurt mother. She doesn't realize.

SOPHIE:

How do you mean, realize, Ruth? It seems to me quite plain, like black and white. If a man acts as he's acting, throwing you over, snapping his fingers at his duty— Oh! how can you stand it? You may have been to blame in letting him get out of hand, but why don't you assert yourself now? I'd like to horsewhip him.

RUTH:

He came to me, Sophie, and told me all about it, like a friend.

SOPHIE:

The cur!

RUTH:

But he said he wanted no dishonesty.

SOPHIE:

Bah! He might have spared you that much.

RUTH:

And lied to me?

SOPHIE:

Why didn't he go his way decently and quietly, instead of blurting it all out that way? Why couldn't he keep it to himself: he could have done as he pleased, and you'd never have known.

RUTH:

What good?

SOPHIE:

Wouldn't that have smoothed things over? Wouldn't it have let you keep up appearances, instead of having your home blown to pieces, your whole life—

RUTH:

Bother appearances!

SOPHIE:

Well, that's the way most of us have to live.

RUTH:

And you're jealous of those who won't.

SOPHIE:

If they don't conform, let them take the consequences.

RUTH:

Very well.

SOPHIE:

There, there. It's not you so much: you're just a poor little—

RUTH:

I'm frightened, I know. So would you be if you had an earthquake.

SOPHIE:

I know my rights. No earthquake of that kind could harm me.

RUTH:

No, you wouldn't let it.

SOPHIE:

It makes my blood boil to see a woman submit meekly to—

(*Mrs. Meddock returns from the kitchen.*)

MRS. MEDDOCK:

I'm sorry, Ruth, but your father will be here any minute, and you know what he is if he has to wait dinner. . . . Oh, (*Taking seat*) it doesn't seem as if it could be.

RUTH:

Let's not begin all over again. We've been going round and round.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But we must talk this over thoroughly, Ruth. You mustn't do anything till—

RUTH:

I've looked at it from every side.

SOPHIE:

He went and told her all about it, right out!

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Oh!

SOPHIE:

I don't see how she stood it. There are some things women have to take and smile if they can. One can expect those. But for a man to come and say—

RUTH:

Would you prefer Herbert to go to you slyly, with lies too childish to offer or to accept without shame?

MRS. MEDDOCK:

You must learn—

SOPHIE:

One can shut one's eyes and still keep something—more than you've kept with all your fine talk.

RUTH:

You're not afraid of the thing; it's the name that frightens you. Your whole existence is built around names and not things. And now you sit here and pretend to be shocked, and lecture me and pose, and wish for horsewhips, because something too big for you has touched the edge of your life.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

You don't lack excuses, Ruth.

RUTH:

I don't want any.

SOPHIE:

Oh, you're not a woman! Haven't you a spark of revenge?

RUTH:

Maybe it's my better nature.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

How can you laugh?

RUTH:

Oh, it's not a funeral. . . . It's a birth. That's pain, but it needn't be made mean and dirty. And if it is pain, you can't escape it.

(They sit a moment in irksome silence. Ruth rises.)

RUTH:

I'm going.

MRS. MEDDOCK:

But your father—

RUTH:

I couldn't stand him now.

(To Mrs. Meddock this is the ultimate of delinquency. Ruth puts on her hat with care: she is secretly exultant. Sophie, baffled, does not rise.)

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Well, Ruth—

(Suddenly Ruth, without a word, dashes to the door, slams it, and is gone. The two women listen with offended stolidity to the repercussion, then ruminate in a silence that speaks. Presently Mrs. Meddock stirs.)

MRS. MEDDOCK:

Don't tell papa, Sophie . . . not before dinner.

SOPHIE:

No . . . Poor papa.

(A man's precise and heavy footsteps are heard approaching on the sidewalk.)



A CHANT

By Charles Glendon

GOD did not make me especially beautiful.
 He did not make me especially witty.
 He did not make me especially brave.
 He did not make me especially rich.
 He did not make me especially good.

In fact, He just made me.
 But, thank God, He made me young.



E PLURIBUS UNUM

By Dennison Varr

HE was on the whole an ideal husband. Indeed, when she reviewed his personality with her critical insight she was conscious of a great many virtues and only one defect—and that defect was mitigated by the fact that it was more or less involuntary. He had delirium tremens regularly.



TO ONE IN FAVOUR

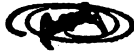
By Djuna Barnes

WHEN the throne stands empty, and the king goes down,
Down into the darkness by your high white tent,
And shall sheath his gray sword, lay aside his crown;
Then, O tall white woman, shall you be content?

Shall you be contented, lying on his knee,
Murmuring face downward, lips within his palm?
Then shall you remember, thus you once kissed me,
Only wilder, madder, closer in my arm?

When he shall release you, turn his eyes to sleep;
Will you lift a little, looking in his face,
And recall our parting, for a moment weep
Down upon his doublet, tarnishing the lace?

And when up the sun rides, and the daylight comes,
Loud with sudden sparrows, and their latest talk,
Will you take his face so, in your two long thumbs
Kiss his mouth for kindness, then rise up and walk?



THE LITTLE GRAND DUCHESS

By Solita Solano

SINCE the grand duchess was so tiny that she looked like a French doll in her white lace coats and fur-trimmed silk bonnets she had been taught to be fastidious. Her person, companions, books and food were all subjected to a sterilizing process that was as relentless as it was frequent. A great marriage was intended for her and she was never permitted to forget that, until this event, her life must be spent in preparation for her proud position.

Her mind was trained as gracefully—and as inadequately—as her body. For the science and economics she lacked there were the piano, embroidery, a little painting, languages, etiquette and charming manners—in fact, everything that would not tend to make her discontented in the coming rôle of pleasant companion during the first months of matrimony and, subsequently, a satisfactory producer of kinglets and princelings. Having no more native intelligence than usually accompanies royal blood, the little grand duchess concentrated amiably on a certain look she had been told was “spirituelle,” an aloofness of bearing and—above all else—the integrity of her person.

She neither gave nor received kisses. She considered them vulgar—when she thought of them at all. Nor did she indulge in hand-claspings, embraces of any pre-adolescent emotions whatever. The common need for affection she claimed not to understand. And as she had been taught, so she prated, “My first kiss shall be for my husband”—a sentiment her mother and elder sisters applauded

until she grew quite priggish on the subject.

When she was about thirteen years old and growing very beautiful, she became devoted to meditation and prayer before her especial ikon. She would gaze at the gently swaying flames of the candles on either side of the holy image and deplore the failings of humanity. Sometimes she even prostrated herself to pray for some erring servant whose love sin had reached her ears—for even the daughter of a great ruler may overhear a whispered scandal much in the same way as the curious child of the bourgeoisie.

Until she was past her sixteenth birthday the little grand duchess prayed more and more fervently, without, however, having any particular blessing in mind. And her innocent young soul would have been shocked and angered to its depths had the court physician told her the meaning of these religious ecstasies. And then she fell suddenly and helplessly in love.

Nature did not consult her about this nor allow her to select an eligible *parti* upon whom to bestow her first love. He was the son of her mother's second cousin, a nobody at court but a personable youth with merry blue eyes and wavy hair. He captured her fancy at first glance. Had the child experienced the usual youthful affairs of the heart she might not have taken the chills and fevers of love so seriously. But in her first suffering she felt convinced that Serge was sent her by heaven.

This trust led her to her mother. Serge, she explained, was the husband she desired, rather than that other uninteresting plan for her future of which

she had so often heard. She was willing to oblige her parents in all reasonable matters but in love—ah, in love one must choose for oneself. Surely her mother could understand and would explain it to her father. Then they could be married at once and go to live in the country.

The royal parents were more amused than alarmed. Yet precautions in such cases were never to be scorned. Thus Serge was brought to leave the palace that very day without making his farewells, lest in some unguarded moment he might touch the hand or lips of their unsullied treasure.

The little grand duchess wept unceasingly for many nights. Then pale and quiet she went about her life as before, more pious and more aloof than ever.

That year a great war was unleashed. At first it raged far away and then as the months passed it came nearer.

Discontent grew apace among the people. The father of the little grand duchess spent days and nights in conference with mysterious foreign envoys whose guttural pronunciation of French annoyed one's ears. The royal family withdrew from public sight as resentful subjects grew bolder and more unrestrained of speech. And thus they lived more and more fearfully as bad news arrived with increasing frequency.

Then like the bursting of a volcano, came a revolution. A blood-lusting mob pursued and slew all persons of wealth or power. The royal family fled to an unused castle where they waited in terror for whatever was to come. Luxurious comforts which formerly had been inseparable from their daily life now could not be provided by their dazed retainers. The fastidious little grand duchess, annoyed by dust and disorder, commanded that clean linen be brought to her apartment and draped over walls and furniture that no cobweb might touch her shining hair or fleck of dust stain skin or garment. She ordered hot water for her morning bath just as if the daily routine had not been interrupted and, despite the risk, a ser-

vant went back to the terrorized city to fetch cologne, lotions and fresh linen.

One night a great noise was heard outside the castle. A band of sweating men, half crazed by war and drink, broke down the gates and swarmed at the castle's doors. With rough torches held aloft in hands foul with dried blood and muck, they smelled out the royal family almost at once with a keen scent for such delicate game.

The little grand duchess was huddled with her parents and sisters when they forced the library door with harsh cries. She saw a knife flash over her father's head and heard her sisters scream as coarse arms seized them. Eluding a pair of thick hands, she fled down a corridor and gained her room. She barred the door and fell on her face, gasping and praying and trying not to hear the running feet outside and the shrieks of her sisters.

Heavy blows began to rain on the door. Voices demanded entrance. An iron bar presently smashed in the panels and an ape-like forearm pushed its way through the splintered wood and threw back the bolts. Its owner, powerful and without reverence, was the first to enter. His boots left smudges where he stepped. A dozen hulks of men followed him in. Their small, terrible eyes were half covered by the locks of hair that grew almost to their eyebrows.

With coarse jests they approached her, one by one—the fastidious little grand duchess whose finger tips were too sacred for the second cousin's son.

Her shining hair became roughened and wet with the sweat of her captors. That dainty skin which had never known a flaw showed ugly red splotches. Purple welts and bruises appeared on the slim young throat. Her screams died to moans which grew fainter and fainter.

Mercifully, she died before the end. Before dawn they carried the bodies of the little grand duchess and her sisters to a precipice's edge. Without compunction, they flung them, filthy and broken, into space.

THE AREA OF A CYLINDER

By N. G. Caylor

NO one could deny that Mr. E. had advanced. He had entered Hoit and Crawford's as a billing machine operator, which, I believe, is low in the scale of book-keeping. Today he had the privilege of signing his name in the blank left by the typist under the words "Ass't Credit Manager," which in itself was proof positive that he had not remained in one place.

And yet, if one had mentioned this fact to the very men who had promoted him—young Mr. Crawford, or Mr. Hoit's secretary, who, they say, can twist Mr. Hoit around his little finger—they would have smiled indulgently, and said, "Yes, yes—he's a painstaking young man." And if you had asked the girls in the stenographic department, who, after all, are the most interested in promotions, they would have looked at you vaguely and said, "Oh, him,—yeh, I guess so—"

Which shows that he had somehow slipped into his present place without much trumpet-sounding. One knew that no one had ever slapped him on the back and said, "Well, Eckersall, we're going to give you M.'s place."

No, he had probably wormed and worked his way along, doing more every day, and the promotions and salary increases had probably crept behind.

Today, as I have said, he was Assistant Credit Manager, but he had no aplomb to suit the dignity of his title. He still walked with jerky long strides down the aisle, his feet ahead of him in their constant haste, his eyes rapt on their goal.

"He steps like he was measuring out the floor," Miss Tate, one of the stenog-

raphers, once said, with a derisive curl of the lips.

And Mabel, the little dictaphone girl, had added, giggling, "or choppin' wood or sumpin'."

When he was busy at his desk, Mr. E. was very studious in his thin-lipped, painstaking way. He had no snappy ways. He couldn't read a letter with a quick comprehensive glance, slap it down, and turn to someone with peremptory decisiveness. Instead, he would figure each paper with slow attention, finally become absorbed in the problem it presented and wake only with a start to discover someone waiting to speak to him. Even then, his glance would be preoccupied, and his pale blue eyes vaguely troubled as he listened,

Sometimes his disturber would be the multigraph girl, sometimes a typist, less often, it was Minden, the credit manager. His stenographer never came to him. In his quiet, obliging way, Mr. E. had formed the habit of going to her desk and reading dictation to her from prepared notes. Usually, when he had finished dictating, he would walk away without glancing at her. Sometimes, when he remembered, he smiled a hasty, kind smile in her direction. In fact, he smiled on everyone when he remembered to do it,—on the multigraph girl, on the typist, and even on the little clerk from the Look-Up department, although she distinctly annoyed him, with her glistening mass of curls, and the little toss of the head which he distastefully felt to be coquettish.

But his kindness made no more impression on the office force than his quiet success had done. The force remained disinterestedly unimpressed. He

was just "Mr. E," to the errand boys, "Mr. E." to the typists, "Mr. E." to his stenographer,—a detached figure seated at the third desk from the plate glass windows in front.

And yet, beneath Mr. E.'s unpretentious kindness, his self-effacement, his abstraction, there was a fine warm glow of self-appreciation. He felt that he had not worked for nothing, that he was a success, that he was important to Hoit and Crawford's, that he was indispensable to the Credit Department.

His was the complacency of hard work. He was always the first to arrive in the morning; he was already deep in his work at the close of the noon hour when Minden began reluctantly to close his morning paper; during the seasonal inventory rush he did not scorn to work overtime or even lend a hand with the billing machines. And if out of his painstaking labor there had come a consciousness of his own worth, so this sense of self-importance buoyed him up and helped him to do more every day.

The day after New Year's, Mr. E. was already deep in an analysis of credits granted to small-town merchants, while most of the office was relapsing with a sigh into the office routine, and the typewriters clicked occasionally and desultorily.

Hm—he had allowed the zeal of his sales-promotion manager to sway him to a policy that was a trifle free. This morning he had had to order five hundred copies of Form No. 2—"We respectfully draw your attention to the acc't of — with \$— still due."

In three weeks perhaps he would have to send out Form No. 3 which said, "You have apparently disregarded our notices of —."

Yes, he had been too liberal. . . . To grant accounts to merchants with only G.3 rating—!

For a long time Mr. E. sat with serious brow, and still white high-lights on his shiny cheeks above his tight-drawn lips. But Mr. Crawford had endorsed this policy—had heartily advocated the radicalism. So Mr. E. sighed, and the load seemed to slip

from his shoulders. He had done nothing but what was asked of him.

He looked up to see Minden pausing before his desk in his breezy jaunt along the aisle. Minden walked like a conqueror, with brisk steps, his eyes glancing quickly from left to right.

"Been up to Crawford's office all morning," Minden announced. "Better go up to see him now, Eckersall,—he wants to talk to you." Briskly, he proceeded up the aisle.

Mr. E. methodically put away the sheaf of bills, and turned his steps abstractedly to the elevator.

He remembered, and turned back to give directions to Miss Jordan, so that the typists might proceed with the fill-in work on the multigraph forms.

Then, his eyes still thoughtfully vague, he made his way to the elevator, and was propelled upward.

II

IN the office, Mr. Crawford, wheeling about in his chair with unwonted briskness, greeted him.

"Well, Eckersall," he said, with an air of announcing a pleasant surprise, "How would you like to go into the Sales Department?"

A daze would not allow Mr. E. to reply. He sat trying to reduce these words, seemingly senseless, to an understandable meaning. He felt, rather than heard, Crawford's voice go on.

"Of course, it couldn't be considered a promotion. The salary would be the same. But you have been with us seven years, and we like to give a man a variation of experience."

Painfully, Mr. E. came to the issue. "You are dissatisfied with my work in the Credit Department?" he asked.

"N—no, not dissatisfied," Mr. Crawford smilingly deprecated. But the truth is, Eckersall, the Credit Department isn't doing what it should. Now of course, we don't blame you. Minden is the head of the department,—but still, in the five months that Minden has also taken up the duties of office manager, a great deal of the work

has fallen on you. And, well, Ecker-sall, I can't say we have had particularly good results."

Mr. E. sat quiet under the great blow of his life. He kept his eyes hard on his superior's face, and found no meaning in its graven lines. And if in that moment his own thin face became a trifle more grey, and the muscles of his lean jaw pulled a trifle more taut, it was because he had lost in that second of time all the self-esteem that had been his prop and bulwark, all that inner glow of satisfaction that had kept his life from becoming a gnarled and twisted hulk without a soul-substance to round it out.

Despairingly he struck out against the engulfing eddy of hopelessness.

"I—I have always followed our policy, Mr. Crawford."

"That's it—we may have outgrown our policy, or allowed it to stagnate. Now here I have a letter from a Canadian dealer, asking that we allow him a discount for sixty-day payment. Now our policy is sixty-day payments from all. But we have let it drift, until now anyone paying on time expects a cash discount."

Mr. E. grasped at the familiar details.

"We have always sent notices to overdue accounts."

"But they have been disregarded just like the bills," broke in his superior, with the ease of a god practising his thunders. "Perhaps we should be more conservative with credit—more radical in getting after new customers—new ideas, new ways—"

Mr. E. could have laughed at the ridiculousness of the situation. The words of Crawford, so meager—bland—inadequate. And they were about the great office downstairs, with its clicking machines, its pounding footsteps, its earnest-faced men and women straining to its rapid pace—

Perhaps for the first time in his life Mr. E. allowed his mind to wander from a business interview. But he found his eyes resting on the buff velvet rug at his feet, then passing to the

mahogany swivel-chair in which was the youthfully-portly form of Mr. Crawford.

He became hostilely conscious of the sumptuous glass-topped mahogany desk, of Mr. Crawford's manicured fingers resting on it.

His eyes passed to the man himself, the bland, smiling face with the cool eyes, the square, pink-shaven face, the thin glaze of parted hair, slightly greying at the temples. And a blaze of hatred woke in the orderly heart of Mr. E.—hatred for this man, his luxurious office, the calm sunlight that enriched his setting. It was so far removed from the hurried wooden-floored offices below. . . .

"I was saying to Minden," came the comfortable voice, "that we might give him a new assistant—with new, even rash methods, and let him fall back on Minden's experience. We were just interviewing a man to that purpose."

Again a stirring of bitterness awoke Mr. E.'s being, and his mouth twisted, sardonic signal of awakening freedom.

"So I am dead material," he thought.

"Now, of course, we thought of you, Eckersall. You can either have a few territories to manage, or we'll give you complete charge of the sales promotion department. That isn't big now—the mail order work is just begun—but you could do much with it. Now, of course, this isn't final. If there is any reason why you don't want to leave the department, if you have some new ideas you want to try out—why let us know."

Mr. E. felt grateful for the charitable lie that Crawford had appended. He knew that Crawford did not expect him to come forward with any saving ideas, but somehow it made the situation more tolerable.

"I'll think about it," he told Mr. Crawford.

But once he had left the office and was alone, he felt the hurt of the truth. He was a failure. Crawford considered him a failure.

Outside of the office door downstairs, he found it hard to enter. If before

he had left the office unconscious of the people in it, absorbed in his own thoughts, he felt now as if every stray glance could read his bewilderment, his misery. He quivered before the knowledge he sensed in the eyes that encountered him.

He reached at last the refuge of his desk and busied his hands among the papers there. He glued his eyes to these, but he could hardly suppress the desire to look about and know whose were the glances that burned him.

Soon he became aware in a shamed way that he was seeking cover in a pretence of business and he wondered whether in the days before, when he had hurried about, lost in the satisfaction of his work, they had known him for a failure and thought his absorption a sham.

He did not look up. Stubbornly, he read the papers on his desk, until his mind, like that of a child struggling with sleep, gave itself up to the anodyne of familiar problems.

Slowly his poise came back to him. These were the details he knew, from the small-town merchant, asking credit because of bad times, to the cheap subterfuge of the big concern that tried to return a consignment after half-a-year, because of a clause in their own bill-of-lading, forbidding back-orders.

He knew these people, their dodgings, their psychologies; he felt himself to be master of the intricacies that they built up. Kingly, he looked down upon their Ephesus, picked up the pawns out of their self-made labyrinths, and set them right again with infallible decision. This was his work! There was no longer any obstructing fog through which to struggle distressedly; he knew that while he felt this power in his work, he could not be a failure, and yet he knew that there was no use in crying out against their judgment—

He was filled with aching resentment. All about him were men who played with their work, who laughed and joked with each other at work, and forgot each other when they left, and yet theirs was the glory of success.

They had no responsibility, and no one sought to put more responsibility upon them.

Half an hour before noon, Minden swung past Mr. E. dressed for the street.

Mr. E. gritted his teeth and bent to his work. But he was thinking. . . .

III

At noon he ate his lunch at a cafeteria. But it was no longer a solitary lunch, as it had always been. With hot, eager eyes, he studied the people about him. Which were the failures, which the successes? What were the secrets of personality that advertised their individual talents to the bidders who pronounced judgment?

He found them shallow in the small swirl of their own groups, and he found them intense in their own individualities—self-absorbed; if they had an interest outside of themselves, they did not show it in this place where they fed. He was disappointed. The eyes of dreamers, of lovers of labor he had not seen. Proportionately, he became awake to his own worth, and his sense of injustice grew.

All afternoon, he worked with the rebellion hot in him. He became aware of the negligence that had dubbed him "Mr. E." He challenged every interruption with a hostile glance,—had they thought his time unimportant?

Soon he became aware that his hostility made no impression, and with a prudish qualm he feared that he had been merely snarling unpleasantly and making an undignified spectacle of himself. He retired into a shell of reserve. But he had an unpleasant sense that things were being noised about concerning him. And now he sensed a disrespect in the attitudes of those about him, just as he had that morning for the first time sensed their indifference.

For the first time he noticed the accumulation of work before him. He wondered hotly what Minden was doing. And through the afternoon he had an irritating sense that the piles of bills,

the letters, the file duplicates and credit memoranda did not decrease before his efforts.

At the close of the day, he swept them passionately into compartments, with none of his usual care as to how he should find them on the morrow. He was eager to be gone.

Somehow the day's irritation found its culmination in a small incident. He had often noticed the little clerk from the Look-Up Department in the State Street car which he took every night. Vaguely he had noticed her, but she had never had the courage to address him. Today, she threw back her head, and flashed him a smile in greeting.

The familiarity of the silly gesture with which she had greeted him incensed him. He scowled at her angrily, and was immediately stricken with compunction to see the little frightened look that sprang up on her face. He was ashamed. Had he lost all sense of proportion in his hatred? He found no comfort in the car under her occasional glances. Long before he reached his destination, he decided to get out and walk.

Outside, a two-days' accumulation of heavy snow, partly trodden down, made walking a slow and preoccupying process. Eckersall found it interesting to select the places where other footsteps had fallen and although this made his progress rather swaying, it was at any rate absorbing.

As he went on, all his rebellion slipped from him; he began to enjoy the clear night, the speckled purplish light of occasional street lamps, on the snow. He became alive to the light voices of men and women, greeting each other, or calling out in parting.

Behind him as he made his way down a narrow, slippery-shovelled walk, were the voices of two boys. Unconsciously, Eckersall followed their ringing conversation.

"Oh, she teaches us an awful lot. More'n some give in high school."

"How do you know? I guess you've never been in high school!"

"I know all about spheres, 'n cubes, 'n cones, 'n cylinders—"

"What's the Volume of a Cone?"

For a moment, there was silence, then Eckersall chuckled to hear the voice rise courageously,

"Aw, where do you get that? What you mean is the Area of a Cylinder—"

There followed a fraction formula that stifled the voice of the doubter. When they stumped past Eckersall on the corner, the voice of the smaller one was going again in the high-pitched realms of eulogy.

As he walked on, he smiled in admiration of the undaunted little one. When he reached his house, he was still smiling. In the living room, his sister, a smallish, rather faded woman ten years his senior, looked up in answer to his cheerful greeting.

"Been walking—" he said apologetically, to explain his good spirits.

"It's good for one," she conceded colorlessly, and rose to get his dinner.

It struck Eckersall for the first time that her spiritless shuffle stamped her as a much older woman than she really was. He wondered why she allowed the little wisps of blonde hair to fall purposelessly about her face, with the pale red-rimmed eyes that she needlessly ruined with constant sewing.

As he thought, he discovered what he feared was a likeness between himself and his sister. Was it possible that at the age of thirty-five he had already developed that meekness and aimlessness that so completely characterized her?

They ate dinner in silence. Eckersall was tired of the struggle that had consumed him all day, he wished he could recall the light-heartedness that he had felt as he walked home. He was grateful for that walk and the courage it had given him. Unobservant as she was in other things, his sister was always ready to discover signs of depression in him, and ferret out the cause. He felt that he wanted to keep his problem to himself.

IV

It was in the evening, when they were sitting in the living-room again, she with her sewing, and he with his evening paper, that he suddenly remembered the incident of the small boys, and laughed out loud as he heard the voice of the smaller one decisively reciting the formula he knew.

"What is it, Gregory?"

He was on the verge of telling her, then, suddenly, he knew he could not make her understand.

"Something in the paper," he said.

"Oh, you with your paper—" her voice came with a sigh.

He knew that the humour and appeal of the incident were particularly his own, because he knew that all his life he had lacked the boldness that gave black for white, and carried it off successfully. Appreciatively, yet somehow wistfully, he thought of the triumph of the littler boy. "The Area of a Cylinder—" he chuckled to himself reminiscently? "The little rascal—" and then again, "The Area of a Cylinder—"

Unconsciously, he reviewed his whole life, searching for a similar incident. Even in his boyhood, he had had none of that blustering self-confidence that had always been, and still was, his envy. The cares of life had fallen on him early. He had not sought to escape the burden of helping his parents. There was no boyish rebellion, no resignation to irksome work. Soberly, he had assumed the duties expected; with an unchildish seriousness he had accepted the responsibility of a "job." And so it had gone on. . . .

Soberly he had given what was asked of him. In a flash of revelation it came to him that that had been his fault. As Assistant Credit Manager, when he had been told to be more careful, he had refused extensions, subordinating his understanding of separate instances to the dictation from above. When the Sales Promotion manager, however, had swayed the higher powers to his viewpoint, Eckersall had let go the

reins. Those five hundred Form No. 2 notices now—that had bothered—

Unnoticed, his newspaper slipped to the floor—

"Gregory!" sounded his sister's sharp voice. "Whatever is wrong with you tonight?"

He was leaning forward on the table, his hands clenched, his jaw tight. What if it were possible to change now, to front nature with courage, to assert where he had acquiesced. He heard his sister.

"Some business ideas," he muttered, relapsing into his chair.

He began to understand his groping resentment, his rebellion of the morning, directionless as it had been. He had never had a free hand. Always he had given what was asked of him, painstakingly he had carried out every suggestion. But his own plans, his solutions to these problems that he understood, he never applied. And yet Crawford was blaming him for the working-out of his own policy. They were expecting him now to retire without having a chance. Was it possible to—? They had left him a loophole. Crawford had said he might stay in the Credit Department if he had any new ideas to try out.

What if he should not respond to this suggestion as he had always responded to suggestions. Give them what they don't expect! He had fire in him—and dreams.

"Mary!" he cried to his sister, and his laugh was like the laugh of a free man. "I've found it!"

"Found what, Gregory?"

"The formula—the Area of a Cylinder!"

The unexpected happened. It was a laugh—a giggle that trickled spontaneously from his sister's throat, young fire from out her withered lips. It leaped and scampered away on the trail of her words.

"Gregory! You do look so funny!"

Somehow the gleam in him, silver and gay like a sea-gull soaring, flopped dirty-white, and fell to earth, dead. He was disconcerted and empty.

Slowly, she began to explain. "You —talked like an inventor, Gregory, or something!"

Again, the giggle, low in her throat, involuntary, but audible.

She stifled it, went on—"Men are like children—funny—; get excited for

a minute—I mean. Clerks—feel like inventors—"

Her apologetic voice went out. . . .

Oh, well, it had been a hard day,—wearing. And there would be one to-morrow. And then—others. He guessed he would go to bed.



PIZZICATO

By George O'Neil

MY Margot, toward your casement hinge
The leaning moonflowers shake,
Trembling the filmy curtain fringe . . .
You do not wake.

The dew has drenched the white swan's wing
And he has come ashore . . .
A new moon hangs a golden string
Beyond your door . . .

A fountain whispers as it falls
Between the marble fingers
Of wan Narcissus near the walls
Where Echo lingers . . .

Oh, I will pull the moon's thin thread
And shake down stars in showers
For winds to heap upon your bed
Like golden flowers!



THERE are two kinds of women: those whom men like to confess their indiscretions to, and those who are the cause of the indiscretions.



A FOOL and her money are soon married.



SALESWOMAN 1318

By Helen Woljeska

IT is time to go home.

We are in the locker-room—dozens, hundreds of us, each opening a little wire cage, each struggling with coat and hat in narrow, crowded passage, under the hard flame of unshaded electric lights.

What faces! What personalities! What a jumble!

Bleached hair and painted cheeks, double chins and short bow legs, powdered wrinkles, emaciated arms, hollow eyes and work-crabbed fingers. . . .

Tawdry satins, coarse lace, ratty furs, crude perfumes. . . .

Cackling laughter and shamefaced giggles, shallow hopes and sordid ambitions, tenacious hatreds, dull complacency, and selfish fears. . . .

And in each nonentity the riddle of life, the secret of sex, the tragedy of doom. . . .



NOCTURNE

By Vincent Starrett

WE called him something loud and free
And tossed him through the door.
The night received him patiently,
As something of a bore—
He'd left that way before.

He left behind him in the bar
And scattered round the place,
A hat, a cuff, a chewed cigar,
Some pieces of his face—
And the disputed ace.

He didn't mind our coltish play;
He took it with a leer:
But it was pitiful the way
He whimpered for his ear—
We'd dropped it in the beer!



THE INTERLUDE

By John C. Cavendish

I

THEY separated without words, without a quarrel, with no final meanness of speech or gesture to linger regretfully in their memories. Neither of them was surprised at the smooth gentility of their parting; they expected a civilized deportment from each other. Langhorne had too profound a sense of the futility of everything to be surprised at the inevitable to be even regretful at the fully foreseen. And as for his wife, while she was surely not a woman influenced by any depth of philosophy, she always lived up to her rôle, which was one of complex artificiality.

Langhorne doubted that she had ever experienced a genuine emotion in her life, shed a heartfelt tear, smiled an authentic smile. He had come to regard her as a woman of intricate poses, a charming marionette with an extreme flexibility of attitude. She could, for example, enact excellently the pose of dignity, of tenderness, of graciousness, of silent scorn, even of pity—but she would never permit herself the part of a common woman, to bandy mean recrimination with him, to accuse him spitefully.

Just as he had expected, they agreed to part with the utmost amicability, with the understanding that they were tired of each other. And when she presented her lips for a final unfelt kiss, he had almost laughed aloud; it was so precisely the gesture she found in keeping with the moment! Now he was relieved; now he was free.

He had taken quarters in a hotel, but the city annoyed him and he felt

the desire to be alone for a time, separated from all the faces with which he was familiar.

Oddly enough, his mind went back to a certain summer, many years before, when he was still a very young man and had spent six months with a friend in the mountains, living in an isolated little cabin, cooking his own meals, taking a deep pleasure in the solitude and the freedom of his environment. Recalling the adventure, other reminiscences connected with this period returned to him; he remembered himself, his attitude toward life, his hopes, his ideals, his dreams.

He smiled: his hopes, his dreams—they were so far behind him that they had not even the substance of phantoms, they were more vague than ghosts, and he felt sceptical and amused at their one-time existence. But the idea of going away again to just such a place appealed to him strongly.

He made up his mind he would find a little house somewhere and try the experiment of being alone.

For a time he was puzzled about the location. Then he recalled a friend who owned a thousand or more useless acres in the mountain region of Pennsylvania—the fellow used to shoot small game there occasionally.

He looked up this chap and told him what he wanted.

“Your idea is to be absolutely alone?” he was asked.

“Yes; I’m not going to take a soul with me.”

“What’s the matter—nerves? Too much business?”

“No indeed. I’m a devil of a sight sounder than you are.”

"Are you crazy then?"

"Perhaps. Sanity is only a convention. You follow certain lines of action, according to your station in life, and you're sane. There's a shack on the place, isn't there? Well then, tell me how to get there and I'll drive up with the back of my car full of provisions and camp till I get tired. Is that all right?"

His friend agreed, of course—Langhorne laughed when he parted from him. His vagary would furnish the topic for a great amount of futile speculation; these men assumed even less interesting and significant poses than his wife. He was glad he was going away. Perhaps he would be back in a week. Now that the affair was settled, he was not at all sure of himself.

It was still early in the spring and he anticipated some more cold weather. He provided himself with a couple of sweaters, leather boots, some thick gloves and an assortment of appropriate clothes.

He set out from the city at daylight one morning with the back of his car piled up with boxes and even the space beside him crowded with odds and ends. He was soon out in the country and, driving leisurely, he observed men in the fields beginning the spring plowing. Their occupation interested him; it seemed pleasantly real. If it had not been for his disinclination to get dirty, or to work hard physically, he believed he would rather like this sort of thing for a while himself.

At noon he stopped in a small town and had lunch. Late in the afternoon, as it showed signs of an early dusk, he decided to stop at the next road-house and put up for the night. He was still half a day's drive from his destination.

He had been out only a short time the following morning when the aspect of the country took on a marked change. The night before he had found himself in the foothills of the mountains; now the ascents became steep; the roads of hard-packed shale stretched up in long inclines; the woods

became more frequent and the little villages more widely separated.

The sky-line was now picturesque; blue, misted and sombre, with the distant ranges of the mountains like waves of heavy chromatic smoke, transfixed in their motionless undulations, and settled, like a sinister and suggestive pall, over the silent land. Nearer, the abrupt hills rose up like inaccessible sentinels of a more distant and impressive host, often bare, save for occasional pines, that topped them in a mournful and dignified isolation.

In these early morning hours the earth seemed wrapped in a primeval brooding, profoundly significant, profoundly inscrutable. Langhorne was pleased; he drove his car more rapidly, anxious to come to the end of his journey.

The last hour's driving was difficult. Some of the ascents were so steep that the water in his radiator boiled furiously and he had to stop at the top of the hills and let the engine cool. Toward noon he frequently consulted an improvised map, given him by his friend.

So far as he could tell, he was not more than an hour distant from the place he sought. He was fully in the mountains now; there were stretches of bare land, covered with a short growth of scrub oak that grew thickly and abundantly over the whole acres. Again, he passed silent miles of pine woods, very dark, curiously quiet, exhaling a suggestive fragrance. Now and then there was a house and cleared land, a forlorn worker trying to plow up a farm whose soil-seemed an interminable perversity of rocks, large and small, with scarcely a handful of earth. Langhorne wondered at the dumb optimism of these people.

At last he located the approach to his own shack and verified it by questioning two lumbermen who were resting their horses at the bottom of a hill, a dozen pine logs piled on the trucks. They were seated on the top of a half of a lumber wagon, and as he talked to them they eyed him with a frank

curiosity. He went on another half mile and found the lane that led back to the house.

It was scarcely big enough for the passage of his car. The pines and hemlocks grew up on either side, shadowing the lane so that the road almost suggested a half-opened tunnel. It widened suddenly into a cleared space and he saw the frame house set up a few feet on an uneven terrace. A rabbit sat on the doorstep regarding him mildly, and it disappeared into the grass in long bounds as he alighted from his car. He could hear it in the brush for quite a time; the single sound of its flight accentuated the surrounding silence. In a few minutes he was inside the house.

He found several beds, a stove, a wood-pile in back, a fireplace and logs cut to burn, several easy chairs, a big table in what he determined to make his living room and three or four coal-oil lamps. He was entirely satisfied. He spent the remainder of the afternoon carrying his provisions from the car into the kitchen.

He went to bed very tired, but just before he fell into sleep he experienced a sudden wonder about his wife; what pose was she assuming now? No doubt the one of being gracious to some of the men she knew.

He smiled, and passed into unconsciousness with the smile on his lips.

II

AFTER a day or two, when he had settled himself, he made some tentative explorations in the vicinity of the house.

The lane that led in from the road, crooked and narrow at best, stopped abruptly at the frame building which he occupied and beyond the clearing it had its continuation in a path covered with pine needles that dipped down a quarter of a mile into the valley, where a spring of very cold water came up among a series of broad, flat rocks. He discovered the spring on the first day of his exploration and thereafter

he went down to it every morning to bring back his drinking water for the day.

Approaching the spring early one morning, the third or fourth day after his arrival, he heard voices in conversation. Evidently a man and a woman were at the spring, and before he made the turn of the path that revealed them, he experienced some surprise at their presence.

Now they came into his view; the man was kneeling on the rocks, dipping up the water in a shallow pail which he emptied into one of a pair of large buckets at his side. A girl was standing over him, talking. They did not notice Langhorne until he was almost upon them; his tread was silent in the needle-padded path.

The girl observed him first. She made an exclamation to her companion. He raised his head, still kneeling, and the two stared fixedly at Langhorne.

"Good morning," he said.

For a moment neither of them replied. Then the girl spoke.

"Who are you?" she asked.

She did not smile at him; her tone was surly; her voice was harsh. She seemed to resent his appearance; she looked at him as if he were trespassing on forbidden ground.

"I'm living in the house up above," he said.

She stared a moment more.

"Oh . . ." she muttered, finally.

She dropped her eyes; her expression was sullen, almost angry.

Langhorne observed her with curiosity. Her appearance was unkempt and in a measure suggested wildness, like that of a half-tamed animal. The tawny strands of her hair were drawn tight against her head, swept down across her ears and up into a large knot at the back. Her eyes were large, light blue, and cold. Her lips were full, and, it seemed, habitually sullen. She stood with her feet wide apart, in a pose of exceptional vitality.

Now her companion stood up and faced Langhorne. On his feet, he

looked enormous; he towered above the girl like a giant. On his huge frame, his small, youthful face and his small head seemed placed there by a mistake in creation, a neglectful inadequacy. He spoke in a hesitating, diffident voice, and smiled naively, ingratiatingly.

"This is your spring, I guess," he said. "We come down here once in a while to get some decent water. You don't mind that, do you? The creek is so blamed muddy this time of year."

"No, I don't mind at all," answered Langhorne.

The fellow stooped down and began to bail more water out of the spring. Then the girl lifted her eyes and looked at Langhorne, staring without flinching, as if he were a phenomenon.

"How long have you been here?" she asked.

Her question was put with a naïve directness, and with a flavour of beligerency that he afterward came to associate with all her speech.

"Nearly a week now," he answered.

"You don't belong here. Why did you come?"

He smiled at her, lifting his eyebrows a little, hesitating before he spoke again.

"Let me ask you some questions," he said. "That's fair, isn't it?"

"What do you want to know?"

"Well, who are you?"

"My name is Alice." She pointed at the kneeling giant. "Do you want to know who he is?"

Langhorne nodded.

"He works for my father on his farm. If you walk through these woods for half a mile you'll come to it. His name is Bredin. He wants to marry me!"

The girl began to laugh, almost mirthlessly. Langhorne saw the youthful Gargantua put out one hand in a hesitating, restraining gesture, which the girl ignored. His downward-cast face reddened violently. He said nothing.

"He hasn't got nerve enough for me," the girl went on, her smile disappearing, an expression of profound

scorn touching her features like the dropping upon them of a sinister mask.

"He's afraid of my old man," she added.

She looked down at the water buckets.

"Come on," she said, addressing the boy. "That's all we can carry."

The big fellow stood up, obedient and docile. He gathered up the pails and started off through the path. The girl followed him. She did not look back; she ignored Langhorne as if he had vanished from her thoughts, from her sight, from all necessity of taking leave of him.

He watched the curious pair until they disappeared in the woods. Then he filled his own pail.

The boy with the inadequate head did not interest him; he was thinking of the girl. She came to him with an unusual freshness, with the manner of something utterly new. All her speech, all her movements, her smallest gesture—the turn of her head, the shape of her lips in talking, the play of her figure under her cotton dress as she walked away—were essentially primitive and convincing. She had the genuineness of primeval simplicity. He could imagine for her all the elemental emotions exhibited with fervour and intensity. She was capable of savage hate, of mad love, of brutal scorn, of merciless animosities.

He turned away from the spring, thoughtfully, wondering. He hoped that he would soon see her again.

III

He came upon her about a week later, under startling circumstances.

He was walking through the woods, and he saw her sitting on a fallen log, panting like a spent animal, scowling and grimacing with the utmost ferocity at the tall trees that surrounded and were the silent and unconcerned recipients of her obvious rage.

Her brownish-yellow hair was loosened and fell about her face and shoulders in an astonishing profusion, in al-

most smothering masses. One of her cheeks was bright red, as if it had been painted with some livid dye. When she heard his footsteps she looked up suddenly, stared at him a second as if without recognition and then seemed to draw in a relieved breath. Evidently she had feared someone else.

"What do you want?" she exclaimed.

Langhorne approached her slowly. She did not rise from the log, but tilting her face, fastened her malignant eyes upon him.

Something in her stare thrilled him, touching his heart to a vague fear, to a profound interest, to the consciousness of a vital and unaccustomed experience.

For a few seconds he looked at her without speaking.

"What is the matter with you?" he asked, finally.

She glared at him with a primitive and deep ferocity, so manifestly genuine, that for a moment he had the confused sense of being himself the author of some fundamental hurt to her, some act of violence and force that aroused all her abundant hatred, all her profuse rage. She clenched the fingers of her strong hands brutally against her thighs.

"My old man is a devil!" she cried. "The old fool gets drunk, and then the Lord Almighty couldn't do anything with him. Sometime when he tries to beat me up, I'm going to kill him; don't think I haven't got the nerve; I'll knock him on the head with whatever I get my hands on!"

For a second she ceased speaking; she dropped her eyes and stared with sombre resolution at the silent earth.

"He was out all night," she went on. "He came in this morning and pulled me out of a chair by the hair. He knocked me down and tried to kick me. I rolled out of his reach and ran away from the house. He chased me over the fields."

She paused again, and pushed back the burdening mass of long hair from her face.

"The last I saw of my old man," she

said, "he was lying in the mud of the cornfield, where he fell. Oh, I'll kill him sooner or later, you believe me!"

Her voice was hoarse, harsh, muttering; he did believe her. He believed her absolutely, with an entire faith in her revengeful and passionate purpose.

His conviction was so complete that her words impressed him profoundly; she had for him the aspect of an enraged animal; she crouched on the log like a tiger, ready at any instant with the stroke of a savage paw.

Again he felt her genuineness, her primitive sincerity. By some obscure impulse he was made to think of his wife, and the contrast of her gestures, her poses, her inconsequent postures, set off luminously the emotional directness of the girl before him.

The situation pleased him. He was aware, suddenly, that it was pleasant to come upon this sort of adventure in his life, to know that there were in the world these simple people, full of elemental rages, real hate, real brutality, real passion.

He thought of the savage fellow who must be her father—her "old man." He wanted to meet this savage, talk with him; he knew he would be as stimulating as his daughter. These people seemed in entire consonance with the brooding and sinister nature among which they had their being.

He stepped close to the girl and touched her shoulder.

"Your cheek is inflamed," he said. "He must have hit you there. If you want to walk up to the house with me, I'll give you something to wash it in that will take down the swelling."

For a little while she was motionless, silent, unregarding, staring at the earth as if she had not heard him. Then she stood up swiftly.

"All right," she said.

She quickly passed her hand under his arm.

"Your cheek is inflamed," he said. "I believe I like you. . . ."

Her manner underwent a rapid and entire change. She appeared to forget

her hurts, the savage flight from the old man, the vengeful thoughts that had occupied all her consciousness a few seconds before. She smiled; she looked at Langhorne's face; she walked along in full strides at his side.

"You remember that fellow I was with the other morning?" she asked. "I love to make him feel bad! Do you know, he's afraid of my old man! I wasn't lying to you. I don't believe I'll marry him.

"You promised?"

"I tell you what I'm going to do," she said. "I'm going to tell Bredin that he's got to show me he's no coward. The next time my old man comes after me, he's got to beat him up. If he don't, I'm through with him. That's what I'm going to say to him the next time I see him—this afternoon, I guess."

Langhorne glanced at her determined face, conscious then of a certain fact.

In this one instance she was pursuing not a genuine emotion but an attitude. She was not in love and the young fellow whom she conditionally proposed to marry stirred none of her ardent emotions, aroused none of her obvious capacity for desire.

She contemplated marriage as a convention—the only inclination toward a convention that he had discovered in her. To be married was evidently one of the circumstances that she believed necessary in her life.

Langhorne smiled slightly. This was ironic. He almost wished that he himself were possessed of youth, illusions and emotions that he might make love to her, start a flame in her, and find within himself a corresponding fire.

IV

ONE evening, a few days later, returning from a long walk, Langhorne approached the clearing of his house and was surprised to find the girl sitting on the small porch, quite evidently waiting for him. He hurried toward her, and mounted the steps, smiling.

She returned his smile with a more

frank expression of pleasure than he had ever seen before on her habitually sullen face.

"Hello," she said.

"I'm glad to see you here," he told her. "Is there anything special I can do for you?"

"Oh, no. I thought I'd like to talk a bit with you."

He sat down on the steps, leaning against one of the posts, turning his face up to hers.

"Have you had any more trouble these last few days?" he asked.

"The old man's been sober," she replied.

"He's all right when he's sober?"

"Well—I guess he's afraid of me when he's sober. He's never all right. I'm tired of all this! I want to get out of it!"

She seemed languid, weary, less vital than he had remembered her. She sat talking with her hands in her lap, her head inclined against the chair-back, using fewer of the abrupt gestures with which she ordinarily illustrated her speech. He found her none the less interesting because she was capable of a more subdued mood. She had still the appeal of freshness, the appeal of something new, of something fundamentally real.

He found that she made him a little uneasy; he could not approach her with the suavity to which he was accustomed, he could not predict just what she would do next.

She startled him when finally she stood up abruptly and ran down the steps without a word of preparation. All the flame of her vitality had returned. She was frowning.

"Must go!" she exclaimed. "I'll be over again some time soon. I like to talk to you. You're different."

She strode off down the path into the woods, with the energetic stride of a boy; he smiled as he watched her go.

The incongruity of her interest in him was amusing. Unquestionably she had never known a man of his sort; he was like one of another species, a different animal, something utterly new in the

shape of a human being. But this was a mutual attitude, for she was quite as novel to him.

A sense of the curious chances of life came to his thoughts. No one could have predicted his meeting with this girl and now that they knew each other, through an accident of acquaintance entirely outside their purpose or intent, no one could foresee what events might befall them.

As if looking at himself, the girl, the enormous boy whom she intended to marry, the father whom he had never met, from some aloof and detached ground of observation, he felt they were all the unconsulted reagents in an obscure chemistry of the fates, charged with potentialities, capable of unfathomable reactions.

He recalled the words of an old Spanish physician whom he had known some years before. They had been drinking whiskey and soda together at Langhorne's club, surrounded with everything to make them at ease, detached for their whole lives, it appeared then, from any arduous concern over the more simple necessities of life. And commenting on this, the charming old man had said:

"Well, my friend, it's all smooth for us at present! But who knows anything about this time in the next year? Nothing will surprise me; perhaps I will be sitting in a dirty white apron, selling sausages in the market-place at Turino!"

The girl did as she had said. Two or three times every week she came to see Langhorne, always at about the same time.

She appeared in the evening, while it was still twilight, sat with him on the porch and talked continuously until she made her sudden departures. Once or twice she was accompanied by Bredin, who came with her as a silent and uncouth shadow, lounged on the steps with the air of being forever ill at ease, and followed at her heels when she strode off into the woods like a docile and enormous bear.

Her conversation was frequently

startling in its display of savagery; life presented itself to her as an adventure in fundamental intensities, a complex of passionate possibilities. She talked of hate and revenge; of shocking brutalities; of stark physical encounters. She had seen men killed by the pitilessness of inanimate nature and once she had witnessed a man clubbed to death in a brawl. The whole aspect of life took on for her the fantastic and almost unbelievable colour of lurid melodrama.

Meanwhile, Langhorne met her father. He came one evening, "just to get acquainted," he said, and talked for an hour or more with his hands in his pockets, pulling periodically on a blackened pipe. He bore a very great resemblance to his daughter—it was impossible to imagine what the dead mother may have been like. He had the same thick, tawny hair, the same sullenness of expression, but his movements lacked her abruptness without sacrificing any of the appearance of vitality that Langhorne had first observed in the daughter. The man was quite sober when he made this visit.

He had known these people perhaps a month when a startling adventure was precipitated that came to him nevertheless without any profound surprise, so surely had he felt it within their possibilities.

He was awakened early one morning, not long after midnight, by an insistent pounding noise. He sat up in bed, sleepy and confused, listening.

The noise, that seemed to vibrate through the wooden building like the repeated blows of some heavy instrument, was at first diffuse; he could not localize it. Then, more fully awake, he was aware that someone was pounding at the door below.

He threw back the blanket and jumped out of bed. He ran out in the hall and downstairs.

The knocking was continuous, urgent and very loud. He pushed back the bolt of the door and opened it.

Two figures were outside and he recognized them at once. The girl, with a raised fist—it must have been she who

had aroused him—was standing with her foot on the sill. Close behind her, like a dusk shadow of grotesque proportions, amorphous and huge in the darkness, was Bredin. He stood in a curiously inert attitude; his hands were hanging at his sides in a limp paralysis; his legs seemed to sag, partially illuminated by the insufficient glow of an oil lantern he held dangling in the fingers of one immense hand.

When the door was opened the girl, peering at Langhorne for a moment, turned suddenly, and, getting behind the apparently inanimate Bredin, pushed him in short vicious shoves over the threshold and into the house.

She slammed the door shut after her, and bolted it. Bredin dropped into a chair, seeming to swallow his support with the amplitude of his bulk, and sat without saying a word, his face covered with his hands, his elbows resting on his knees. Langhorne set the lamp near him on the table and now he could see that the boy was shivering with convulsive violence.

"You're alone?" the girl asked.

Her voice was tense, nervous, more harsh than ordinarily.

"Yes," said Langhorne.

"Look at that fool!" she said, pointing at Bredin with bitter contempt. "Hasn't he got a lot of nerve?"

"What's the matter? What has happened?"

"Wouldn't you think a big lump of flesh like that would have nerve enough in it to see him through?" she went on. "What did he wake up for? I could have done the thing myself!"

The boy said nothing. He sat in the same attitude and the chair shook with the convulsive movements of his body.

"What's he afraid of?" she continued, speaking louder now. "He must think there's a rope around his neck already. What does he expect to become of him—like that? Does he think he's got nerve enough left to do anything to help himself?"

She sat down suddenly, exhaling an exclamation of extreme venom and contempt.

Langhorne saw now that she was only half dressed; her shoes were untied; she seemed to have no stockings; her hair fell over her shoulders like unwound strands of heavy rope. He stood near her silent, waiting for her story.

She told it in exclamations, in fragments, punctuating it with abuse of her silent, shivering companion. She contorted her face with savage grimaces; she breathed in sharp gasps.

Her old man, she said, had come home after midnight, howling drunk. She was awakened by his curses at the door and she lay in bed, staring up into the darkness, waiting. He came in; he kicked a chair out of his way, and mounted the stairs in a stumbling ascent. He stopped in the hall near her room and swore for five or ten minutes—he cursed everything, the woods, the land, the house, Bredin, herself and finally, as was customary, his inebriate animosity concentrated itself upon her.

She lay very quiet, waiting. Then she heard him coming closer to her room; he opened the door. He was carrying a lantern in his hands. He dropped the lantern on the floor and made a rush at her bed. She rose up suddenly and flung the sheet over him; this gave her a second in which to elude him. Of course he was now enraged to madness; for a few moments he struggled with the entangling sheet and then charged her like a bull. She ran out into the hall and found the boy emerging from his room at the end of the corridor.

Bredin yelled at the old man to stop. His voice had a curious effect. She said her father paused abruptly, his head lowered, his matted hair falling forward into his eyes. He lifted his face and stared at the interposing figure of the excited boy.

Then he began to laugh and for a moment he chattered there in the hall like a mad ape. His cachinnation ceased with the abruptness with which it had begun; he clenched both his fists and rushed at Bredin. The two came together with the dull impact of hard

bodies. For some seconds they swayed in the hall in indistinct, furious gyrations; then they crashed to the floor together and the house resounded with the noise of their falling. The girl, panting, disheveled, stood over them, watching the combat with wide eyes, with a keen delight.

For a time she could see nothing but the kicking of their legs, their flying arms, their twisting figures and from the interlocked pair came the cursing of her father. Then the two became more quiet; the cursing ceased; she could hear the hard breathing of only one of them.

She ran back to her room and got the lantern. She leaned over the two men. Bredin was on top and his two immense hands held her father's throat in an implacable, ineluctible grasp.

She pulled at his hands and he finally loosened his hold; he stood up and staggered against the wall. She bent over the old man; it was with a feeling of inevitability, without remorse, without any especial joy, that she saw him quite dead.

At this moment Bredin seemed for the first time to comprehend his act. He was at once the victim of an unnerving terror; his fright was pitiful.

But for this manifestation the girl had no pity and the admiration for him that had begun to vibrate in her consciousness changed instantly to contempt.

Nevertheless, seeing him helpless, she conceived it her duty to save him. He would be incapable of brazening out an inquiry. Nothing was left to him but the acknowledgment of guilt in flight. She forced him to put on his clothes and she had brought him with her to Langhorne.

"What are we going to do with him?" she asked.

From the beginning, the affair had held no surprise for Langhorne. He looked at the prostrated boy and understood his condition fully. The youth had been aroused to a primitive fury at the sight of danger to the girl he loved,

but he had held no premeditated notion of murder. The knowledge of his act came as an overwhelming blow.

Watching him, the older man experienced an emotion of profound pity. Deeply interested, he determined to play out this rôle that had come to him unasked. He sat in silence for several minutes.

Finally he stood up, addressing the girl.

"Keep him here," he said, "for a while. I'll get dressed and then bring out my car from the shed. I'll drive him down to the city and if I make good time we'll be well on our way before daybreak. I'll get him into a room there and have him keep under cover for a while. A searching originating in a place like this can't reach very far—no one will ever find him. Afterward I'll come back and take you down to him."

She said nothing, but as he passed out of the room he saw her looking at him with a smile, a smile for his resourcefulness, a smile for her admiration.

This somehow thrilled him, and the fact that she could thrill him gave him an instant surprise.

V

LANGHORNE executed his plan without any difficulty. For the first part of the trip he kept the boy half prone in the back of the car, covered over with a pile of blankets. When they were out of the mountains he permitted him to sit up.

The youth had nothing to say. He no longer shivered as he had some hours before, but he seemed dead and half comatose, incapable of independent action. They reached the city late the night following their escape. Langhorne had driven continuously and he was enormously weary. Nevertheless, he persisted until he found a cheap lodging-house for the boy and saw him safe in his room. Then he went to his apartment and fell to sleep instant-

ly; he did not awaken until the next afternoon.

He stayed in the city a day before making the return trip. Going back now, the first sight of the mountain landscape impressed him deeply; the sinister ridges in the purple distance seemed to brood over inscrutable secrets. He reached his house in the afternoon at much the same time as he had arrived in the first instance. He did not see the girl until a day later.

She told him all that had happened in his absence. Of course Bredin, who had disappeared, was held guilty and the sheriff had searching parties hunting the woods for him. They were confident that he would soon be discovered. When questioned she had denied any witnessing of the murder; she claimed that a noise had awakened her in the night, but on listening and hearing no further sounds she had gone to sleep. In the morning she said she had discovered her father lying in the hall. Their farm hand, Bredin, was gone.

He talked to the girl less than an hour this time. They agreed not to see each other for several weeks, in order to prevent any inquiries directing themselves toward Langhorne.

When he left her he experienced an hour or two of sincere surprise. It came to him then how curiously and spontaneously he had become involved in this affair, and yet how much outside its inner heart he was after all. He shared none of the elemental emotions of these people, not the hate and malice of the girl, nor the impulse to kill and the reaction of abject fear that had come to the boy in the city, nor the brutal rage of her murdered father. He was differentiated from them as completely as the people of another star.

Several weeks passed by and the search for the unfortunate Bredin relaxed and dwindled. The death of an obscure farmer made only a restricted and local stir. Since his daughter was now alone she stated her intention of leaving the farm and going down to the city; she spoke vaguely of her rela-

tives. The day was fixed when Langhorne was to take her with him in his car.

She came to him early one morning, wearing strangely ill-fitting clothes and carrying a small handbag. She seemed subdued and more than ordinarily sullen. She had very little to say; they drove away in silence.

As Langhorne steered the car into the tortuous lane and the shadows of the tall trees fell over it in a sinister and implacable caress, he turned and looked back at the house. Already it had begun to bore him; he knew he would not return. The series of episodes that had made so long a stay possible was now entering its concluding stage.

He glanced at the girl sitting by his side. Her face was fixed in front, her lips were compressed and the changing shadows of the close branches that brushed the sides of the car came and went on her face with the singular effect of penumbra thrown from the spread wings of dark, unseen birds. She was still silent.

They drove steadily until it was noon and stopped along the edge of the woods to eat the lunch they had brought with them. Both got out of the car and walked about a little to ease their cramped muscles. Then they sat down at the edge of the road and unpacked their lunch. They ate in silence.

As they were about to rise, the girl put out her hand quickly and clasped his in a tense, hard grip.

"Why are you taking me to him?" she asked. "That isn't my plan!"

He looked at her, surprised.

"Where do you want to go?" he asked.

She held his hand, she looked at his face intently, her eyes narrowed a little. She seemed to be speculating, hesitating over a decision.

And then she seized his head between her hands and with a swift, resistless movement drew his face against her own.

She found his lips and kissed him; she gave him a strange thrill of fear. She startled him; her kisses were pas-

sionate, intense, clinging. These were not, he knew, the kisses of a formula, the kisses given lightly, the kisses exchanged in the easy game of love he had played so often, but were the physical expression of an urgent and genuine emotion, to which he was without the power of response. He felt immensely oppressed, a little giddy, and he drew in a rapid breath of relief when she dropped her imprisoning hands and spoke to him.

"You're not going to take me to him," she said. "I'm going to be with you!"

She made no further attempt to embrace him.

They got into the car again and continued their journey. But now, when he stole glances at her, he saw a profound assurance in her face, a certainty of her purpose, a confidence in the outcome of her plans. During the remainder of the trip she was as silent as before, but now her silence was more meaningful, as if she were waiting, were infinitely expectant, were pausing for the proper moment of avowal and assurance by speech and action.

He began to pity her, and in a small degree to pity himself. She had no means to measure his complete separation from her, the aloofness of an utterly different life. And he, too, had a regrettable lack; whatever capacity for fire had been his youthful endowment, the fuel of the flame had gone unseen, like an escaping vapour into the spent days of his other years.

And mixed with these emotions came his never-failing appreciation of persistent irony: how ironic it was that he

should have been the chosen agent to bring her her futile hopes, her unavailing visions, her purposeless dreams!

He began to smile; his aplomb returned; he was in full possession of himself.

They entered the city the next morning. He drove her straight to the room where he knew the boy was waiting. She did not question him; her faith seemed boundless. He stopped before the house and helped her to alight.

They went in together and he led the way upstairs. He paused outside a room on the second floor. He opened the door and with a gentle push thrust her over the threshold into the room. He heard a clumsy movement of someone inside rising from a chair. He did not wait to observe the expression of joy that would come to the face of the boy, nor her own deep dismay.

He closed the door suddenly and ran down the stairs. He ran until he was out of the house and in his car. He drove away in a half-flight with the sound of the eager roar of the engine accompanying him like a symbol of escape.

He had decided to go back and see his wife. He knew she would receive him quietly, even graciously. He saw very clearly, with entire assurance, the smile she would give him, and heard the words she would say. This was comforting—to be assured, to understand. He left behind him, in a room presided over by brick walls whose gloom counterfeited the sinister brooding of their own moods, these two of a more elemental age, who knew the sincerities of hate, of despair, of passion, of hope. . . .



A WOMAN thinks of her husband in terms of other men, but a man thinks of other women in terms of his wife.



WILD OATS

By Joseph Bibb, Jr.

THERE was both a simplicity and a lordliness about retiring that gave him a more than double delight. How often had he looked forward longingly to the day. His heart had been in his work, true; yet a man of any breadth must admit that there are other things in life, other beauties, than leather and findings. And now retirement was possible. He had made his little nest-egg. And the business was so smoothly running a machine that the quest of surprises was ended. One is entitled to leisure in the declining years.

Not that he felt declining. Still, one does not live forever. There must be ample time for the well-earned quiet. Besides, retirement sometime is incum-

bent on a man of culture. There were so many who worked on to the end for the lack of the saving grace, the philosophy, the taste, as it were.

He at least was not dead to the fine things of leisure. He would retire: he decided upon it forthwith and benignance lighted his mind at the thought of the easeful future. There was so much for him now, so much that he had always wanted, as a man of taste. And perhaps he no longer would be alone. A sharer at the fireside—who could tell? He would retire at once: upon his birthday. That came next week. The day would mark a rounded period of active life. It should be arranged at once. His birthday . . . his ninety-first birthday.



SONG

By Glenn Ward Dresbach

I HAVE loved the rainbows
And the wild gusts of rain,
And white ships in the dark storms,
And leopard-women twain.

I have loved the red dawns
And waters deep and blue,
And roads that burned with moonlight—
How can I love you?



MIRAGE

By E. Michaelis

THEY had been a dream, these last two hours, a dream from which perchance she should expect no realization. And yet she hoped, as one may hope when one is young and still confident that the power for good ultimately rules all things. She hoped joyously and madly because she knew that never again could she endure the innumerable days, out on the desert "alone," she found herself saying, with her sister and the children.

Her head lay back upon the cushion, the dusky eyes half closed, the lips drawn into a tight line. It was not a pretty face, at times it might have been ugly, glorified it would have been beautiful; but faces do not become glorified out on the Mojave desert where the sand-storms wail and the heat wilts.

It all seemed so strange to her now. Why, why had she not? But the question remained unfinished, her lips trembled, and the whole episode rushed back upon her mind with an intensity that she had not felt when it actually occurred.

It had lasted but a short time and it had not been a grand passion. If only she had expected no more. If only she could have realized at twenty that the "grand passion" is the exception that we read of in the novel, and that for you and me and all of us who are not very rich, nor very good, nor very beautiful, the companionship of two loyal souls is the usual ideal to await successfully.

He had been handsome and she had liked him; perhaps if she had not just then read "Guinevere" she would have thought she loved him, but so soon after that it all seemed too commonplace.

Now after the three months they had

decided to wait before they should meet again, if they were ever to meet, she knew that her only possible happiness in life was to follow him for better or for worse to the ends of the earth. Again and again she thrilled with joy, that instead of saying "no" forever she had said that they would meet again at the end of three months in Needles, if he should feel as he had felt three months before and if she should love him.

It was a seven-hour ride she had to make to the place of their tryst, and the miles dragged on interminably. The small desert hills burned black by the sun seemed to radiate heat; the greasewood blinded the eyes with its headache grayness; no stir of life betrayed that the desert was a part of God's busy world. But in the infinite distances she could discern the vague outline of the opalescent mountains and it seemed to her that beyond them cool meadows shaded by big, shaggy trees must stretch forever.

As again she became vaguely conscious of life around her, she became for the first time specifically aware of the young man across the aisle who was eyeing her in the very casual manner of the youth who expects to have the overwhelming pleasure of opening a window, with a disagreeable lock, for a lonesome young lady, or possibly of picking up a handkerchief. But being unlearned in the wiles of railway flirtation she leaned over and asked him how long it would be before they would reach Needles.

Being a very obliging young man and a very bored one, he not only gave the desired information, but slid over be-

side her and began to tell her of Needles, which she had not seen. It was a small town he told her, and in that stage of would-be civilization in which the elite play bridge for silk stockings and read skeptical magazines. It was a pleasant place to be, however, he added, if one were not inclined to be bored, but—

Surprised to find her paying little attention, or at least not emitting the usual feminine gurgles of interest, he labelled her a bore and excusing himself as soon as possible resorted to the smoker for the remainder of the trip.

Once more she leaned back, her lips slightly parted, and this time a smile hovering near them.

"Needles," cried the conductor, and from the window she marked the conglomeration of engines, trees and smoke-stacks that greet one upon entering the town. Hastily and nervously she alighted.

"Tan sants, Twenty-five sants," droned the Mojave squaws with their strings of beads, but novel as it all would have seemed at any other time within the past five years, today she hastened from it into the little waiting-room, the place of tryst. It was a vile, cell-like place with benches around the walls on which were hung soiled advertising pictures of the Yosemite and Grand Canyon; and it was empty except for a Mexican woman and her brood. She hastened to the ticket office to learn that the train on which he would arrive was late and would not come for twenty

minutes. She sat a moment and then walked out into the open court between the Harvey House and the tracks. The afternoon sun had caused most pedestrians to desert except the trainmen and the Mojave squaws, who still held up their wares, droning, "Tan sants, twenty-five sants."

In the distance a train whistled. Three minutes later it came to a stop before the Harvey House.

She waited, with a sensation she had felt but once before. It had been six years before when the doctor had told her that her mother might live, but the doctor had not known.

As in a dream she watched the usual passengers alight—the laughing soldiers, the lady traveling for her health, the woman with the two marriageable daughters, the fat drummer, the three college boys, but the tall familiar figure she saw only in her mind's eye.

The train soon became empty, the travelers swarming into the Harvey House. For a moment she thought she would fall, but, gaining control of herself, she stumbled through the vague darkness toward the waiting-room. For several moments she sat there unconscious of the Mexican baby playing to her, unconscious of the eyes of the ticket agent fixed curiously upon her, unconscious of all save her own dumb, blank, overwhelming misery. At length she walked to the ticket window and asked in a firm voice for a return ticket. Her train would leave in fifteen minutes.



THE saddest thing in marriage is not a husband who tries to escape, but a husband who believes that he is happy.



ALL love affairs terminate in unpleasantness. They either end too soon or they end too late.



LE SECRET DE LUCAS

By Hubert Fillay

DANS la grange, le pressoir avait été dressé et, chaque soir, après la cueillette des grappes, à la lueur des bougies, les hommes *habillaient* l'énorme machine.

C'est un labeur qui demande de l'attention mais dont on vient vite à bout lorsqu'on s'accorde bien. Une traverse après l'autre, l'édifice monte et prend tournure. Les raisins passent des *jales* aux broyeur, des broyeur au pressoir, qui écrasera leur chair et en exprimera le jus sucré.

Pan! Michel le tonnelier cogne en mesure sur les cercles, rythmant un air de pas redoublé que Bardou, l'ancien clairon, siffle à pleins poumons.

Enfin, le pressoir est *habillé*. Bardou l'examine, puis, satisfait, s'approche du levier, le pousse, le ramène. . . . Le jus des grappes commence à dégringoler dans le cuvier. . . .

— Repos! . . . crie le clairon. Et il saute à terre.

— Je fumerais bien une cigarette.

Son camarade Lucas lui passe du tabac.

— A quoi penses-tu? demande Bardou. Tu as une tête pas ordinaire. . . .

— Moi, à pas grand'chose de sérieux, comme qui dirait une histoire arrivée voilà plus de quinze ans, là-bas, dans le vignoble. Tout le monde en a été bouleversé pendant trois semaines. . . .

— Si tu te figures que je comprends un mot à tes boniments! fait l'ancien clairon.

— T'es trop jeune, Bardou! Mais Michel s'en souvient, lui. . . . Michel, tu te rappelles-t'y le Béju, celui qui avait le poil roux et une si vilaine dégaine? . . . Et Moriau, tu t'en souviens-t-y de Moriau? . . .

— Celui qui est mort à cette époque-ci de l'année?

— Juste. Eh bien je sais comment ça s'est fait, et personne ne s'en est jamais douté. . . . Mais je n'ai rien dit, les affaires des autres ne sont pas les miennes, n'est-ce pas, Michel?

* * *

Bardou donna quelques coups au levier, et le vin nouveau recommença à couler. . . . Alors Michel et l'ancien clairon écoutèrent.

— Vous savez ce qu'est la vendange pour les filles et les gars. Ceux qui hottent ne se privent point de pincer une gamine, de la *biner* quand elle ne s'y attend pas. Pan, ça y est, derrière l'oreille. La drozine fait du potin.

— Vous allez me laisser, grand imbécile! . . .

On dirait qu'elle va tout manger, mais c'est des giries; un quart d'heure après, elle rit comme une folle, et, si le gaillard n'est point déplaisant, peut-être se demande-t-elle quand il recommencera.

Chez le maître Fleury, où je travaillais alors, a La Brosserie, il y avait toujours une quinzaine de vendangeurs. Moi, j'étais garçon charretier, et j'étais sur le point de me marier. C'est vous dire que j'étais sérieux. Mais Moriau, qui était malin comme un diable, courait toutes les filles, les taquinait, les embrassait, les remuait comme des toupies. . . . Il n'était pas possible de le retenir. D'un bout de la vigne à l'autre, on riait du matin au soir. . . .

Ça n'était pas comme le Béju. . . . Laid, maigre, la goule remplie de taches de rousseur, il avait des dents à vous donner la chair de poule, lorsqu'il venait manger à côté de vous. . . . Un vrai loup. . . . Avec cela, des yeux verts, méchants comme ceux d'un chat.

Personne ne voulait le voir. Il était sournois, menteur. Et, voyez comme c'est curieux, il n'y avait pas plus jaloux. . . .

Moriau surveillait la Titine, rapport qu'elle était un beau brin de fille, point difficile à débaucher de son travail. . . . Elle riait, elle riait, dès qu'elle se sentait embrassée! Et c'était fini; elle n'aurait pas remué un doigt pour se défendre. . . . Béju (le Rouquin, comme on disait) entra en rage rien qu'à la voir s'amuser avec Moriau. "Saligauds, glapissait-il, vous êtes des saligauds!" Et chacun criait après la Titine, n'aurait-ce été que pour exciter Béju davantage.

La vérité, c'est qu'il aimait Titine avec rage, avec toute la méchanceté qui lui emplissait la peau, et qu'elle le dédaignait malgré ses avances, ses supplications et ses promesses. . . .

— Ce que je veux, c'est une peau d'écreuil pour descente de lit. Va chez le boucher, dis-lui qu'il te dépiaute, mon ch'tit rougeaud. . . . Après ça, je t'aimerai pour la vie. . . .

Béju, pâle de fureur, grinçait des dents. Je pensais toujours: "Il finira par faire un mauvais coup. . . ."

Un soir, comme aujourd'hui, la vengeance tirait à sa fin.

Béju et ce pauvre Moriau devaient fouler les cuves de rouge à la nuit. Le maître Fleury leur avait recommandé de passer au cellier vers les six heures, après avoir dételé leurs chevaux. J'étais seul à la ferme; et, comme la besogne ne me pressait pas, je m'étais couché sur quelques bottes de paille, dans l'écurie.

Voilà que j'entends Béju et Moriau ouvrir la porte du cellier. Ils causaient ensemble; et je les comprenais comme si j'avais été avec eux, puisqu'un mur, seul, nous séparait et que les portes étaient grandes ouvertes.

Tout d'un coup, Béju dit à Moriau:

— Pourquoi que la Titine ne veut pas de moi. . . .? Si tu voulais, elle ne demanderait pas mieux. Quand il y en a pour un, il y en a bien pour deux.

Sans souci de la prière désolée qui montait vers lui, Moriau éclata de rire, et hargua:

— Tu n'as pas de toupet! . . . Tu ne

t'es don jamais vu, avec ta binette d'orang-dégou tant es tes cheveux queue de bœuf? Sur que non, elle ne veut pas de toi, la Titine. Elle a rudement raison. . . . S'il n'y a que moi pour

lui conseiller de t' faire les yeux doux!

— Qu'est-ce que ça te ferait, Moriau?

— Ça me ferait que je ne veux pas porter des cornes par la faute d'un affreux comme toi! . . . Tiens, je vais être gentil: je l'embrasserai pour toi, si ça te convient? . . . Ça va t'il? . . .

— Nom de Dieu! . . . hurla Béju.

Que se passa-t-il alors? . . . Ce fut le bruit d'une lutte. . . . Quelque chose comme une dégringolade, suivie d'un plongeon. . . . Moriau, soulevé de terre, devait être dans la cuve. . . .

Un bâton s'abattit sur du bois. . . .

Moriau cherchait à remonter à l'air, en s'accrochant aux rebords du tonneau, et Béju cognait sur les mains, jusqu'à ce que sa victime lâchât prise.

Je m'étais soulevé sur mon lit. J'étais déjà à la porte de l'écurie quand un grand râle passa. . . .

Aussitôt, la porte du cellier se ferma avec un claquement sec. . . . La clef tourna dans la serrure. Ils étaient deux derrière: l'assassin et la victime.

Que faire? Je réfléchis. . . . Dénoncer Béju, appeler au secours. Si Moriau était mort à quoi cela servirait-il? Je retournai me coucher, laissant Béju s'évader à pas de loup, puis revenir ensuite, flanqué du patron. . . .

— Malheur de sort, c'est-y possible. . . . Moriau qui est tombé dans la cuve! gémit le rougeaud en poussant des cris à fendre l'âme.

— Il est perdu. L'acide carbonique l'a asphyxié, déclara maître Fleury.

Je m'en vins sur ce coup de temps-là, et je ne dis ni oui, ni non. . . . Les affaires des autres ne sont pas les miennes, pas vrai, Michel? . . .

Michel hocha le front d'un air pensif. . . .

— T'aurais bien dû l'dire tout d'même, fit Bardou, suspendu à nouveau au levier du pressoir. . . .

Et le vin recommença de pleurer dans le cuvier, tandis que Michel, vérifiait un autre fût à grands coups de maillet.

THE POTBOILERMAKERS

By George Jean Nathan

IN the world of modern dramaturgy, the English hack takes categorical precedence over the hacks of Europe and America in the enterprise of writing bad plays as dully as is by human effort possible. The American hack at his worst is always a cut or two above the English hack at his worst: however empty his play there is generally a touch of sharp Americanism, a dash of vulgar honesty, that catches the ear. And the French hack or German hack, the Italian or the Austrian, contributes to his dismal masterpiece at least a flash of phrase or dim suggestion of quasi-philosophy. But the English hack reaches heights of virtuosity in stenciled balderdash unscaled by his drivelling contemporaries.

This is true not only in the instance of dramatic writing, but in the other forms of literature; for the English hack novels of such as the immensely popular Nat Gould are as far inferior to the American hack novels of such as the equally popular Harold Bell Wright, or to the French hack novels of such as the equally popular Henri Bordeaux, or to the German hack novels of such as the once almost equally popular Heinz Tovote, as the English hack plays of such as Horace Annesley Vachell are triumphantly inferior on all counts to the American hack plays of such as William Hurlbut, or the French hack plays of such as Lucien Gleize, or the German hack plays of such as Rudolph Holzer, or the Austro-Hungarian hack plays of such as Vajda Szinház, or the Danish hack plays of such as Carl Gjellerup, or the Italian hack plays of—

But no need to continue the tedious catalogue. Nothing in all the modern writing for the stage attains to the dull splendour of an Englishman writing at his dullest. At his worst the Englishman is as difficult of matching as at his best. Search the records of current theatrical writing the world over and one will be at pains to discover equals in the art of sheer inanity for such British masters of bavardage and twattle as Jennings, Porter, Devereux, Worrall, Morton, Hemmerde, Vansittart, Nielson, Howard, Brandon, Lonsdale, Dunn, Coleby, Martindale, Pleydell, Fenn, Thurston, Terry, Raleigh, Hodges, Percival, Harwood, Vernon, Owen, Parry, Stayton, Frith, Gibson, Hamilton, Jeans, Lion, Merivale, Chilton, Ellis, Carr, Denny, Fernald. . . .

This last, though American born, is by personal vote, long residence, activity, taste and training, as English as a mutton chop or tight shirt, and a typical example of the contemporaneous English rubber-stamp professor. Twenty years ago, this Mr. Chester Bailey Fernald, then living in the land of his birth, wrote a first-rate short story and a second-rate, though rather diverting, one-act play. But in the nineteen years elapsed he has composed not so much as a single phrase touched with grace or originality, with resonance or wit, with melody or observation or philosophy. The plays he has written, from "The Moonlight Blossom" to "The Married Woman," from "98-9" to "The Day Before the Day," from "The Pursuit of Pamela" to his most recent "Three for Diana" out of "The Third Marriage" of Sabatino Lopez, are in

each instance illuminatingly representative of British hackdom on the flying trapeze.

I do not mean to single out Fernald as the worst of this sour school, or even the second worst. He is by no means the worst. But he combines in himself so many of the deficiencies and absent qualities of the present-day British drama drudge that, as well as any other, he may be selected by way of horrible example. It is a characteristic of Fernald, as of his colleagues in the arts of unimaginative writing, that he works almost entirely in terms of the platitudes, treadmills, stock phraseology and stale literary baggage of the stage. And this habit is so deeply ingrained that it operates even when he gives himself over to the transposing of a play manuscript from one language into another, just as it operates in like situation in the instance of such of his fellow doctors of stencil as Fagan, Hicks, Farquarson Sharp, Bithell, et al. In instance whereof, I append a few examples from the adaptation by Fernald of the aforementioned Italian "Il Terzo Marito" (briefly presented in the Bijou Theater)—examples of the substitution of so many coccygine vaudeville-sketch cackles for what might, by the simple and obvious means of direct translation, have been retained as somewhat less banal, moth-eaten stuff:

1. "The mere *sight* of you makes me grow younger. It's like a breath of the sea air!"
2. "You are free; I am free! What is the use of having freedom if one cannot make happiness out of it? Marry me and the world will be just big enough to hold our happiness!"
3. "I have (*dropping her eyes*) something to tell you. When you have heard me, probably you will want to reconsider your proposal."
4. "I decided to talk the matter over with her once again. She had insisted that we should not refer to it again."

5. "But under that moon, under those silent stars, with the music of the waves beneath us. . . ."
6. "How she has changed in a year! She was a *child* then; now she is a *woman!*"
7. "I wrote you not to come until now because I wanted to give you a chance to think. I wanted you to be prepared for (*pause*) what we shall have to say to each other."
8. "What do *you* know of life? Nothing! There is a great, beautiful world still to be opened to you!"
9. "You have had no experience. You are a beautiful unwritten page."
10. "When I looked into your eyes—I can see your eyes every night whenever I close my own in the dark—the first time I looked into them and every time since—something has happened in my heart."
11. "If I talk lightly about the most serious things in the world, it does not mean that I am frivolous. I was never so serious in my life. And you are not going to tell me (*gulping*) that there is another?"
12. "If you send me off, I shall never get over it as long as I live!"
13. "My own feelings were a trifle hurt, at first; but when you explained, I saw that your intentions were as kindly as they always are."
14. "And what, pray, do you know about *me?*"

Add to these sentimentalized stencils the injection of an alien hooch of morals, the joke about the practise of exchanging duplicate wedding presents, the joke about the climate of England, the joke about married persons fighting with each other, and the joke about woman's habit of changing her mind, and one achieves a fair idea of the Fernald operations in adaptation. I have seldom laid eyes on a sadder job. The

Italian original, true enough, is in the most liberal accounting a third-rate effort, but Fernald has dexterously plunged it thirty pegs further down the scale. He has changed the cocklescent Italian lover into a cool cockney cucumber; he has turned the saucy widow into a dour Prince of Wales's Theater clothes-horse; he has removed the gin from the cocktail in Acts III and IV; he has written over the Italian phraseology into the phraseology of the commonplace London curtain-raiser. In the original, a kind of high-comedy matrimonial "Baby Mine"—though in no sense and in no degree so adroit or humorous a work as Miss Mayo's—the play is revealed in the adaptation as a windmill turning furiously in a dead calm.

The production, both as to acting and direction, was in the main of a piece with the quality of the work produced. The actors, when addressing each other, were coached in the obsolete manner to stand shoulder to shoulder, avert their faces and recite their lines straight at the audience, as if each had eaten onions for dinner and, conscious of the lingering aroma, was maneuvering to hide the fact from the other. Mr. John D. Williams, under whose name the presentation was made, appears to have lost completely the share of judgment displayed by him at the outset of his professional career. It demands a very considerable genius to unearth in rapid succession so magnificent a trio of pot-boilers as "Betty at Bay," "Toby's Bow," and this "Three For Diana."

II

THE always idiotic enterprise of attempting a list of the ten best new plays of the season is this year approximately as simple and satisfactory as translating Ring Lardner into Spanish. The attempt to list even six plays of sound worth is not easy. The best play of the year, and by far, was Dunsany's "Laughter of the Gods," presented by Mr. Stuart Walker.

With this play, the only four pos-

sessed of sound merit or approximately sound merit, from the accepted critical points of view, were "The Moon of the Caribbees," by Eugene O'Neill, presented by the Provincetown Players; "Papa," by Zoë Akins, a prompt and overwhelming popular failure, presented (and ruined) by Mr. F. C. Whitney; Rita Wellman's "The Gentile Wife," also a popular failure, but admirably revealed by Mr. Arthur Hopkins; and "John Ferguson," by St. John Irvine, presented by the Stage Guild.

Aside from these leaders, the five plays that appear to me as probably least to the distaste of the kind of theatergoer who prefers Mozart's Jupiter symphony to "Oui, Oui, Marie," Anatole France's "Garden of an Epicure" to Emma C. David's "Polly and the Princess," and an All Saints Madeira to Coca-Cola, were, though not necessarily in the order named:

"The Marquis de Priola," by Lavedan, presented by Mr. Leo Ditrichstein.

"Tea for Three," by Roi Cooper Mergue out of Karl Slaboda, presented by the Messrs. Selwyn.

"The Jest," translated by Edward Sheldon from Sem Benelli, presented by Mr. Hopkins.

"Sleeping Partners," by Sacha Guitry, presented by Mr. Williams.

"Dear Brutus," by Barrie, presented by the Frohman Company.

These latter, obviously enough, are but purely comparative selections. The majority of them are by no means first-rate plays—or even second-rate plays—but they yet bulk larger than any others vouchsafed the public during the season.

I am this season similarly unable to dredge up ten acting performances among the unstarred or unfeatured men and women players that seem to me worthy of especial notice. The only two non-star or non-featured performances among the women that I can commend for exceptional technical resource were those of Miss Laura Hope Crews in "The Saving Grace" and Miss Margaret Lawrence in "Tea for Three." The best performance of the year by a featured woman player seems to me to

have been that of Miss Irene Bordoni in "Sleeping Partners"; the best star performance that of Mrs. Fiske in "Mis' Nelly of N'Orleans."

Among the unfeatured or unstarred males, I nominate four performances, though concerning one of these I am somewhat dubious. The performances in question were, as I see it, those of Mr. Hamilton Revelle in "Mis' Nelly of N'Orleans," Mr. John Halliday in "A Place in the Sun," the youthful Master Andrew Lawlor in the original casting of "Penrod," and Mr. Dudley Digges in "John Ferguson."

On a lower plane, but relatively good, were the performances of Charles Millward in "The Net," Robert Fischer in "Luck in Pawn," Arthur Byron in "Tea For Three," Edward Douglas in "The Saving Grace," John Cope in "Daddies," George Marion in "Toby's Bow," William Lennox in "Penny Wise," J. H. Brewer in "Dear Brutus," Alfred Kappeler in "Tillie" and Frederic Burt in "Mis' Nelly of N' Orleans." The best featured player performance was that of Mr. Cyril Keightley in "A Little Journey"; the best star performance that of Mr. Lionel Barrymore in "The Jest."

The best productions of the year were the Hopkins productions of "The Jest," "Be Calm, Camilla" (a finely delicate example of staging) and "The Gentile Wife." Mr. Hopkins stands out at present as the American theater's foremost producer. The best ensemble acting was that revealed in Miss Rachel Crothers' production of her own play "39 East." The most diverting music show was George M. Cohan's "The Royal Vagabond"; the most ingenious yokel show, the trick melodrama light "The Unknown Purple"; and the twenty-five worst plays: "Mother's Liberty Bond," "Over Here," "Crops and Croppers," "The Walk-Offs," "The Awakening," "Information Please," "A Stitch in Time," "Perkins," "Not With My Money," "Peter's Mother," "Three Wise Fools," "Remnant," "By Pigeon Post," "Betty at Bay," "Back to Earth," "East is West," "Cappy Ricks," "Just

Around the Corner," "Dark Rosaleen," "A Sleepless Night," "The Fortune Teller," "Luck in Pawn," "A Good Bad Woman," "Come-On Charley," and the Fernald opus described in Chapter I.

For these various selections, I am full of profound and sincere apologies: in the instance of the plays I have endorsed, to the producers for thus somewhat too emphatically drawing the attention of the public to the kind of plays I especially admire and so—as I have often discovered—arousing the public's distrust of them. And in the instance of the plays I have failed to endorse, to the producers for thus so clearly establishing the demerit of the plays in point that the producers will, if past records count for anything, have to scurry around immediately for extra ushers to seat the crowds.

III

EVERY year or so, some gentleman of the theater who is confident that Hall Caine is the next greatest living dramatist to Abraham Schomer and that "Oh go to hell" is a greater dramatic speech than Marc Antony's oration, and who hence regards me as a very crooked critic, issues—via ambassadors—threats to waylay me presently in a dark alley and bite me. For fifteen years, rarely a season that has failed to reveal me to some such gentleman in the light of a potential cookie. But though I have now and then defensively equipped myself with small capsules of sulphureted hydrogen, surprise boutonnières containing hidden squirt guns, old-fashioned strawberry shortcakes, an automatic and very life-like mouse, cachoo powder, loaded cigars, explosive trick matches and a push button containing a pin (worn on the coat lapel), my armament seems never to have been called upon to exhibit its virtuosity.

On certain other periodic occasions some gentleman of the theater, given to the custom of spelling diva with an u and irritated by the critical conjecture that the vocal chords are probably displayed to their fullest advantage when

the singer is in an upright position, complains bitterly to my office and bothers me so much listening to the ululations of my employer that I am compelled, for comfort's sake, to discharge him, take over his interest in the property and run the thing myself in a peaceful manner.

And on certain other occasions some gentleman of the theater, who imagines I have some grudge against him other than the fact that he produces tenth-rate plays and sends me seats to sit through them, accosts me and makes so much noise and so many gestures that I, unable clearly to make out his purpose, think he is trying adequately to tell me how good I am, mistake his extended fist for an invitation to shake hands, warmly shake hands, thank him profusely, and so suffer the extreme embarrassment and discomfort of gaining him for a friend.

I often wonder why these gentlemen who thus attach an absurd and undue importance to me and seek to work my undoing, do not—if they desire effectually to make a fool of me—take a leaf from the unintentional stratagem employed by Mr. David Belasco. I say unintentional because Mr. Belasco undoubtedly duly appreciates—as I myself fully appreciate—that altogether too much attention is paid already to certain dramatic critics by certain producers to whom the dramatic critics in point already pay altogether too much attention. And the notion, therefore, that Mr. Belasco cares one way or the other is ridiculous. But whether he cares or does not care, the fact remains that, slowly but surely, Mr. Belasco is succeeding brilliantly in discrediting me. And the worst of it is that, while year by year I feel myself being thus gradually discredited, I am, as one groping in the dark, helpless to fight against the final relentless, devastating, low estimate of me.

Some dozen or more years ago, when first I began to suggest the infirmities and grotesquely bogus tenets of the Belasco stage and its dramaturgical rites,

Anointed of the great yokelry—looked on as one honest, callous to hocus-pocus, and possessed of sagacious critical eye. And in the several years succeeding, as I continued in the face of the general prostration to make bold to point out (save in the instance of certain isolated excellent productions) the Belasco deficiencies, my reputation for unhoodwinkable veracity continued to grow apace. But did Mr. Belasco so much as peep? Did he so much as *once* threaten to bite me? Did he approach my employers on tiptoe while I was sojourning mayhap at Palm Beach or Coronado and whisper gamy somethings against me into their ears? Did he accost me in foyers and wave his arms at me pin-wheel fashion and denounce me loudly to the assembled scholars? Or did he once refuse me admittance to his theaters? He did not! On the contrary, he continued to treat me, as always he had treated me, with the highest politeness and courtesy, sending me the very best seats in his playhouse accompanied by gentlemanly notes of welcome, causing his minions to check my coat and hat gratis, and making me in every way thoroughly comfortable—and embarrassed. And thus shrewdly bided his time.

For as year after year passed, and as eighth-rate play after eighth-rate play succeeded one another upon his stage, and as he was growing richer and richer, I found myself, though I was writing of the eighth-rate quality of the plays as honestly as I had in the years before, being yet gradually regarded even by my old supporters as one who was undoubtedly prejudiced against the producer of these plays. How, otherwise, could I so regularly damn? How, otherwise, could I so regularly refrain from praise?

Aware of the droll forces thus working against me, I tried all sorts of expedients—letting this bad play down more easily than it deserved, over-emphasizing an actor's good performance in that bad play, and the like—but to little avail. I essayed all sorts of

to find something worth while in the different exhibits, hoping against hope to bring myself to like something I ordinarily didn't like. But I honestly couldn't. And I saw my reputation for fairness and integrity slowly slipping from me, as beach sand from the fingers. And I thus doubt that today there is one reader in a hundred who is not a trifle suspicious of me, who doesn't in his heart believe that I have something against Mr. Belasco and am in the habit of using him undeservedly as a chopping block.

Mr. Belasco provides the major difficulty of my critical career. I tell you quite frankly that I see no way to counteract his Machiavellian but ever-smiling courtesy to me. He suavely invites me to his eighth-rate plays; I write that they are eighth-rate plays; and such is the tragedy of prolonged repetition, no one any longer believes me. But, so long as Mr. Belasco is willing, I am willing. I shall continue to accept his invitations. And I shall pray to God that he will soon produce a first-rate play if only to save my critical reputation and my job. I am determined to write praise of him some day, or bust. For another season of "Daddies," "Tiger-Tigers," "Pollys with a Past," "Tiger Roses" and "Dark Rosaleens" and—so far as anyone believing in my honesty is concerned—I shall be irretrievably lost.

It is the more recent producing technic of Mr. Belasco first to pick out as poor a play as he can find and then assiduously to devote his talents to distracting the audience's attention from its mediocrity. This technic is made visible once again in the instance of "Dark Rosaleen." The work of the Messrs. Hepenstall and Kane, the play is of an almost unbelievable ingenuousness: the ancient fable of the twenty-to-one shot ridden to victory at the last moment by a makeshift jockey, and the consequent lifting of the mortgage. The locale is switched from Old Kentucky to the Emerald Isle and a half dozen hip-hip-hooray allusions to Parnell and a free Ireland have been substituted for

the customary 1890 hip-hip-hooray allusions to John L. Sullivan and a free Ireland, but for the rest the manuscript is the venerable Dazey-Boucicault salad in which the beloved mare pokes her nose through the open window just before the race and is wistfully God-blessed by her owner, the heroine, and in which the Irishman is presented less as a Sygne, Dunsany or O'Donnell than as a comedian in the Rentz-Santley Burlesquers.

The play is carefully staged and is in the main very well acted. On the night I witnessed the performance every patriotic allusion to Ireland was cheered to the echo, amid a tumultuous stamping of feet and boisterous applause, by the large audience which contained among its apparently most enthusiastic and vociferous Irishmen a number of the most suspiciously semitic looking Celts I have seen in a dog's age.

IV

THOUGH it contains the favorite stencil of every young man's first attempt at ironic farce, the Satirical Butler, William Le Baron's "I Love You" is otherwise in the general matter of freshness and humour considerably superior to the average home-made drollery. The piece is in essence a jig-saw of "Crichton," "The Harvest Moon" and other such already familiar plays pieced together with much of the repetitional technic characteristic of Teutonic farce-comedy. But Le Baron goes at his job with a sufficient measure of bright parody to make the thing, at least for the first half of the evening, amusing pastime.

Tony Sarg's admirably maneuvered Marionettes, the best things of their kind that America has brought into the theater, are this season doing a version, by one Hettie Louise Mick, of Thackeray's "The Rose and The Ring." The manuscript is not especially well suited to the marionettes; it is poorly arranged; it is deficient in opportunities for the puppets; it is altogether too deliberate. The performance itself, how-

ever, is excellently managed. And the scenic and lighting arrangements, though contrived on a somewhat too small scale, are accomplished with a quite unusual beauty.

H. S. Sheldon's "It Happens to Everybody" is a crudely written, but frequently comical, farce of the Cohan-Megrue-Winchell Smith school. With more careful nursing, it might doubtless have been developed into a considerable popular success, since it contains at bottom a sufficient amalgam of novelty and hokum to pop the emotions of the Broadway dilettanti. Even in its present rough state, the piece is—as above observed—not lacking in a number of very fair chuckles.

V

ST. JOHN IRVINE'S "John Ferguson," hereinbefore noted, was one of the few distinguished pieces of dramatic writing revealed during the season recently concluded. Though somewhat over-written in its scenes of introspection, the play is sharply imagined and forcefully executed; the characters are drawn with a bold and steady hand; the gaunt fable of the ironic tragedy that descends upon the lonely farmhouse in northern Ireland is related with a simple, ruthless, and compelling vigour. Since it is clear that, in the dramatist's view, life is as a "song sung by an idiot, dancing down the wind," it may seem a trifle odd, however, that he did not see fit to make terminal use of the fairly obvious, yet striking, device of the idiot Clutie's *leit-motiv* piping. The presentation by the Stage Guild was, in the main, very good indeed. And the play, one of the slender handful of plays of the 1918-

1919 theatrical year that made any pretence to artistry.

VI

THERE may be less imaginative music show librettists than Miss Anne Caldwell, but I am not privy to their names. The average libretto by Miss Caldwell boasts all the lavish wit and humour of an essay on gastrohydrorrhea in cirrhosis of the liver. As for the lady's originality, one need not look further than her two most recent *opera*, "The Lady in Red" and "She's a Good Fellow." The former, we find, is a reboiling of the thrice-told tale of the artist who paints a fleetingly observed beauty in the nude, subsequently meets her, falls in love with her, is rebuffed, meets her again, listens to her sweet indignations, looks into her eyes, slashes the canvas, and so preserves her modesty—the whole embellished with such novel wheezes as "What is that painting?", "That is the painting of a chaste woman", "Well, if I had seen her running around the woods with no more clothes on than that, I'd have chased her all right, all right." And the latter a reboiling of Robert Buchanan's venerable pre-Julian Eltinge farce, "The Strange Adventures of Miss Brown"—embellished with such not less novel *mots* as "What is your name, senorita?", "My name is Pepita Mosquito", "Well, somebody is going to get stung all right, all right."

And yet I understand that theatrical managers stand in line outside Miss Caldwell's eighty-acre country estate, their pockets full of cheque books, patiently awaiting their turn to bid upon her masterpieces.



THE CORONER'S INQUEST

By H. L. Mencken

I

IN all the days of my pastorate in this place, now running, boy and man, to eleven year, I have faced no such stately pile of critical works as that which now rears itself before me. Enumerated, they come to fourteen volumes, and in size they range from Vincent Starrett's thin monograph on Arthur Machen (*Hill*), with its thirty-five duodecimo pages, to the lordly bulk of the second book of "The Cambridge History of American Literature" (*Putnam*), tilting the hay-scales at two pounds eight ounces. And what variety in tone, in point of view, in sobriety and authority! There is the brisk, disarming iconoclasm of Louis Untermeyer's "The New Era in American Poetry" (*Holt*); there is the heavy respectability of the Cambridge and of Prof. Dr. Bliss Perry's "The American Spirit in Literature" (*Yale Press*); there is the terrible thoroughness of Dr. Julia Patton's "The English Village; a Literary Study" (*Macmillan*), and Prof. Dr. William Henri Eller's "Ibsen in Germany". (*Badger*); there is the brilliant, humanized scholarship of Prof. Dr. John Livingston Lowes' "Convention and Revolt in Poetry" (*Houghton*), and Arthur Symons' "The Symbolist Movement in Literature" (*Dutton*), a new and revised edition of an old book; there is the laborious, mole-like diligence of Prof. Dr. George Pierce Baker's "Dramatic Technique" (*Houghton*); and there is, to make an end, the flatulent, amateurish half-information of Albert Mordell's "The Erotic Motive in Literature" (*Boni*), and Howard Willard

Cook's "Our Poets of Today" (*Moffat-Yard*). A great range of tone and method, indeed! It is miles from the sharp, penetrating criticism of Untermeyer and Lowes to the sophomoric prattle of Mordell. It is even further from the impressionistic manner of Symons to the gray, relentless pedagogy of Eller, Baker and the Cambridge headmasters. But in all of these books, including even Cook's and Mordell's, there is, at worst, something worth reading and noting, something that contributes a shadowy mite to the understanding of the matter. And all, save one, are by Americans! More, at least half of them are unmistakably and unashamedly American!

The most stimulating of all these volumes, despite many curious aberrations of the judgment and the fancy, is undoubtedly Untermeyer's, if only because it is the first cogent and exhaustive statement of the case for the new poetry by one who has helped to give it form and direction. The critical literature of the movement, hitherto, has been very unsatisfactory. I need only point to the windy, chautauqua-like pronouncements of Vachel Lindsey, the vague and often contradictory announcements of the Imagists, and the hollow guff of Dr. Kreymborg and the other third-raters of Greenwich Village. Mountebankery has too often corrupted the thing; in Lindsey himself, perhaps the most original of the whole boiling, it is often impossible to say where serious purpose ends and mere boob-bumping begins. Even the elaborate expositions of Amy Lowell and Ezra Pound have left a lot to be said, for Miss Lowell always demolishes her

theories by printing dithyrambs embodying them, and Pound is so steadily and heroically indignant that he usually leaves one with the notion that all poetry is evil, including even the kind he advocates. Here Untermeyer stands shoulders above the rest. He is clear, he is positive, he is full of a fine gusto, and yet he keeps his head from first to last, and avoids getting into a sweat over ideas that, after all, may still need a certain amount of revision before they take rank with the binomial theorem. Not that he is timorous, vacillating, temporizing. Far from it, indeed. He thinks he knows what he thinks he knows, and he states it with bounce. But the messianic note that gets into the bulls and ukases of Pound and Miss Lowell is happily absent from his treatise, and so it is possible to follow him amiably even when he is wrong.

And that is not seldom. At the very start, for example, he permits himself a lot of highly dubious rumble-bumble about the "inherent Americanism" and soaring democracy of the new poetry movement. "Once," he says, "the most exclusive and aristocratic of the arts, appreciated and fostered only by little *salons* and erudite groups, poetry has suddenly swung away from its self-imposed strictures and is expressing itself once more in terms of democracy." Pondering excessively, I can think of nothing that would be more untrue than this. The fact is that the new poetry is neither American nor democratic. It started, not in the United States at all, but in France, and its exotic color is still its most salient characteristic. Practically every one of its practitioners is palpably under some strong foreign influence, and most of them are no more Anglo-Saxon than a samovar or a toccata. The extravagant strangeness of Pound, his almost bellicose anti-Americanism, is a mere accentuation of what is in every other member of the fraternity. Many of them, like Frost, Fletcher, H. D. and Pound, have deliberately exiled themselves from the republic. Others, such as Oppenheim,

Sandburg, Giovannitti, Benét and Untermeyer himself, are palpably Continental Europeans, often with Levantine traces. Yet others, such as Miss Lowell and Masters, are little more than translators and adapters—from the French, from the Japanese, from the Greek. Even Lindsey, the most thoroughly national of them all, has also his alien smear, for whatever is most novel and significant in his verse is based plainly upon the rude folk-song of the negroes of the South. Let Miss Lowell herself be a witness. "We shall see them," she says at the opening of her essay on E. A. Robinson, "ceding more and more to the influence of other, alien, peoples. . . ." A glance is sufficient to show the correctness of this observation. There is no more "inherent Americanism" in the new poetry than there is in the new American painting and music. It lies, in fact, quite outside the main stream of American culture.

Nor is it democratic, in any intelligible sense. The poetry of Whittier and Longfellow was democratic. It voiced the elemental emotions of the masses of the people; it was full of their simple, rubber-stamp ideas; they comprehended it and cherished it. And so with the poetry of James Whitcomb Riley, and with that of Walt Mason and Ella Wheeler Wilcox. But the new poetry, grounded firmly upon novelty of form and boldness of idea, is quite beyond their understanding. It seems to them to be idiotic, just as the poetry of Whitman seemed to them to be idiotic, and if they could summon up enough interest in it to examine it at length, they would undoubtedly clamor for laws making the confection of it a felony. The mistake of Untermeyer, and of others who talk to the same effect, lies in confusing the beliefs of poets and the subject matter of their verse with its position in the national consciousness. Oppenheim, Sandburg and Lindsey are democrats, just as Whitman was a democrat, but their poetry is no more a democratic phenomenon than his was, or than, to go to

music, Beethoven's *Eroica* Symphony was. Many of the new poets, in truth, are ardent enemies of democracy, for example, Pound. Only one of them has ever actually sought to take his strophes to the vulgar. That one is Lindsey—and there is not the slightest doubt that the yokels welcomed him, not because they were interested in his poetry, but because it struck them as an amazing, and perhaps even a fascinatingly obscene thing, for a sane man to go about the country on any such bizarre and undemocratic business.

Thus burdened at the start, Untermeyer quickly throws off his theories and gives us some extraordinarily sound and penetrating criticism of his contemporaries. Now and then, as in the case of Giovannitti, he allows himself too much praise, and now and then, as in the case of Pound, he halts his analysis before he has done full justice, but in the main he is accurate, thorough and fair. His essay on Robert Frost is far better than Miss Lowell's, and I think he also does better with E. A. Robinson than she does. Furthermore, his book is much wider in scope than hers; covers a great many more poets, and so gives a more comprehensive view of the general movement. Finally, he finds space for a brief consideration of various poets who stand quite outside it, among them, Sara Teasdale and Lizette Woodworth Reese, who are much greater artists than any of the bards within the fold. In this outer Alsatia he is less sure-handed than inside. His astounding under-estimate of John McClure in the *New Republic*, happily not included in the present book, will, I trust, become historical and cause him to blush on the gallows. But, taking his bitter with his sweet, he has achieved a book of criticism that is readable, sagacious and good-tempered—in short, quite the best critical work that the new fermentation of minnesingers has yet thrown up.

As for the relative and absolute worth of these rebels against Stedman's *Anthology* and McGuffey's *Sixth Reader*, I shall probably discourse upon it

profoundly in the future. At the moment, my impression is that Sandburg and Oppenheim are the best of them—the one an incisive and shocking realist and the other a sonorous rhapsodist, almost biblical in his stately eloquence. Miss Lowell is the schoolmarm of the movement—a pedagogue with brief moments of illumination. She has done half a dozen excellent poems in the Imagist manner, and a great many dull doggerels. There is a good deal that is extra-poetical in her celebrity; if she were Miss Tillie Jones, of Allentown, Pa., we'd hear a great deal less about her. Masters, I believe, is already extinct. What made the great fame of "The Spoon River Anthology" was not so much its grim truthfulness as the public notion that it was improper. It fell upon the country at the height of the sex wave. All of Masters' later poetry is pishposh. Lindsey? Alas, he has done his own burlesque. Frost? A standard New England poet, with a few changes in phraseology, and the substitution of sour resignationism for sweet resignationism. Whittier without the whiskers. Pound? The American in headlong flight from America—to England, to Italy, to the Middle Ages, to ancient Greece, to Cathay and points East. The most picturesque and pugnacious man and withal the sharpest, most resilient mind in the movement. The Others group, the Greenwich vers librists, the Socialist trombonists? They are the street-boys following the callopie.

II

DR. LOWES' book, like Untermeyer's, deals with the new poetry, but his method of approach is far different. Instead of contenting himself with a few pages of general exposition and then plunging into a consideration of concrete poets, he devotes practically all of his space to an elaborate investigation of the nature and materials of poetry. This investigation is conducted with the utmost learning and painstaking, and the result is the most original,

informative, persuasive and entertaining volume by a college critic that these old eyes have rested upon for years and years. It is, in fact, a book that I press upon everyone who would understand what all the current discussion of poetry is about. There are weaknesses in it. It has, for example, a last chapter that doesn't belong to what has gone before, and is intrinsically unsound. But in the main it is a work of extraordinary range, depth and good sense—a work in which very widely dispersed facts are brought together and co-ordinated, and in which mere scholastic diligence is matched by a constant shrewdness and a colorful, ingratiating style. I am amazed to find that Dr. Lowes sits in a chair at Harvard. His tenancy, it appears, is recent; he is lately from St. Louis. Let him hide his "Convention and Revolt in Poetry" under the bed. If it ever gets about that a man so intelligent is on the faculty there will be calls for a general court-martial and the abatement of the outrage.

"The American Spirit in Literature," by Prof. Bliss Perry; "Dramatic Technique," by the eminent Prof. George Pierce Baker, and "The English Village," by Dr. Julia Patton, are far more professorial and Harvardish. Dr. Baker's treatise is an incredibly tedious and stodgy piece of work—a vast assemblage of stale platitudes about the drama, supported by examples so numerous and so lengthy that the student essaying to plow through them must inevitably sicken and die on the way. The notion that the learned pundit conducts a highly successful seminary for playwrights at Harvard and has turned out a great number of adept practitioners is one of the amazing superstitions of the day. If his book accurately represents his teaching, then it is hard to believe that he helps his pupils at all, for what is sound in his book is either obvious on its face or easily accessible in other literature, and what is apparently original is often astonishingly feeble. The trouble with him is that he writes

his discourse interesting. The books of Brander Matthews and William Archer on the same subject are far more useful, if only because they are far better written. Here I mean useful to the aspiring Scribe and Maeterlinck. The broader social utility of the Baker book is much greater; it will, I daresay, bog and discourage many a neophyte, and so hold down the annual production of bad plays.

Prof. Dr. Perry's "The American Spirit in Literature" is a good deal more suave in manner, but in it there is the same paucity of ideas. The volume belongs to a long series called "The Chronicles of America," to be edited by a posse of Yale birchmen, and shows every sign of professorial correctness and emptiness. He says the correct things about Hawthorne and Emerson; he is correctly a bit suspicious of Poe; he has the correct patronage for Mark Twain. Toward the end he essays to describe the American spirit, in literature and in life, in a few amiable paragraphs. It is the spirit, he says, of the camper and pioneer. It is marked by "venturesomeness, . . . a tolerant disposition," a desire to be "foot-loose." I quote only partly, but I hope not unfairly; It seems to me that Dr. Perry is very much in error here. The truth is that the American spirit, as it is revealed in American literature, shows characters almost precisely opposite to those he describes. The American, in all the arts and in the larger play of ideas no less, is perhaps the most timorous and conventional of men. Nowhere else in the world is heresy attacked and punished with such overwhelming ferocity; nowhere else are the official doctrines supported by a more formidable body of fears, prejudices and punitive statutes. To be a Whitman in America, or a Mark Twain of the posthumous books, or a Dreiser, or a Poe, is to run almost as much risk as to be an I. W. W.; there are definite punishments for such contumacy, and they are swift and cruel. All the tolerance of the pioneer has been

lies there now is the stupid suspiciousness, the ignorant certainty, the hysterical fear of ideas of the shopkeeper.

The second volume of the Cambridge, like the first, is a monumental and very useful work. It covers the ground thoroughly; it is accurate; it has admirable bibliographies. One does not look for novel notions in such a book; it is professedly a compendium of notions that have been well tested, and contain nothing shocking, and are thus fit for unlimited propagation. But this programme does not exclude plausibility and even charm, as you will find by consulting Prof. Dr. John Erskine's chapter on Hawthorne and Prof. Emory Hollway's excellent summary of the official doctrine about Whitman. Unluckily, it also lets in a certain amount of laborious balderdash, as witness Prof. Dr. Edwin Mims' discourse on the poets of the South and the Hon. Henry Cabot Lodge's heavy effort to prove that Daniel Webster was an ornament of beautiful letters. The Lodge chapter is perhaps the worst in the volume. Lodge himself, I am convinced, is one of the most absurdly over-estimated men now flourishing in America. How the theory that he is an intellectual giant can survive a reading of his books or of his speeches in the Senate is more than I can fathom. He is, in fact, a mere phonograph of platitudes, a correct New Englander of the *décadence*, the perfect Bostonian. But this brings me to his politics, and politics has nothing to do with the Cambridge. I advise you to buy the first two volumes, and to put in your order for the third and last. It is a work quite devoid of the brilliance which sometimes marks the corresponding English work, but it is at least honestly made, and as a reference book it has great value.

Two other valuable but seldom readable works are Dr. Patton's "The English Village" and Prof. Dr. Eller's "Ibsen in Germany." The former is a study of the part that the village has played in English literature since the middle of the eighteenth century, and

represents an enormous amount of mole-like diligence. Scarcely a serious English poem, novel or play of the ensuing century has been overlooked. It is the last word in Ph.D-ism. Dr. Eller goes almost as far. He has sought to find out just what influence Ibsen had upon the modern German drama and just what influence German taste and criticism had upon Ibsen, and to that end he has explored the dramatic reviews for forty years, and prodded into theater programmes and other such documents. The study is to be followed by one of "Ibsen in England," by Miriam Franc, and perhaps by yet other volumes. Its appearance brings forward the fact that a new and complete Ibsen bibliography is something that some patient candidate for the doctorate should undertake. The Halvorsen bibliography, in Dano-Norwegian, is excellent so far as it goes, but it stops with 1901, and thus deals very meagrely with Ibsen's followers and chief commentators. My own collection of Ibseniana is at the disposal of any scholar who cares for the task. More, I shall be glad to keep him in tobacco and malt liquor while he is at it.

Which brings us to Cook's "Our Poets of Today," Symons' new edition of "The Symbolist Movement in Literature," Mordell's "The Erotic Motive in Literature," Starrett's little book on Arthur Machen, and Alexander Bakshy's "The Path of the Modern Russian Stage" (*Luce*). The last-named, I suppose, will be disappointing to those who cherish the common delusion that the Russian stage is vastly in advance of any other. Dr. Bakshy's own text proves that this is not the case. It has some very earnest and competent producers, but in general it is imitative and often it is decidedly second-rate. Among the settings illustrated there is none to equal the best of Gordon Craig or Reinhardt, or, for that matter, the first act scene in "The Jest," as produced by our own Arthur Hopkins. Symons' book is already well known. The present reprint, however, includes some new matter. The essays

on Huysmans, Verlaine, Rimbaud and the others of the symbolist group are excellent, but perhaps the best criticism in the whole volume is in the note on Zola's method, an extremely fine piece of analysis. Starrett's book is so short that he gets little beyond eulogy, but even so he mingles it with sense, and thus one wishes that he would do the thing again and on a larger scale. Cook's volume on the poets is a very bad work—ignorant, lazy, prejudiced, useless. Imagine speaking of Lizette Woodworth Reese as "a new voice in our American poetry," or of Charles Divine as "one of our most important poets," or of Louis V. Ledoux as "conspicuous among the few purely classic (*sic*) poets which American literature had produced!" An obscure maker of doggerel, Anthony Euwer, is praised; George Sterling is not mentioned at all. A flabby introduction by Percy MacKaye completes the atrocity. Mordell is even worse. Seizing upon several notions propagated by the Freudians, he applies them to works of art in the manner of an owlish sophomore. His criticisms are usually childish and his English is execrable. Let Dr. Freud pray to God for escape from ignorant admirers!

III

THE Braithwaite "Anthology of Magazine Verse" for 1918 (*Small-Maynard*) contains, as usual, some of the worst magazine verse of the year. What could be more ludicrous, for example, than Amy Lowell's "The Cornucopia of Red and Green Comfits," surely a maudlin piece of blather, if one was ever penned by mortal hand. Or than some of the doggerel ascribed to Patience Worth, the lady spook? What could be more hollow than the sonnet of Brookes More, or than the "Vanity" of Karle Wilson Baker? The truth is that Braithwaite's pretensions begin to wear distressingly thin. At the start his enthusiasm intrigued and his hard labor called for politeness, but now he grows pontifical, bombastic and ridicu-

lous, and the poet who escapes his collection of bad verse is more to be envied than the one who is included. The true heft of his critical faculty is revealed by the notes on new books of poetry toward the end of his volume. What one encounters there is a critic almost devoid of ideas—in brief, the sort of solemn young man who fills our more intellectual newspapers and weeklies with heavy imitations of the book notices in the *Athenaeum*. It is a wonder some other fellow doesn't go into the poetry-anthology business. It would be easy for him to surpass Braithwaite, and incidentally he would probably stimulate and improve Braithwaite.

The short story anthology of Edward J. O'Brien (*Small-Maynard*) is even worse. Braithwaite, in the midst of his purposeful jingles, at least prints, now and then, an excellent piece of verse. But O'Brien apparently excludes everything that is not wholly third-rate. Even when he pays his devotions to an author capable of decent writing, he seems to choose infallibly a story in which that author is at his worst. Consider, for example, Achmed Abdullah. This Abdullah is an extremely competent journeyman, and when he is feeling in the humor can write an excellent story, with shrewd observation in it, and caustic irony, and much structural ingenuity. But there he is represented by a machine-made tale of Chinatown—one of a sort constantly popular in the cheap magazines—a thoroughly standardized model, turned out at wholesale by dozens of obscure hacks. Yet O'Brien opens his collection with this rubbish. Again, there is a story by Burton Kline. Kline, too, has skill; he has done fiction of very fair merit. But his "In the Open Code," here reprinted, certainly does not suggest it. It is, in brief, a banal piece of sentimentality, as artificial and unconvincing as a dyed moustache. And so on, and so on. O'Brien sagaciously observes that the war stories of the past year or so have been vapid and idiotic—and then prints an extra

bad one by Wilbur Daniel Steele as a glorious exception! I say it is bad, but surely it is not as bad as Julian Street's "The Bird of Serbia!"—also solemnly put among the best of the year. . . . Altogether the collection is an intolerable botch. It reveals an almost absolute lack of ordinary judgment, information and taste. That such silly pretensions as those of Braithwaite and O'Brien should be seriously accepted in America, that their verdicts should be solemnly awaited and snuffled over—this is but one more proof of the naïve stupidity of the folks upon whom a literary artist among us must depend for recognition and a livelihood.

IV

A GOOD many miscellaneous books of more or less interest are in the current crop, and I wish I had space to review some of them at length. The fattest and withal one of the most entertaining volumes in the lot is "The Book of Philadelphia," by Robert Shackleton (*Penn*). It is as thick as an ordinary brick and nearly as heavy. Within are many charming pictures of the huge Pennsylvania village, and much pleasant gabble about its history, and the lingering relics and remains thereof. More than any other town in America, Philadelphia lives in the past. Its great men are all dead; no ideas ever come out of it; it stands for next to nothing in the developing life of the nation. A city of somewhat shoddy shopkeepers, with a proletariat herded like swine by the most putrid of politicians and an imitation aristocracy organized upon sewing-circle principles. But in its history there is plenty of romance, and even plenty of thrills and high courage, and Mr. Shackleton gets some flavor of these things into his book. . . . In "Letters of Susan Hale," edited by Caroline P. Atkinson and Edward E. Hale (*Jones*), the chief scene is old Boston. Miss Hale began to write in 1848, and the Boston personages of more than half a century move through her pages. A sprightly writer, she yet

manages to grow dull toward the end. I daresay one must be a Bostonian to savor it completely, and know Hale from Hale. . . .

The second volume of Guglielmo Ferrero's "A Short History of Rome" (*Putnam*), carrying the story to the fall of the Western Empire, is, like the first, a workmanlike job and extremely well ordered. There is, so far as I know, no better history of Rome in the same compass. It is succinct, and yet it avoids the dryness of a mere summary. E. D. Trowbridge's "Mexico Today and Tomorrow" (*Macmillan*) has the same virtue of sound arrangement. It not only presents a review of the melodramatic history of Mexico; it also discusses the latter-day difficulties of the republic with obviously accurate knowledge, and with no less show of fairness. No other book that I have read describes the causes and events of the revolution more clearly. . . . "Spiritualism," by J. Arthur Hill (*Doran*), is an elaborate defense of spook-chasing by a man, apparently of some intelligence, who believes in it thoroughly. Unluckily, a reading leaves me more convinced than ever that the enterprise is an imbecility, and fit only for senile old maids, male and female. "The Equinox," by Aleister Crowley and others (*Universal*), is a book of magic and quite beyond my comprehension. This Crowley is an ingenious man, but here he deals in ideas that I can't follow. . . . Which brings me to the excellent Modern Library (*Boni-Liveright*) and its new volumes—among them, John Payne's translations of the poems of François Villon, D'Annunzio's "The Flame of Life" (a bad novel, already old-fashioned), a collection of pronunciamientos by Dr. Wilson, and a book of essays on the infernal woman question, by such authors as G. Lowes Dickinson, Elsie Clews Parsons, Edward Westermarck, Lester F. Ward, H. G. Wells, Havelock Ellis and Millicent Garrett Fawcett, with an introduction by the editor, T. R. Smith. This last volume is of unusual interest, and I hope to deal with it again later on.



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HALF A HUNDRED BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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The SMART SET

Edited by
GEORGE JEAN NATHAN
and
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THE MYSTERY OF MAN

By Robert Merkle

THROUGH a peep-hole in time and space I look at the singular creature. I am a disembodied spirit. I look at him as he sits there, but I cannot understand him.

He sits in his chamber of horrors. He has finished his dinner; it is a dinner of the flesh of animals and of herbs. At this moment he is quiet. But in the corners of the room I see his playthings. It is a chamber of horrors. There I see the rack, the pincers, the wheel, the stake, the thumbkins, the boot, the spit, the knout, vials of poison gas—his playthings of a thousand years.

At this moment he is quiet. But I know his history. He it was who roasted Bocchoris, King of Egypt, on the spit. He it was who burned his fellows at the stake by thousands for the pleasure of the multitude not so long ago; who tore the flesh of helpless women with white-hot pincers for the glory of his God; who wrenched apart the limbs of petty thieves upon the rack,

broke the bodies of vagabonds upon the wheel, drew and quartered his traitors in the market-place. He it was who drowned women and children in the river Loire a boat-load at a time; who guillotined for pleasure. He it was who threw his fellows to the lions in the Coliseum; who on the great plains ate the heart of his defeated enemy, steaming and quivering yet; who freezes his fellows slowly to death with douches of water in merry Russia.

He is a beast—cunning, intelligent, but a beast. At this moment he is quiet. His animal face is wreathed in dreams. He has eaten his dinner. What deviltry he will hatch tomorrow no god knows. But now he is quiet. He looks at the crescent moon in the silver mists of heaven. His face is rapt, exalted. He is mumbling to himself over and over again, caressingly, mystically: "The rose has enchanted the nightingale. . . . The rose has enchanted the nightingale. . . ."

CHATTER

By E. Gifford Noyes

THE world is very sweet, even if you won't marry me. The dove brown meadows under a shell gray sky, the little hills, violet and mauve, as soft as a pigeon's wing. I cannot be unhappy. The sails are so pretty on the sea. The sand is so warm in my hands. It was madness to have dreamed of marrying you. I shall go on, when the loveliness passes, drift like those junks, blown by the wind, drop into some harbor, lodge at some inn, see the flutter of a white curtain, glimpse a face at a window pane. Child, are you attending?

Frail hands, dear eyes, exquisite beauty! I've told you that before? Didn't Dante say things over and over again of Beatrice and Petrarch of Laura?

Well, smell the richness of the earth in the wind. The world is very sweet without you. So I shall go down that twisting road, past the open barn, where the calves are fed and your maltese kittens snuggle in the hay. Off and away! Into the crannies of the world, into the cobbled streets with sudden corners, laughing, weeping, scribbling and sometimes believing, I loved you.



THREE VOICES

By George Sterling

WHITE dove, the morning light
Is on the grasses,
And in each wind that passes
A coolness of the night.
"Love! Young love!" you call.

Grey dove, the moon is blue,
No winds remaining.
Low, low is your complaining,
In woodlands dim for you.
"Love! Soft love!" you cry.

Dark dove, where shadows are
None hears you calling.
Night and the dews are falling,
Below the evening star.
"Love! Lost love! you mourn.

THE BOLDINI MADONNA

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

CHAPTER I

MRS. SLOANE stood on the balcony outside her dressing-room. The summer night touched her with its warm serenity. The breeze beat upon her with the gentle regularity of wings. A fragrance, exhaled from the earth, floated up into the still shadows. The woman on the balcony moved slowly away from the strip of radiance thrown through the open French window. She leaned over the balustrade.

It was the sort of night Mrs. Sloane could respond to with ardour; on this occasion, however, she had eyes only for a glittering illumination in the distance. Mrs. Benjamin Weston was giving a spectacular ball; the electric glare emanated from her estate.

Mrs. Sloane, her back to the moon, sighed as she gazed; she even trembled slightly. The quiver that shook her was not unlike the nervous start of a horse at first sight of the hurdle.

At last Mrs. Sloane turned and walked quickly back to her dressing-room. In the dark, the gleam of her arms and the lustre of the white gown she wore had imparted almost a luminousness to her appearance.

Facing her image in a tall mirror, she gave an impression only of excessive modernity. Her bodice frothed and sparkled, as if in an ineffectual attempt to prevent the wearer from looking quite nude. At the hips, the costume became amazingly severe of cut, sweeping in long, clinging lines to the floor, where it spread out into a preposterous train and foamed anew.

In short, it was the kind of gown

Boldini had brought into vogue. All pretty women loved the daring fashion and exulted in the mastery of its difficulties; they had not as yet awakened to the vulgarity of it.

Mrs. Sloane's beauty was of a sufficiently arresting and eccentric type to be heightened by the complex garments enveloping it. Slender to a degree, she amazed one by the perfect beauty of her back and by the exquisite budding swell of her bosom, French modistes found no other woman who could wear clothes with quite the skill of Mrs. Sloane.

The peculiar thing about her was that she never impressed one as clothed at all. Rather she seemed always to be floating out of her gowns as out of a scintillant flood.

A man once found himself famous (but that was years after the night of Mrs. Weston's ball) merely because he had remarked:

"Sybil is a perfect Aphrodite—rising from the sea, you know—and more than half clear of it, too."

Mrs. Sloane smiled at herself in the mirror. Nothing she had ever seen could compare with her eyes, she thought. She was quite just in that appraisal. They were magnificent eyes, long and sleepy and yet with fire somewhere in their black depths. They gave to her skin a startling whiteness; one would have said they usurped all the power she possessed and absorbed all her strength. They were volcanic, triumphant. Her other features were of a delicacy approaching the unearthly by comparison.

Suddenly a door burst open and Timothy Sloane strode across the floor with

a force that set all the dainty things in the boudoir shaking.

"What in hell's the matter?" he sputtered. "You've kept me kicking my heels downstairs for an hour."

Mrs. Sloane ignored this.

As her irate husband came to a full stop beside her, she turned her beautiful back upon him and addressed the maid in a gracious tone.

"I think I am ready for my cloak," she said.

Timothy Sloane stormed away in a rumble of curses. His wife still lingered in front of the glass, bringing order out of the lacy chaos of her evening wrap. At last, satisfied of the effect she would produce, she swept out of the room and glided in swirling grace down the staircase.

One calm look of scorn was all Sloane got for the scowl of rage he shot at her as she descended to his level. She walked past him as if he were a footman. He scuffled along behind and climbed into the motor after her.

"I'll be damned if I waste my time like this again," he announced.

He began to cough, catching himself up now and then with a short gasp.

Mrs. Sloane sat quietly in her corner. She vouchsafed no sympathy; in the darkness, she might have been merely a large exotic flower, exhaling a heady fragrance. Her eyes rested on the man beside her; occasionally, as his choking spasm would reach a climax of inarticulate gurgles, she would shiver and shrink away from him in disgust.

The sigh she gave when he at last quieted down was occasioned, not by solicitude for her husband's well-being, but by the reflection that his face would still be purple for a long time. Mrs. Weston and her guests could not but be revolted by the spectacle he would present. A feeling of discouragement began to weigh on her; she should never have attempted Newport, she told herself; at least, she should have waited until—

But the motor had stopped.

Mrs. Sloane, with an unruly heart, watched her husband grope his way

heavily out of the automobile. He turned and extended his arm; the attitude of polite deference by no means became him. His wife, leaning lightly on him, stepped from the shadow into the warm light. She stood still for a moment and glittered and shimmered.

The picture was compelling, she knew. Then she looked at Timothy Sloane and caught her lip to keep the expression of contempt from her face.

In the passionate desire to captivate her audience, there had mingled a foreboding of failure, a certainty that her husband would somehow thwart her. It was but natural, therefore, that she should gaze upon his disfigurements and with feverish imagination magnify them.

As a matter of fact, he was a big man who had become much too stout. There were traces about him of good looks; but the resistless tide of fat had obscured and altered what fine points he had once possessed. For many years he had filled his skin to bursting, yet with an effect of rather pleasant sleekness; all at once there had come a general let-down, a perceptible sagging of flesh in places. As a result his appearance had become lumpy. Pouches had developed in his previously smooth roundness.

He was not, to be sure, attractive; he was not, however, the outrageous creature his wife was beginning to consider him. Had she ever brought herself to the point of examining him dispassionately it might have occurred to her he was ill. Even that thought would not have caused her to relent, for she would have known it was his excessive drinking that was telling on him at last.

He swayed and coughed as she surveyed him.

A slight tremor of alarm passed through her; but she dismissed the fear and spread her gown around her preparatory to the pretty entrance she had planned so long.

CHAPTER II

ON the day before Mrs. Weston despatched the invitations to her ball, the

Timothy Sloanes had been the subject of an animated discussion. A group gathered for tea on Mrs. Weston's terrace had focused a fitful attention on the topic.

Mrs. Anthony Willoughby began it.

"Are you going to ask the redoubtable Sloanes to your party, Alice?" She addressed Mrs. Weston.

"I haven't quite decided." Mrs. Weston smiled broadly. "Freddie has been begging so prettily I think I shall give in to him."

"Freddie!" Miss Winton exclaimed. "What under the sun has Freddie to do with it?"

"He worships Mrs. Tim," Mrs. Weston elucidated. "Of course he doesn't know her; but he thinks she's tragic and beautiful."

"She is beautiful," said Reggie Fleet. "Every man I've seen agrees with Fred there."

"I agree, too," returned Mrs. Weston. "She is so beautiful she's absurd. She is indescribable, with her wonderful, indecent eyes."

"I know just the words that do describe her," announced Fleet. "You've given me the cue, Alice. Mrs. Tim is obscenely beautiful."

That evoked a roar of laughter. Mrs. Willoughby in particular filled the air with a ripple of liquid tones that somehow affected one as the result of technique rather than spontaneous mirth; but then, the lady's charm lay in her perfect art. She was as symmetrical a product of wealth as a sunken garden.

Had Mrs. Willoughby not been so lovely, so sweetly musical, people might have called her conventional. If she should ever go insane, it would be to the accompaniment of a flute. "Gracious and womanly"—so she was always termed; that is, until debts began to worry her.

Mrs. Weston, on the other hand, gave vent to merriment by throwing herself back in her chair and shouting. She was a bluff woman, to put it mildly, and seldom practised modulation;

she was the sort that no corset can check for long.

"Does anyone know what she's like? Has she a history of any kind?" Miss Winton, who had merely smiled at Fleet's witticism, took up the subject of Mrs. Sloane. Miss Winton was a quiet girl, not without a vein of curiosity in her athletic makeup.

"Oh, yes," supplied Fleet. "I know a good deal about her. She comes of splendid stock—old Southern family; they've all been disreputable for generations—a typical aristocratic crowd—splendid stock."

Miss Winton frowned. "You are unkind. You have probably made that up this minute, just to be clever."

"No, he's truthful," said Mrs. Weston.

Her attention had begun to wander; but, catching the word "disreputable," she had experienced a revival of interest. "I've heard something very much like that. I've heard she was Spanish—a descendant of the Aztecs and some explorer—Columbus, I think."

"Alice backs me up," laughed Fleet. "You see, the two stories are much the same."

"They come to the same thing," opined Mrs. Willoughby. "Some dreadful heritage, isn't that the idea?"

"Exactly," agreed Fleet. "It may turn out to be only malaria, but it's an interesting problem, at any rate."

"Good heavens!" protested Miss Winton. "If she's as unhealthy as all that, can't somebody deport her?"

"Reggie is trying to scare us off, so he can have Mrs. Tim all to himself." Mrs. Willoughby smiled prettily at Fleet in a way that gave the lie to her statement.

"Upon my word, I swear I've never spoken to the woman." Fleet returned Mrs. Willoughby's smile.

"Well, after all, isn't that the first thing we've heard in her favour this afternoon?" Mrs. Willoughby wanted to know.

"Let Freddie talk to you about her," said Mrs. Weston. "He's made up quite an original story; he says it *must*

be true. The point is, according to Freddie, that she was the daughter of fine but beggared parents. She married Tim Sloane to save the old people from the poor-house. Now she is pining away—getting to be all eyes—just because she's so much better than her husband."

"Very original of Freddie!" mocked Fleet.

"Does Freddie say what the parents think now of their daughter's bare back?" asked Mrs. Willoughby.

"Freddie doesn't *know* anything about it," said Mrs. Weston. "This is all conjecture; but he does believe it."

"I think one can tell to look at her that she hasn't the instincts of a white woman," announced Mrs. Willoughby. "I am sure the Aztec story must be the true version."

"Well, I shall ask her for my party," said Mrs. Weston. "There's nothing startling in that, is there? I always ask everybody in sight, anyhow, to my big affairs."

She signalled with her highball glass to a figure in the distance.

"Now, let's drop Mrs. Tim," she warned. "Here comes Freddie and he won't listen to stories against her."

CHAPTER III

MRS. SLOANE really delighted people at the ball. Despite the exaggerated splendour of her costume, she struck one as after all childish and ingenuous. Such spontaneous gaiety was refreshing; a short conversation with the lady left one soothed, as if a cool, bright billow had suddenly rippled its way across the floor and broken over one with a delicate plash.

She covered ground with speed, flashed into one's vision and then in an instant was out of sight. She was never in a hurry, however; she just drifted about airily like thistle-down. For all the expanse of bare surface she displayed and the very feminine charm she exerted, it was hard to believe, if one judged by her motion, that she had legs.

"You were right at that, Freddie—that is, in one respect," Mrs. Weston confided to her nephew, Frederick Mallory. "Your Mrs. Sloane is delightful—quite the best sort. She might have been common, you know. How were we to suspect she would carry her gowns off so superbly? But she never could be the child of paupered parents. I still can't think her *human*."

Mallory smiled and a beam of delight showed in his gentle eyes.

"She does seem too dazzling for human nature's daily food," he commented. "She's a—a sort of fountain congealed or—well, I can't say what she suggests. She is elusive; you can't put your finger on her."

His aunt's characteristic, broad smile brought him up short.

"There you go," he protested, "just because her gown is low you think my last remark was funny. Really, Aunt Alice, it's wonderful what enjoyment you can still get out of the obvious."

He gave her a good-natured scowl.

"I'm sorry, Freddie," she apologized. "But when you get poetical you do blunder."

It was quite evident that young Mallory had fallen in love with the radiant Mrs. Tim. His aunt was by no means alarmed. She did not pretend to understand Freddie; but she knew he was to be trusted. He was not the kind to become involved in a scandal.

Everybody felt sorry for Mallory; he was upright, admirable, pitiful. He was really unique—an ascetic with a wild desire to worship something high and immensely exalted. Born into a civilization that had no place for such as he, he had been forced to absorb a certain amount of alloy. He never could have survived in his original pure state.

The result was that he had developed a sort of scholarly reticence as a protection against the people about him. His fund of devotion had been drawn on, not for the promotion of a religious body, but in the cause of beauty. He was a votary of poetry, music and painting.

And now, of a sudden, he had found himself prostrate before the vision of Mrs. Timothy Sloane. It was ludicrous; even Mallory was instinctively aware of that. Mrs. Tim was neither high nor immensely exalted; whatever was remarkable in her elevation was due only to her French heels.

He was just a bit frightened. He had never before thrown himself at a woman's feet. It was a piece of ironic injustice to thrust him into the world at such an epoch. He would have been much happier as a contemporary of the Egyptian hermits; he would then have had the right to scramble up on a pillar and nod his life away in awe-struck reverence. It was not yet too late, however, to draw the fellow out and humanize him; but nobody would have picked Mrs. Sloane for the job.

On the occasion of his aunt's ball, Mallory ventured into hitherto undiscovered lands of faery. Mrs. Sloane was at the helm, one might say; for, although Mallory had guided her away from the house to the parapet overlooking the ocean, it had seemed, strangely enough, as if she had floated on in front, flutteringly near and yet unattainable and as if she had pointed the way to the little Greek temple where they paused.

They were on the brink. They leaned upon the balustrade and peered at the water washing the wall of masonry far below. The moonlight lent to Mrs. Sloane's skin the gleam of alabaster and set her gown to flashing whitely.

She drank in the night and was silent for a moment; it was one of the most fascinating of her traits that she could appear placid and yet at the same time was never still. She was always alertly vivacious; but her continual effervescence gave her an added zest for the beholder. She was in this like champagne just poured. Her voice added the silver tinkle necessary to complete the bewitching effect she created.

She glanced over her shoulder at the small marble edifice behind them.

"Isn't it charming?" She did not

wait for his answer. "It is a mistake, though, expecting us to live up to a background like that."

"Oh, no, Mrs. Sloane. It's a perfect picture, just this way."

Mallory's tone had a tentative quality, as if, not sure of his ground, he were venturing abroad only carefully and on tip-toe.

"No!" She pursed her lips. "Our clothes are absurd today. They are meant for a drawing-room, where one doesn't cast a shadow. Greek robes must have fitted into the picture, like those columns."

She pointed to the parallel blocks of shade the pillars threw across the terrace.

"Now look at my silhouette," she continued, indicating the grotesque outline stretching over the ground at her feet.

"See how fat and puffy it is—like a goose or something."

Mrs. Sloane struck the note of childish eagerness.

"But why give one's attention to a shadow?" he asked. "You look like a swan in that gown. I don't care to see what's beneath your feet."

He was both surprised and pleased to hear himself so glib.

"I suppose a shadow does serve its purpose—even the shadow of a modern frock." She looked down again. "It's like an allegory, isn't it?"

She smiled as the thought struck her. "I might be an angel treading down a demon."

Mallory did not reply; his silence was one of rapt adoration. Mrs. Sloane cleverly took the measure of his attitude. She glided up the steps leading to the temple and paused at the top to toss him a smile. Their gaze held for a perceptible space.

Just at the moment when she was preparing to droop her head as if vanquished by his steady contemplation, Mallory looked away. An expression of impatience, almost of sullen disapproval, crossed his face. The poor fellow was giving way to savage annoyance at himself for the embarrassment

that had overwhelmed him and caused him to shy; it appeared, however, like involuntary condemnation of his companion.

The sound of laughter reached them. People were approaching. Mrs. Sloane descended the steps. She rustled across the terrace to him and together they returned to the house. Mallory still had nothing to say. He had let her arch glance confuse him hopelessly. She, on her side, had stiffened and was holding her head primly erect. Mallory knew what she was thinking—that he had judged her delicate coquetry brazen and had, as it were, taken to his heels.

He got hot in the bewildered effort to formulate a deft phrase that would show her he was not after all so abysmal an ass. He wrestled with himself to no purpose. The silence was still unbroken when they reached the ball-room.

"It's such a perfect night—somehow talking would take away—something." He would not have volunteered it if he had not been desperate.

Mrs. Sloane merely raised her eyebrows. Dismissing him with sweet dignity, she turned to receive the homage of Reginald Fleet.

Mallory was aghast at his clumsiness. How *could* a man behave so like a dunce? For all his reticence he had at least acquired ease in the years he had been about. What had betrayed him, he wondered. Did infatuation always knock people on the head this way?

Fleet at once dropped into a tone of easy intimacy with Mrs. Sloane.

"Have you been out getting your feet wet?" he asked.

"No," she returned with a challenging smile. "I have kept to the beaten track."

She grimaced at the retreating figure of Mallory.

"Besides," she continued, "it is not my habit to go wading in fountains."

It was daring. She alluded to a disgraceful performance of the previous summer, in which her companion was implicated. The story had still a tang

then; it took several years to render it quite stale.

Fleet laughed and hung his head with deliberate intent; he levelled a sly shaft from his handsome eyes.

"Why do you scoff?" he asked. "Do you know that wading can be made beautiful? Let me inform you it is an art, even a rite if it's done properly."

"Perhaps," she agreed—"by moonlight." She had already decided Fleet was charming.

"Oh, I don't defend such a proceeding at noon," he assured her.

"So the tale is true." She shook her head. "You don't look the type to play schoolboy pranks."

"Nothing delights women so much as two-year-old capers from us," he replied with mock sententiousness.

"I wonder." She ruminated. "It is possible. People love the depravity of an act that used to be done by them in all innocence."

"You put it very strongly," he said. "I object to 'depravity.'"

"Should you like me to call your conduct cheap?" she asked.

"Good Lord, no," he expostulated. "What we do on impulse may be absurd—it may be depraved—but it's seldom cheap. Bringing the thing to light later and discussing it—that is cheap, it seems to me."

"How cruel of you!" She winced daintily as he chuckled above her. "You don't present your case convincingly, though. One can't picture you in a moment of impulse. Everything is premeditated with you, I fear."

"Certainly not. If I had been that sort, I should be a married man with a family now. I know that would be best for me but I can't pull it off. I often wish somebody would take me by the collar and push me up the aisle to the altar."

"You are getting mixed," she said. "It's the bride that one pushes up the aisle."

It was a deliberate hint on her part; she meant him to take it up and ponder over it. He would decide that marriage had been forced on her. She wanted

him to get the false impression and spread the report.

She paused and looked away.

"I see my husband prowling about on the lookout for me." She gave Fleet a dazzling smile and made her way across the room to Sloane.

"I am going," announced Sloane testily. "I never was so bored in my life."

His voice was under imperfect control; the words reached a good many ears.

His grievance was a substantial one. Deserted on the very threshold by his wife, he had been forced to fare for himself. He had approached several people and attempted to appear at ease with them by adopting an air of gruff defiance. He had not been treated with cordiality and had been dealt out the rebuffs he courted. He therefore gave up in a fury the pursuit of sociable companions and found some solace in abundant draughts of champagne. It was impossible to make a man like Sloane drunk; he could be counted on in that at least not to disgrace himself.

"Don't be stupid, Tim," admonished his wife. "It is far too early to go home."

"You do as you like. I am going," he pursued. "I am going *now*, do you hear?"

"Very well."

Frigidly she yielded the point, knowing that, once the tone of stubbornness crept into his voice, he would kick up an unseemly row if she attempted to cross him.

There was the bitterest sort of resentment in her heart. She had progressed so well; if she could but have lingered, the night would have wound up in triumph for her. Of that she was certain. Now ludicrous rumors would begin to circulate. People would soon be treating each other to an account of Mrs. Sloane's abrupt departure, undoubtedly to tuck her sodden spouse into bed.

Sloane, with a confused haste that puzzled her, began to stride away.

"Please wait for me," she called after

him. When she had caught up, she murmured, "you are doing this merely to humiliate me."

"Oh, go to hell!" he responded under his breath.

Mrs. Sloane carried off the departure with delicate ease. While she and Tim were descending the long flight of marble steps to their motor, she turned and tossed one last wistful glance behind. The strum of the orchestra reached her; she sighed.

Suddenly there came a tug at her cloak, followed by a sound half a gasp and half a sob.

In terror, she shrank back and trembled under a weight that had begun to press upon her.

Not until she raised her eyes to her husband did she get the force of it all. He was toppling, his head thrown against her shoulder. She caught sight of the blood suffusing his eyes. As she stood still and helpless, he swung away from her and crashed down the steps.

Mrs. Weston's footman jumped from his position at the door of the motor.

The Sloane servants, scrambling out of the automobile, had joined him and were bending over the prostrate man before Mrs. Sloane had conquered the faintness sweeping over her and descended to them.

"Let me call Mrs. Weston, Madame," urged the footman. "We could carry Mr. Sloane to one of the bed-chambers."

Mrs. Sloane, however, preserved the social instinct even in the midst of tragedy.

"I don't wish Mrs. Weston disturbed," she replied firmly. "We must get him into the motor; it will be far better for him to be at home."

The bewildered servants bundled the terrible figure somehow into the automobile. His wife, sitting up very straight in the corner, held the head on her lap. With admirable calm, she gave orders. At last, after final instructions to Mrs. Weston's man in regard to summoning a physician and an incisive command to say nothing to his mistress until the next morning, the

woman found herself shut in with her husband.

The light of a passing street-lamp flashed into the motor. Mrs. Sloane looked down at the man's face. She felt herself shuddering all over.

In a moment she had burst into hysterical sobs.

CHAPTER IV

MRS. WESTON, at the Casino the following afternoon, enthusiastically acclaimed Mrs. Sloane; everyone who heard the story hailed the debut of the tragic heroine.

"Why the ride didn't kill him I don't know." Mrs. Weston voiced her amazement. "And I can't make out how he fitted into the motor; it seems he was on the floor, with his head propped up. It was Spartan; but it was kind. It saved my dance."

Fleet laughed. "I call it comic. It's the funniest thing that has happened this season."

"She is a woman in a thousand, of course." Mrs. Willoughby spoke, however, without enthusiasm; she alone meted out a measured praise. "Still, I can't help thinking the act brutal; she strikes me as homicidal. You all say she was superb. I quite agree; but the coup was *too* clever. It wasn't womanly."

"And it wasn't your party, Nora," Fleet reminded her.

Mrs. Sloane, if she had heard these comments, would have wearily acknowledged the justice of Nora Willoughby's contention. She had striven, all that anxious night, to put away the sense of guilt; but self-accusation had beaten like a pulse through her consciousness, even while she stood at the doctor's side and rendered him deft aid. She had refused to leave the room where her husband lay; her quiet competence had been remarkable.

She had broken down at last, late in the morning. In bed she found it impossible to sleep; she tossed about, trembling and sobbing brokenly, until they quieted her with a drug.

As a matter of fact, the strain had distorted her vision and thrown everything out of focus; from the moment her husband fell, she had been delirious and had fancied herself sane. There had been nothing to steady her; yet, in the midst of confusion, she had appeared cool.

She forgot to take into consideration her terror and bewilderment; it seemed to her she had acted abominably in cold blood. Her husband was dying, that she was sure of; and at the instant of crisis she had sacrificed him in the interest of a hostess, had risked his life merely because it might have annoyed Mrs. Weston to witness the gruesome intrusion upon the festive scene. It was an overwrought imagination, certainly, that the sleeping-powder was called upon to soothe.

Days of abject repentance followed. Poor Tim became for his wife an object of wellnigh maternal solicitude. She hung over him constantly in a cloud of exquisite drapery. The calls of the sick-room had found her with a wardrobe ill-adapted to such an exigency.

For a time she thought of ordering a quantity of severe costumes, cut with a beautiful suitability to the occasion. In the end, however, she decided that a morning-wrapper would perhaps cheer the sufferer in his lucid moments, for of course the sick love what is fragrant and flower-like.

She therefore swept up and down before the bed in her most delicate negligees. They by no means impeded her progress. Her ministrations continued faithful and effective.

Little by little, she lost the belief that she had committed a crime. The habit of giving comfort and executing instructions made her almost happy; and in her heart a quite authentic feeling of pity and tenderness lay. She no longer, now that her husband had been struck down, shrank away from him. As she would press her frail fingers to his forehead, no tremor would shake her.

Sybil Sloane had never before wit-

nessed the struggle against death. Both her parents had died in the South while she was abroad. The doors of sick-rooms had always been closed to her; and she had been given a sight of dead faces only after the marks of suffering had been removed. Like many persons who have been fostered to perfection at a distance from all signs of decay, she responded to this new note of human weakness and pathos. There was even a trace of legitimate curiosity in her attitude.

At the end of a fortnight, the attending physicians dropped guarded hints of a possible recovery. The sick man's mind cleared. One morning he mumbled something as his wife rustled past him; he had recognized her. His speech improved rapidly, though it came from him with an effect of being forced out through clogged passages.

"Your husband, we are convinced, will get well." At last the announcement came.

Mrs. Sloane stood quite still. The words, she felt, were preposterous; such a possibility had never presented itself to her mind. She had up to this time brushed aside the tentative suggestions of hopefulness as absurd. The news gave her a distinct shock.

In her boudoir, she settled herself among the cushions of the divan and lit a cigarette. The attitude of easy repose brought out all the sinuous slenderness of her figure; at that moment she might have been posing for Sargent. The effect seemed studied. It was characteristic of Sybil Sloane to look her best when she was alone and confronting the future in perfect earnestness.

So Tim would recover. She had not, after all, been preparing him for death. He was there to be reckoned with; life would soon settle again into the old routine. The fit of apoplexy would leave the man a more potent factor than ever in his wife's problematical career. Weakness would keep him constantly near; physical disability would but add fuel to his explosive temper.

The new feeling of permanence in

the tie from which she had imagined herself almost free hurt like a bodily ache. A protest against the injustice of everything stirred in her. She had forgotten completely now that there had ever been in her mind the thought of guilt in connection with his illness.

Sybil consulted her watch. It was her custom to visit Tim at just this moment every day. She rose. Reaching the top of the staircase, she hesitated. Then, instead of continuing along the corridor, she descended quickly to the first floor. The door of the music room shut behind her with a smart emphasis.

For over an hour, Sybil played. It took only one Chopin valse to dissipate the gloom that had enveloped her. Emotions with her possessed a theatric volatility. The liquid rippling of a piano could waft her straight out of despondency into the empyrean. Music had an effect more subtly purifying, more tonic with Sybil than fresh air; it might be said that she filled her lungs with deep draughts of delicate sound.

She got a score of "Faust" and opening to the "Roi de Thulé" ballad began to sing softly. The atmosphere of Marguerite's garden stole over her like silvery twilight.

As her hands crashed out a chord that set her vibrating, she realized with a little start that she had run through the entire act. She had responded completely to the magic of it; the last delicate surrender in Faust's arms had left her trembling. She turned back to the "Air des Bijoux" and sang it again, this time with a tiny furrow between her eyes; it was evident she held herself in check with a view to dispassionate criticism.

After she had finished, she relaxed, sighing. Closed eyes and a tired droop of the head showed her discouraged. Her voice had lost something. The trill had no longer the perfect evenness that had once been her boast; the swelling rapture was still there, but that did not satisfy her. How beautifully, with what

perfect art, she had done the thing in Paris!

Suddenly she remembered Timothy Sloane. She caught her lip in bitter irony at the recollection. He and his millions had seemed the supreme prize to her, during those student days in Paris. She thought of the exultation, the joy in her heart when she had forced him to his knees. His vulgarity had by no means revolted her aristocratic sensibilities. The marriage had meant an end of hard work. The *début* in Brussels had loomed, so terrifying, just ahead. Sloane's wooing had been clumsy but well-timed. Sybil, relinquishing the prospect of triumph as a *prima donna*, had decided a career as a society matron would suffice. The five years of her married life had taught her that a Western husband with millions may be a handicap that bodes defeat even for a descendant of Virginia planters. New York families are apt to be wary of Southern blue blood when it is not mingled with the more equable fluid bequeathed by Knickerbocker ancestors.

Mrs. Sloane, tracing the course of her life with a relentlessly clear sight, stopped short before the vision of the stricken man upstairs. Pity for herself overwhelmed her and, sinking into a chair by the window, she began to weep.

After a time, the throbbing of her pulse began to hurt dully; she had cried herself into a headache. As her gaze drifted aimlessly through the window, it occurred to her that she had not been out of the house for a week. It was a dazzling day, with a heady breeze and a continual winged race of shadows over the water. Sybil decided she needed a bracing ride.

The change from the iridescent billows of a tea gown to a compact habit took time. Tim must be already uneasy, Sybil reflected; the thought seemed not to worry her.

The wind rushed by and sang in her ears when Sybil cantered briskly out of the driveway; it was as if an invisible frolicsome scamper were going

on in the air. She brightened. Not even a headache could assert its sway over her for long.

At the gate, she paused a moment, then decided for a run over the beaches. It was something of an effort to turn her back on the more frequented thoroughfares; she knew the picture she made on a horse. Still, it would be best to efface herself until all the world should share with her the tidings of her husband's return to life.

Skirting the cheap precincts of Easton's Beach, Sybil galloped the length of Purgatory Road; as she checked the pace, enabling her horse to pick a dainty way down the slope to Second Beach, she noticed a solitary horseman on the sandy stretch.

He was riding in her direction; before she had gone far, she recognized Mallory.

Her greeting was cordial. He responded with a dignified attempt at gaiety; his quick flush of delight pleased her. She had gone over more than once in her mind the ridiculous scene on the steps of Mrs. Weston's temple. In the end, she had come discriminately to judge his attitude as flattering. It was possible he might prove a dreadful bore on further acquaintance; but, Sybil had determined, he was at least a gentleman and merited a trial.

He questioned her at once about her husband. It was but natural, of course; yet it struck her that Reginald Fleet would have begun far afield.

"I have just heard splendid news," she told Mallory. "My husband is pulling himself together and winning his fight."

"Ah, I am so glad. Do you know, I can see that you too have been battling and helping him win."

The tone she had set was stiff; she lightened it, fearing a bombastic tendency on his part.

"Oh, dear," she wailed, "have I developed wrinkles?"

He could be gallant but not agile. "No, no; you have a triumphant air. You show that you have just come from a field of victory."

As he spoke, Sybil deliberated.

Why not talk seriously with this man? Might it not be refreshing to drop the tone of banter for once?

She surveyed him, found herself approving of his gentle good looks and mentally told herself it was unfair thus to keep him at a disadvantage. It would be something of a novelty, in any case, to draw him out and to exercise for his delectation her well-schooled intellect.

"We talk as if I had wrestled with death and thrown him," she remarked. "A modern dressing-up of the Alcestis story, isn't it?—the woman does the throwing, don't you see?"

He laughed out a surprised appreciation.

"We *have* reduced death to ridiculous proportions in modern literature, haven't we?" he commented. "I suppose Ibsen started it with his rubbish about suicide being obsolete and all that. Nowadays, the death of a hero is considered a dreadful anti-climax."

"It's true." She showed an eager desire to follow it up. "We have reduced death and made it so feeble that a woman *could* throw it. That is going too far."

"It's a fad and will pass," he assured her.

"I hope so," she returned. "I like nothing better than a successfully executed death—in a book or a play. I can't say I fancy the act in real life, though."

"Isn't it extraordinary?" he cried. "I have been afraid to talk to you, because I thought you might be rattle-brained, like all the other lovely ladies I know."

"You were sure, if you looked into my head, that you'd find it resembled a vanity box, weren't you?" She laughed. "Empty except for a very fluffy powder-puff. My brain, I assure you, is more like an untidy suitcase."

She developed the far-fetched image elaborately; she relished his attitude of charmed attention. "I go rummaging about in it and never can find what I want—it's most disconcerting."

"It seems to me you have your brain remarkably well packed. You have had no difficulty today, at any rate, in finding what you were after." He radiated enthusiasm; he so seldom got the opportunity to be himself.

"I do know more than I'm usually willing to admit," she confessed. "Father was a scholar and a tyrant—not a typical Southerner at all. He fed my mind forcibly, so it got more nourishment than a silly girl's should."

"I say," he suggested, "should you like to walk a bit?"

She complied and turned their horses over to her groom.

They got on famously.

Before the afternoon was over, they were the best of friends. The tone of the conversation soon dropped to a normal level and they found themselves chatting quite simply. The episode of the Weston ball, touched on with apologies by Sybil, proved a source of mirth.

"What possessed me to act so?" she wondered. "It was my fault we didn't hit it off. I'm not surprised you thought me a fool. I should have known you weren't the sort to flirt with."

"Tell me," he demanded, when she had remounted and was preparing to gallop away, "do you come here often?"

She hesitated. "Do you?"

"Today is the first time for me this season."

"I come here every day," she said.

She had not realized, until after she had spoken, that she so obviously liked him.

"I shall come here every day," he returned.

As she wheeled her horse about, the faintest of blushes, stealing over her pallor, rewarded him.

CHAPTER V

A WEEK passed. Mrs. Sloane's visits to the sick-room became less frequent. This caused no surprise. The nurses and physicians had been quite certain, from the beginning, that she would in-

evitably get impatient, sooner or later, with the weary routine; indeed, the verdict of Tim's attendants was that she had held out extremely well.

Mrs. Sloane had rearranged her daily schedule. She reverted to the old habit of breakfasting in bed and rising at eleven. Noon found her with her husband for a perfunctory half-hour. Then, until luncheon, she would be shut in the music-room; her accompanist had been recalled from a vacation induced by Tim's illness. Sybil loved this morning practise; and she had once thought of her singing as the hardest of tasks! Luncheon over, she again soothed Tim by her passive presence, this time for precisely an hour. The rest of the afternoon would be occupied by her ride—and incidentally by her meeting with Mallory. For years she had neglected her reading; the long evenings enabled her to catch up a bit. Sometimes, if she became very much engrossed, Tim had to go without the balm of her influence, without her sweetly breathed good night; at best, he would get but a fleeting peek at her.

It was taken for granted now that Sloane would recover—that is, it was taken for granted by everyone but Sloane himself. He tried his feeble best to put out his cheeks in scorn, whenever he heard a cheering word about his remarkable improvement. He was done for, he felt convinced. Nothing could shake that decision. As his mind grew clearer, he began to brood. During the period of Sybil's sweetest ministrations he had been unconscious. Her defection was almost the first thing he had been able to get with precision. His anger rose against her; a great part of his time was occupied by silent cursing.

One evening, when Sybil bent over him prettily to whisper good night, he stammered out a peremptory command.

"I want to talk to you—*alone*," was what it came to.

Sybil shook her head. "You mustn't wear yourself out," she admonished him.

Then she sped back to her reading.

The next morning, Sybil found one of the doctors leaning over Tim. With a nod of understanding, he straightened and bowed his greeting.

"Mr. Sloane wants to talk; he has something to tell you," the man explained. "It won't hurt him the least bit, I'm sure."

She sat down beside the bed and bent her head to listen. The sound of a door closing told her the doctor had hustled the nurse out.

Tim spoke with prodigious effort. When he had finished, Sybil sat quite motionless. The effort to make out the words had been trying; often they had become choked by the superfluous sounds that accompanied them. It had been so difficult to grasp, syllable by syllable, what he articulated that she had somehow let the meaning of it all escape her. With Tim lying quiet again at last, she closed her eyes and placed the fragmentary utterances together. She went over the narration in her mind, moving her lips silently:

"You have been no wife for a man; a man's *got* to have an heir."

Why should Timothy Sloane crave a son, she asked herself; could he think it tragic that the Sloane line should become extinct?

"I am going to tell you something—not any damned confession; I'm not ashamed of this. I've got a son; I'm going to make him my heir. You'll get more money than you want, anyhow; he'll take my name and his share of the estate. Legal adoption—that's my plan. It won't take much time or energy. I can last till it's over. I am *proud*; I mean to let people know he is my own."

She opened her eyes suddenly; the droop of exhaustion was gone and her face became brightly alert.

"Tim," she queried with distinctness, "how old is your son?"

"Three years," he returned.

Sybil with difficulty suppressed a smile; the situation began to assume a comic value.

She rose.

"I understand perfectly," she said in gentle tones.

Tim had expected tears of protest and cries of humiliation. The prospect of Sybil's prostration had impelled him to act on his son's behalf quite as much as the stir of parental affection for the strapping infant. The scheme of adoption would probably never have occurred to him if he had not been for a week in a perpetual fume of rage against his wife.

Worn out by his exertion, he lay and panted; he confessed himself puzzled at Sybil's gentle calm. He *did* not understand; perhaps if he could have realized that he was not on his death-bed he would not have been so at sea.

As Sybil, gliding away, reached the door, Tim played his trump card.

"The mother's name is Mary Sullivan." He threw this from him like a missile.

"I understand perfectly," his wife repeated and disappeared.

Tim frowned. He had been quite sure she would crumple up in agony at mention of the dreadful name. His enthusiasm had dropped; he determined to postpone the plan of adoption.

That afternoon Sybil, while her hair was being dressed for riding, hummed to herself, broke into fluty whistles and chattered at a headlong rate to her maid. All at once she began to shake with uncontrollable laughter; she tossed off a perfect star-shower of silver peals.

Sybil's mirth was contagious; the maid smiled broadly.

"*Ah, la chose se complique.*" remarked Sybil. "*On ne sait ce que l'on fait; on est très-parfaitement absurde. Ce sera tout bénéfécie pour moi.*" She was enigmatic.

"*Mais oui!*" agreed the maid, at a loss.

A week later Sybil, assured by the doctor that her husband could get along for a few days without her, went to New York. Tim stormed and blustered during her absence; he was confident the visit meant a mourning outfit.

Sybil returned in a jubilant spirit. Her lawyer had been sanguine. The

matter could be despatched with speed and ridiculous ease, he had asserted. Tim, once he was on his feet, would be handed the papers he himself had made it so easy to put into shape.

Meantime, his wife would go quietly to work, getting things ship-shape for a solitary trip abroad. It might take a twelvemonth, she decided, before people would consider she had altogether recuperated from the protracted lapse of the past five years.

CHAPTER VI

THE divorce was happily free from all spectacular features, if one failed to take into consideration the unprecedented size of the alimony. That sum had set the entire country to gasping, Tim himself not excepted. Otherwise, proceedings had been quiet and unostentatious, "like a house wedding," as Reggie Fleet put it.

Sybil had suffered moments of terror at the thought of the tantrums Tim might give way to; but he had been positively stunned by the affair. He had not regained his breath until it was all over. When he did recover from the shock, he at last found himself accepting dumbly the fact that he must be getting well. A man hovering between life and death of course would have succumbed in short order. Sybil had informed the world, in a manner not at all to Tim's liking, that the Sloane line had an heir after a fashion. The infant's mother had testified in a vein eminently satisfactory to the wronged wife. The idea of legal adoption was set aside with promptness by Tim.

Sybil, trailing clouds of alimony (this a mot of Nora Willoughby's) set a straight course for Florence. Paris, the Riviera—she had dismissed them decisively as too conspicuous.

"Above *all*, not Egypt!" reflected Sybil.

The year in Italy was to be a veritable retirement from the world; no composer, however, keeping his prima donna out of things for an act or two,

ever had his audience more squarely before his mind's eye than had Sybil at this time. The months of self-effacement were, quite frankly, a sort of cocoon period in her career, a preparation for the imminent flash of gorgeous wings.

She felt, to be sure, by no means grubby or bored. It was all perfectly fascinating—if one kept in mind that it would not last.

Sybil was happy, ecstatic in her new power of free flight. Besides, she loved Italy; the chilliness of its winter climate was more than atoned for by the warm glow of its pictures. Renaissance art thrilled her; but, since it spurred her to the liveliest enthusiasm, the necessity of merely gazing in silence irked her.

She wanted to communicate the clever things that frolicked through her mind. It was hard to stand still until one's neck got stiff; it would have been such a delight to break into odd, fantastic gestures, to gossip and poke delicate fun even at the works that most enraptured one. A courtship carried on under the sympathetic stare of Italian Virgins would be something of a lark, she thought more than once.

Sybil was constantly chuckling over her quaint little blasphemies in the presence of masterpieces. The Christ Child seldom struck her as anything but ridiculous. He so often bore a grotesque resemblance to people she knew. The divine infant in the Magnificat Tondo, for example, was like a delicious caricature of Mallory; the discovery sent her home one day in a gay mood.

Mallory was a faithful correspondent. His letters were always extremely long and written with the precision and neatness to be expected of him. The style sometimes became involved; but he could be counted on for the most part to say a thing well.

Sybil knew, whenever she tore open an envelope of his, that she was going to be interested; at times she was even charmed. The epistles she sent off to him in return were usually brilliant and cryptic. It was impossible for her to

be straightforward on paper. She was so impatient, so eager to score that her self-consciousness showed in what she wrote.

It was a habit with her to go over her letters just to pick out the places where she fancied she had made palpable hits and to see if every paragraph contained its proper share of wit. Her handwriting was characteristic and yet conventional. The vast majority of pretty, fragile women splash ink about and construct enormous characters with an attempt at the masculine touch; the result is apt to be undecipherable and exquisitely feminine.

Sybil's chirography was amazing. There was a scenic dash to it; the capitals were, one might almost say, pyrotechnical. She did not like to write letters. It was a proof of her substantial admiration for Mallory that she never let more than three of his epistles arrive before replying. Mallory did not take her erratic responses in this way; he feared she was neglecting him.

He had left the United States in August. London and Paris occupied him for a time. When the winter air began to nip, he took himself off to Cannes. Not before the end of a month there did he summon sufficient courage to slip over into Italy. At the end of a letter to Sybil he touched, absurdly casual, on his intention. She was still in Florence; with unaccustomed promptness she bestirred herself to urge on him a stop there.

"You must see my cypresses; and I do want to gush in somebody's presence—yours will be just what I'm after—over Benozzo's hobby-horsical Epiphany."

He did view her among her cypresses; he lingered, in fact, for a week. They went at a furious pace. Mallory, a man of studied deliberateness, was quite worn out on his departure.

Sybil took everything at top speed; it never occurred to her to leave off chattering musically when they got inside a cathedral. The constant flow of engaging talk did not weary Mallory; he soon found, to his bewilderment,

that Florence with all it contained was beginning to sink for him into a mere background for the absorbing Mrs. Sloane. He could scarcely believe credible such unfaithfulness to the beloved Florence.

They found much to argue over. She would have none of the austere Brancacci Chapel; she would not listen to the indignant arguments he presented in favour of "The Tribute Money." Benozzo's delightful Adoration in the Palazzo Riccardi; the Fra Angelicos in San Marco; above all, Botticelli—these she never tired of.

"I insist on *charm*," she announced one day as they strolled in the Uffizi. "Majesty and dignity and all that—no, I don't see it. Brightness and radiance and grace—I call such qualities life-heightening."

"Life-heightening! The words are the words of Berenson," he mocked.

"Yes, I read what the critics have to say. I pick up some of their phrases, too." She was unabashed.

"What do you say to the Sistine Ceiling? You condemn it, don't you?"

"Certainly not. I think it has decided charm," she parried.

"I understand." He gave her a slow smile. "Your *charm* is an elastic term. What you like has charm; what you don't like has none."

"Yes. I consider things for what they give *me*; I don't judge for other people. That is, I try not to. I do forget, don't I? I've done my best to convert you, to make you like only what I like; but you are very stubborn."

"About charm," he persisted. "If a painting repels you, doesn't it ever assert a baleful power?"

"It does. It has in that case a hideous charm." She laughed. "Don't try to argue with me," she warned him. "I seldom mean what I say; and I never know, really, what I'm talking about."

"You are a Protean artist in argument, rather," he corrected her. "Isn't our idea, after all—?"

But she was not listening. She had stopped before the Magnificat Tondo. Mallory could see she was biting her

lips in the vain effort to keep back a smile.

"What is it?" he asked. Then, "So even Botticelli tickles you at times. You *are* incorrigible."

"My smile was one of the fondest affection," she asserted. "I adore that baby. He is so like—a dear friend of mine." She could not resist a mocking grimace.

Mallory caught what the look conveyed. He blushed and smiled. Perceiving the resemblance between himself and the nude infant, he could not help feeling as if he had left his clothes at home and were standing before her naked and ashamed.

"So I *am* a dear friend?" he asked, his ludicrous embarrassment conquered.

"As if you did not know!" she answered.

It was not until Mallory's return northward from Rome that he and Sybil became engaged. She had left Florence; it was at Verona she accepted him.

"Why Verona?" he queried as they sat at tea in her huge drafty drawing-room.

"Why not Verona? I think it's fascinating, though the cold is trying at first."

"It's easy to guess what brought you here," he said. "You probably dote on Pisanello."

"Such scorn!" she mocked. "But I'm not ashamed. He is adorable; he is," she hesitated, "a darling."

"Fancy a Pisanello pilgrimage!" Mallory voiced his scorn.

"I *knew* you'd say just that. Wait! You've never seen the fresco in Sant Anastasia."

"Neither have you—*really*. The fool painted it way up near the roof where nobody could see it."

"Very well," she pouted. "I shall send you out to look at the amphitheater or to go through the barracks one hears so much about while I worship at San Fermo or Sant Anastasia."

"I do want to see the Francesco Morone Crucifixion," he announced.

She shuddered. "I detest that painting."

"You should detest all crucifixions," he reminded her. "Surely you don't look for charm in crucifixions?"

"I do. Moreover, I often find it—in the best crucifixions." Thus she silenced him.

At luncheon the next day they were radiant.

"Do you know," remarked Sybil, "I think it was extremely delicate and sweet and delightful of you to propose at the feet of St. George and the Princess of Trebizond."

"I waited until I saw you in your most melting mood," he replied. "I knew you couldn't refuse me at that moment—or any other fellow, I'm afraid."

CHAPTER VII

SYBIL and Mallory were married in London on the last day of March. They sailed at once for New York. The middle of April found them in Newport. Mallory owned a charming cottage on the Cliffs, an old-fashioned and inconspicuous house that had aged gracefully. He had never been rich enough to afford the alterations necessary to bring the place up to date; besides, he much preferred it just as it was, anyhow. Sybil agreed with him when he asked if she didn't think it quite perfect; her acquiescence was, however, distinctly not enthusiastic.

"Ah, you don't like it!" he exclaimed.

"I do—awfully," she replied, with a straight drop into relenting sweetness. "I only thought—"

"Yes?" he politely urged.

"Well, it's so beautifully rambling we could run a ballroom out from this end with ease. Then we could build one of those big porches along the water side and it would be ideal for entertaining." She gave him an eager smile. "Wouldn't it be jolly? With the moss green roof and the rest that dark brown"—she pointed it out—"a ballroom would look as if it had always been there. It wouldn't hurt the gen-

eral effect in the slightest; it would add a touch if anything."

Mallory shook his head with a gently paternal smile; he had already learned to accept the fact that his wife was a spoiled child. He loved her the better for that.

"Now please be frank," said Sybil. "I love the place this way; it satisfies me. It is your house and I don't wish to change anything unless you feel it would be an improvement."

"Sybil, dear," Mallory responded, "I've for years been longing for a ballroom right on the spot you indicate. And a porch—the wide kind on the water side—the thing!"

His sarcasm never came at one like a rapier thrust. It was merely his way of giving in a point, but of giving in with a delicate hint that he was by no means hoodwinked.

Sybil appreciated this. He had accepted her plan.

"Let's send for an architect at once," she urged. "We can get it done in no time at all. It will be finished before the season begins." She looked at him tenderly; the expression of mingled exultation and guilt on her face made her irresistible. "I shall never, never forgive myself if I think you are doing this against your will. I can't make out whether you are holding back or not. It is so hard to get at you."

"I am exceedingly enthusiastic," he protested. "All joking aside, your idea is a splendid one. Two or three chaps—architects too—have told me as much before; it would make it easier to rent, don't you see, if I should ever want to."

He lied glibly.

"We must get right to work," she exclaimed in delight.

Sybil, during the period of voluntary exile, had been keeping her audience in mind. She knew that as Mrs. Frederick Mallory she could count on a welcome of warmth from Society. Everybody loved Mallory; no list of guests for an affair of any sort was without his name.

People, without the slightest cause, had for years felt sorry for "poor dear Freddie"; perhaps it was because they

could not get over the idea that there must be something dismal and pitiable about such unbending respectability. Whatever the motives of Mallory's friends, they were careful not to let him out of their sight. He was precisely the husband for Sybil's purpose. At the end of the first year of her life with her husband she should emerge on the crest of the glittering wave; of her triumph there could be no doubt, she assured herself.

She had therefore thoroughly ransacked Paris before running over to London for the marriage. The wardrobe with which the Frederick Mallorys embarked at Liverpool was indeed extraordinary. Every dressmaker on the Rue de la Paix must have risen to new heights of splendid achievement, Mallory decided; for Sybil had with infantile delight displayed the entire dazzling array for his benefit. He had been set blinking. The gowns seemed like bright blossoms too fantastic for this earth, too delicate to withstand the touch of a man's hand; and the hats, perched all about him, were like enormous birds, bigger and more brilliant than those of Paradise, that had alighted in the florid bower.

Sybil had quite honestly warned him, months before, what to expect. He had accepted with alacrity the responsibilities any husband of hers would incur.

"I know, I know," he had said. "It will be the case of Aunt Alice all over again. You are going in for the business of entertaining. I am content; but Sybil—one favour I beg. Let me have you absolutely to myself for three months. After that, I swear I won't interfere. You may go your maddest and merriest from the first of July; until then, leave things to me. It is a go?"

"It is a go," Sybil had echoed. "Listen to me, while I tell you a wonderful scheme. Three—oh, four—months of *every* year shall be yours; the rest will be mine. That will suit us both, won't it?"

"Perfectly!"

"What are we booked for, those first three months of our married life? Or

haven't you decided?" She showed a lively curiosity.

"We shall settle down in my house at Newport for the Spring."

She rewarded him with a radiant smile. "It will be absurd but delightful."

So they spent a quiet three months at Newport. Sybil knew that her husband worshipped her. On her side, she found him a companion who interested her and won her liveliest esteem. Nobody could have been less stiff and pedantic than Frederick Mallory once he had been warmed to enthusiasm. It would never have occurred to Sybil to consider herself in love. There was something so matter-of-fact in her acceptance of intimacy with him that she could not bring herself to think this charming state of affection for the man a grand passion.

July came. The stage was set; and Sybil Mallory felt her blood stir as if in response to a high challenge. The old craving for things theatrical and spectacular asserted itself. The impending debut in Brussels years ago had scared her too much to awake real inspiration.

Now, however, she trembled with joy each morning as she dipped into her wardrobe and peeked at its splendours. The ballroom was finished; everyone had to acknowledge that it could not have been done in better taste. The big porch, with its expanse of polished floor, ran around three sides of the house. Mallory's modest establishment had been transformed. It was still wonderfully adapted to cozy dinners; on the other hand, by the simple expedient of throwing open a few doors, it could accommodate the throngs a big entertainment would bring together. Mallory himself was delighted at this proof of his wife's genius.

One morning he discovered her in the act of leaning out at a perilous angle from her bedroom window.

"Fred," she said, "has anybody bought the Hollis place yet?"

The vast, untenanted Hollis estate adjoined Mallory's. Sybil had been

risking her neck to get a good look at the mansion.

"Good Heavens, Sybil!" he exclaimed. "You're not pining—?"

She laughed gaily. "Certainly not! I've just been comparing it with our lovely place and thinking how horrid and ugly it was. I've been almost sticking out my tongue at it."

Mallory beamed.

"You frightened me for the moment," he confided.

"The strange part of it is," she said, "that I made poor Tim miserable last summer simply because he refused to buy that house."

She turned away from the window.

"Oh, if you only *knew* how happy I am!" she cried.

CHAPTER VIII

It was quite the gayest season Newport cottagers could recall. The indefatigable Sybil set the pace; she went about it so skilfully that people did not realize, until Fall was upon them, that it was she who had at the very beginning of the Summer dashed ahead and whistled them all, panting in pursuit, to her heels. It was too late then to demur; indeed, very few would have been inclined to grumble, so refreshing and charming was this newcomer. Hot Springs in September received a gasping throng from Newport; it took one a month there to get one's breath.

Sybil herself had never given in to weariness. She could sparkle at a dinner, then dance all night, and still report by ten-thirty in the morning at the Casino for a game of tennis; noon would see her immersed in the ocean at Bailey's. Her repartee at luncheon was unflinchingly bright. If she took a nap in the afternoon, it must have been but a few winks; for she seldom went without a ride or a drive or a game of golf.

The townspeople felt that a day had failed if they got no glimpse, on Bellevue Avenue, of the fascinating creature and her untiring escorts, Frederick Mallory and Reginald Fleet. It was a ques-

tion in the minds of the men in the shops which picture was the more satisfying: the lady on horseback and laughing with Fleet, while her husband lagged a bit behind, or the lady in her motor, a vision of black eyes and white lace, between the two men, with a sunshade poised in a way that left poor Mallory delicately out of things.

The mention of Fleet always occasioned a melancholy headshake in a group of gossiping tradesmen. It was too bad—Mallory was such a fine fellow! And yet, they would not have altered the situation; it savoured so decidedly of the romantic and the wicked as it was. It was a satisfaction, moreover, to behold Mrs. Willoughby forlorn at the defection of Fleet. Mrs. Willoughby, once championed by all shopkeepers, had suffered eclipse. Mrs. Tim Sloane—so they still called Sybil—was not merely the more beautiful of the two women; she could be counted on to pay her bills. And of course that implied Fleet's bills, too!

It was true that Sybil and Fleet had become alarmingly intimate. Their relations were commented on everywhere, by people of their own set as well as by the underlings. Sybil, Mallory and Fleet were perhaps the only people in Newport who knew just how far matters had progressed; and of these three, Fleet was the one who was not perfectly content.

The very day he arrived at Newport he sprang clear of the crowd at Sybil's heels; and throughout the exhilarating season he had kept almost even with her in the race. He was always near; the two were delighted with each other. Mallory did not attempt to keep up with them. The serenity with which he dropped back caused universal wonder. People had no time, however, for clear thinking; and before they got an opportunity to condemn Sybil they found themselves liking her and mutely deciding to overlook any indiscretions.

Besides, for Mallory's sake, it was up to them to keep quiet and not pry.

Chatter, that periodical of gossipy cynicism, began to level shafts at Sybil

and Fleet. Nobody could deny the cleverness and the fastidious charm of style that characterized every issue of this scandalous sheet. There was something gracefully libelous about it; an Addison in the devil's pay might have written the terse paragraphs it contained. *Chatter* aired its depravity with an insolence positively Wildean. It recounted the ripening and the rotting of fashionable intrigues; and it did so by the aid of writing so lucid and pure as to o'erleap its purpose and become finicky.

Fleet had for years been one of *Chatter's* long-suffering victims. His escapades had been touched on time and again, and with ever-increasing mordacity. He had come to represent in people's minds a sort of Saint Sebastian, lifted naked on high and riddled by the arrows of sarcasm and ridicule. His affair with Nora Willoughby, most charming of widows, had been commented on with frequency during the years of its duration.

And now, directly he picked out Sybil Mallory for his attentions, *Chatter* went at the attack with a delicacy and beauty of phrasing that made each compact essay on the subject a masterpiece of its kind.

Sybil, very much against Mallory's wishes, perused every number of *Chatter*. If she found herself pilloried, she would seek out her husband, corner him and read aloud the account of her pretty sinfulness.

Mallory would protest, but to no purpose. He was forced without appeal to hear the thing through.

"I want you to know all this," she would announce. "A man should realize how people talk. Not only that! He should watch his wife constantly. If you let me run about loose you may find, all of a sudden, that you're jealous."

"You know I shan't ever be jealous of you," he returned.

"Probably not," she admitted. "Still, please watch me, just the same. It will make me feel so much freer to do as I wish."

As Mrs. Tim Sloane, Sybil had read *Chatter* faithfully. It had seemed then somehow a mark of social prominence, a privilege to have one's name whispered from its columns. There was still a trace of that feeling, a not unpleasant thrill, when she came upon an allusion to herself. She realized it was vulgar.

Sybil, trained for the stage, could not live without publicity. In an opera house she would have sung for the highest gallery as well as for the boxes. In social life, therefore, it was but natural that she should play for everybody. She had wanted most of all in her student days to sing Manon and Violetta. and here she was doing the same sort of thing, masquerading as a delightful wanton before the people she knew and the people she didn't know.

One night at Nora Willoughby's house, Sybil and Fleet, confessing to each other a desire for some place of intimate solitude, slipped away from the dance. They strolled across the lawn to the Cliffs and down a broad slant of cement walk leading to a little beach.

"What's the point of that walk anyhow?" asked Reggie. "I'm sure we're the first ones here in an age."

"Don't you know?" Sybil laughed. "It is not edifying. It is used to cart rubbish down."

The man shook his head.

"My God!" he wailed. "The money it cost would settle my bills so nicely! I never heard of such extravagance. It makes me furious."

"Reggie, why don't you get married? There are so many pretty girls and women in love with you." Sybil liked to worry him with advice.

"Because—for the hundredth time! —I prefer my creditors to a woman I couldn't shake off."

He fixed her with a glare that softened to an appeal.

"But that's not my only reason—now," he went on. "You know, you know; don't deny it, Sybil."

"What makes a rock so comfortable?" she asked, as if it interested her. "Upholstery can't touch it." And she

settled herself with a sigh of content on the surface of smooth stone.

Fleet dropped into place beside her.

They talked on and on and smoked cigarettes. Sybil all the while toyed with the feather fan she held. She would silently ruffle it, then bring it daintily into play. The next moment it would cease fluttering and sink to her breast like a great white tremulous bird. She had the situation in perfect control; when the man showed a flash of angry ardour, she got up quickly.

"Good Heavens!" she exclaimed and spread the fan as for flight. "We've been here an outrageous time."

She swayed a little; entangled in the mazes of her train, she had lost her balance. A pretty cry of mingled amusement and fright escaped her. The next moment she had fallen straight into his arms. In a flash she had regained her footing and drawn away. Reginald deliberately let her hear the profanity he treated himself to.

"I beg your pardon!" Sybil apologized coolly. "I shall never get used to this gown, I'm afraid."

A few minutes later she came up to him in the ballroom.

"Could you go down to that wretched little beach again?" she asked. "I've dropped my fan somewhere. I think it must have been on the rocks."

When Fleet returned, Sybil greeted him with a flourish of white feathers.

"I am so glad it's been found," he exclaimed. "Needless to say, it wasn't where you suggested. I've been prowling about the grounds after the lovely thing."

"A footman came in dangling it," she explained. "Isn't it peculiar? I am confident I put it beside me on the rocks; and I remember taking it up and playing with it. I *know* I dropped it as I tumbled."

"I wonder what the fellow's up to," commented Fleet, "and what he was doing on that beach? They don't cart rubbish at this time of night, surely."

Sybil was not at all surprised to find the incident touched on in the next *Chatter*:

"There is a rumor," *the article began with the discussion of an entertainment Mrs. Weston was planning*, "that we are to have a performance for charity soon at Freebody Park—one of those delightful occasions, you know, when the actors reap glory and the orphan asylum, or whatever it is that is supposed to benefit, receives but a meagre shower of coins into its coffers. Not that the affair will be a freeze-out; we hasten to protest against any such surmise. The boxes and seats will, without a doubt, all be sold for incredible sums. The point is, so much money will be spent on making certain a brilliant representation that the profits will find their way into the pockets of professional coaches, scenic artists and decorators.

"We admit this arrangement rather pleases us. Warm winter clothes for the orphans would doubtless be more abundantly forthcoming if the services of Mr. Gerard, the trainer, were dispensed with; but for our part we can't help feeling the play's the thing. We applaud the ladies who insist on proper rehearsing; the thought of a few foundlings relieved from shivering on this earth would not be sufficient to make us view unperturbed the lamentable spectacle of Mrs. Mallory inadequately prepared for her rôle.

"Taking it for granted that you are not ignorant of the conventions of performances for charity, we assume you have guessed by this time whose the delightful drama will be—yes, of course, Oscar Wilde's. No band of altruistic and wealthy amateurs ever chooses a play by anybody else. The comedy we shall witness will be *'Lady Windermere's Fan.'* It is said the woman who has been swept into prominence this year on the current of alimony—the neglected Mrs. Tim Sloane of a twelvemonth back—will grace the part of Mrs. Eryllyne. Mrs. Mallory is one of the few people still young enough to confess on the stage to a grown-up daughter without fearing smirks and smothered guffaws from the audience. She should triumph as the adventuress, if only for the reason that she wields the éventail so adroitly.

"You know the story of the lost fan? More than one of Mrs. Willoughby's guests last week, finding the ball-room stuffy, strolled out into the night for a glimpse of the moon on the water. It may have occurred to some that the pretty, secluded beach below the brink afforded a delightful retreat.

"Cottagers in Newport, however, are celebrated for their discretion—so far as others are concerned. The sight of two points of flame, one unwavering—the light from the cigarette of a man at gaze, assuredly—the other darting and curvetting with the vivacity of a fire-fly, warned travellers off the rocks. There were moments, of course, when these small beacons suffered extinguishment; but nobody considered that as a signal to de-

scend. The feeling seemed to be that at such a time visitors might be more than ever unwelcome. As the night wore on, two figures were seen to ascend from the haven of solitude; the lunar beams, dancing playfully over the surface of a back bared to the moon, put all doubts in regard to the woman's identity at rest.

"The beach was now deserted. The two tiny flames no longer glowed. 'But what is that spread out on the rocks like a great dead swan?' people ask. The question remains unanswered.

"Later a man is descried hurrying towards the spot. It is Reggie Fleet; one might have known! He returns, a worried frown on his forehead; he has been unable to find what he was after—that is quite obvious. Who has been before him? Who has captured the feathery mass? Ah, dear reader, if we were to let fall that information, we should be dropping our mask.

"In the ball-room a plaintive voice is heard above the music. 'Has anyone seen my white fan?' asks Mrs. Freddie Mallory.

"A footman enters, half hidden in the ruffled plumes; Mrs. Mallory makes for him and seizes on the prize.

"Who has put the thing into his hands?"

"He shakes his head; he does not know the lady's name."

CHAPTER IX

THE performance of "Lady Windermere's Fan" was scheduled for the night preceding the last day of the Horse Show. A dance at the Frederick Mallorys' would complete the evening and incidentally treat the guests to a view of the sun rising on the last day of the season. Sybil and her husband planned to leave Newport directly the house had been swept clear of the festive frippery. After three months in Paris they would hasten back to New York. At the beginning of Lent Mallory, with his wife's consent, would take matters into his own hands.

"It's as if I had one inning out of the nine all my own," he remarked in sportsmanlike jargon.

"I have an idea you are going to hustle me back to Italy." Sybil tried her best to conceal the fact that she was dropping a hint.

She failed to deceive him.

To his amused lift of the eyebrows she responded by bursting into merry laughter.

People had feared from the moment "Lady Windermere's Fan" had been chosen that the assigning of the women's parts would be the occasion for squabbles. Sybil was everywhere voted an ideal Mrs. Erlynne. Fleet and Mallory alone demurred, backing each other up in furious protest.

It was preposterous, they insisted; maturity and artfully compressed fleshiness were necessary, in order to make the woman a plausible figure. They begged Mrs. Weston to take the role. They were overruled in short order. No matter what arguments a dramatist may put forward to the contrary, his adventuress should be slender and girlish and above all the possessor of big eyes—such was the verdict on every side. So Sybil was cast for Mrs. Erlynne. She was overjoyed.

Nora Willoughby's delight at being asked to do Lady Windermere brought a gasp of relief.

Nora had been throughout the season a puzzle. The yielding womanliness that had always made her so charming and restful was perceptibly giving place to frank bad temper. Her pretty purring, her air of basking forever in the warm sun, had ceased to be habitual. She was often cross now. She snapped too and at times seemed positively to be indulging in a faint growl.

But then, this new attitude was not to be wondered at. The poor thing was hopelessly in debt. She had lately taken to inviting impossible men to her place for week-ends. She kept them carefully concealed, to be sure; but, considering the state of her finances, it was illuminating to find out that these guests were unfailingly of prodigious prosperity. Could she be bringing herself to the point of contemplating another dip into matrimony? One wondered.

With Sybil in particular Nora bridled and quarreled; that, too, was condoned. Fleet was to blame there. People had always imagined Nora would become cloyingly sweet and wistful under a misfortune; it was refreshing to feel her claws.

"I swear it's rather jolly to see her

spit out," cried Mrs. Weston with her usual disconcerting vulgarity.

To Muriel Winton had been entrusted the delicate mission of sounding Nora on the subject of Lady Windermere.

"We can't ignore her," Mrs. Weston opined. "As it is, I don't expect to get any rent out of her for that house of mine she's living in; but if she gets hot, she won't even pay her bridge debts. Then we should *all* get left. So do be careful."

"She was tickled to death!" Muriel voiced her amazement when she entered the Casino the next morning.

"I know why!" Sybil suddenly saw it all. "I wager Nora has never even read the play. Naturally she thinks she'll be the heroine and make a great stir."

"Prepare to look around for another Lady Windermere," advised Fleet. "As soon as Nora does read it she'll back out."

But Nora did not back out. She attended every rehearsal; furthermore, she succeeded in making the priggish character charming. Her comments on the others' success with their parts were sometimes caustic; but on the whole she let out less frequently than had been her custom in the last few months.

"It seems to me," she remarked once, appealing to Mr. Gerard, the coach, "that Mrs. Mallory doesn't make her epigrams sound spontaneous. Doesn't she—er—get out of the picture and toss them across the footlights? It must be hard to say so many clever things—I realize that—and not want to impress them on the audience. Of course, I haven't that difficulty. Lady Windermere has no wit. But isn't there something?—it's hard to express it—"

Mr. Gerard agreed; Nora's criticism was justifiable. Sybil had been scoring her points too obviously. Her acting had something in common with her letter-writing.

When the coach, however, made a tentative plea for more self-effacement, Sybil became furious. She refused to

have her conception of the part interfered with. A quarrel resulted. Mallory, Fleet and Muriel Winton had called their utmost skill into play before the thing was settled. When the rehearsal had been resumed, these three, Sybil's staunchest champions, confessed to each other in the low tones of conspirators that she really *did* over do it.

"She will make it worse now deliberately," said Muriel. "Can't you talk to her, Fred, and make her see?"

"I'm afraid not." Mallory shook his head and smiled. "It's her operatic training."

"Well, now that she's heard Gerard on the subject, it will be her own devilishness if she keeps it up," announced Muriel.

"Do look," whispered Fleet. "I only hope on the night of the show she won't fall off the stage and land on the base-drum."

They giggled as Fleet, responding to his cue, entered upon the scene. Muriel and Mallory were to appear only as guests at Lady Windermere's birthday dance; they therefore found much time to loiter about in the offing and discuss Sybil. Mallory liked nothing better than to talk of his wife to Miss Winton. He knew she shared his enthusiasm on that point.

Sybil and Muriel had in a short time become intimate. There was in their friendship no element of rivalry. Muriel was quiet and serious. She looked her best on the tennis-court; she never was at ease in an evening gown. As an athlete, nobody could touch her. In any tournament, she received the enthusiastic attention of all Newport; but somehow people forgot her once the dinner hour arrived.

This did not discourage Muriel; she accepted it philosophically. Sybil, without knowing why, had the greatest affection for her; if she had analysed the feeling with critical acumen, she would have found she liked the girl simply because her nature so resembled Mallory's. Muriel faced the world with a silent diffidence of attitude; she appeared awkward and stupid to all but

the people she knew best. When stirred into enthusiasm, however, she made a delightful companion.

Sybil's most conspicuous failing was her habit of ineffectual matchmaking. She attacked Muriel one day.

"You're well over twenty," she remarked, "and you are much too nice to stay single. Why not give somebody a chance at you?"

Muriel smiled. "But I am perfectly happy as I am. I don't want to get married."

"Of course I know that," Sybil assured her. "If you *had* ever wanted to, I shouldn't be scolding about it today."

"That's very sweet," said Muriel.

"The trouble is, you treat every man as if you were facing him over a net. You keep him in constant dread of your fore-arm stroke."

"I prefer men at a distance," pronounced Muriel.

"They are sometimes great fun close to," Sybil persisted. "Try falling in love, Muriel. You can't do it at long-distance, though."

"I never heard that before!" the girl laughingly protested.

"I know you hear about such cases; but things of that sort never happen to those one knows." Sybil was incisive.

"The trouble with you, my dear," said Muriel, "is that you know nothing of men at long distance. The chaps themselves see to that."

"If you spend your time ridiculing men and marriage, you will find, when you want to fall in love, that you won't dare to." Sybil dropped the subject with a smile that was half a pout.

Muriel was silent for a moment.

Then, "Sybil," she said, "why do you spend so much time with Reggie Fleet? I like you both so much that I hate to hear people talking."

"Reggie and I get on so beautifully," Sybil explained. "Why shouldn't we see each other often? And it makes no difference to me what people say, so long as my husband trusts me. If *he* were jealous, I should stop seeing Reggie. I've made Fred promise to tell

me the moment he begins to get uneasy."

"You are right, I suppose," Muriel answered. "Still, is Fred the only one to consider?"

Sybil's eyes showed a gleam of merriment.

"You can't mean that I'm hurting Reggie's good name?" she cried.

"Be serious, Sybil." Muriel smiled in spite of her earnestness. "I mean that you can't ignore people successfully. You aren't discreet, are you? Don't you do things that you know will be talked about?"

Sybil nodded.

"Oh, yes!" She shrugged and grimaced at Muriel. "Sometimes I do things just for that reason."

"Well, then," Muriel pounced, "you deserve all the nasty remarks that are made about you."

"I do believe you have been reading *Chatter*," announced Sybil.

"Good gracious, no!" Muriel was emphatic. "Father wouldn't let the horrid magazine in the house. He sued *Chatter* some years ago, you know, and won, too. Think how they love us. That's why we are so careful now; we know the roasting in store for us if we side-step once."

"It is up to you, Muriel, to stop all this scandal about Reggie and me."

Sybil leaned forward and patted Muriel's knee as she spoke.

"It's up to you!" she repeated. "Smile at Reggie a few times, give him a little encouragement; and—when he proposes, take him. It will be easy for you, I haven't a doubt!"

"It *would* be easy to bag Reggie," Muriel mocked.

Sybil, engrossed in lighting a cigarette, followed it out. "I should feel then that he was practically in the family. You could lend him to me as often as I wanted him."

In triumph she clouded the air with smoke and smiled at Muriel.

The poor girl was blushing hotly; Sybil had never before seen a tide of blood so violent in any woman's face. For a second she was frankly alarmed.

Then she hastened to look away.

"Reggie is quite boyish in some respects," she pursued, not daring to change the subject.

"He is just the type to fall head over heels in love, all of a sudden," she wound up.

Delicately she veered to "Lady Windermere." After a time, stealing a peek at Muriel, she perceived the girl's face had regained its customary ruddy hue.

Sybil, thinking over the painful moment when she was alone, found her pity for Muriel's plight less vivid than a feeling of disappointment at the ludicrous betrayal of it. Sybil did not bother her head to think up an explanation other than the conventionally romantic one—*this* was without question an involuntary confession of love; she had always pictured a sudden pallor, followed by a fainting-fit, in such a situation. She could not help smiling. It was pathetic; but, alas, it was also farcical. It was certainly by no means in accordance with operatic traditions.

CHAPTER X.

THE day of "Lady Windermere" arrived. Sybil and her husband left the Horse Show in the middle of the afternoon. There were still those last deft touches to be given to the ballroom decorations, those finishing strokes that a conscientious hostess never leaves to the florist. Mallory would be of no use whatever; that he knew: but he wanted to watch.

Outside the Casino they were obliged to wait a moment while the motor was brought around. On either side of the entrance was a closely packed throng of people whom the policemen with difficulty kept in order. The eager, curious crowds of Newport that one knows nothing about always flock to the Casino during Horse Show for a look at the brilliant birds of passage; they form a whispering border to the strip of side-walk from the entrance door to the street. "Rubber plants" Reggie had once called them; and from that day to this the appellation has persisted.

Everybody complained of them and thought them a great bother; but Sybil could not but confess to herself that they delighted her. Today in particular she enjoyed the excited murmur they emitted on sight of her. In her huge black hat and diaphanous gown of creamy chiffon, with its deep borders of lace, she stood and chatted with her husband and breathed out fragrance like a thirsty flower at the first drop of rain. No homage struck Sybil as more intoxicating than this. While she looked about in apparent unconsciousness for a sight of the motor, she took in every nudge, every gasp of awe in the crowd. It was the "bravas" of the topmost gallery again.

Mrs. Gordon Chesterton and her daughter shared the clear patch of walk with the Mallorys. Sybil smiled at them and brightly called out something. The two women responded in their stupid way and prepared to climb into their ponderous automobile. Sybil could not have asked for a better foil; she guessed what the comments of the spectators must be.

At this moment Reggie rushed down the club stairs and dashed up to the Mallorys.

"Nora insists she is ill," he cried. "She says she won't be able to leave her bed for a week."

Sybil clicked her heel emphatically against the brick pavement; the gesture was too delicate to be described as a stamp of the foot.

"How silly!" she protested. "Couldn't Nora think up something cleverer than that? What does she say is the matter with her?"

"Ptomaine poisoning, of course," said Reggie. "She's threatened with appendicitis."

"Nora won't ever have her appendix removed." Sybil spoke distinctly, with a view to letting the rubber plants in on the conversation. "Other people's cooks can lay her out so easily now. Some day she will die after a party of mine, just to be nasty."

"But what are we going to do?" pleaded Reggie. "We can't give the

show minus Lady Windermere, can we?"

"Somebody will have to read the part," Sybil said.

She reflected for a moment.

"Reggie," she demanded at last, "go and find Muriel. She will do it."

"But Muriel's too strapping," Reggie demurred.

"Reginald!" cooed a voice from the Chesterton limousine. "Mamma wants to talk to you."

Sybil and Reggie exchanged a merry glance. Mrs. Chesterton's designs on Fleet were well known; she wanted him, not for her portly self, but for the dowdy daughter who was beckoning through the window of the motor.

"Whatever you do," warned Sybil, "don't be led into offering the part to Gwendy Chesterton."

Fleet strolled away in the direction of the designing mamma.

Mallory was despatched in pursuit of Muriel. He rounded her up in the ring and almost snatched her off the back of the hunter she was jumping. Sybil, in her ballroom, put the panting girl through a stiff rehearsal and pronounced her adequate if not distinguished.

That night Sybil drooped on her husband's shoulder as they rode to Freebody Park from the gorgeous dinner Mrs. Chesterton had given before the performance.

"I am so tired!" she confessed.

Suddenly, stifling a yawn, she sat up quite straight. "Fred, look quickly—in that motor that just passed. Oh, dear!—you never look in the right direction. I could swear I saw Tim."

"Lady Windermere's Fan" was voted perfect. Despite the malicious prophecy of *Chatter*, the profits were very large; many orphans would go about clothed during the hard winter to come. Muriel got through her ordeal beautifully, with no clumsy fluttering of the pages from which she was compelled to read. People asserted they soon lost sight of the dog-eared pamphlet she carried. Reggie, in the rôle of Lord Windermere, acted as if born for but

the one purpose—to go through life the girl's devoted mate. The Mrs. Erlynne of the occasion was triumphant. Nora's presence being dispensed with, Sybil set Mallory to capering in gentle glee by staying right in the frame; not a single line of hers was given undue stress. It was a brilliant performance; nobody even attempted to deny it.

Sybil seemed to forget she had an existence apart from Mrs. Erlynne; as a matter of fact, however, she kept an eye on the Windermers. Reggie in particular was ardent; surely, thought the romantic Mrs. Mallory, he was using the utterances of Wilde's nobleman as a medium for the display of his own passion. He had not treated Nora thus; it did not occur to Sybil that the inspiration of an audience, combined with the influence of Mrs. Chesterton's champagne, might be sufficient to evoke fervour. No, Reggie was in love.

Later, at her own house, Sybil drew him to a sequestered corner.

"Reggie," she begged, "will you do me a favour? It would make me so happy."

"Anything, anything, you ask, Sybil," he returned, "except marry some girl you've picked out for me."

She sighed. "But if it is a girl you may have picked out too?"

He shook his head. "I have picked out nobody."

Sybil leaned closer.

"Reggie, ask Muriel to marry you."

She hesitated, then determined to hazard everything.

"Muriel loves you—she has confessed it. Not in words—oh, no!—but I have watched her and I can tell."

She had not meant to go so far; she was a bit frightened.

"Oh, nonsense!" Reginald stared down fixedly at the floor. "Muriel doesn't care a rap for me. Besides, the Wintons are desperately hard up."

"Ah, how can you?" Sybil cried.

"If I ever marry, it's got to be a girl like Gwendy Chesterton. Years ago I might have been able to take a chance on marrying for love. But not now.

Don't be a goose, Sybil; you know that as well as I do."

He shifted his glance and perused one of Sybil's slippers. "And I *never*, for the life of me, could have fallen for Muriel."

Sybil's eyes, by this time, were starry with tears. She had done a dreadful thing; Muriel's secret had been betrayed.

All at one, Fleet looked up and fixed her with a glance of weary yearning. There was no longer that fiery defiance she had come to expect from him. His brilliant eyes held in them a shadow of melancholy, a tenderness that was almost like renunciation.

"Sybil," he told her, "you are a baby. I have never known a woman like you—never. You are artless and innocent. Can't you realize how much I love you?"

He paused.

Then,

"No, of course you can't," he said.

Sybil still looked deep into his eyes, her own wide and sparkling.

"And you don't even realize that *you* are in love, too." He gave her a slow smile. "I give you up, Sybil, because I can't take advantage of a baby. Well, here goes for a piece of news—and I may be a damned fool to tell you—Sybil, you are head over heels in love with one Frederick Mallory. I haven't a show against him; I haven't had a show from the first. Yes, you're in love—but stodgy, respectably; it's almost middle-class."

Sybil timidly returned his smile. She had forgotten Muriel's existence.

"And you're leaving tomorrow." He roused himself and the old light of defiance stole into his eyes and gleamed through the cloud of melancholy. "Things should have been different. Last year I could have had you so easily; you would have been glad to get me then. But," and he shrugged, "we should have been at each other's throat now, if that had happened. The devilish part of it is, five or six years ago I might have taken that long-lost chance of *marrying*—and for love. Think of

it, Sybil—you my wife! An absurd, penniless, passionate pair! It wouldn't have lasted; nothing could make a man of me. But we should have had months, maybe years, of ecstasy; we should have touched heights."

He drew a long, shivering breath. "My God, what a life that would have been! That's what you were meant for, too."

His lips pursed into a silent whistle. "This respectability of yours is humdrum. You'll never know the joy I could have given you; you'll never know the suffering, either, for that matter. But you've missed your calling. Lovely, sensual, a great soprano—not a doubt of it—with a disreputable husband to support and abandon yourself to. Instead, you've got a nice, law-abiding mate; you are rich and virtuous. Look here, Sybil!"

Suddenly his anger flickered out; a note of quiet sarcasm came into his voice. "Well, you've missed a good deal by not falling in love with me and don't you forget it. The reason I've opened myself to you this way, you understand, is because I'm more than a little drunk."

Sybil had sat quite still during this recital.

She remained motionless, one hand at her heart, until he spoke again.

"It's fortunate I'm not drunker; I might have told you much more. You *do* make me furious; I hate to see a woman sacrifice all she was born for. You're beyond recall now; you'll die virtuous, simply because I came along too late. Take a look at yourself before you go to bed tonight and see if you think eyes like that were meant for a man like Mallory."

Sybil rose with a frightened flutter of silk and lace.

Fleet got up, too, and faced her.

"You great baby!" he mocked. "Some day, soon, I mean to tell you all about myself and my career. And you'll thank your stars, like the silly woman you've become, that I let you alone, that I didn't bring you out. Meanwhile—since I've nobly given you

up—I think I'll go and propose to Gwendy before I get too drunk."

Sybil, left alone, trembled.

A quarter of an hour later, Mallory found her.

"Fred," she pleaded, as if begging him to give up a great deal for her sake, "let's go right to Italy. I'm so tired; I don't want to see Paris—noisy, horrid place."

She rested her head on his shoulder and burst into childish, refreshing tears.

CHAPTER XI

THE Mallorys did not make for Italy after all. Sybil had changed her mind even before they left Newport. Her husband agreed, with a sigh, that it would really be absurd to keep away from the exquisite apartment awaiting them in Paris, that it would be ridiculous to put up with the discomforts of Italy when a view of the Parc Monceau could be theirs. Had they not for months been thrilling to the prospect of the vista through their windows of the luscious verdure checkered with the gleam of those lovely Corinthian columns? Of course they had. Sybil must have been half asleep to suggest Italy at such a time.

A fortnight later they were settled in Paris. Mallory had left off sighing and was as blissful as Sybil. The Parc Monceau rippled at their feet charmingly. They vied with each other in extravagant imagery.

"It's like a delicious, cool lake lapping in the distance," offered Sybil tentatively.

"The glimpses of marble might be the pebbles it washes over," suggested Mallory.

But his wife always surpassed him in this sort of bout.

"No, those spots of light are flecks of foam or white-caps dancing," she cried.

They never tired of strolling along the paths of the Parc and chatting with the children clothed in gowns as delicate and expensive as Sybil's own. The tiny lake, bordered with its Corinthian

columns and vine-wreathed pergola, was ever a joy. And the statues! Gounod and Thomas and Chopin held Sybil rapt.

"When I die I want my soul to come right to this spot," she murmured one day at the feet of Gounod. "I want it to inhabit the form of Marguerite and live forever, silent and gazing. Though she is a bit dowdy," she admitted.

So they spent much of their day in the tremulous light filtered through the green foliage. They might have been alone in a deep sea grot; the people about bothered them not at all. Even the old woman with her offer of impossible "fauteuils," as she called them, soon learned at Mallory's generous hint to take herself off.

Sybil and her husband, at the end of a month, had become unconscionable recluses. They shut their ears to every call of the world; they kept away from the Ritz and their friends. Mallory's astonishment was unbounded; he had vaguely feared another season of gaiety to follow close on the heels of Newport.

This drop into peace was incredible. He knew, of course, and so did his wife, that it would not last. The night of "Lady Windermere's Fan" had frightened her and sent her scurrying off from the brilliant scene she loved; she had not yet the courage to steal back.

For the time being, they shared their solitude with but one companion—Paris herself; they became intimate with her for the first time. People are afraid now to go rooting about in the celebrated city and nosing out all its beauties like truffles; it would be such a disgrace to incur the tourists' stigma.

Despite the years these two had spent in Paris, they had never before let themselves go; now at last they wandered unabashed away from the center of fashion and explored with frank delight. They even at times found themselves pushing and jostling good-naturedly the bands they had learned from childhood to shun—the benighted who suffer the indignities of personally conducted tours.

"I even forget to read the news-

papers," Mallory confessed one day. "Reggie's engagement is the only thing we've heard about since we came over."

"Père Lachaise is nicer than the Society column," replied Sybil. "Think of it, Fred! I've given up reading the Society column."

"It's peculiar we haven't heard from Reggie," she announced, as the thought struck her. "I expected he wouldn't give us a moment's peace. Muriel is the only faithful one; and she writes such stupid letters, poor dear."

The next morning Sybil, running over her mail and guessing in characteristic fashion, before she resorted to the paper-knife, what the envelopes contained, announced half aloud:

"This one must be from Reggie!"

She let her gaze wander a bit before she settled down to the business of reading.

She slipped the letter out and turned at once to the signature. Yes, it was Reggie's.

Then she noticed a piece of paper that, shaken from the closely written pages, had fluttered to the counterpane. A clipping from *Chatter*; jolly!

In a moment Sybil had started up with a bewildered cry.

"We announce with delight," *the article read*, "that Amazons are after all only women and the prey of love no less than the maid who milks and does the meanest chores. We had, until recently, scouted at such a belief; surely brawn, we argued, formed as it were a coat of mail around the heart and left the fortress impregnable. But no; such is not the case. We learned our error not long ago at Mrs. Frederick Mallory's last charming dance of the season. We confess to the crime of eavesdropping.

"Quite the prettiest woman at the dance ('The hostess!' you cry at once. To which we reply, 'Perhaps.')

—quite the prettiest woman at the dance, we repeat, was confiding in delight to Reggie Fleet a bit of news as the writer passed near the covert where the two sat. What she said was so arresting no man could help pausing with ear instinctively pricked.

"Reggie," exulted the lady, "I must tell you something delicious."

"Fleet leaned near, letting his eye roam but by no means allowing his attention to wander.

"Reggie," continued the lady, rippling out

her glee, 'who do you think is hopelessly in love with you? I've had the confession from her own lips.'

"Fleet shook his head and brought his eye to rest on the bosom so near.

"You will never guess.' The possessor of the aforesaid bosom paused and then in triumph breathed out the name. The waves of sound from her pretty mouth were directed to Fleet's receptive ear; but mirth betrayed the lady into a silver laugh, just at the moment she whispered the tidings. This caused the waves to scatter. An eddy of the dulcet murmur smote the writer, concealed but attentive.

"What was the word he caught? It was the name of the girl celebrated afar as the athlete par excellence of the summer colony. Not beautiful, we confess, but preëminent for muscular prowess. We dare hint no further; we have already given the secret away, we fear.

"It struck the writer as distinctly cruel of Fleet to join his companion in a shout of laughter. Should he not rather have felt within him a stir of pity for the lovelorn Amazon?"

Sybil stared, wide-eyed and dazed, at the article.

Then a fit of sobbing took her; she sank back on the pillows and cried out her inarticulate protest.

When she at last roused herself and turned to the letter, her eyes could make out but dimly what Fleet had to say.

"You expect," he wrote, "that I shall begin this with a furious question, 'Who wrote the disgusting, beastly thing?'—or something of the sort. No, I am not going to do that; I am going to be frank for the first and last time in my career. I wrote it. In fact, I have been the life and soul of *Chatter* for three years. Think of it, Sybil! Do you remember the lovely fan you lost? I picked it up from the rocks; it was delivered by me to the footman; I contributed the famous remarks on the subject to *Chatter*.

"When you get this, you will doubtless have read about me and pitied me, you and Fred. You will have been treated to a brief paragraph in regard to me, perhaps even with a photograph attached. I wonder. It is hard to tell what the newspapers will do for one.

"After you left Newport, I deliberately kept myself drunk for a week—

celebrating my engagement to Gwendy, everybody said. That wasn't, however, the reason. It was all because of you, Sybil. I contemplated suicide—yes, actually—but decided that would be tommyrot. Instead I dashed off the enclosed piece of harmless fun and presented it for publication to my 'Chatter' colleagues. Why? Well, I told myself I was a fool to let the thought of you bother me. I wrote that article in the effort to prove how little you counted. You were like the rest, I insisted, charming to be sure, but at the same time useful; you unwittingly helped me to carry on 'Chatter' and apart from that weren't worth worrying about.

"I was wrong, Sybil. I tell you I have had one hell of a time in the last few weeks. It has got to the point where no world is big enough to hold Reggie Fleet and his conscience from coming together for a last tussle. At least, it had got to that point a few hours ago. It is all settled at present. You are responsible for the issue. I said 'conscience' just now. I don't believe it was really that; but it was some nonsensical thing inside me that prodded.

"I suppose you have heard the news of Nora's approaching marriage. I am going to tell you something, Sybil—not in a boasting spirit! I can honestly say there's no conceit left in me—but just to show how much I care for you. Nora has two things she hopes to gain: first, of course, to get herself out of debt; and secondly, to buy me back. Poor Nora will find tomorrow morning that I'm not on hand to be bought. Last year at this time I should have felt myself in prime luck. I should have got right to work to make Gwendy break the engagement; then I should have returned gracefully to Nora's side.

"Now!—Sybil, tonight I feel like taking back what I said to you at your dance. You are following out beautifully what you were born for. And, you great baby, you are even something of an evangelist—or a Madonna à la Boldini. You have set me grovelling in the dust. But no! That can't be it.

Come to think of it, you are such a silly, frivolous thing yourself you couldn't possibly reform a man. Again no! The point is, you have made a baby of me, too. I have been reduced to sentimental mooning; a state so unhealthy is naturally fatal to an able-bodied man.

"I expect I am playing a mean trick on Gwendy to act this way; but she will get over it soon enough, I'm sure. It would be possible, perhaps, to make amends for the past by marrying Gwendy and going straight from now on. How vulgar that would be!

"I must stop. Down the mail-chute with this and then I shall bid the world and you, Sybil, good night. Reggie.

"P. S. As I read this over, it seems to me awful rubbish. I solemnly withdraw all credit from you. I've decided that, after all, the world I am bidding good night—you you are part of that world—is too stupid for me. The explanation of my conduct is, simply, that I am bored to death. Gwendy, Nora, Sybil—I don't care a rap for any of you. No matter what your morals are, you are humdrum and dismally middle-class; there isn't a true aristocrat alive today.

"I'm seeing quite clearly at this minute; it's the first time I ever have seen clearly, I find. Middle-class, I tell you; you won't ever get away from it. But how hard you will try, Sybil! And I hope I shall be somewhere watching you and making fun of you. Honestly I do. You are beautiful, Sybil, and amusing, I'll grant you that. Nothing you could achieve now, however, would make me wish to come back and claim you. Isn't it strange? I began this in a vein of thankfulness and adoration. But you don't believe what I've said in this paragraph, so I must needs stop arguing. R. F."

CHAPTER XII

A MONTH later Sybil looked up from her newspaper.

"What do you think, Fred?" she demanded. "Tim has bought the Hollis

place for Nora. How can she be so silly as to attempt Newport?"

Mallory looked up, surprised and delighted.

"Well, that lets us out, at any rate," he commented. "We shan't feel now that we ought to open our Newport place. We *can't* be the Tim Sloanes' neighbours."

"Oh, no!" Sybil concurred. "We can do quite enough entertaining here in Paris and in New York. We shan't need Newport; there's always Bar Harbour."

She paused. "But I've got to pay Nora back for the nasty trick she played the night of 'Lady Windermere.' We must do a lot of entertaining this winter; it would be silly to give her a leg up by letting her have things her own way. I would wager anything the Hollis place will be for sale again next year. Then we can go back."

The light of conflict had begun to flicker in her eyes; it was already fanned to a bright flame.

Mallory sighed.

"Sybil, dear, aren't you afraid the habit of entertaining will grow on you? Remember Aunt Alice; she is a slave, you know."

Sybil laughed.

"You *do* tire, don't you, dear? Never mind. There will always be the wonderful three months in Italy."

Mallory nodded gently.

"Well, I'm glad Newport is out of the question for next season. Somehow, I hate to face it just yet—it won't be the same. Poor old Reggie! He's the sort one can't imagine dying."

Reggie! In spite of his last clever, puzzling attempt to assert a power over her, to force himself into an unchallenged place in her thoughts through the weapon of mockery, he had already become dim in her mind, while Mallory still harboured a vivid regret.

"Poor Reggie!" Sybil agreed and returned to her newspaper.



BETWEEN twenty and thirty a woman is most charming. Before that she is trying to conceal her youth: after it, she is trying to simulate it.



WHEN a woman loses prestige among women it follows that she has gained prestige with some man.



WOMEN are of two types: those who are hard to persuade and those who are hard to dissuade.



THE SUBTLE THREAD

By Mary Carolyn Davies

EVER since the mother had had word that he was killed she had believed that in some way he would break the veil and communicate with her. Surely even death could not hold that eager, boyish, dependent spirit from her. They had been too close to each other for that.

At first this belief had been but a vague thing, subtly comforting her. It made a curtain about her which shut out the sharpness and the worst despair of grief. She did not know that the curtain was there.

But afterward this comfort made itself more perceptible.

She found herself wondering if the dead *did* communicate, if they could make themselves visible to those who had been nearest them. Why not? If it could be so!

She wished that she had overtalked of this with him. But he had always been so absurdly active, so vivid.

He had always seemed to her more to *be* life than to possess life. How should she have spoken to him of the possibility of his being one of those who would be stilled? One knew that the possibility was there, but, like thrifty people, they two had used that knowledge to sharpen their sensitiveness, to put an edge to the delight of speaking in answer, and of touching each other.

That had seemed wise then. But now she wondered if, after all, she had not deliberately throw away a thread that might have now bound them to each other. If he had promised her that if he died he would try to come back, to communicate with her—

When she first found herself think-

ing these thoughts, she tried to put them from her as a weakness, an absurdity, but soon they seemed to her natural, and presently even necessary.

She began furtively to question other women who had been bereaved; at first very cautiously, and with a sort of scorn as if she herself could put no credence in any seeming evidence.

But soon she forgot to be cautious, and was frankly anxious, pitifully eager and ready to believe.

She found things to believe. It was a time when people must believe the unbelievable, or die. And at such times proofs crowd upon the race.

This old woman and that had seen, after long waiting and hoping, had unbelievably seen—

She fed on these tales. She took hope from hopelessness, and lived from day to day, grew stronger.

But it was not the whispered confidences of other women that made her surest. It was the long hours when she was alone, when she re-created her boy as she had created him twenty years before. Now again his life grew within her. In her brain were memories. Skilfully selecting, putting one on another—slowly, carefully, painfully—out of them she built a man.

All her hours, every day, went to this work of building. What was there for her to do, else? Martha, the serving woman who had also seen him grow from babyhood, did all that there was to do in the little home. The mother sat all day long in her rose garden, under the trellis he had made when he was fifteen, and felt his presence.

Some days the vivid memories came easily, other days she had to evoke them

fiercely, to force them to come. But each day she remembered more and more, in that vivid way that is so little less than real companionship.

After many days, she had found all the memories, had hung them together, had fitted them where they belonged. Out of shadows of words dead, of acts past, of gestures finished, of traits laid aside, she had created a man again. She had rounded out her thought of him, made it live.

Now she had only to conjure up her re-vivified memory. How happy she was! The days had exhausted her, the days when a clear picture of his first day at school, or of his face as they had seen some beautiful thing together, refused to come. She had whipped each stubborn recollection into place. Once recovered, these did not leave her. She was satisfied.

But her satisfaction did not last. She wanted something more.

All through this period she had kept up her inquiries among the women she knew, and among their friends whom she did not know. Anyone who had had an experience, had seen her dead again, she must talk with and question.

She did not always believe, but sometimes the woman seemed so comforted, her story sounded so true—and it is very hard to doubt what one must believe or die.

Her hours alone with his memory and her talk with those who had dead, and who had to see them, as she had, filled her life. It was not an unhappy life. For she felt nearer her boy even than she had when he was alive.

That is, she felt as if she were about to be nearer. For after a time she felt certain that he would come. It was no longer now a hope, it was simply an event to be waited for. At first she waited vaguely, then she began to be sharply, concretely expectant.

"He may come today," she would say to herself as she awakened, and looked out from her pillow into the garden.

From this it was a short step to "He *will* come today!"

Soon she said that every morning,

and never any less hopefully because it had not fulfilled itself the day before.

She turned corners with a rapt belief, she awoke at night waiting for the darkness to resolve itself into his form, she sat in her chair in the rose-garden looking straight before her with eyes ready to widen in startled wonder. Most of all she waited him in the garden.

II

ONE afternoon she was sitting there under his trellis, trembling with an expectancy she had not known before. She felt that he would come on a sunny afternoon. He was young, he was youth itself, and now, in this spring weather, in the sunshine of this glorious day, how could his spirit stay away from the earth that it knew so comradely?

She looked straight before her at the thick hedge that was twice as high as she.

And he would come to her. He *must* come to what he loved most. Even death could not keep his eager spirit from that. There was a subtle thread she believed that binds a man to what he loved most on earth and that would draw him back inexorably. And to what but her could that thread lead?

He and she had been nearer than most mothers and sons. The bond had been of his own making. He had told her everything. He had had no secrets from her. He would come; he *must* come.

She sat in her chair, her heart beating as if it had been told some piece of news that she did not yet know. Her face was pale with hope, her eyes were big. The embroidery she had brought out with her seemed dim and far away. The frame trembled in her hands as she tried to go on pushing the needle in and out with its following thread of color.

She was waiting now, almost without breathing. There was no wind in the garden, the leaves of the vines were as motionless as she. How could anyone move at this instant, in the world, she wondered. Those people passing

in the road, how could they talk so noisily, the girl cutting roses in the garden next door, how could she move?

She was seized with a sudden anger for the family passing, though she had been friendly with them from her own youth. She hated the young girl singing in the next yard, though she knew her to be pleasant and kind. She did not especially like the girl, and her son seemed to share her indifference. Still she liked her well enough and had since she was a barefooted child. There was no reason to hate her because she was singing.

But irrational though it was, she hated the girl and the people on the road and all in the world who laughed and talked and moved about their work, unknowingly, while she waited breathless for her son. She felt, in some new manner, quite apart from those moments of hope, that something strange was about to happen. Her body was trembling. As she waited, things blurred before her.

Against the hedge grew something, a misty figure, a shape through which she could still see the small dark leaves of the hedge. She knew that form, those shoulders.

At last! At last! Out of death he had come back to her. She had seen him.

She had known that his love for her must bring him back! The tie between them had been such as no mother and son had ever felt before. He would have come to comfort her in her grief, no matter what worlds, what veils, stood between.

She had never really doubted this, and already she had believed in it concretely for so long that now she felt no surprise.

It seemed only the inevitable result of the love between a son and a mother. They two, who had been so close, could not be parted by death.

As she gazed, the embroidery fell from her hands and lay in a vivid tangle against the grass.

Slowly she got to her feet, her eyes upon him.

His head was a little to one side in that teasing way he had used to carry it. How the spring sunshine brightened on his hair! She had often seen it that way as he set off to school in the morning, and later, to work.

His young body, pliant and graceful, was straight now and proud, as it had been the night he left with the others.

All as he had always been—all as she had remembered.

He moved; he was coming toward her.

The moment was here!

He had come—over all that might lie between; he had remembered her need and had come to comfort her, to assure her once more that he was hers. He had to come back to what he loved most. She had known, she had believed, and this was her reward. All her being became one prayer of gratitude.

Nearer and nearer he came, silently, a shadow, made out of her importunity.

He saw her, for his face lighted with recognition.

The mother held out her arms as she had held them out to him so many times.

But after a moment she fell back in her chair, sick with heartbreak. For his gaze was fixed on something beyond her.

Walking past her without seeing, he went to the girl in the garden of the next house.



GENIUS is the capacity for side-stepping infinite pains.

THE REASON

By Mrs. L. G. R. Hitchens

SHE was undeniably pretty and everyone admitted she was as good as she looked.
The right kind of men flocked to her in platoons.
Old ladies asked her to tea.
But the other girls avoided her.
She always wanted to try on their new hats.



THE SHRINE

By Louis Untermeyer

BEAUTIFUL, wise— but you do not compel
Worship beyond a bent and willing knee;
Your loveliness is a familiar bell
Ringing incessantly.

Yours is a dazzling and unblemished shrine;
The niches burn with color, candles sing.
Yet bread is bread, and water is not wine
For all your murmuring.

Yes, you are like a splendid house of prayer,
A sanctuary where no joy has trod;
But I can never stand in reverence there
Where there are lights and altars—but no god.



A KISS on the cheek has finished its travels; a kiss on the lips has just started.



THE ILLUSION

By L. M. Hussey

I

HER transparent pathos arrested the eye of visitors. When they came into the modeling room at the League they were sure to observe her among the first, working at the little idealized babies that she shaped out of clay. She aroused more interest than the gaudy girls in smocks and bobbed hair or the sculptors of futurist tendencies who erected figures of writhing muscles with faces of arresting grimaces. She was pathetic; it was easy and pleasant to pity her.

She had been at the League for more than a year; everyone knew her and everyone was kind to her. She came from some obscure little town in a Western State with a letter of introduction from a Chicago sculptor. Pretending no intimacy with him, she explained frankly that she knew him only by correspondence and that, on her sending him two or three small plaster casts of her work, he had advised her to study in New York.

Lorenzani, the teacher in charge of the modeling class, received her as one of his pupils with only a brief hesitation; he was a man of some feeling and it would have been too cruel to have refused her desire. He had nothing to regret afterwards. She worked very quietly, making her innumerable little babies, each one an impossible, fat cherub. The egoists of the modeling-room were not even jealous of her; her endeavour was so palpably futile.

Lorenzani occasionally stopped at her side, for a moment only, and told her that the child growing out of wet clay was "pretty" or that it was "cute" or

that she was doing "very well." She never failed to smile, and her smile was always somewhat affecting. Her hunched back dwarfed her and she had to turn her face up in a trusting attitude to meet his eyes, to watch his lips when he spoke. Then her gold curls, that upon her did not seem an affectation, fell back from her forehead and her face seemed large and more pale.

Occasionally Lorenzani, in a second of idle speculation, wondered what she wanted, what she hoped, what she dreamed, but the fact that in reality life could bring her so little always replaced the problem of his imagination. He would pass on to a more promising pupil, or to one whose skill had almost gone beyond the pupil stage, and her fingers would take up the damp clay again. She worked longer than anyone else and no one conceived her with any other purpose.

She was never visited in her little room near the League. Each evening she walked there alone, passing through the crowds almost like a phantom in the unobtrusive smallness of her deformity. When she entered the house she never troubled to look on the table near the stairs for mail, inasmuch as she had no correspondents to write to her. She went up the stairs quietly and entered her room almost without a sound. When the door was closed behind her she often sighed.

The room had delighted her when she first came to the city. It had embodied then some of her unexpressed and unguessed hopes. The red wall paper was warm and suggestive; the two large windows at the end had fascinated her for a time with the view of several tall

apartment buildings turned intimately with their backs to her searching eyes.

She used to watch the heads that appeared at the windows, the faces of girls and men, several times the glimpse of a scene enacted duskily in the square of a window, an occasional silhouette at night, and the remote, nearly indistinguishable sounds of conversation coming to her ears across the court of backyards and an alley.

These things had suggested the manifold activities of the city, something of its mystery, and a sense of its promise. They assured her in the early days, they made the deeper hopes of her coming seem possible of fulfillment.

In the little town that she had left no one had ever been unkind to her and the pity of all the familiar people among whom she lived since her earliest recollections had entered like a colour and a flavour into all her moments, reminding her of her difference, calling up the knowledge of her abnormality, unwanted and increasingly hateful.

She had no illusions as to the possibility of her success in sculpture, although she loved the clay and the charming little creatures that she fashioned out of it. But primarily the chance to learn more of the technique of modeling had not brought her to the great city. Her heart admitted another urge, although her lips never articulated it.

As a subtle observer, you might have guessed the substance of her secret had you followed her among the streets, watching with intimate eyes. It would have been more obvious during the first months of her arrival. Then her glances, always accomplished furtively, with timidity, embraced the passing figures of many men, men with girls, men alone, groups of men together. They seemed remote from her; she had never the courage of a smile; but afterward, alone in her room, her pallid cheeks flushed with hope. The sense of the city's vastness was strong in her mind, its complexity, its potentialities; such unbelievable things might happen there!

Yet, after the passing of a year, she knew no one. Each evening she returned to her room alone and the dull hours of the night spent themselves slowly.

Like single drops of water eroding a pillar of marble, the empty-handed days, passing one by another, wore down the hidden shaft of her hope. A certain bitterness, an unspoken resentment, stood in its place. She resented the kindness of the students at the League; she came to hate the daily smiles given her by the handful of men with whom she studied.

These were not the smiles she wanted, these curved lips of ill-concealed pity, nor their glances those of her desire! She even read less and less of the romantic books that had engrossed her, and less and less she dreamed of herself in the rôles of the heroines, ardently wished and warmly sought. She began to work dully; the routine of her days irked her; and each gesture of living became trivial and without purpose.

II

SOMETIMES she walked out at night, often quite late, wandering without purpose in the streets, because she could no longer bear the silence of her room. Often she found some comfort in mingling with the crowds where they were the most dense, on Broadway in the region of the uptown theaters, the cabarets, the restaurants, for then, witnessing the many chances of so much life, flashes of her confidence returned to her.

Once, on her joining a crowd about two men who had begun to fight, a young fellow accidentally standing at her side spoke to her pleasantly and she remembered his face and his smile for many succeeding days. He made some casual comment on the belligerents and she had been too confused to answer him. A moment later two policemen broke into the gathering crowd, she was pushed back, she lost sight of the young chap who had spoken to her and she never saw him again.

Afterward she accused herself of a tragic and imbecile hesitancy, the lack of a quick response, and she wondered if he, like all the others, had spoken to her through a hateful impulse of pity. She walked to the same place for several successive evenings; but no one said anything more to her.

One night, several months after this, she had gone out quite late; unable to sleep, the melancholy scraping of a violin by some amateur in a near room of the house had tortured her with its melancholy wailing. The night was warm; she wore no hat and her yellow curls were gathered up into a loose bundle at the nape of her neck. Her dress hung down in wide folds from her shoulders, half-concealing her deformity. She walked very slowly, and in the aimless languor of her pace, in the squat smallness of her figure, she seemed remote from the life about her, a curious and unheeding dwarf from another and less rigorous existence.

She walked an hour or more and then turned back to return to her silent room. And rounding the corner at her street she saw a man sitting on the curbstone with his head in his hands.

He looked up; he seemed to have heard her step.

A flickering arc light made his countenance indefinite, but its general aspect was plain enough. She saw the sagging lines under his eyes, the drooping mouth, the disordered hair that stuck up over his head like tufts of thick grass. His hat had rolled off a few feet into the street, where it lay on its side forlornly; she knew at once that he was drunk.

He was waving his hand at her loosely. Stopping, she approached him.

"Hello," he mumbled.

She bent over a little, looking down at him.

His clothes were incredibly dirty; he seemed to have accumulated something from the smudge of every street, from the filth of every gutter.

"What do you want?" she asked.

Her words were uttered with their

customary gentleness and she felt an interest in the encounter.

His lips moved and he muttered something, but she was unable to differentiate any words. He leaned back precariously, propping himself on his hands pressed palms downward on the pavement.

A momentary beam of clear light, falling over his face from the uneven arc above him, revealed his countenance to her plainly. She observed that his features, despite their alteration of the moment, were finely cut; his face was not brutal; she saw that he was young.

Then he dropped his face unexpectedly, drawing up his hands and propping his head between his fingers whilst he supported his elbows on his sharp knees. She perceived his shoulders shake and she heard him sob; he was unaccountably crying. He cried shamelessly and with loud, gurgling sounds.

She drew closer to him and touched him lightly for an instant on his drooping shoulder.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked.

Again he raised his face and this time it was ludicrous with large tears that spread out over the smudges of dirt into areas of dingy moisture. His condition suddenly amused her—his forlorn look, his childish tears, his alcoholic melancholy. She looked down at him and laughed and her little laugh joined like a charming and alleviating counterpoint with the dolorous theme of his grief.

"I thought you were sympathetic," he mumbled, choking over the words.

"I am!" she exclaimed.

She laughed again. She was delighted with the adventure. Her loneliness was gone, and now, in the isolation of her position, she felt an agreeable content; she could talk to this fellow if she cared to and as long as it pleased her to do so.

"No y're not!" he accused her.

His eyes met her own unsteadily, but with an expression of deep reproach,

like the look of one profoundly hurt and beaten at a friend guilty of a betrayal.

"Look at me!" he cried pathetically, weakly. "Here I am poor and homeless. Does anyone give me a home? Does anyone care 'bout me? It's a shame! . . ."

He broke off in a sob and continued after he had swallowed his grief in convulsive workings of his larynx.

"It's shameful! They ought to be ashamed of themselves to le' me this way, the way I am. Here in a city like this! 'S a rotten shame! . . ."

In the excess of his dolour and indignation, his voice trailed off into mutterings from which she could not separate understandable words.

"What are you doing here?" she asked.

"Jus' waiting!" he cried. "Waiting to see if there's any heart in this city!"

She smiled at him brightly.

"It's too late," she told him. "The hearts are all asleep now. You'd better go home and look for them tomorrow. Poor fellow, tell me where you live and I'll put you on a car."

He gazed at her face solemnly, searching her countenance as if he sought to read the innermost hidden things of her soul.

"Don't believe you're m'friend," he said gravely.

"Oh, yes, I am."

"Got no home," he said.

"Well, where do you live? Where do you sleep?"

"Nowhere. They don't le' me live anywhere now . . ."

His head dropped down on his chest and he was silent. His alcoholic dejection, his conviction of utter friendliness, both amused and touched her.

She watched him a moment without speaking. A man passed the corner and looked at the two; he hesitated a moment and then went on and the sounds of his footfalls diminished in the distance. They were alone again.

Presently a startling idea came to her. Her eyes widened a little and her heart beat a little faster; she could feel the

hastening blood pressing at the veins in her wrists.

For an instant it seemed bizarre and impossible, but she shrugged her shoulders and realized her position. No one bothered about her; she had no one to consider. So she came to a decision.

She leaned over the drooping figure, grasping his arm in her frail hands.

"Get up!" she commanded.

He made an effort to rise.

"I know," he sobbed accusingly.

"You're like all th' rest . . ."

She pulled impatiently at his arm.

"Come on," she demanded. "Get up now!"

He struggled violently and gained his feet.

For several seconds he tottered uncertainly and she was fearful that he would fall and drag her to the pavement with him. But his sense of equilibrium grew a little more acute, and swaying slightly like a curious blunted tree in an unfelt wind, he stood beside her on the pavement. She continued to pull at his arm.

"Walk along with me," she told him.

He was obedient, and as she stepped forward, he kept an uneven pace with her. There was no lightening of his dejection. He walked with a sunken head, with sagging shoulders, with bent knees. He looked like a derelict of the accumulated punishment of the fates. His soiled clothes flapped about him grotesquely. He muttered to himself.

"No, you're not m'friend," he accused dolefully. "You were never m' friend."

She paid no attention to his words. She pulled him along as fast as she could, as rapidly as her meagre strength allowed. She was glad that it was so late and the street so quiet, for after all it would have been embarrassing to have been observed.

She passed the tall apartment house that was the sentinel of her block, and came to the row of boarding-houses, every room rented to a different person. The brown-stone fronts were dusky in the night. The entrances to the cellars were black and pit-like be-

hind the iron railings that guarded each short flight of descending steps.

She stopped in front of the third house and laboriously turned the drunken man around until he faced the wide steps that went up to the door.

"In here now," she said, sharply. "Look out for the steps!"

She pushed him over against the stone banister and they began the flight together. He dragged one foot after the other painfully and several times he frightened her by his swaying uncertainty. She was breathing fast; her eyes were wide and excited; her pale cheeks were brightened by a suffused colour, invisible in the gloom of the night.

She piloted him safely to the landing and searched in her bag for the key. Finding it, she thrust it softly into the lock and opened the door with care. There was no one in the hall. The drunken man followed her with a comforting obedience.

With several perilous moments to make the outcome uncertain, they managed the ascent to the second floor. Once he nearly fell and she clutched hard at the hand-rail and held there with all her scarcely adequate strength. When they reached the last step she breathed deeply, expelling the uneasy air with an immense relief.

They were at the door of her room and she opened it hurriedly. No one had seen her come in; no one had appeared in the hall. She was very much satisfied with her success. She gave her charge a push and he stumbled into the room.

At once she closed the door and locked it. Running over to the gas-jet on the wall, she struck a match and illuminated the room. Desperately holding to a chair, wavering like a tottering animal, was the man she had brought in with her. His eyes blinked in the sudden light.

He looked very amusing and she laughed softly, meanwhile crossing the room to him and taking his arm again. She led him to a couch against the wall.

"Lie down there," she said, "and go to sleep."

He dropped heavily; the springs creaked under his weight. His arms fell out limply and his hands hung over the edge of the couch in a flexed inaction. He closed his eyes and began to mutter.

"Not m'friend," he mumbled. "Not m'friend. No, she's not m'friend."

He repeated it again, like the refrain of a profound and pitiful sorrow, like the simple expression of some momentous grief. She smiled at him in delight. His words died away into a sorrowful silence, and she continued to smile.

She was happy; she was glad. She had done an adventurous thing and no one could say what might come out of it. She was immensely eager to know what the man would say when he woke and was sober. How surprised he would be! How astonished at finding himself with her! This was the romantic life she had foreseen in the city and the city had brought her something at last!

She threw a quilt over an old red Morris chair and straightened the folds until there was a smooth place for her to recline. She wrapped herself in a thick red dressing gown that extended to the bottoms of her shoes and trailed a little on the floor. Then she turned the light low and sat down.

Leaning back, with half-closed eyes, she looked at the man on the couch. His face was more composed now and the configuration of his features pleased her. He was good looking and he was young!

She felt no loneliness at all.

For a time she wondered what they would say to her in the house if they knew she had brought a man into her room after midnight. She almost wished that she had been seen; she would have felt pride in the discovery. Perhaps they would not then regard her with that hateful and unfailing glance of pity. In this city she could be like others and achieve the life of others. She thought of the girls at the League;

they would envy her fearlessness. Her small body thrilled with pleasure.

She was very tired, but the languor of her weariness was soothing to her. Presently she closed her own eyes and fell asleep.

III

SHE awoke early in the morning and when her eyes opened the strangeness of her position startled her.

For some minutes she was unable to understand why she occupied this uncomfortable chair; her back hurt, her body felt sore. She drew her small hands downward over her face as if to brush a web of sleep from her countenance; she blinked her eyes and looked about the room. Then she saw the man on the couch.

He was still asleep. He rested with his head thrown back on the pillow, his mouth slightly open, his arms flung out and one hand hanging limply over the edge of the mattress.

She remembered everything now—and she was afraid!

She stood up quickly, her eyes wide and startled. None of the daring impulses of the night before was with her now; in the light of the morning the desire of hazards was gone and her rapidly beating heart expressed nothing save a vague terror. It seemed to her that she had been exposed to a grave danger, real enough even if the precise terms of it were not understood.

For several seconds she was distracted; she did not know what to do. She felt as if she had put herself in a genuinely menacing position, from which there was no safe extrication. Smoothing back her curls with nervous hands, she stared at the stranger on the couch.

Then she grew calmer. He did not awake; his sleep was profound.

She advanced toward the couch on the tips of her toes, holding her breath. She drew close and looked down at his face.

The scrutiny of his features reassured her. His face was paler now

and the swollen pouches under his eyes had somewhat subsided. There was nothing fearful in his aspect; he was only a young man and there was not even a marked brutality in his countenance. A measure of her former emotions returned in looking at him; she began to feel glad of her adventure, proud of her fearlessness and full of agreeable anticipations for whatever might follow. She stood near his couch, smiling.

A noise came to her ears from the next room. The old man who rented it was getting out of bed. At once she perceived a certain peril for herself. She understood the necessity of awakening the stranger and getting him out of the house unseen. For a moment she hesitated, afraid to touch him, but then her resolution came to her and she put her hands on his shoulders. She shook him gently.

It took considerable shaking to make him open his eyes. His lids separated only a little at first; he stared up at her dumbly. He seemed to find nothing strange in her presence there, in his own position. He tried to close his eyes again; she shook him once more. At this he raised himself slowly, propping his head in one hand, his elbow on the couch.

"Gee!" he exclaimed. "I feel like the devil!"

Now, as if his eyes had not recorded her before, he appeared to see her for the first time. His languorous attitude was abruptly changed for a sitting posture, and he stared at her from head to foot as if she were a sudden phantom.

"Who are you?" he asked. "How did I get here?"

She touched her warning fingers to her lips and restrained, meanwhile, a wish to laugh at his surprise.

"Don't speak so loud," she whispered. "I had no business to bring you here! But, oh, but you were drunk!"

He said nothing; her admonition and his own astonishment kept a temporary seal on his lips. He only waited for her to speak and with her words bring

him some enlightenment. His ruffled hair stood up all over his head in a ludicrous disorder and with his streaked face and wide eyes he looked like a gnome just emerged to a surprising and unexpected light. Now she could not help laughing, and the gentle sound of her mirth vibrated quietly in the room.

"Oh, excuse me," she begged, "but wait till you look at yourself in the glass; you look so funny! And you don't remember me bringing you in here at all!"

"No. . . ."

"Well, I found you just down at the corner and spoke to you, and you said you had no place to go, not a place in the world where you could sleep. What do I care what anybody says?—nobody knew anyway. . . . So I just brought you in here. . . ."

"You spoke to me on the street?"

"Yes, of course; just the way I said."

"What for?"

"Well, you were so awfully drunk. . . . I couldn't leave you there. . . . I brought you here."

He turned slowly on the couch and swung his feet over the edge, placing them softly on the floor.

He looked down at his disreputable clothes; he tried to brush some of the dirt from his coat.

"I must have rolled in every gutter in this town," he remarked.

Then he looked up at her again, studying her like an unreal phenomenon, narrowing his lids until he almost squinted.

He noticed her gentle face, her little deformed body, the gold curls that hung down to her shoulders, and the room that made the setting for her, full of finished and half-finished figures in clay. The little girl and her room increased his puzzle. The shock of uneasiness, the brief sense of fear that had come to him at first passed, but no enlightenment took its place. He sought blindly for her motive in sheltering him.

She was thoroughly delighted and a sense of living life intensely seemed to increase the natural warmth of her

blood. She leaned a little toward him, speaking in a voice that was only a whisper.

"Listen," she said. "You know I had no right to bring you here. So I must get you out now before the house is full of people. You can wash at the stand over there and I'll give you a brush for your clothes. Then I'll peep out over the stairs and as soon as we see that it's clear you'll run down and go out quickly. You must wait for me at the corner, and I'll come soon, so that we can have a little breakfast together. I want to talk to you!"

He stood up now, putting aside the problem of her strangeness until he could talk to her later. He understood her anxiety and he hurried to leave the room. Soap and water altered his appearance greatly; he looked still younger and she was sure that she liked his face. He brushed his clothes as well as he could, but the final effect was not wholly admirable.

Meanwhile she stood smiling at him, her hand on the knob of the door, waiting for his readiness. He walked toward her at last and she opened the door softly.

She tip-toed out into the hall and leaned over the banister, looking down. No one was in the lower hall. She motioned rapidly for him to follow her. He obeyed, as quietly as he could, and she pointed down the stairs.

"Hurry," she whispered. "And wait for me!"

She watched him go down, clinging to the railing in order that his feet would make less noise in treading the stairs. He opened the front door and disappeared; he was safely out of the house.

She returned to her room.

Her spirits were exulting and her heart was beating fast. She began to change her frock, in haste that she might quickly rejoin the one who had just left her. As she hurried about the room the thought of her former home came to her, the little town, the people she knew, all of them, seeing her each day, being kind to her, pitying her. . . .

Their pity was a mockery; she could laugh at them! Life was bringing her more than ever it vouchsafed to them. She had the courage for adventures they would never dream. The course of compassion was reversed; she pitied them!

In a few minutes she was ready and then she left the room with a rapid step. Filled with agreeable expectancy, she ran down the stairs and opened the front door. Out on the steps she looked up and down the street and she saw him at the corner waiting for her. She waved her hand and he answered with his own.

It took her only a few seconds to reach his side.

"Come," she said breathlessly. "Let's have our breakfast."

He stood still for a moment; he hesitated and she saw his face redden a little. She understood. Laughing, she pulled him along the pavement with her.

"I know," she said. "Of course you're broke; you haven't a penny, have you? Well, that doesn't matter, because I have some money."

An exuberance never felt before stirred within her like a volatile fluid. Her curls stirred on her back with the buoyancy of her step. Her lips, her eyes, each curve of her pale face expressed a smile. Her manner bewildered the man at her side.

"What are you?" he asked. "Have you adopted me? Are you my guardian angel?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed. "That's it! I've adopted you! Tell me, do you get drunk every day?"

IV

WHEN they were seated in the restaurant she began to ask him questions, one after another, and he found himself fully occupied answering them. She demanded his whole history; and what there was of it, he told her.

He had spent all his money, all he had, since he had arrived in the city a little more than a year before. Like herself, he had come from a small town

and with a certain similarity in his aim, although not impelled by as definite an urge. He had wanted things to happen to him, he had desired excitement, but he went about the satisfaction of his wishes with none of her hesitancy, with none of her waiting. A fair-sized sum, coming into his hands on the death of his father—the gradual accumulation of a lifetime's hard work—disappeared from his pockets in something over twelve months. . . . The day before he had been put out of his last boarding-house.

"I pawned a few things that were left," he said, "and of course I celebrated."

She smiled.

"Yes, you celebrated. And what are you going to do now?"

"I don't know."

"Don't you really have an idea?"

"None at all. I'll have to work at something. Anything I can get to do."

She knit her brows thoughtfully.

Meanwhile, he regarded her with a strong curiosity.

Why was she interested in him, why did she trouble about him? But perceiving her deformity, it was easy for his mind to regard her as something different, a woman not quite like others; the fact that she was different in a measure explained her. So he began to accept her and little by little his wonder lessened.

"I'll tell you," she said finally, "you can easily find something to do if you have a little time to look about and somewhere to live while you're doing that. What you need right away is some money. Suppose . . . suppose you let me lend you some?"

He was silent for a moment. He dropped his eyes and stared at his plate.

A faint sense of shame reddened his cheeks a little. The simplicity of the small creature in front of him was pathetic, as pathetic as her unfortunate body. She was not like anyone else. He felt a warm compassion for her.

He raised his eyes slowly.

"Well . . . if you want to do that—" he began.

She was smiling again.

"Surely! Didn't I tell you that I adopted you!"

Already she was beginning to feel very sure of herself. He was so helpless without her; she was the strong one. This would save him from thinking of her as others did, from regarding her with that odious compassion she inevitably aroused, unwanted, unasked, and hateful. She was certain that he would never pity her!

Later she took him with her to the bank, where she drew some money for him. Then they went together to look for a room. There was some difficulty about securing this, but she was never tired; she enjoyed each moment of the search. All these hours together were a promise of the companionship to come and it seemed impossible that she would ever be lonely again. She had found the object of her search; at last the city was bringing her the substance of her dreams. Endearing scenes that she had scarcely dared to vision before entered her imagination now like promises all but fulfilled. She watched her companion endlessly, looking up at his face, reading his features. He was an adventurer, too, and he was worthy of her visions.

At last they found a place; she herself did the bargaining with the woman of the house, she was so solicitous of his comfort. Then she told him that she must go to her work and she took his hand in saying good-bye.

"You'll come and see me this evening, of course?" she asked.

"Certainly," he said.

They parted on the street. He watched her until she disappeared around the corner, waving her hand to him. He sighed a little. He had never met anyone like her; she wanted nothing and her kindness was the result of her pitiful difference. A regret and a dull melancholy marked his mood. Life was ironic! Why was no woman perfect; why did it not bring him a woman with her soul, and with a body that he could love?

V

He visited her that evening as he had promised, and they spent several hours together. She eagerly showed him some of her work and was delighted with his praise. He gave this without stint, and she began to think that perhaps even her work was more important than she had imagined. She was thoroughly happy and deeply regretful when it was time for him to go. She went to the door with him and watched until he was out of sight.

Returning to her room she smiled to herself as she thought how pleasant it would be could she find him drunk every night, as on the night before, and so keep him close to her. But she was patient; she was willing to abide the certain fulfillment of her desire.

Now in the League she worked with joy every day, waiting until the evening when she could be with her friend. Those days when he excused himself, for some reason or another, marked for her only dull and wanting hours. She was so glad with him! They went about the city together, they visited the theaters, they ate in the restaurants, they walked on the streets arm in arm. Her pride in the possession of him was very great, and the sight of a girl walking past her with a man at her side no longer brought her emotions of melancholy.

Yet after a time she began to feel, vaguely at first, a certain wanting in their relation. They had progressed, in their companionship, to a desirable point of intimacy—but for several weeks the course of their mutual interest seemed to have stood still.

She realized this very suddenly one evening when he had found it impossible to be with her. She thought then how the work he had secured was intruding into their hours; frequently he had to work at home in his room. In a way she regretted that he was so faithful to his opportunity.

Somehow the endearing moments of her dreams had not yet come and inexplicably the movement toward them had

stopped. He was kind to her, he confided in her, he told her the incidents of the new work he was doing, he seemed to withhold nothing. She had even observed a look in his eyes that she knew arose from an inner tenderness—yet he had never touched her with tenderness, she knew none of his caresses, no ardour had come into being. She sat in her room alone, pondering this.

It came to her swiftly, in the inspiration of a second, that perhaps he lacked the courage. She began to smile. Of course! He regarded her as the strong one; he did not pity her as others were used to do. In every way she had taken the initiative with him; she felt an old thrill of delight in her fearlessness. And now she remembered more intimately that look in his eyes. Often she had seen it there, when she glanced up at him suddenly, when she met him unexpectedly, when she first appeared to him in the evening. Assuredly it was tenderness; without doubt she was dear to him.

She stood up suddenly, a resolution stirring her heart, quickening her breath, widening her eyes. She brushed back her yellow curls, as if to see more clearly. That evening he was working at home. That evening he was in his room, the room she herself had found for him, working alone.

A sense of strength was full in her senses; it seemed to expand in her body, increase the meagerness of her person, make her resolute and indomitable.

That evening she would go to him and make him confess his love.

She pinned a hat to her hair, threw a blue cloak about her shoulders and hurried out of the room.

On the street the fresh air was exhilarating and she breathed it in quick, full inspirations. At the corner she took a car; she sat alone fidgeting in her seat, impatient with the eternal stopping at every corner, angry because this bumping box on wheels did not fly like a winged chariot to the door of her desire. But at last she

came to his street and she hurried out with a quickened beating of her heart.

There were several squares to walk. She half ran, paying no attention to the men and women whom she passed. Now she was very near his house. She fastened her eyes upon the door, knowing that in another moment she would be there, pass in, and find him alone in the upstairs room.

She was almost at the step when the door opened, and she heard his voice! She stopped abruptly.

A girl stepped out and directly behind her, holding to her arm, he appeared.

The door closed. The pair walked down the steps.

She drew back into the shadows. Her heart seemed to die in her breast, the rise and fall of her breathing seemed to cease as if forever. They did not see her in the gloom of the house wall, she was so small, she was so negligible. She heard him murmuring caressing words to the girl at his side and she caught an instant image of his face, bending to the eyes of his companion. She saw the expression then that lay over his features—and in a second of abominable revelation she knew that never had he given this look to her, this palpable quality of tenderness, this obvious expression of admiration, of desire.

She knew now what his softened glances had meant to her; their illusion had vanished, the false glamour of her imagination was gone from the memory of them. He had looked at her with an old familiarity, with a meaning she had known and hated all her life—with pity!

Now the two had turned the corner and were gone from her sight.

For a time she stood quietly, pressing against the wall, as if in that flattening against the hard stones she could shrink out of the clutches of reality. But at last she stepped away from the wall and began to walk slowly, the way she had come. She did not take the car; she walked the entire distance to

her room. She walked slowly and her body felt light, as if some substance of it had departed from her. Now and again her nervous hands clenched at her sides.

She reached her room. Within the closed door she ran toward the couch and sank upon its cushions. Her tears ran out of the corners of her eyes and wet her cheeks. How foolish she had

been, what a mirage had deceived her!

At last she raised her face. Something of its old look had returned, the look that marked her countenance before the glad, illusive days when she had found her man upon the street corner. The dumb pain, the dumb patience, came back to her face—the expression of a different one, of a hopeless one, of a pitiful one.



IN THE KEY OF BLUE

By T. F. Mitchell

SHE wished for masculine admiration but she was homely and got none of it. She realized that she must attract some man's attention. With this end in view she stood on a street corner for two hours waiting for a man to come up and speak to her. She was ready to give up in despair when her heart was suddenly made glad by the sound of heavy masculine footsteps behind her. She waited eagerly for him to speak.

"Move on," he said gruffly as he twirled his club.



GIFTS

By Babette Deutsch

I HAVE woven you music
 And flowers too;
 What more elflike thing
 Would you have me do?

I have taken your heart
 And given you pain;
 Do you want my gifts
 Or your heart again?



MR. JOHNSON

By Elinor Maxwell

I HAVE been in his employ for three years. He dictates to me two hours every morning, nods me a curt dismissal, and says gruffly, "Get these letters out as soon as possible, young woman! Try not to go to sleep on the job the way you did two or three days last week! Remember, if you *can*, that you are working for a business house!" or "Keep an eye on your spelling, Miss Nichols! There are

times when one would think that you had not finished the grammar grades!" or some other equally complimentary remark. I look meek, reply, "Yes, Mr. Johnson," and glide from the room. And all the time, I'm dying to pull his head down in my lap, rumple up his hair, and murmur, "Well, him was my sweetums 'ittle bitta boy!" Dear me, dear me!



A CHANT FOR LOVERS

By Harry Kemp

Love is an army terrible with banners,
Love is a terrible, triumphant king,
Swift as the feet of the wind is his coming;
He is no soft and little thing.

If you seek dalliance, gentle, gentle lovers,
Or any substance of soft desire!
Turn, turn aside from his marching banners
And his young eyes of sleeping fire . . .

Love is an army terrible with banners,
But if you will dare his implacable face
He will give you sunrise and moonrise
And twenty million stars in space!



THE NOBLE MOMENT

By N. G. Caylor

I

SHE was to meet James Clegg for dinner that evening. Quite unconsciously, Helen Dixon had formed the habit of slowing down the pace of life on those days. It was as if, not realizing, she was saving herself.

This afternoon—it was Saturday—she went to pay a leisurely call on Lilly Carew, the daughter of old family friends—just a child, Helen thought—who had married some weeks before.

When she rang the bell she felt well-gowned and well-poised. She was conscious of her height. She was aware of a feeling of lovely matronliness, this despite the fact that she was thirty-six years old and unmarried. She was ready to humour the ridiculously young child on her visit. She would wish her happiness in the conventional way, and be amused. Certainly the apartment that Lilly had written of was amusing.

"Come and visit us in our 'wee two' or 'we two', spell it as you like," she had written.

Those ridiculous youngsters, starting out in a room and kitchenette—furnished. Helen and James Glegg had made plans for a real home.

In reality, that was the secret of her complacency. She was engaged to be married to James Glegg. At her age that meant, of course, that she had studied life, had weighed and measured it, and was prepared to attack its problems with confidence.

With a collected benignity Helen Dixon walked up the narrow cement of the court, and finding the number and the name above the bell, rang to announce herself.

An hour later, when she left, she felt aimless, ineffective, *gauche*; her very height seemed to her to typify a diffusion of vitality, a lack of concentration. She wondered if her groomed appearance only lent an effect of blandness, stamping a lack that reached within.

Accustomed to think of topics as reflected by herself, just as she rejected ideas which did not present her kind graciously, she was thinking intensely of Lilly Carew.

For the child, unfinished as she was, had touched with sure fingers the liquid fire of life. Just as wispy and sudden as she had been as a little girl, Lilly had become vital, compelling. Hers was the passion of worship; the richness of feeling that made a sensation of each breath of life, a past, present and future of every moment.

"Silly," Helen Dixon said to herself as she walked away, and "fatuous." Her words, the offering of her well-ordered mind, made no impression upon her feeling.

But in reality, beyond the mechanical sensation of movement, she did not feel. The breath of flame she had passed had left her blank.

She wondered what time it was. She had meant to stay longer. But then Donald Carew had arrived. And she had gone quickly. One had to leave them alone. Lilly had been talking to her when she heard the hall door open. A brilliance had leaped into her eyes and her face had turned pale, like a sudden flame reflected in a frosty window. She had rushed into the hall, and Helen Dixon had known that they were in each other's arms.

She had gone soon after that.

She walked now, and the wind reached the cold skin of her body.

The other was a dynamo. The wind would not touch the area of her body and leave her cold. She did not feel the skin all over her cold like that. She was a soul, vibrating from within. Silly thoughts—those.

Helen Dixon began to talk to herself as she walked. "Poor children. An up-hill struggle. Not like James and I—a real home. Books. Firelight on the dinner service—"

Despite the comfortable words she wanted to bawl. An irritation crept into her nerves. It ached in her arms. It made an unbearable lump in her chest. Something to cry out against. Something not to be borne.

She took a taxi down-town. A curious blankness was on her. There was nothing to think about.

II

IN the ladies' dressing-room in the hotel, with care and distaste, she retouched her appearance. Something impatient in her arms made her turn away from the mirror. Then she sat, looking with careful and yet blank eyes on the other women.

There was something loathsomely deliberate in their preening. Yes, that was it—by dragging out the processes of life you made things loathsome. Wasn't that the secret of beauty? A mood, a pose, the gleam of evanescence?

What would she and James Glegg talk about that evening? Sometimes they discussed love—implicitly as understanding people. He often said he had an intellectual admiration for her. She was measured in all things and competent, he said. Measured, competent—

She bit her lips against the tears.

At last she went to meet him. He stood near a pillar, straight and correct, something professionally eager in his roving glance, she thought. Like a teacher searching for receptive eyes in a class-room.

There was solicitude in his eyes as he met her.

"You look—"

"Don't tell me I look haggard!" Her laugh was brittle.

"Tired, Helen?"

Speculatively she analyzed.

"We are two people—desperate for a home," she thought.

He ordered dinner quietly. In his eager, almost youthful way, he would look up from the bill of fare to consult her. And she, who usually enjoyed these consultations, making them the occasion for little dissertations on dining, happy combinations of dishes and moods of taste, could hardly gather herself to answer.

"I feel tragic," she realized. "I want to wring my hands. I'm funny."

But her sense of humour, always meager, would not come to the rescue.

Conversation was no better.

"Have you read the translation of the Russian all-Soviet constitution?" he asked her.

She hadn't.

"Amusing—" he said. "One always had the idea that they meant equality—the Socialists. And now they just reverse the order. Before the moneyed classes voted. Now the proletariat does—and the capitalist doesn't."

He went on. It seemed to Helen Dixon that he drifted.

Something raged within her.

She wanted to talk about—

She didn't know what.

The waiter placed a small dish of salad at her right.

"Serve it as a course," she snapped.

That was it. Anger. She wanted to be angry. No use in disguising the demons of nervousness that jumped beneath her skin, no use in calming her tones. She wanted to rasp, to be disagreeable. Spluttering. Mean. Destructive.

She wanted to shock James Glegg—who drifted so hopelessly on.

"You are really a small mind, a provincial college instructor. Do you know? A cheap failure. Idiot! Working until almost forty to work up

to a living wage. Thief! You robbed—me.”

Something throbbing, angry, leaped into her throat. It burned her eyes. It crouched livid-white behind the corners of her mouth.

No use thinking those things. Under lowered brows she surveyed him. His hair was getting white at the temples. What more did he deserve? But then—a real love, a home, children. His kindness would expand. What was before them? Not the sacred ardor of the children, of Lilly and Carew.

Lilly had trembled when she spoke of “Don.”

Her voice would fail and fall into her throat.

“I am having a wonderful time—and he knows it,” Lilly had said.

The comic, inadequate in-a-door bed. Lilly had wheeled it out to exhibit it. Her voice had stopped with a click a sharp intake of breath—

III

WHEN the waiter approached them again he was timid, obsequious.

She wanted everyone to drop before her wilting anger.

“A woman cheated”—the phrase flashed into her mind.

“Silly, you’re like a movie,” she rebuked herself.

Then she began to talk, stridently, with a metallic sound.

Someone had played the “Serenade” by Drdla, spoiled it. The tones were mawkish-sweet.

So they talked of music. She wanted to crush his every reach of thought.

He was trying to tell of Schumann-Heink singing “My Tears Shall Flow.” She jarred in with, “Give me the Habanera from ‘Carmen’—my favorite—” She went on to further idiocies.

“I always dreamed of singing it with a gaudy shawl draped over me—” Recklessly—“but my figure was not sensuous enough—”

Sensuous. He winced at the word, as she had known he would.

“You don’t know me,” in a high,

tense tone. “Did you know I have always wanted to be a detective?” She had never thought of it before.

So it went on. He was disturbed.

“Do you know?” she thought with enjoyment, “I should like to nag at you—to make you really miserable—”

He was unhappy when he left her at her door. Something in her laughed.

IV

“YES, treat them that way.” She didn’t quite know what she meant.

In the same nervous, angry exaltation she mounted to her room in the house. “I’m tired—” she said aloud as she entered.

She lit the light, catching a glimpse of herself in the mirror. “Old—a fright—well—”

She took off her hat, put out the light, and drew up the shade. The street was a low, sweet mist of light—the dim round light-globes like tired moons or like the kind of dull lights of a sick-room.

She sat and watched the street, her cheek pressed to the window.

“I am played out,” she told herself intellectually. “Grooming—hygiene—to keep appearances—”

And then with a rush of liking for herself—somehow like in former years.

“My dear—you’re not nearly so bad when you are alone. People wear on you,” she told herself. “You could be quite natural and charming if you only had yourself to please—”

“Poor Jim—” she thought.

Almost aloud, as if composing her thought, she said, “Our lives are going to be drawn after a pattern lived by others. We have no fire of creation in us.”

And then, no longer reasoning, she felt in a flash the picture of the two youngsters from whom she had parted. Like shimmering ghosts they filled the night with their fused happiness—their two smiling figures—

A hot tear met the cold of her cheek against the pane—

“Oh, God,” she whispered, “let me

be young! Don't let me nag at my husband. I want to be happy. I want to make him happy—"

Almost like a prayer she amended, with a half-humorous glow, through her tears, "I have to have a wonderful time—and I want him to know it—"

And then, strangely enough, she prayed. Scraps of Biblical phrase filled her words. She prayed into the blue-and-whiteness of the misty night—into the unfathomable peace about her. . .

It left her very tired, and aware of her tiredness.

"I have worked hard," she thought. "Played out—" she used the phrase again. "And I will make him miserable. I wanted to nag, hurt, abuse him, tonight— And I love him."

The solution was easy. The decision overwhelming: "I am not going to marry him. I have no right to. Someone young can still bring him illusions—"

The misty night swam in her tears—

"This is your message, dear God—
"Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven—"

It was a long time before she went to bed.

* * *

When she woke up in the morning she knew that she would marry him and that she would make him suffer for all the mothering she had missed, all the satisfaction she had missed and all the ease that she would miss until she had safely married him.



THE TRAVELER

By Frank La Forrest

HER guests were enjoying themselves hugely with dancing and drinking, when she was suddenly called outside. Soon she reappeared with the news that her husband had returned from his long absence, unexpectedly. She informed the company that he was upstairs now and would presently be down. Everyone was eager to see him, and all crowded around the foot of the stairs awaiting his coming. Minutes passed by without his appearance, but the guests were forbearing. They made allowances. They knew that filing off a ball and chain from one's leg was a tedious matter.



SANG FROID: The attempt to conceal from your friends the fact that you know that they know that your marriage is a failure.



THE chief difference between domestic and foreign drama is the different shape of the telephones.



THE SON OF A HUNDRED GRAND-FATHERS

By Olga Petrova

I

CHING LI put his iron down on its stand. Mechanically he wiped the dew from his forehead and mechanically he turned off the switch. With the same mechanical precision he folded the wisp of violet-tinted chiffon embroidered with the tiny heart just above the spot where its owner's heart had been wont to pulse—thereby sending the sheer fabric into nameless and delicious flutterings—and placed it on top of a nearby pile of shimmering gossamer. This done he took an American pipe from the depths of his voluminous sleeve and betook himself to the stoop, there to wait for the coming of the police.

II

It was a sweltering night. The sun which had been beating down mercilessly all day upon New York in general and upon Ching Li's Very Good Hand Laundry in particular had retired some hours ago, but the baked pavements still threw off a humidity with a fury that presaged an even hotter tomorrow. One might almost hear the heat in the air, or what did duty for air, above the sounds indissolubly associated with early night in the tenement district.

A couple of dogs nearby contested the ownership of a bone with full canine ferocity. A female cat wailed her passion to high heaven and to a male of her own species even more mangy and lovelorn than herself.

Across this din came the sounds of a connubial dispute carried on with a vigor oblivious of a heat only a degree less than its own, the arguments being liberally punctuated with references to the ancestry of the gentleman in the case, or rather, to an apparent lack of any human ancestry at all. Now and then, between the cats, the dogs and the humans, came the squawk of a parrot enraged at his legitimate slumbers being thus rudely disturbed. From his cage on a neighboring fire-escape came a volley of oaths. Now and then a laugh, shrill and raucous, proved that mirth is comparative like anything else, while on an adjoining porch a pair of lovers crooned and whispered in the shadows.

Ching Li fished again in his sleeve and was rewarded this time by a box of matches, with one of which he lighted his pipe. An American pipe could not compare with the pipe of his grandfathers to be sure, but one must be contented with subterfuge when the devil holds the opium, and when one has a capacity for dreaming one may conjure up all sorts of myths even without its poppied presence.

In retrospect Ching Li's dreams began to take shape.

Staring straight ahead of him, oblivious of the potential lovers in close proximity and of the erstwhile lovers a little farther off who had tasted of the cup and had evidently found that tasting bitter, he saw again the familiar roof of the parental home.

In fancy he re-lived the scene in which he had informed his august father of

his determination to abjure the land of his birth, of almonds and of honey, and to set sail for the land of the foreign devils, there to learn the secret of American success, American language and customs.

He shivered a little as he recalled the curse of his respondent father, the tears of his celestial mother, not to mention the haughty indignation of his honorable mother-in-law of only two days' mother-in-lawness. He recalled the fact that like the prodigal of the Christian Bible—Ching Li was exceedingly well read—the said august parent had delivered to him the portion of goods that fell to him and had adjured him on the tablets of his ancestors never to return.

He recalled his arrival at Shanghai. He remembered his leaving there. He lived again the terrible indisposition which had been his during the first four days of the trip to San Francisco. He remembered, too, that his impression of that city was as of a kaleidoscope, so violently shaken as to take no definite form in his consciousness.

He did recall, however, that other adventurous spirits from his own land had arrived there ahead of him and that one section of town was practically inhabited by Chinese, some still Chinese in outward as well as inward form, while others spoke the language of the country and in American clothes plied their trades with all the Oriental cunning of their flowery native land.

In New York, concentration point of the country's greatness, melting pot in which the ingredients, white, yellow and black, never will and never can become one, Ching Li had counted up what was left of his earthly belongings.

They were as follows: three Chinese kimonas with their attendant articles of clothing, a complete set of the Encyclopedia Britannica, a very large dictionary in English and Chinese, a trunk bought in San Francisco, and a hundred and sixty-five taels, which in the parlance of this foreign land amounted to about one hundred and twenty-five dollars. Now one hundred and sixty-five taels and

one hundred and twenty-five dollars may be intrinsically the same as far as coin of either realm is concerned, but the purchasing power of the one shrivels and shrinks like unto the skin of a snake cast in the springtime when translated into the terms of the other. So you will observe that as far as a seeker after truth and a worthy scion of a worthy ancestry was concerned, Ching Li was not to be regarded in any sense as a bloated capitalist.

With a hundred and twenty-five dollars left (he now thought in dollars), he decided that his future studies of America were not to be gained within the gilded portals of Harvard or Yale, but rather in some occupation which might be both profitable and pleasant. With one hundred and twenty-five dollars one could not set up in a very large way as, say, a dealer in curios. Besides, he rather disliked the idea of curios in connection with anything Chinese. There were not a great many metiers open to one of his race, so that the process of selection was not unduly delayed.

The great idea had come to him one evening when counting for the five hundredth time the remains of his one hundred and twenty-five dollars. Why not a laundry! A Chinese laundry! What more chaste or more excellent way to employ himself profitably and at the same time pursue his observation of the American? One hundred and twenty-five dollars, even American dollars, would be sufficient for rent and equipment in a modest district for many moons to come.

True, it was an unusual proceeding, this, the scion of a hundred grandfathers washing the dirty linen of individuals who, as like as not, might find—if they searched assiduously enough—a single grandfather among the contents of their waste-paper baskets.

But what of it? To the pure all things are pure, and in a democracy like America a little thing like a grandfather more or less is a matter of no importance from their point of view, so why from his?

Then again, he didn't know very much about laundering as a profession, but with his one hundred and twenty-five dollars he would be able to hire a first-class hand to do the actual labor at first, and at the same time he would be learning the intricacies of the trade from a very maestro of the art.

No sooner planned than executed.

Wing Foo, a very capable laundry man, but without the advantages of personal capital, listened to the blandishments and the promises of future partnership in the business, as propounded by Ching Li. "Ching Li's Very Good Hand Laundry" was therefore born amid a festival of joss sticks, on the ground floor of 101 Percy Street in the Borough of Manhattan.

III

BEING a philosopher and having put his hand to the iron as it were, the offspring of a hundred grandfathers looked not back. Stifled were the memories of the plum-trees of his native China—stifled also the memories of their sweet odors in the springtime. As through a haze he remembered the wrath of his august parent, the tears of his celestial maternal parent and the big-eyed wonder of his little twelve-year-old bride. All his energy, both of mind and body, were devoted to becoming successful, first as a laundry man and afterwards, through that medium, as a student of things American.

With true oriental stoicism he investigated the very mysteries of washing and ironing.

Under Wing Foo's experienced care he mastered the elementary details of sheets and flat wash.

He passed through the intermediate stages of collars and cuffs and had, after due diligence, arrived at that graduation attendant upon the extremest skill of his art, namely, chiffons and crêpe de chine.

As time went on the laundering of such delicate fabrics supplied the only glamour of Ching Li's Percy Street existence. They spoke to him mutely of

the poesy of remote Fifth Avenue in contra-distinction to the utter lack of it on Avenue A.

Particularly entranced was he with the lingerie of a certain lady whose tastes ran in the direction of violet chiffon with the finest of fine laces and embroideries in discreet abeyance. All her gossamer garments were embroidered with a tiny embroidered heart, above the knees of certain of them and above the rounded fulnesses of others. In addition to the heart there was also another attraction, equally great if not greater, to the celestial senses of Ching Li—perfume. Soul-stirring or sensuous, mystical or flamboyant, just as his mood might happen to be as he passed the iron caressingly over their damp surfaces, sending the perfumed steam in little warm waves against his nostrils.

Then would Ching Li dream dreams and weave fantasies like nothing conceived of even by the pipes of happy China.

Sometimes he would see himself with all the mysteries of all the ages mastered and familiar, and by his side would be the shadow of a woman, white as snow, with soft blue eyes and curling yellow hair. An American woman—who smelled of cherry blossoms and yet of joss sticks and who called him "Honey." He had heard the word used many times by American sweethearts and he liked the sound of it. . . . He could hear the crooning of bees in the grass, he could smell the sweet odor of the fields and the honey-comb.

Yes, she must certainly call him "honey," for would he not surely show her how sweet a soul may be wrapped in the yellow carcass of, outwardly, a laundryman, but inwardly, a savant, a poet, a lover?

Ching Li's close attention to the necessities of his laundry had given him little time to pursue his contemplated study of the country he had adopted for his own. From early morning to late twilight he and Wing Foo would stand over the tub or ironing board and when at last night fell, rather than go

out and risk the spending of a few of his hardly gotten cents he would retire to the stoop with his pipe and his dictionary, there to pursue his visions and the flights of his Oriental soul.

But every dream and every vision radiated to or radiated from the wearer of the violet lingerie. She must be very beautiful. No one could wear such gossamer fabrics and be anything but beautiful. The size of her little chiffon vest would presuppose that she was slight. Ching Li would picture her to himself, her bosom rising and falling like a lovely music with every beat of her little heart.

He would picture the gentle curves which the chiffon in his hands would soon conceal and yet reveal. Then the perfume of her would send his heart a-dreaming until he would be forced to put down his iron for the very terror and ecstasy which this unknown woman inspired in him.

As the weeks and the months crawled by the violet woman grew to be an obsession. She figured as prominently now in his actual conscious life as she had previously figured in the visions he had thought to keep visions.

His tortured soul cried out its revolt. He must see her . . . he must . . . but how?

Many times he would carry the fragile bundle to her residence himself in the vain hope that he might catch a stray glimpse of his goddess . . . but no . . . and week after week he would trudge back, his dream and love and passion still unfulfilled. Then . . . one day . . . the great occasion came.

Could it have been only *today*? It seemed now so very long ago that tragedy, stark, actual tragedy had broken in on Ching Li's violet dreaming and sent it, with a crash, down from the heights of Olympus to the nethermost depths of 101 Percy Street in the Borough of Manhattan.

Ching Li had spent the afternoon as usual, ironing the soft silks and laces which had come to be his sole and particular care. He had left the violet lady's violet garments for the last as a

sort of a present, a reward for a child who has toiled through a long and strenuous day. All day long, in spite of the torrid heat, in spite of the overpowering humidity and the stale air of Avenue A, Ching Li's soul had been held up, revitalized, at the thought of the perfumed communion with these *pièces de resistance*.

Six o'clock came. Wing Foo had put down his iron, announced that he "no more work some more in this velly bad dam' heat," and had left Ching Li to his dreams and the visions of this lilac lingerie.

Gently he had patted the soft fabrics and run his iron into little nooks and corners, until he came to the embroidered heart. . . .

The perfume of cherry blossoms and yet of joss sticks had wafted upward. He had bent his head lest one wave of its fragrance might escape him. If he might only hold the beautiful lady herself for one little perfumed second! If he might only whisper half of the adoration of his Chinese heart! If he might only tell her how long and how passionately he had thought of her and adored her, of his utter loneliness. . . .

His brain and his hand had refused to co-ordinate any longer. SSSssss . . . the point of the iron had torn through the little embroidered heart and a great black gash was left to mark the place where it once had been.

Ching Li's dream came to a sudden and horrible end.

Was it an omen? An omen of something terrible about to happen to her? The gods of China forbid!

He knelt reverently down by the ironing board, reverently he took the gossamer vest in his two hands and reverently pressed it to his lips while the tears from the almond eyes of this son of a hundred grandfathers fell upon its smooth surface.

What should he do? How come into the presence of his lilac lady? Living or dead he felt that he must see her at once.

With an unusual swiftness of his processes of thought he reviewed the

situation. Ah, he had it! He would take a taxicab immediately, regardless of financial consequences. He would take the vest with him to her residence and beg an immediate interview that he might present his apologies for his superhuman carelessness and stupidity. He would not take her refusal to see him for an answer.

No sooner said than done.

The taxi driver pocketed his fare with an odd grunt, remarking on the nerve of "chinks" in a civilized country and honked away into the turgid shadows.

Ching Li ascended the steps of the front entrance and rang the bell.

IV

THE door was opened by a footman in resplendent livery who looked Ching Li up and down and was about to shut the door in his face when something, perhaps in the inevitableness of that face itself, made him think better of it and in a surly tone ask what was wanted.

Ching Li, in a voice in which none of the miserable apprehension of his soul was made manifest, requested a personal interview with the footman's mistress on a matter of great and immediate importance.

Ching Li's great education and his hundred grandfathers had never stood him in better stead than now. The footman, who was of Swedish persuasion, inwardly reflecting that in war time you could never tell when a man is "a government official, an ambassador or something," ushered him into the hall and offered him a seat. A moment later he returned with the intelligence that Mrs. Finkelstein would see Mr. Ching Li if he would step this way.

Ching Li's heart leapt from his ribs to his throat. Then she wasn't dead! . . . Thank all the gods for their celestial beneficence! And he was to see his lilac lady, in all the glory of her lilac lingerie, in the flesh. Of course she would be hidden by outer garments—but what of that? With the eyes of the

soul Ching Li knew every fold of her silken covering. And with the eyes of his dreams.

He followed the footman on satin feet, scarce daring to tread, and clutching the precious means of this sudden state of grace to his lovelorn heart.

"Mr. Ching Li, Madame!"

Through a haze of soft golden light he beheld a figure reclining on a couch drawn up to an empty fire-place. The odour of cherry blossoms and yet of joss sticks was in the air. He could not see her face for she lay with her back turned to the room.

For one brief second Ching Li's feet hovered between earth and heaven. Should he present his apologies first or tell of his great love first? Should he speak at all, or should this laden silence not speak for him?

A million thoughts crowded through his brain. Mechanically he noted a Buddha wrought of bronze standing on a nearby table and subconsciously he bowed his head in salutation. Then, still shrouded as with a spiritual mist, Ching Li felt that the footman had retired.

He opened his mouth to speak. His throat was dry, dry as the punk he burned. His tongue refused its office. His English deserted him, for the jade it was. The blood pounded in his ears—but above the din he heard a sharp, nasal, screechy voice saying, petulantly:

"Well, what is it you want? It's too bad that they must come to me for everything."

Down from the cherry trees he came with a bang! There began to dissolve about him the violet mist of his thousand dreams. What a voice! Shadows of his august mother-in-law, *what a voice!*

He drew a little nearer. The lilac lady raised herself on her divan and turned her countenance to the horrified son of a hundred grandfathers.

Across her shrunken shoulders a kimona was so tightly drawn as to show not a vestige of a curve beneath. Her bony arms terminated in hands that had

the semblance of the talons of some horrid bird. Her nose, true to the racial characteristics of her name, overshadowed a chin from which the teeth and gums had long ago receded. Her scrawny neck supported a head topped by a mass of sandy, grayish hair from which any hint of beauty had been carefully eliminated by Time's handmaidens. To complete the picture her cheeks were heavily rouged, as was her thin loveless mouth, drawn and puckered at the corners like some hideous mask.

Ching Li looked, scarce believing the evidence of his two eyes. It could not be true. It must be the diabolical lie of his own eyes, mad with too much dreaming. This ghastly old hag, the lady of his thousand nights' adoration—it couldn't be! Slowly the hideous truth dawned upon his unbelieving senses.

Such a travesty of love must not be allowed to continue. His duty became clear to him. He raised the bronze Buddha with both hands and approached the divan and the rigid Mrs. Finkelstein. Slowly and with perfect precision he brought it down with all

its ten-pound weight on the skull of what had in his sleeping and waking hours represented the lilac lady of his dreams. One blow was sufficient. With scarcely a sound she had crumpled, and not a breath was left in the unlovely body of Mrs. Finkelstein.

Ching Li picked up his bundle which had fallen to the floor and with a shudder of disgust left the room.

V

CHING LI put his iron down on its stand. Mechanically he wiped the dew from his forehead and mechanically he turned off the switch. With the same mechanical precision he folded the wisp of violet tinted chiffon, embroidered with a tiny heart just above the spot where its owner's heart had been wont to pulse—thereby sending the sheer fabric into nameless and delicious flutterings—and placed it on top of a nearby pile of shimmering gossamer. This done, he took an American pipe from the depths of his voluminous sleeve and betook himself to the stoop, there to wait for the coming of the police.



WHEN a bachelor marries he astonishes himself a good deal more than he astonishes his friends.



“**W**E hate each other and yet we do not part,” said the woman. “That is love,” said the man.



ALL widows and spinsters secretly advocate divorce. It puts husbands into circulation.



RÉPÉTITION GÉNÉRALE

By George Jean Nathan and H. L. Mencken

§ 1

Histoire d'Amour.—There once was a woman.

There once was a man . . .

There once was a woman

§ 2

The American Credo, III.—Additional articles in the American credo:

1. That a clean play never makes any money in Paris.

2. That a Sunday School superintendent is always carrying on an intrigue with one of the girls in the choir.

3. That it is one of the marks of a gentleman that he never speaks evil of a woman.

4. That a member of the Masons cannot be hanged.

5. That a policeman can eat *gratis* as much fruit and as many peanuts off the street-corner stands as he wants.

6. That the Italian who sells bananas on a push-cart always takes the bananas home at night and sleeps with them under his bed.

7. That a soft and wistful melancholy permeates all of Schnitzler's writings.

8. That the headwaiter in a fashionable restaurant has better manners than any other man in the place.

9. That a girl always likes best the man who is possessed of a cavalierly politeness.

10. That the most comfortable room conceivable is one containing a great big open fireplace.

11. That brunettes are more likely to grow stout in later years than blondes.

12. That a bull-fighter always has so many women in love with him that he doesn't know what to do.

13. That George M. Cohan spends all his time hanging around Broadway cafés and street-corners making flip remarks.

14. That one can never tell accurately what the public wants.

15. That there are hundreds of letters in the Dead Letter Office whose failure to arrive at their intended destination was instrumental in separating as many lovers.

16. That the exceptionally tall and lordly looking footmen in the Savoy Hotel in London are hired by the canny management for the express purpose of impressing American tourists.

17. That, when sojourning in Italy, one always feels very lazy.

18. That the people of Johnstown, Pa., still talk of nothing but the flood.

19. That there is no finer smell in the world than that of burning autumn leaves.

20. That Jules Verne anticipated all the great modern inventions.

21. That a woman, when buying a cravat for a man, always picks out one of green and purple with red polka-dots.

22. That a negro's vote may always be readily bought for a dollar.

23. That cripples always have very sunny dispositions.

24. That if one drops a crust of bread into one's glass of champagne, one can drink indefinitely without getting drunk.

25. That a brass band always makes one feel like marching.

26. That firemen, awakened sudden-

ly in the middle of the night, often go to fires in their stocking feet.

§ 3

The Biogenetic Law.—The fact that old men tend to be very conservative is well known to everyone, but biology has overlooked its significance. Under it there is probably a sort of psychological brother to von Baer's biogenetic law: the individual rehearses the intellectual progress of the race, from savage credulity up to civilized knowledge. When we are young we believe in things readily and violently. All of us fall in love during that time, and are ardent patriots, and swallow more or less Socialism. In middle age we grow skeptical. In old age, unless our minds decay and we grow childish again, we believe in nothing—and especially in nothing that is new and untried. A Socialist of forty-five is simply a man in a state of arrested development: intellectually, he is still eighteen or twenty. So is a man of fifty who falls in love: even women, for all their professional interest in such imbecility, laugh at him.

§ 4

The Spangled Lure.—It needed no Bernard Shaw to discover that the chief charm of the stage is aphrodisiac—that most men go to the theater, not to see plays, but to see pretty women. So much was, and is, platitude. But even Shaw overlooked a fact that should be quite as obvious—that even the learned men who compose tomes and treatises on the drama are chiefly kept to the job by sparkling eyes and graceful legs. Consider, for example, a late critic of great eminence—for years a Broadway sage. Read any of his solemn books, and you will find out what was the matter with him. He was forever falling in love with some prancing gal in grease-paint. Half of his alleged criticism of the drama was no more than a series of carnal hymns to such charmers. He was an

intensely respectable man—but he had an eye. It is surely no secret that I allude to William Winter. Among his living heirs and assigns—but perhaps I had better haul up.

§ 5

Essay on Publishers. — Encomium credited to Theodore Dreiser on the slip-cover of a mediocre novel called "The Great Hunger," translated from the Dano-Norwegian of Johan Bojer:

I would have "The Great Hunger" set side by side with (1) "A Family of Noblemen," by Saltykov; (2) "Madame Bovary," by Flaubert; (3) "Cousin Betty," or "Père Goriot," Balzac; (4) "Mikhail Gourakin," Danielevkaia.

Extract from Dreiser's actual letter to the publishers:

But the book is a tract, and as such falls short for me. In proof of this, I would have it set side by side with, etc., etc.

§ 6

The Deadly Duo.—The two most depressing companions a man can select are (1) the fellow who has just lost his girl or (2) the fellow who has just won her.

§ 7

The Scientist.—The value the world sets upon motives is often grossly unjust and inaccurate. Consider, for example, two of them: mere insatiable curiosity and the desire to do good. The latter is put high above the former, and yet it is the former that moves some of the greatest men the human race has yet produced, to wit, the scientific investigators. What animates a great pathologist? Is it the desire to cure disease, to save life? Surely not, save perhaps as an afterthought. He is too intelligent, deep down in his soul, to see anything praiseworthy in such a desire. He knows by life-long observation that his discoveries will do quite as much harm as good, that a thousand

scoundrels will profit to every honest man, that the folks who most deserve to be saved will be the last to be saved. No man of self-respect could devote himself to pathology on such terms. What actually moves him is his unquenchable curiosity—his boundless, almost pathological thirst to penetrate the unknown, to uncover the secret, to find out what has not been found out before. His prototype is not the liberator releasing slaves, the good Samaritan lifting up the fallen, but the dog sniffing tremendously at an infinite series of rat-holes. And yet he is one of the greatest and noblest of men. And yet he stands in the very front rank of the race.

§ 8

The American Negro.—It is one of the commonest of delusions that the American negro is by nature a musical fellow. The truth, of course, is that he is not at all musical, but rather merely rhythmical. He has an acute feeling for rhythm, but of music he knows nothing. It is, indeed, as rare to find a black American who knows anything about music as it is to find a white American . . . The negro, with his unusual sense of rhythm, is no more relevantly to be called musical than a metronome is to be called a Swiss music-box.

§ 9

The New Revelation.—Socialism in brief: the notion that John Smith is better than his superiors.

§ 10

The Fibre of Woman.—Woman is of much coarser fibre, of much less delicate sensibility and romantic sensitiveness, than man. A woman of refinement may without shame conceivably love a wholesale cheese merchant, for instance, and marry him, and live with him happily, and be faithful to him, and bear him numerous future wholesale cheese merchants. But it is difficult to think of a man of like compara-

tive refinement loving, without at least a flicker of shame, a woman who confessed to having loved—if only for a day of her life—such a virtuoso of cheeses, however handsome, however noble of spirit, however intelligent.

§ 11

Homo Boobus.—Religion, as religion, gradually dies out in the world, but the anthropocentric delusion at the bottom of it still flourishes. What else is behind charity, philanthropy, pacifism, the uplift, all the rest of the current pishposh? One and all, these puerile sentimentalities are based upon the notion that man is a noble animal, and that his continued existence and multiplication ought to be facilitated and made safe. Nothing could be more gratuitous and absurd. As animals go, even in so limited a space as our world, man is botched and ridiculous. Few other brutes are so stupid, so docile or so cowardly. The commonest yellow dog has far sharper senses and is infinitely more courageous, not to say more honest and reliable. The ants and the bees are more intelligent and ingenious; they manage their government with vastly less quarrelling, wastefulness and imbecility; the worship of cads and poltroons is unknown among them. The lion is more beautiful, more dignified, more majestic. The antelope is swifter and more graceful. The ordinary house-cat is cleaner. The horse, foamed by labor, has a better smell. The gorilla is kinder to his children and more faithful to his wife. The ox and the ass are more industrious and patient. But most of all, man is deficient in courage, perhaps the noblest quality of them all. He is not only mortally afraid of all other animals of his own weight, or half his weight—save a few that he has debased by inbreeding—he is even mortally afraid of his own kind—and not only of their fists and hooves, but even of their snickers.

Moreover, man is also a physical weakling—the most fragile and ridicu-

lous creature in all creation. No other animal is so defectively adapted to its environment. The human infant, as it comes into the world, is so puny that if it were neglected for two days running it would infallibly perish, and this congenital infirmity, though more or less concealed later on, persists until death. Man is ill far more than any other animal, both in his savage state and under civilization. He has more different diseases and he suffers from them oftener. He is more easily exhausted and injured. He dies more horribly, and sooner. Practically all the other higher vertebrates, at least in their wild state, live longer and retain their faculties to a greater age. Here even the anthropoid apes are far beyond their human cousins. An orang-outang marries at the age of seven or eight, raises a family of sixty or seventy children, and is still as hale and hearty at eighty-five as a Seventh Day Adventist at forty.

All the amazing errors and incompetencies of the Creator reach their climax in man. As a piece of mechanism he is the worst of them all; put beside him, even a mullet or a staphylococcus is a sound and efficient machine. He has the worst kidneys known to comparative zoölogy, and the worst lungs, and the worst heart. His eye, considering the work it is called upon to do, is less efficient than the eye of an earth-worm; an optical instrument maker who made an instrument so intolerably unfit for its work would starve to death. Alone, of all animals, terrestrial, celestial or marine, man is unfit to go abroad in the world he inhabits. He must clothe himself, protect himself, swath himself, armor himself. He is eternally in the position of a turtle born without a shell, a hog without a snout, a fish without scales or fins. Deprived of his heavy and cumbersome trappings, he is defenseless against even flies. In a state of nature he hasn't even a tail to switch them off.

We now come to man's one point of superiority: he has a soul. This is

what sets him off from all other animals, and makes him, in a way, their master. The exact nature of this soul has been in dispute for thousands of years, but regarding its function it is possible to speak with some accuracy. That function is to bring man into direct contact with God, to make him aware of God, above all, to make him resemble God. Well, consider the colossal failure of the device! If we assume that man actually does resemble God, then we are forced into the impossible theory that God is a coward, an idiot and a bounder. And if we assume that man, after all these years, does *not* resemble God, then it appears at once that the human soul is as inefficient a machine as the human liver or tonsil, and that man would probably be better off, as the chimpanzee undoubtedly is better off, without it.

Such, indeed, is the case. The one practical effect of having a soul is that it fills man with anthropomorphic and anthropocentric vanities—in brief, with the cocky superstitions that make him disgusting. He struts and plumes himself because he has this soul—and overlooks the fact that it doesn't work. Thus he is the supreme imbecile of creation, the *reductio ad absurdum* of animated nature. He is like a cow who believed that she could jump over the moon, and ordered her whole life upon that theory. He is like a bullfrog boasting eternally of fighting lions, and flying over the Matterhorn, and swimming the Hellespont. And yet this is the poor brute we are asked to venerate as a gem set in the forehead of the cosmos! This is the worm we are asked to defend as liege lord of the earth—with all its millions of braver, nobler, decenter quadrupeds—its superb lions, its lithe and gallant leopards, its imperial elephants, its honest dogs, its courageous rats! This is the insect we are besought, at infinite trouble, labor and expense, to reproduce!

§ 12

On Drama and Acting.—Drama is the art of expressing artificially what is felt naturally. Acting, the art of expressing naturally what is felt artificially.

§ 13

On Charm.—A man is charming to women in the degree that he does not appeal to men. A woman is charming to men in the degree that she does not appeal to women.

§ 14

On Relatives.—The normal man's antipathy to his relatives, particularly of the second degree, is explained by psychologists in various tortured and improbable ways. The true explanation, I venture, is a good deal simpler. It lies in the plain fact that every man sees in his relatives, and especially in his cousins, a series of grotesque parodies of himself. They exhibit his qualities in disconcerting augmentation or diminution; they fill him with a disquieting feeling that this, perhaps, is the way he appears to the world; and so they wound his *amour propre* and give him intense discomfort. To be on good terms with his relatives a man must be lacking in the finer sort of self-respect.

§ 15

An Essay on J. M. Barrie. — The triumph of sugar over diabetes.

§ 16

Annual Award of the Gold Medal.—The gold medal for the most elegant piece of dramatic criticism to appear in an American newspaper during the theatrical season of 1918-1919 just concluded is hereby awarded to the *New York Globe* for the following excerpt from its published review of Miss Zoë Akins' play "Papa":

"An author need not know what a play is. Neither need an audience. It is of no con-

sequence what the play is, notwithstanding that in this particular case there is a sequence of comedy, and so far as we know there was no such word as 'amorality' until Miss Akins introduced it. The impression the play leaves, the impression any play leaves, is of consequence. 'Papa' leaves one with impression of having overheard a story at a Fifth Avenue club of a man who had suddenly paid his dues long overdue being told by a man who knew he was talking to another clubman."

§ 17

Quid est Veritas?—Pursuing lately, as a recreation from the sorrows of the world, the study of the Portuguese language, I have been diligently sweating through what is called O Novo Testamento in that soft and slippery tongue. It is, perhaps, the best of all ways to acquire a vocabulary quickly, and, what is more, to get into the rhythm and sough of an unfamiliar language. One reads what is already very familiar, and so recollection supports the attention, and words and idioms seep into the mind by a sort of osmosis and without any of the customary hard effort. But every time I read the New Testament, in whatever dialect, I always carry away one invariable sentence, and it haunts me for weeks thereafter like the recollection of a pretty girl, or the smack of a hoary bottle, or some ancient turn of tune. In Portuguese it stands thus, in the thirty-eighth verse of the eighteen *capitulo* of O Sancto Evangelho Segundo S. João:

Disse-lhe Pilatos: Que é a verdade?

Pilate saith unto him: *What is truth?* A question banal enough, God knows: it almost recalls How old is Ann? And yet, as I say, a question that somehow sticks, a question with a profound and unshakable sagacity under its banality. Occupied by it, revolving it in my thoughts, going to bed with it and getting up with it, I always end with doubts that are fatal to my Calvinism. After all, is history wrong here, as it nearly always is elsewhere? Haven't we been seduced into a grotesquely false view of Pilate by theological sentimentality? Isn't it a fact, when all is said and done, that he

stands out brilliantly, above all the human personages of the New Testament, for his honesty, his intelligence, his hard common sense? Isn't he, in point of truth, the secular hero of the book?

I daresay the thought has occurred to many others. Perhaps thousands and hundreds of thousands, emerging from the sacred chronicle, have carried it around *in petto*, hesitating to voice it or even to formulate it. Maybe it has done more to shake Christianity in the world than all the direct attacks, and particularly all the angry arguments ever made.

§ 18

Vaudeville.—Vaudeville is a species of entertainment derived from the dregs of drama and musical comedy assembled in such wise that they shall appeal to the dregs of drama and musical comedy audiences.

§ 19

The Just and Unjust.—In the world, said Carlyle, there are two classes of men: those who think that what is "right" will prevail, and those who think that what is true will prevail. Let us go a step further. The two classes are really these: those who think that whatever is "right" is true, and those who think that whatever is true is "right."

§ 20

The Feminine Mind.—The commonplace observation that women change their minds more often than men has been converted by popular imbecility into the doctrine that they are light-headed, unprincipled and emotional. This doctrine, of course, is exactly contrary to the truth. Women change their minds oftener than men for the plain reason that their perception of reality is sharper. In other words, they are more delicately and accurately conscious of the shifting, uncertain nature of the thing roughly called truth—they are better aware that absolute truth is

a mere chimera, that what is true now is not apt to be true tomorrow. Men are too vain to see this. Their puerile egoism causes them to cling fanatically to a truth once lodged in their minds, even after it has quite ceased to be true. All the balderdash that prevails in the world is thus bred and cultivated. Men cling to ideas long after their imbecility has become obvious. Every scheme of theology, politics, philosophy and æsthetics is full of such ideas. Most schemes, in fact, contain nothing else. The majority of things that men believe are not merely partly untrue; they are entirely untrue.

§ 21

Sic Transit.—If the accursed poison gas of prohibition, rolling southward from Sherry's, now reaches out a block westward to the Beaux Arts, then ten thousand million harsh *sforzando*, sulphureted damns! It would grieve me to hear that Senator Henry Cabot Lodge had broken his neck; it would pain me even more to see Jane Addams or Frank A. Munsey hanged; but neither event would leave such scars upon me as the shutting down of that eminent kaif, and the disappearance of its excellent *maitre d'hotel*, M. Alévy.

M. Alévy is a man I have known and admired for many years. His rank in his extraordinarily delicate and arduous profession is that of a Kreisler in fiddling or a Josephus Daniels in moral politics. He is master of every last detail of it. He has tact, shrewdness, diplomacy, the grand manner. He is a man of humour. He understands the follies of humanity, and yet he remains simple and human. His advice upon the arrangement of a dinner I would put above that of the late King Edward VII. He is privy to the inordinate intricacies of American drinks. His touch converts a salad from a mass of greasy greens into a work of art. He is never ruffled. He never forgets anything. He is in two, three, five, ten, twenty places at once.

Prohibition will purge the United States of such men. A dinner without something to wash it down is simply beyond their imagination; they could no more direct it than they could direct the choir at a Billy Sunday revival; they are too civilized to pollute their minds with such abominations. Think of the oysters coming on with sarsaparilla; the game accompanied by grape-juice; the dessert shamed by ginger-pop or Hunyadi! Just what will become of M. Alévy I don't know. I

have hesitated to ask him. He has estates, I hear, in Touraine and a chateau near Lausanne. I fancy him in his old age, gathering his grandchildren about him and telling them of a land where it is a felony to dine decently and where an ancient man is forbidden his toddy at bed-time—a land of eternal raids and spyings, of blue-nosed Puritans and snooping *agents provocateurs*, of lemonade and near-beer. And so fancying, I feel a sudden chill, as horrible as an aunt's kiss, run along my diaphragm.



BALLAD: (Old Style)

By John McClure

THERE was three maidens in one bower,
Rede this riddle if so ye can,
 Of all fair maids they was the flower,
And the devil is a gentleman.

There was three maidens from dawn to gloom
 Span in a bower upon the loom.

There was three maidens from dawn till night
 Sang in a bower for their delight.

Gay Thomas he was dressed in silk,
 His fingers was as white as milk.

Gay Thomas wore a golden ring,
 He was handsome abune a' thing.

Gay Thomas came with staff and scrip
 And kissed these maidens upon the lip.

Gay Thomas he came over the sea
 And kissed these maidens abune the bree.

Gay Thomas fished for the golden minnows,
 Gay Thomas was the prince of sinners.

There was three vixens in one bower,
Rede this riddle if so ye can.
 There was three vixens from that hour,
And the devil is a gentleman.

MY LOVES: THEIR RISE AND FALL

By John Hamilton

I

Paula

PAULA, as graceful as the Victory Goddess, skated across the frozen pond. Her red tam fell from her head and lay like a pool of hot blood on the cold ice. It began to snow. The flakes fell on Paula's uncovered hair and clung. It came to me suddenly how beautiful Paula would look with the silver locks of old age . . . and I fell in love with Paula.

The sun appeared and melted the snow on Paula's hair, which fell about her cheeks in drab, straggly wisps. The drops, trickling down, streaked her face with rouge . . . and I fell out of love with Paula.

II

Patricia

PATRICIA, dainty as a Watteau shepherdess, fragile as a teacup. Narrow violet veins quivered across her eyelids. The tips of her slim fingers were tinted like bud-roses. As I encircled her slender waist it was as if I spanned a strip of mist . . . and I fell in love with Patricia.

I spilled a drop of orange pekoe on her dainty French frock and Patricia said: "Damn your awkwardness!" . . . And I fell out of love with Patricia.

III

Madeline

SHE lay on a couch of deep magenta

velvet, the gold glow of a Chinese lamp suffusing her. Her gown was jade, the color of her eyes, and scant. Her fragrance was of cyclamen. Her fingers were heavy with rings. She smoked a long amber cigarette. By her side was a teakwood table. On it was a bust of a satyr, a bowl of heavy red roses, a tall decanter, and a book of Sanscrit verse. Lazily she covered her lips with a rose petal . . . and I fell in love with Madeline.

Sitting at the side of Madeline, I dislodged a pillow. Beneath it was a novel by Gene Stratton Porter . . . and I fell out of love with Madeline.

IV

Valerie

THE chattering of butterfly-girls bored me. I saw Valerie. Valerie was as placid-browed and simply-coiffured as Juno. Her eyes behind wide spectacles were hothouse pansy beds. Her gown was a severely cut tweed; her shoes English and stanch. Under her arm she carried several stout-leathered books. Wearied of ballroom banter, I longed to converse with Valerie about Strabism, and Adminthology and the Xiphias. "May I talk to you?" I entreated. She nodded . . . and I fell in love with Valerie.

I led her to a secluded alcove. "Some luck!" she said. "I hear you know John Drew. Tell me about him" . . . and I fell out of love with Valerie.



FUGITIVES

By Mary Carolyn Davies

THE old man and his wife had been married fifty years. Tonight was the anniversary. Their children and grandchildren had come many miles from their farms scattered over the countryside. The fathers and mothers talked comfortably, bridging with the help of the reminiscent glow of the good dinner they had eaten the years since they had seen each other. The grandfather and grandmother moved a little timorously among them, too concerned over whether there were enough towels in nephew John's room and whether Mary's baby was safely sleeping to be proud. After the guests were gone, tomorrow they would remember, complacently and triumphant-ly. It was a good thing to have something to remember.

But now they were in a panic lest anything should mar the smoothness of the reunion.

In the room beyond, the grandchildren were dancing, the grandchildren and the children of nephews and nieces and relatives by marriage.

The dancers did not care that what they were dancing in honor of was the fact that an old man and an old woman had been married fifty years. They did not realize that the music, the sweet cider on the table in the hall, the red apples and brown nuts in the bowls on the window-seat, they themselves, were pieces placed to do honor to the owners of this house.

They realized only their own youth and the youth in the couples dancing opposite them, and in the partners joined to them by hot, perspiring hands. They saw the shine of each others' eyes, and heard each others' high excited

laughter and words, and they were fused by all this into one fluid mass of life. Each one felt himself to be gay, witty, radiant, attractive. The conceit which is characteristic of the crowd had fallen upon the individual and for the moment changed him, disguised him with the common mantle which covered them all alike, the mantle of the crowd thinking, feeling, playing as one.

The fathers and mothers looked on indulgently, complacently. They had had all this such a short time ago that they were still not tired of resting, for they had not yet begun to hunger for it again.

But the grandfather gazed through the folding doors with a puzzled wonderment. He saw something in the tense movements of the young men's shoulders, in the electric touch of eyes, in the sudden catching of hands and flinging of them aside, that he did not quite comprehend.

He had felt that way once, that he vaguely remembered, but what was it all about? To be alive, that was the thing. These silly young things dancing, were alive, their blood was beating. There was the lure of the attraction of the boys for the girls, too. There was the possibility, when one was that age, of suddenly looking across at the girl opposite one in a contra-dance, and wanting to buy a farm and a couple of cows and a team and marry her. That was an exciting possibility, of course.

But love was not all. Love was in that throng of romping young things like an extra person mingling with them, threading in and out with the twistings of the dances. But love was not the

only thing that was so surely among them as to be almost capable of being seen. There was something else. What was it?

"Grandfather's not hearing a word we're saying," said his eldest daughter to her mother.

"Father's a little tired," said the gentle old woman. "It's been an exciting day for him."

"And for you, Mama," said her youngest son, leaning over with the sacrifice of comfort and the carefulness of a fat man who has dined well to pat her hand.

"I don't feel things the way your father does," she said. "I want he should have a good time tonight. A good time for once in his life. He's earned it."

"You've both earned it, Aunty," said the nearest nephew. "It's a big night for you both. It'll give you something to remember."

"There, isn't that the baby, Mary?" The little grandmother was on her feet, and she and Mary went out together with a rosy young grandchild of eighteen with curls, who did not dance, and who hoped to get a glimpse of the sleepy baby.

But the grandfather did not hear any of the commotion and noise of living that went on in the room where he sat. He saw only youth beyond the folding doors.

"Swing your ladies," the old fiddler's voice came out.

The fiddler was living the romance of each couple for whom he called his orders. He could enter through a door the grandfather had never heard of, the door of art. An artist understands youth even when he has left it behind, age even when he has not yet reached it.

But the grandfather was not an artist. He was the inarticulate common man that his father and grandfather had been before him. He could not possess and understand; he could not even wish for the thing he needed, since he did not know what it was for which he was moved to formulate a wish.

Out from the background of dancers

to his watching eyes, two began to disentangle themselves, until soon it was they alone that he saw. The others were only color and movement like a curtain, hanging behind the two and setting them off with its rich color.

"Mother," the old man turned and spoke across the intermingled nieces gossiping between them. "Who are those two dancing?"

"Two?" his wife looked into the front room bewildered.

"I mean nearest the door, the girl with the red dress and the boy laughing, that one with the curly hair?"

"Why, father, don't you recollect?" she reproved him tenderly. "That's Albert's boy and cousin Hilda's girl. They're no relation to each other, but both kin to us by marriage. They're sweethearts, didn't you hear Hilda tell? They're going to be married come Christmas."

Sweethearts! So that was it. That was why they stood out so from the others. It was that that gave them more life, more quickness, more red in the cheeks and black in the hair.

He and Miry had been sweethearts once. But they had not glowed so publicly with the fact. They had been a little ashamed. He had been afraid of happiness, had never let himself enjoy love. To be contented was right, but to be glad was a little shameful, and he had cautiously kept nearer to content. He did not know what thoughts went on in Miry when they courted. He had never even wondered.

She had been seventeen and he eighteen the year they were married. They had gone to district school together and when she was older he had seen her home from church. Then almost with no transition at all she had been milking his cows and he had been eating her biscuits with the jam she had put up from the wild blackberries on the old Taber place.

They had both shrunk from any beauty in their youth and after, from any tremors or wondering. They had helped each other gloss over and ignore the fact that there was such a thing in

life as joy. They had never said its name in their house or fields.

But he with his stern passion for ugliness, with his loyalty for the unlovely hull of things, even he had known at times the longing for that secret sin. It is true that he had never yielded. He never sought beauty in his pasture grass, in his row of poplars, in himself, in Miry. Though the sin called to him, he had been strong. He had stood unshaken for sixty-eight years.

But tonight the temptation was coming again. Something was disturbing him. Was it the young people dancing in there? Out of their bodies these young people had come, out of his and Miry's. It was a strange thought.

He looked across at Miry. It did not occur to him to wonder whether this whimsy had appealed to her too. He never conceived of Miry having thoughts, except thoughts of the proper amount of flour and meal for corn bread and of watering the geraniums in the kitchen window often enough.

Miry was talking now with Bert's wife, Hester, of the babies. The men were grumbling and boasting about crops, or only silently smoking their pipes and watching the dancers.

The old man had a sudden impulse to be alone. He did not want to look now at the dancers. He wanted to get away from them, from what they were doing to him, to be safe.

"I think I'll step out on the porch a little, mother," he spoke up.

"Yes, father," she said absently, with her automatic tenderness that neither irritated nor soothed him, but that soothed her.

II

As he shut the door of the warm kitchen behind him, he blinked against the darkness.

First, the night misted his eyes and blinded him, but in a moment he could see the gate, the pump, the poplars.

Then he saw something else. At the

other end of the porch, by the steps some one was standing. He looked closer.

The blur became two people, a boy and a girl. It was the two, Albert's boy and cousin Hilda's girl. They were standing close together and whispering. Her face was looking down, it was in the shadow, but the old man could see her hair, where in the wind it seemed almost alive. The boy was looking at her. He was holding himself awkwardly, as a too big boy does in the classes in school.

But through the awkwardness, even the grandfather vaguely felt, something else was breaking, a new power, a sureness, a joyousness. This was not yet in his body, but it was already in his voice.

"Milly," he was saying. "I've wanted to see you all the evening!"

"You've seen me—too much, Elmer," the girl laughed. "You've danced every time with me! You know we shouldn't do that."

She looked up now, reproach in her face. He met it.

"They know we're to marry," he said. "They must know we're happy and want to touch each other. It'd be silly not to want to. What'd dancing with any one else be to us?"

"Yes, I know," said the girl, her eyes glowing to his. "I don't mind their thinking what's true. Oh, Elmer, it's a splendid thing to love a man!"

Her voice was like a singer's in a church, full of holy ecstasy, confessing to the glory of the Lord, and wanting to be heard.

"It's a splendid thing to love a girl!" gave back Elmer, his unflung head proud of her, glorying in her.

The grandfather, overhearing, felt a little ashamed of them.

"Elmer, look at the poplars," Hilda's girl pulled his eyes around to them by running her white hand into his hair and twisting the head in the proper direction.

"Like shadows in the afternoon, long and thin, ain't they?" said the well-

trained Elmer appreciatively. Poplars are only poplars to most men until they know a woman well.

"And the hill, and the fence. Everything's so still and beautiful tonight," went on the girl. "But I think," she looked up at the murky sky and then stood in a listening attitude, "there's a sound of stars."

The boy smiled at her and they both listened whimsically.

Then suddenly the smile faded out of his face.

"You're the loveliest thing of all, prettier than the night, or the trees," he said, his voice tense.

Then, "Oh, Milly, Milly," he was sobbing, and as his lips touched her white cheek, there was awe and wonder in his wide eyes. Then he kissed her again, passionately, on her mouth, a long locked kiss, so that she could not breathe.

In the darkness the grandfather blushed.

But when the boy raised his head again there was no shame in his face, only a joy so frank that it shocked the watching old man.

The grandfather had a sudden panic of fear that they might see him. He was afraid, not that the knowledge that they were overheard would embarrass them, but that it would not.

He stood in tense silence for a moment lest they see; then, when their faces were turned to each other again, he stole back into the house.

He had been away longer than he knew, for it was late, and the elder people were trying to make their children stop dancing.

"One dance more! Only one!" the girls called in their sweet voices and the boys shouted to the fiddler for another tune.

But the fiddler, with a word in his ear from the elders, shook his head and opened his fiddle case. Not until they saw the old violin tucked away out of sight did the girls give up, but then they did cheerfully and quieted their partners with calls of things to be done "Tomorrow!"

The grandmother and the oldest daughter gave out the candles, already lighted, and one by one the guests went up the splintered old stairs. Even the twitter of good nights could not lift the heavy silence from the house. It seemed almost sinister after the loud gaiety of a few moments before.

The grandmother was in the kitchen, kept by the few simple night tasks that she refused to let anyone else attend to. All the others were gone now.

No, not all. For as the old man sat for the moment alone in the shadow, he heard the noise of steps and from the deserted front room came his oldest granddaughter and her husband. Ellen took her candle from the table and started slowly to go upstairs. On the first step she paused.

"I only wanted one last look at it all, Jim," she said in the voice sweet with her mother's personality but strong with her own. "It's all just as it was when I was a little girl. How strange to be a little girl! How strange to be a woman!" she laughed down into her husband's eyes as he stood below her.

"It was in this house I first saw you," Jim said, a little ashamed to be awed.

"I played alone and made up lovely stories about father and mother and my dolls," Ellen mused. "How beautiful the poplar seemed to me, and the hill!—And you, that day!—And oh, how sweet it's been since!"

"All of it, all of it," said Jim, not ashamed now.

"We were together yesterday, last night," Ellen went on. "But tonight it's as if we'd been parted for years. You're so new to me, so wonderful."

"It's you, you!" Jim answered, his words choking his throat.

He looked up at his wife's face and at the light of the candle on her warm neck, and then he caught her in his arms.

After a moment they went up the stairs together.

The grandfather was trembling. Their passion had reached out and touched him. Their joy had pulled

him from his place of safety and left him alone in a new world.

It was as if joy and beauty were suddenly embodied and had become visible before him, as if they two joined forces and became one Nemesis banded to have vengeance upon him for neglecting them, for daring to plan a life without their control.

He was afraid—of nothing, he told himself. It was nothing. What was it? He had seen two youngsters kiss, he had heard a man and wife speak a few words, and his world was shaken.

III

AFTERWARD, in bed, it all came again, heavier with meaning.

He lay for hours in the stillness and thought and remembered and pondered. How clear things had seemed in his youth and how unreal they had actually been!

How unreal were these fancies that crowded him against the wall, as it were, tonight, and yet how they clarified things!

He lay there a long while, and for the first time in his life thought out things calmly and truly.

He saw himself and his wife in the mirror of fact, at last, though he half thought that it was fact into which he had been always looking.

They had both been afraid of beauty and they had helped each other to flee from it. They had feared joy, and together they had managed to elude it.

They had been poor, and they had forbidden themselves the one extravagance of the poor, the right to feast on life. They had denied each other until the denial had become truth. Fugitives from joy—what an epitaph!

The old man, lying there awake, felt the sudden agony of it, and as his thoughts writhed through the long night he was glad that the old woman by his side would never see. He knew that she understood their life and themselves even less than he, that she was even more inarticulate than he.

About four, when the birds wake suddenly and begin to sing together, feeling his uneasiness, she lay weeping softly, with caught breath, so that he should not hear. Lying cautiously still, he knew that she wept, but he knew, too, that she would never know what it was that made her weep.

And for that he was grimly glad.



THE first age of man is when he thinks about all the wicked things he is going to do. This is called the age of innocence.



AVOID the truth. Nearly everything that is true is in bad taste.



BAD news comes by aeroplane, but good news travels in a Ford.



THE COLLEGE GRADUATE

By Dennison Varr

HE found in after years little use for most of the things he had studied at college. Latin, Greek, Mathematics, Calculus, Spanish, Botany, Physics, Political Economy, History, Psychology had long since been forgotten. In fact, the only subject which had repaid the long nights of study was geology. He found his geologist's hammer the ideal thing for soothing his wife.



MOONLIGHT

By Theodosia Garrison

WHEN girls sell posies beside the curb
And the days grow long again,
The white moon spreads her silver net
Over the dreams of men.

And he is unsnared of souls alone
Who moves in a present bliss,—
Step by step with his own true love
With the touch of her hand on his.

But over the hearts of lonely men
The silver seine is thrown,
And across the tide of the empty nights
It draws them on to their own.

And some go back to the carnival
Where the fiddles play shrill and high,
And some are drawn to a love to be
And most to a love gone by.



A WISE man is one who knows many things and believes very few of them.



ENCHANTERS OF MEN

IX

A Witch in the Arts of Love

By Thornton Hall

IN the early years of George III's reign there was no woman in London who set more hearts a-flutter than Grace Dalrymple — from the Macaronis, those "gilded popinjays" who haunted Almack's, and strutted along the Mall in all the glory of pink satin and silver net, cocked hats and curls, ogling beauty through their spying-glasses and twirling their tasselled sticks, to that king of dandies and gallants, the "First Gentleman in Europe," George, Prince of Wales.

Many other women there were as fair as they were frail. Clara Hayward, the laughter-loving, fascinating idol of the Drury Lane Theater; Charlotte Spencer, "all refinement and elegance and seductive charm"; the *chère amie* of more than one wearer of the strawberry-leaved coronet; Harriet Powell, "graceful as a fawn, and lovely as Venus herself"; Betsy Cox, with the figure of a Juno and the voice of a nightingale, who had a passion for masquerading in male attire—these and many other butterflies of pleasure had their admirers by the legion; but queen of them all by common consent was "Scotland's most bewitching daughter," who drew men to her net as the flame draws moths.

How Grace Dalrymple came to be in that "galley" was a puzzle to many; for there was little in her heritage to explain the mystery. A daughter of the noble house of Stair, she had for grandfather Robert Dalrymple, a highly respectable Writer to the Signet, who

reaped such a rich harvest from his clients that he died a laird, the owner of large estates in his native Dumfriesshire. Her father, Hugh Dalrymple, after a short spell of soldiering, had qualified for an advocate's gown; and might, if he had played his cards well, have ended his days a Lord of Session.

But there was a wild strain in Hugh Dalrymple's blood. He could not long be loyal to such an exacting mistress as the Law; and many of the hours he should have devoted to his briefs he preferred to dedicate to his twin passions for wine and women, until he was recognized as the arch-spirit of debauchery in the Scottish capital. One by one his shocked clients deserted him; and the climax came one night when the too amorous lawyer was discovered climbing a rope-ladder outside the house of a married lady in Dumfries. Scotland had no use for such a legal Lothario; and Hugh Dalrymple fled southward to escape the storm his indiscretions had at last brought on his head.

Arrived in London he made an attempt to join the English Bar, but the Inns of Court inhospitably shut their doors in his face; and for some years he picked up a precarious livelihood by his pen, writing satires which brought him more notoriety than lucre.

Meanwhile the daughter of the legal scapegoat was growing to lovely girlhood; and at sixteen returned from a Flanders convent as attractive a maid as any that could be found in London

—"as rosy as Hebe and as graceful as Venus," to quote the enthusiastic description of a contemporary writer. "Her complexion was clear as the sky of a May morning, and tinged with the roseate blush of Aurora. Her disposition was lively, and her temper mild and engaging." And to her beauty of face and charm of disposition was added a figure "uncommonly tall," exquisite in its moulding and of singular grace.

Such was the daughter who in the year 1771 came to share the modest home of the "feckless," happy-go-lucky Hugh Dalrymple, still struggling to keep a roof of any kind over his head, and by no means overpleased to have such an additional responsibility, however charming, placed on his shoulders.

Before Grace had been many weeks from her convent-school she had loves galore among whom to pick and choose; the most ardent of them, a flourishing little doctor named Eliot. That he was at least twice her age, ungainly in figure and coarse-featured, mattered as little to Grace as to her father. He had a fine house and a large income to offer; he dazzled her eyes with visions of jewels and rich gowns and a town coach, baits which Grace had neither the power nor wish to resist; and thus it came to pass that one October day the radiant young Scots girl stood before the altar of St. Pancras Church, towering head and shoulders above her bloated, coarse-featured bridegroom, who was little younger than her own father.

A few days later Hugh Dalrymple sailed away to the West Indies to take up the office of Attorney-General of Grenada, which his scurrilous political pamphlets had at last won for him; and within three years he was lying in his grave, a victim to the climate and to a constitution worn out with excesses.

For Mistress Grace Eliot, as Dalrymple's daughter now styled herself, there was little prospect of happiness as wife of her unattractive spouse. She had, it is true, a luxurious villa in

Knightsbridge, with a generous allowance for millinery and dresses; but her doctor-husband was much too absorbed in his professional work to have time to spare for his dangerously pretty wife. There were other men, however, who were glad to relieve him of his duties; and Grace never lacked handsome gallants to escort her to the Pantheon or the Opera House, where her beauty drew the eyes of the world of rank and fashion.

This was, indeed, life after her own heart—the gaiety and glitter of Vanity Fair, the homage of high-placed men, the envious glances of the leaders of society. It was intoxicating; it fired her blood; and when the newspapers began to hail the advent of a "new beauty, the wife of Dr. E——t, who is turning the head of every Macaroni in town," her cup of happiness was full to the brim.

And while she was thus tasting the first intoxication of conquest, her husband was by no means blind to her doings. Stories began to reach him that his wife was not as discreet in her conduct as she ought to be. Her name was associated first with one gallant and then with another, until his jealousy was roused to life. He set a watch on her movements; and it was not long before his suspicions were amply justified.

One April evening in 1774 Mrs. Eliot left her home in a hackney coach, ostensibly to visit a friend in Spring Gardens; but this time she did not depart alone. The doctor's footman, by his order, followed the coach swiftly and stealthily on foot; he saw his mistress dismiss the driver in Covent Garden, proceed on foot to the Strand, and there enter a waiting coach in which a gentleman was seated whom the servant recognized as a young Irish peer, my Lord Valentia, one of Mrs. Eliot's most ardent admirers.

Together the pair drove off into the darkness along a circuitous route half-way round the town, halting at last at a house in Berkeley Row, —the footman, who had followed like

a sleuth-hound, arriving just in time to see his mistress enter upon her lover's arm.

"For more than two hours," a chronicler tells us, "the footman kept watch outside the house. At last Lord Valentia reappeared with his companion, and drove away in a hackney coach which had been called for them. Before they had gone very far, the conscience-stricken Grace, who continued to cast uneasy glances through the window, fancied that she could see the figure of a pursuer; and feeling instinctively that she was being watched, she insisted on returning to their trysting place. So they went back to the house in Berkeley Row; and Grace, trembling and fearful, said that she was very frightened, and must go home in a chair. By such constant doublings and turnings, as on her carefully planned journey from home, she hoped to baffle any possible pursuit. It was long after midnight when she reached Knightsbridge."

Such evidence as this was quite sufficient for the jealous husband, who, a few days later, turned his wife out of his house, vowing that he would get a divorce, and bidding her go to "that noble blackguard, my Lord Valentia."

This order she promptly obeyed; declaring as she turned a scornful back on her husband, his bloated features distorted with rage, that she would not see him again, alive or dead. For a few more or less unhappy months she remained loyal to her noble protector, until their frequent quarrels led to a final rupture; and "the fascinating Grace commenced her long career as a demirep of fashion."

II

It was not long before Grace's pre-eminence in this new arena was assured, for her surpassing beauty had long been familiar in the haunts she now frequented; and the newspapers of the time were soon publishing such paragraphs as this:

"Lord Cholmondeley and the fasci-

nating Mrs. Eliot were inseparables; and although they remained masked all the evening, they excited more interest than any other couple in the room."

Mrs. Eliot had not long lacked a successor to the Irish Viscount; she had, in fact, dallied with more than one noble lover before Lord "Tallboy," as the gigantic, herculean Cholmondeley was dubbed, came under the spell of her bright eyes. And never had a woman a more infatuated slave than the athletic young peer, who was "a decent fellow at heart; and, with the exception of a predilection towards illicit attachments, perfectly harmless."

There were many, indeed, who, knowing his great amiability and his weakness, confidently predicted that before long the doctor's discarded wife would be wearing a countess's coronet, now that her late husband had procured his decree of divorce.

Grace had now reached the height of her ambition. Her earl's devotion was unbounded; all the luxury that wealth could purchase was hers without the asking. Her coroneted carriage and pair, her liveries of blue and silver were the most splendid in all London; her jewels were the envy of the greatest ladies of fashion; and she had her box at the opera.

"Not even the Duchess of Devonshire, or the Countess of Derby," we are told, "excelled her in the magnificence of their costumes; and a vivid blue seems to have been her favorite shade, which, as she was shrewd enough to know, harmonized with the color of her eyes."

Her portrait, painted by no less an artist than Gainsborough, drew crowds to the Academy Exhibition in Somerset House; and at the great Cholmondeley houses in Piccadilly and at Roehampton she dispensed a regal hospitality. And thus she reigned in splendour for three years and a half, the acknowledged queen of the world of pleasure, until the end came in a rupture, thus explained in the *Morning Herald*:

The separation between Lord C—— and his beloved Miss D——le was occasioned by the warmth with which the latter urged the promise of marriage said to have been made to her by her noble lover. His lordship hesitated; and she flew into a paroxysm of rage, ordered post-horses, drove off instantly to Dover, and crossed the water to seek an asylum in a cloister.

But the flighty lady was not the woman to hide her disappointment and her beauty in a nunnery. There were as good fish in Paris as she had left behind in London; and we soon find her with a new retinue of admirers, including such exalted personages as the Duc de Launzun; the Comte d'Artois, King Louis' handsome and scapegrace brother; and the Duc de Chartres, the King's cousin, who in turn took the lovely Scotswoman under their care. It was sitting by the side of the Comte d'Artois, driving in a royal equipage in the Bois de Boulogne, that Hugh Dalrymple's daughter first dazzled the eyes of Paris, as she had dazzled London a few years earlier.

But Grace could not long be constant to any lover, however devoted and high-placed; and after two years of queendom in Paris she was back in England, where George Selwyn saw her "in a vis-à-vis with that idiot, Lord Cholmondeley," who, at sight of her, had returned to his old allegiance. But Grace, who had for two years had royal princes at her feet, was minded to fly at higher game than a mere earl; and her opportunity soon came when the Prince of Wales, wearied of Perdita and Mrs. Armistead, began to cast admiring glances at her.

For some months the princely Lotherio, then but a boy of twenty, had no eyes for any other woman than his "incomparable Grace. On March 30th, 1872, Grace gave birth to a daughter who, three months later, was christened at St. Marylebone Church as "the daughter of His Royal Highness George, Prince of Wales." Unfortunately, however, for Mrs. Eliot's pretensions, her infant was exceedingly dark, while all the royal family were unmistakably blonde; and when the baby

was first shown to him, the Prince is reported to have exclaimed: "to convince me that this is my daughter they must first prove that black is white."

The Prince, however, was of much too easy-going a disposition to quibble about such a small matter as the paterernity of the infant; and although he had no further use for a lady so designing as the mother, he took a fatherly interest in her child, to whom, as to the mother, Lord Cholmondeley good-naturedly offered a home. A few months later the erratic Grace was back again in Paris, with the Duc de Chartres for squire—the most immoral, as he was the ugliest, man in all France.

"Nothing," we are told, "could have been less attractive than his personal appearance. His face was covered with blotches, the fruits of debauchery; his eyes were dull and fishlike; his features coarse and expressionless; his figure unwieldy and ungainly." He could dance and ride well; but he had no other accomplishments, "being wholly uneducated and dull by nature."

Such was the royal duke for whom Grace Eliot again deserted the loyal and foolish Cholmondeley—only to weary of him in turn and to return to London, where she amazed the town with the splendour of her carriages and the gorgeously of her attire.

III

HERE she transferred her volatile affections from one lover to another, until once more we find her installed as favorite of the blotched-faced duc, who had now blossomed into the Duc d'Orleans; and reigning as chief sultana in the Palais Royal, heedless of the rumblings that were beginning to herald the French Revolution.

The story of her experiences during the Reign of Terror she herself has told, with perhaps an eye rather to dramatic effect than to accuracy, in her "Journal of My Life During the French Revolution."

While Camille Desmoulins, with fierce words and wild gestures, was urging the excited mob in the gardens of the Palais Royal to deeds of violence, the Duc and his "belle Écossaise" were spending a pleasant holiday together at the Chateau of Raincy, little dreaming of the storm that was about to break over France.

In the pages of her "Journal" the whole lurid drama of the Revolution is displayed by one who saw many of its most terrible scenes enacted before her eyes. She saw the royal coach, bringing back Louis and his Queen from their ill-fated flight, pass by with its escort of wild-eyed, curse-shrieking rabble; and she was disturbed at her toilette by the cannonade that heralded the assault on the palace and the slaying of the Swiss Guards. One day she was almost swept away by a mob of fierce-eyed, foul-mouthed citizens, pouring through the streets like a foul torrent, with Foulon's head, mounted on a pole, for banner; and, on another day, she looked from a window on a similar crowd bearing aloft the head of the beautiful Princesse de Lamballe, to exhibit it to her friend Marie Antoinette in her Temple prison. On the day of the King's execution she heard the gun that announced the fall of the guillotine; and having climbed the hill at Meudon which commanded a distant view of the Place Louis Quinze, she met a workman returning from the scene of the tragedy holding a handkerchief stained with the "Royal martyr's" blood.

Her most remarkable experience, however, was associated with the Marquis de Champcenetz, Governor of the Tuileries; who, flying for his life, came knocking at her door and begged her to hide him from his pursuers.

Grace's tender heart was not proof against such an appeal, nor did it quail for a moment before the terrible risk she must face in giving shelter to a man so hated by the populace. Her quick brain soon discovered a hiding-place where, if anywhere, the Marquis could defy discovery.

"Her bed lay in an alcove, and by pulling out two of the mattresses further than the others, a space was made by the side of the wall into which the fugitive was able to creep. When he had been stowed away in this suffocating retreat, Grace decided to disrobe, and get into bed herself, hoping in this way to allay suspicion." Scarcely, however, was she within the sheets, when her door was burst open by the Guards, who had traced the fugitive to her house and were determined to capture him dead or alive.

It was a very charming spectacle that met the eyes of the rough soldiers—that of a lovely woman, evidently startled out of her sleep, with a smile on her lips and eyes of enquiring wonder at this strange invasion of her privacy. To their questions she answered sweetly—"Oh, dear no; certainly not"—there was no gentleman in her house. How could Messieurs imagine such a thing possible? But since they had come on such a fruitless errand, she must offer them hospitality; for no doubt Messieurs were exhausted with their long search.

Wines, liqueurs, and tempting viands were produced; and as the soldiers, overcome by such a sweet and gracious reception, regaled themselves, she entertained them with jokes and stories, which kept them in a roar of merriment. They were deeply pained, they protested when the feast was ended, at disturbing so charming a lady; and with a final careless glance around the room, made their respectful adieux—much to the relief of the Marquis, who, a few days later, was being smuggled in a mail-cart to Boulogne on his way to England and safety.

But Grace was not altogether to escape the clutch of the Revolution. For some months she was confined as a suspect in the prison of St. Pelagie, "a most deplorable, dirty, and uncomfortable hole"; and later, at the Recollects at Versailles, where she shared a cell with an English Doctor, no doubt to their mutual embarrassment.

When the thunders of the Revolution

had at last rumbled to silence, Grace returned to her old life of gaiety and pleasure, coquetting now with one, now with another—including the sedate Lord Malmesbury, who arrived in Paris on a diplomatic mission.

One more brief visit she paid to London, to meet with a chilly reception. Her old admirer, Lord Cholmondeley, was now a married man; and there was an impassable gulf between herself and her daughter, who was still living under his lordship's roof—a beautiful and accomplished girl of sixteen, in whose welfare the Prince of Wales continued to show interest. There was no place for the unhappy mother, who wisely, however sadly, allowed her child to pass out of her life. The Heir Apparent was just as little pleased as Lord Cholmondeley and her daughter to see her again; and, according to the gossip of the clubs, took some trouble to induce her to return to Paris.

Twelve years had elapsed since she left her native country; and another generation had arisen to whom her former queendom was unknown and she was a stranger. Thus it was that within a few weeks she carried a heavy heart back with her to France; and

London was reading in the *Morning Herald*,

"Mrs. E——t, the *ci-devant* Miss D——le, who lately returned from France to England, is said to have since received a settlement of four to five hundred a year from a young gentleman of high rank, on condition that she shall for the future reside out of the Kingdom. This establishment has taken place in consequence of an attachment that formerly existed between them, and which the gentleman, being now married, is desirous of concealing from his amiable spouse."

From this time of sadness and disillusion we get few glimpses of Grace Eliot. All that is reliably known of her is that she spent the remaining years of her life at Ville d'Avray, near Paris,—her beauty gone, abandoned by all who had fawned on her in her days of pride and queendom, draining the dregs of the cup that once had been so sweet to the taste—and there, one May day in 1820, the longed-for end came to her at last in peace and welcome.

The tenth article in this series, entitled "The Sport of Love," will appear in the next number of THE SMART SET.



A WOMAN is not satisfied when she has gained the respect of her enemies. What she strives for is the respect of her friends.



TABLE manners—A conspiracy of the unskilled to prevent the pea-juggler from demonstrating his ability.



THAT every woman has her price is absurd. Some of them donate.

FOOTSTEPS

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

I

A FAINT splash came from the depths of the well. The woman, leaning over the opening, heard the sound and shuddered. She was breathing heavily, for her exertions had almost exhausted her. A dead man is an unwieldy burden. She had half-carried, half-dragged the body from near the kitchen fifteen yards away. Its feet had been continually in the way, but the woman had labored, working until the perspiration had dampened the hair upon her forehead,—until she had brought it to the well.

She came back to the house, wiping her hands unconsciously upon her skirt. She felt no regret, merely a feeling of relief that she would no longer have to listen to his continual nagging. No longer would it be necessary for her to lie and deceive him.

She looked at her clothes in surprise. Her bloodstained hands had made crimson splotches where she had wiped them. She washed her hands and took off her cotton dress. She stuffed it in the stove and listened a moment until she was sure it was burning.

As she listened the familiar sounds of night came to her. Frogs croaked in a nearby pond, their voices rising and falling, each one trying to outdo the other in volume. A brisk breeze scampered around the house, ruffling the leaves that lay upon the ground.

Though her breath still came fast, the woman went quickly upstairs and took a new suit-case from its hiding place in the attic.

Once in her bed-room, she began hurriedly throwing things into the suit-case.

She worked feverishly, as though each moment was precious. She threw her clothes into the bag, making no attempt at packing them in so they would not be wrinkled. Her movements were swift and she glanced about her apprehensively as she worked.

The room was sparsely furnished. A bed occupied one corner, and by its side was a cheap wooden chair. On the chair was a book, and on top of the book a bloodstained hammer. The woman cast frightened glances toward the chair at intervals. She seemed anxious to leave the room as quickly as possible. As she journeyed about the room, she kept as far away from the chair as she could.

She stood before the bureau and pulled a few handkerchiefs from one of the drawers. She put several of them in the suitcase, and threw the rest back in the drawer.

Crossing the room, and keeping as far from the chair as the room would permit, she went to a closet in the wall, and took a skirt and a cheap cotton petticoat from a hook. She again gave the chair a wide berth, and then put these two articles into the suitcase. It was full to overflowing now, and the woman pulled down the cover of the bag and tried to fasten it.

But the bag would not fasten. The clothes within it were not folded, but were thrown in loosely. Some of them protruded beyond the edge of the suitcase and kept the top from fitting snugly.

A kerosene lamp was burning on the bureau. By its light the woman could be seen to be thirty-five, and looking even older. Farm work leaves its mark

upon men, but upon women its effect is even worse.

This woman had done the monotonous round of chores upon the farm until she had lost all pretensions to good looks. Her hair fell stringily upon her cheeks. Her face was pale, and shiny, and her faded blue eyes possessed no spark of animation. Instead, in their depths a gleam of fear stared at the shadows and the corners of the room.

The woman stopped, and listened.

A footstep sounded upon the floor below.

She listened, every nerve taut, to the footsteps. They went into the kitchen on the floor below. Slow, ponderous footsteps, *the footsteps of a man who felt perfectly at home!*

As she listened the woman's eyes grew wide with fear.

Sweat glistened upon her forehead and trickled down upon her chin. In mental agony she listened to the footsteps going from one side of the kitchen to the other. Slow, ponderous, heavy footsteps, the footsteps of a man who felt perfectly at home.

The steps came into the hallway and then returned to the kitchen and moved around in the room.

The woman, with her eyes glazed by terror, listened, listened. If only the footsteps would stop or pause for a moment! Instead they kept up their steady pound, pound, upon the uncarpeted floor.

The footsteps left the kitchen and came down the hall. The woman stood rigid, listening, listening. If the footsteps came up the stairs she knew she would go crazy, she knew she would shriek, shriek. She knew she would shriek until she fainted and fell to the floor.

But the footsteps turned and went into the parlor, the room they used so seldom. Only when they had visitors was the parlor opened, and its atmosphere was musty from disuse. What were the footsteps doing in the parlor? The woman wondered, but did not have the courage to investigate.

Soon the footsteps came out of the parlor and went back to the kitchen.

The woman listened to them as they moved around. She was waiting, waiting, for something.

The footsteps hesitated for a moment and then went out into the yard. There was the sound of a body falling like a log against the house. When the woman heard this she fell in a heap on the floor.

The footsteps she had heard were precisely like those of her husband. The sound of the body falling was precisely like the sound he had made when she had fractured his skull with a hammer just two hours before.

II

THE woman lay senseless upon the floor while the kerosene lamp burned lower and lower. The oil was almost exhausted when she turned, and began to moan. She whimpered a little when she came back to consciousness, then she lay with her eyes staring into the dense blackness of the wind. The lamp burned lower and lower.

In a few moments the woman raised herself to a sitting position and listened.

The footsteps had stopped. Came the creakings and soft whisperings from the house came to her. She climbed to her feet and turned again to the source.

She must leave the house at once. John would be angry. He did not like to be kept waiting. But when she thought of him about the footsteps he would understand and not be angry with her.

She looked at the cheap alarm-clock on the bureau and saw that it was most midnight. She had promised to meet John at ten o'clock. The footsteps would . . .

Her hand stopped in mid-air. What was that? What was that fumbling at the door? There was no one in the house but herself. Someone seemed to be breathing on the other side of the door. She stood rigid until every muscle in her body screamed at the tension.

Still that breathing on the other s

of the door. The woman moved noiselessly away from the door.

Something, someone, was breathing softly in the hallway outside the door of her bedroom.

"Who is there?" she called, and did not recognize the sound of her own voice. Was that her voice, that voice cracked with terror?

She waited tensely, hoping a familiar voice would answer.

There was no reply. Whoever was waiting outside the door, was waiting until she should leave the room with the suitcase.

The woman backed away from the door. The menacing thing or person—she did not know which—could not come through the door and get her. Suddenly she wondered if the door was locked.

If it was locked she was safe. She could climb out of the window with the suitcase and then climb down the woodshed and to the ground.

The flame in the lamp sank lower and lower. The woman was near the bureau and the suitcase. She took out part of the articles in the suitcase and then closed it. She had no difficulty locking it now. Her eyes were on the door while she snapped the catches on the suitcase. Perhaps the thing could open the door, perhaps the door was not locked.

She started toward the window, with her eyes still fixed upon the door. She must keep her eyes upon it. Slowly she moved, and softly. She must leave the room without that unseen person knowing that she had made her departure.

The woman crept toward the window.

She moved slowly, cautiously, making as little noise as she could.

Something touched her in the back. She turned and found the chair beside the bed was in her way.

The woman picked up the blood-stained hammer. This was the hammer she had used to kill her husband. As she grasped it in her hand the blood upon the handle clung to her palm as

though it wished to stay there, forever, and publish to the world what she had done.

The woman turned toward the door again. She was desperate. If there was a man on the other side of the door he had best prepare to defend himself. Did he think she would hesitate about killing him? Hadn't she killed her husband? She was not afraid of any man on earth, not one but would die if she could get close to him with that hammer.

The woman laid down the suitcase and crept stealthily toward the door. She would surprise this softly breathing person. She would pull the door open suddenly and spring upon them. First a blow upon the head, enough to stun him. And then she would treat this person as she had her husband. Her husband would not feel lonesome if there were another body in the well beside him.

The kerosene lamp began to flicker. Soon it would sputter and go out. The woman must reach the door before the lamp went out, otherwise she would not be able to see the person who was waiting there.

She reached the door and listened to the breathing outside. Her hand came slowly to the door-knob and with a sudden wrench, she snatched the door open and stepped into the hallway with the hammer up-raised.

There was no one there. The hallway was empty. Not a sound, not a movement. . .

The woman caught up the lamp and stepped into the hall. She walked to the head of the stairs and looked down. Still not a sound. And not a second before she had heard someone breathing outside the door of her room!

The lamp began to sputter. It would go out in a moment. The woman decided to return to her room and get the suitcase. She would run down to the road, to where John was waiting for her. They had planned to go to New York, and begin life again. New York was the place to hide! Two

people would be lost in that enormous hive.

The lamp sputtered, sputtered. She walked toward her bedroom and . . .

The footsteps had begun again! They were in the kitchen!

Slow, ponderous footsteps, they were the footsteps of a man who felt perfectly at home. They were heavy, solid, unhurried.

The woman stood frozen with terror. The footsteps were unmistakable. *They were the footsteps of her husband!*

As she stood there her mind flashed pictures of their life together. Their courtship, and marriage, and the day they came to the farm. Then the long weary days of work, and the beginning of his cruelty to her. He seemed to take a fiendish delight in torturing her soul. Her body was too weary after the day's work was over to suffer. But her mind was comparatively fresh. And he tortured her mind until she hated him with every waking thought.

He took delight in saying things that would wound her feelings. He soon discovered the things she was sensitive about, and he took a hellish pleasure in speaking constantly of them.

Every day for the past four years she had been twitted about the details of her cousin's compulsory marriage. Every day for the past four years she had been told that she was homely and unattractive. Every day for the past four years she had been told that she couldn't leave the farm because her husband was ashamed to be seen with her, and he could not trust her with any one else.

Then John Fleming had taken the next farm. He was a slow-moving, hard-working man, terribly poor. Sometimes he had come over to borrow tools, or farming implements, for he was not able to buy all he needed. The woman had been glad to see him. He was someone to talk to, and she craved human companionship. They had very few visitors on the farm. John was pleasant in his slow, quiet way. She

began to look forward to his comings.

At first her husband had not noticed John's visits. The woman remembered how John had begun to come over on small, unnecessary errands, and how he took much more time than was needed. He began to forget what he had come over for and have to be reminded to take back the article he had asked for. Then she began to think that perhaps he came over to see her, and the thought had made her look at John with tender eyes.

Her husband had a prosperous year, but John's farming had been a failure. He decided to go to New York. The woman knew that John worshipped her. She knew that she loved him more than she ever did her husband. She told John she would go to New York with him. John could find work in the city. There was always work there for a willing man. And she would be away from the eternal nagging of her husband. John was kind and gentle to her.

Tonight a wagon had driven into the yard, and a man climbed from it slowly. The woman had looked through the kitchen window with fierce hatred filling her mind. The night was dark, impenetrable, yet the woman knew that it was her husband who had returned. It was like her husband to come home unexpectedly soon, to interfere with her plans, to keep her from going away with John. The wagon was a mass of blackness, scarcely defined against the blacker mass that was the barn. The man moved slowly toward the kitchen door.

A wave of frightful hatred swept over her. Her husband's early return dealt a death-blow to her hopes of happiness. John would have to leave without her. She would be compelled to spend her life with the man she loathed, would have to listen to his endless naggings, would be tortured by his brutalities.

Blind rage possessed her, a fury that took no thought of consequences, an ungovernable passion that flooded her brain. As the man's figure drew near

to the house, she snatched up the hammer, and slipped out into the enveloping blackness of the night.

Her movements were rapid. She was waiting when the man came around the corner of the house. As he came slowly past her, she put her whole weight behind the blow. The blunt, round head of the hammer struck him just back of the ear. The man dropped without a sound.

The woman's soul flamed with hatred. Again and again and again she struck with the hammer. It twisted in her hands and blood flowed from his wounds and upon the ground, as he lay face downward.

They had planned, she and John, to leave for the city tonight. After she had finished her chores he was to take her to the railroad station. John had enough money to pay their fare to New York. She would be away from the taunting voice of her husband. . . .

Carrying it at arms' length, the woman had pulled and tugged the body away from the house. The wooden railing around the mouth of the well had seemed determined to frustrate her. It seemed to be obstinately tall, as if it did not want the body to pass over it. At last . . .

In the room where the woman stood, the lamp sputtered and went out. The woman shuddered.

III

THE tiny creaking, the whispering noises, the occasional cracking of a board, began to make images in the woman's mind. She lived over again the scene outside the kitchen, the slow advance of the man, the limpness of his body when he fell. She put her hands over her face to try and shut out the horror. She began to moan, to whine, to whimper.

The footsteps began downstairs again. They were slow, unhurried, ponderous, the footsteps of a man who felt perfectly at home. She recognized them, for she could have told her husband's footsteps from a million others.

she shrank and quivered from the sound.

The footsteps came from the kitchen. She listened tensely . . . wondering if they were going into the parlor again. They passed the parlor door, and her tension relaxed slightly.

She felt around in the darkness for her suitcase. She was becoming somewhat accustomed to the footsteps. She knew her husband was dead. She had thrown him down the well. He had been heavy. It had taken all her strength to drag him so far.

The footsteps were going up and down the hallway. The woman shivered. She must leave the house, she must meet John. He was waiting for her.

She opened the door of the bedroom and looked into the dense blackness of the hallway. On the floor below the footsteps stopped—and then began again. They left the kitchen, came down the hall, and then . . . *They were coming up the stairs!*

The woman shrieked. Her voice cut the air like a swift sword. Fear and terror and agony pierced the walls of the house. Her lower jaw trembled. She could hear the noise of her teeth striking together.

Slowly the footsteps sounded on the stairs. The woman sank down on the floor and shriek after shriek tore at the darkness.

The footsteps came gradually nearer. Her eyes were fixed upon the stairs; she was waiting for the body to appear. Her eyes strained from their sockets, her hands twitched and tore at her dress as she waited, and waiting, shot scream after scream into the black blanket of the hallway.

The steps neared the top of the stairs.

The woman suddenly stopped screaming and listened, quivering.

The fourth step from the top was loose, one of the boards squeaked when it was trod upon. The woman had noticed it ever since they had come to live in the house. She was waiting

until the footsteps reached that step. Whenever that board was stepped on, it squeaked.

The steps sounded on the stairs, while the woman listened. How far up had they come? She wished she had counted them. Eight,—was it,—or ten? The twelfth step was loose.

Step. The next would be the one.

Step. The woman tore frantically for her room. The board had squeaked!

With herculean strength the woman struggled with the bed. She would put it against the door. If the door was forced open she would be waiting with the hammer. She would kill the ghost of her husband.

The footsteps came down the hall while she waited, shivering, trembling, shuddering.

Then they went into the room across the hall.

The woman crept away from the door and tugged at the bed. With the energy of desperation she moved it enough to allow her to leave the room. Picking up the suit-case and the hammer, she opened the door.

As she stepped into the hallway, she felt a hand upon her arm.

Fear snatched away her strength and left her faint and gasping. The smell of cheap whiskey floated on the air. A familiar voice came to her, a voice she thought was stilled forever.

"What's the matter?" her husband asked, "What 'you holler'n' for?" Drunken suspicion showed in his voice. "You holler'n' for John? Say, what's 'is team doin' in the yard, anyhow?"

She knew her husband was standing before her, that it was his hand she felt upon her arm. Comprehension stunned her.

She had killed John!

The suit-case and hammer slipped from her hand, and fell to the floor. The noise of their falling sounded curiously loud in the strangely quiet house. John had driven into the yard to get her, and it was his body that now lay at the bottom of the well!

The woman tore herself from her husband's grasp. Wild with grief and half-crazed with horror she sped down the stairs. She had killed the man who cared for her, the man who was willing to share his pittance with her, the man who wanted to take her from her unbearable surroundings.

She raced into the kitchen, her breath coming in quick moans. Out through the back door she sped, straight toward the well. John was waiting. Patient, quiet, dependable, John was waiting.

"I'm coming, John, I'm coming," she screamed.

The water in the well had splashed once when the body had come twisting down. Now the water splashed again.



OBEDIENCE in a woman is the faculty of harmonizing her husband's commands with her own inclinations.



BOOK-KEEPING has been traced as far back as ancient Peru—book-keepers have been traced everywhere.



WILL scientists find a new use for the cherry?

WHY MANICURE GIRLS LEAVE HOME

By Ford Douglas

LISTEN, girlie—"The youth's voice, pitched low enough to escape those at the adjacent tables, was soft, pleading, and Mabel inclined her blonde head as she worked over his tapering nails with her chamois buffer. He thrilled her, for he was young, and highly barbered, talcumed, manicured and perfumed. On the silken sleeve of his twenty-dollar shirt a large and brilliant monogram emblazoned his aristocracy to all the world. He wore two diamond rings of heavy calibre, and as he spoke he drew from his pocket a jeweled gold case from which he extracted a cigarette. Mr. Gus Wurtz was distinctly a personage.

"Listen, girlie. We can beat it in my roadster—make Atlantic City by night, spend the week-end there, and—"

She looked up at him sharply, adjusting the pink satin straps that were slipping off her sleek white shoulders under her low-cut Georgette.

"Say, where do you get that stuff?"

"Marry you, of course—that's what I mean," hastened Mr. Wurtz, his pendant cigarette trembling from his upper lip. "Sure I do."

Her sharp expression softened. The lids under the thin straight eyebrows widened and her blue eyes regarded him babyishly.

"Really?"

She laid down her buffer, and smearing a nail with rouge began rubbing it with her soft, pink palm.

"On the level?"

"Sure! Say you'll go, kid, and I'll throw a fit for joy. I'll tell the world I will!"

She smiled up at him, the half-opened

cherry lips displaying a dazzle of white teeth.

Then she pouted prettily.

"You say that to everyone," she declared. "I think you are a naughty, naughty boy!"

"I'm not either," he retorted sulkily.

A melting look from the liquid blue eyes disarmed him and he returned with eagerness to his heart's desire.

"Now say you'll go, hon, won't you? Look! I got the dough all right"—he produced a roll of bills—"and you know how the old man is fixed."

She knew indeed how papa Wurtz was fixed—knew to his last dollar. She knew also that the wife of the rich old brewer was socially ambitious, and she sensed the war that would follow her entry into the family.

Besides, Pearl and Mayme, the other two manicures in the hotel barbershop, had told her of their experiences. Pearl's week of wedlock with a college freshman had been rudely ended by some hocus pocus of law; and Mayme, who had become the marital companion of a slightly soused sophomore, had suffered a like fate. Both had warned her of such traps.

"Say, will you, hon?"

A heavy, blue-jowled man, prostrate in the head barber's chair, raised his head like a fat seal and shot an impatient glance at the pair.

"Say, will you, hon?"

The white enameled brow knit thoughtfully.

"I don't know what mamma would say," she ventured at last. "But I'll think it over."

"Will you?" The rising inflexion in Mr. Wurtz's voice indicated that he

considered the matter decided in his favor.

Delighted, he rose from the table, peeling a five off his large green roll. This he crushed into a small wad in his palm, after which he offered her his hand. It was, perhaps, symbolic in a way—a subtle suggestion that he was offering to the beautiful Mabel both his heart and his fortune.

The head barber carefully wound a steaming hot towel about the blue visage of the fat man, patting it with professional, though useless, dabs. Thus having his client helpless and in-durance, he was moved to a brief review of recent world history and contemporary thought and events.

"I see by the *Lit'rary Digest*," he began, "that there's a guy what says that—"

The scrape of Mr. Wurtz's chair as he departed interrupted the speaker, and with a snort the fat man snatched the towel from his face and squirmed to the floor—this time more like a hasty walrus rolling off an ice floe. Seizing his collar and tie, he waddled over to Mabel's table.

"Who was that fresh young thing that was giving you all that guff?" he demanded.

As one of the proprietors of the hotel, and, moreover, as one of Mabel's most ardent admirers, the fat man believed he had the right to know.

"Oh, that was Mr. Wurtz. And he treats me with perfect respect."

The fat man snorted a snort that might mean anything. He eyed her with what he thought cold deliberation—at the same time endeavoring to button a collar a size too small, with the result that his breath became short and his face crimson. Mabel watched him unperturbed.

The buttoning process was at last accomplished.

"Well, kid," he said, "have you changed your mind?"

For answer she gave him the slow, steady smile she had found to be more effective—and easier—than words.

"Listen, kid. We're going to put in

a beauty parlor on the mezz floor. Say the word and I'll put you in charge."

Beautiful Mabel wrinkled her brow in thought, the sum total of which was nothing. So she said:

"I don't know what mamma will say. . . . But I'll think it over."

The fat man winced.

"That's what you always say," he growled irritably. "Get some new stuff!"

And with this jeer he waddled away, almost colliding with a small person who was approaching Mabel's table with something like a hop, skip and a jump.

The new arrival wore "college clothes," and was pursued by a small rearguard of porters and bootblacks who tried vainly to relieve him of his hat. He fought them off and dropped with sudden abruptness into the chair at her table.

Mabel, who had observed him for some time hovering about the front of the shop, looked up with glad surprise.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Kelly!"

The pink satin straps under the gauzy Georgette slipped again from the sleek white shoulders. Reaching through the low V at her throat she replaced them—an act that did not escape the eyes of Mr. Kelly, and which made him cough with some uneasiness. Once more there was the dazzling smile—this time genuine, for Mr. Kelly had resisted the devotional stare of the beautiful Pearl, and the sad, wistful gaze of titian-haired Mayme, and had come straight to her table.

Mr. Kelly was a business man and his attack was frontal.

"Well," he said, "what about it?"

Mabel knew a trick that was worth many, many words. By holding her breath and contracting the muscles over her diaphragm she could send the blood pulsating to her cheeks. She did this now and the blush was both convincing and wonderful.

Mr. Kelly, observing the color slowly mantling her cheeks, experienced a glow of pleasure. The conviction came to him that he was masterful, that he

was emperor of the situation and could dictate at will. His chest swelled with pride and he grinned in good-natured tolerance.

"Don't be so bashful, little girl. Speak out. I won't hurt you."

Through her thin white nostrils Mabel noiselessly exhaled her pent breath, feeling much like a deep-sea diver coming up for air. A glance in the mirror told her that her natural pallor was returning, so she averted her head and murmured:

"I don't know what mamma will say. . . . But I'll think it over."

"That sounds familiar," asserted Mr. Kelly, collapsing somewhat. "It shows that your mind is working about as usual. However, this may help you to arrive at some conclusion."

He handed her a folded slip of paper.

Mabel unfolded and read the printed and written words.

"Oh, you darling!" she whispered. "I'm perfectly crazy about you!"

"I thought you would be," said Mr. Kelly dryly. "But get your hat and we'll go."

Thus commanded, Mabel rose and walked the length of the room to the cloak closet. Half way across the marble floor she reached through the low V of her Georgette and adjusted the satin straps that had slipped from her sleek white shoulders. Simultaneously twelve men, prostrate in as many chairs, lifted their heads like twelve trained seals and watched her as she noiselessly undulated out of their presence.

* * *

A florid fat woman in a frayed and

flapping kimono opened the door and took the note from the messenger boy. A pleasurable reek of boiled cabbage was wafted across the threshold for a moment; then the door was shut, and the messenger boy sadly retraced his steps down the six flights of worn red carpet to the street.

Hurrying to the window, the fat woman hastily opened the note and read it. There was a sudden joyous gasp and she sat down smiling broadly.

"Well, well," she muttered softly. "Leave it to Mabel!"

The shabby furniture in the little three-room apartment became transformed—transfigured. The dilapidated red sofa became an imposing davenport; tapestry chairs succeeded the spindling "fumed oak"; and she visioned rich and costly rugs in the place of the thin worn carpet.

At the corner drugstore, a few minutes later, the fat woman called up her sister:

"Is that you, May? . . . Say, listen: Mabel put it over! . . . You bet she did. . . . I'm goin' to take that apartment on the Drive, and you gotta come live with us—there'll be plenty of room. . . . Sure, I'm goin' to live with 'em, and you are, too. . . . Listen, dearie: I just got a note from her. I'll read it to you:

"Dear Ma—Mr. Kelly and me has just come from the little-church-around-the corner. He certainly has treated me grand, though he did lie to me about his age. Instead of 59 he is 76. But he slipped me a check for 20,000 bucks, and it was certified. "Mabel."



THE question is not what a woman thinks of her husband, but when.



REJUVENATION

By John F. Lord

THE last prayer had been said by the minister. The Supreme Order of Rosicrucians had performed their mystic rites, and now the widow was led forward to kiss her dead spouse before he was carried out to the waiting hearse. A hush fell over the assemblage as she bent over the casket for the parting kiss. She did it slowly, a bit awkwardly, and no wonder. It was the first time she had kissed him in fifteen years.



MI-CARÊME

By Charles Divine

SEeking, seeking goes the world,
Dreams and gifts and laughter;
And some are idling in the crowd,
And only follow after.

White masque, pink masque . . .
Carnival is dawning,
But half the clowns are sipping drinks
Underneath the awning.

White masque, pink masque . . .
Here a turban flashes;
A rag-picker is at the curb,
Seeking gold in ashes.



NEXT to the jawbone, the most undesirable feature about a woman is her wishbone.



THE BEAUTIFUL THING*

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By Murray Leinster and George B. Jenkins, Jr.

THE scene is a portion of the mezzanine floor of a really good hotel. It is not the sort of hotel that has acquired the reputation of being expensive, or the sort that in Oklahoma is known as first-class. It is a hotel of which the mythical man in the street has never heard, a hotel in which a delicate guest would be quite sure of not meeting commercial travelers, and delegates to Knights of Pythias conventions, out-of-town buyers.

Against the subtly tinted wall we see a broad settee on which two well-designed electric lamps throw a subdued glow over the floor at their bases. They contrive to cast a gentle light upon the settee,—the sort of light which shows a woman at her best. The rest of the stage is lighted, but not obtrusively. Whoever designs the setting must disregard entirely the dictates of Mr. Belasco. The effect is one of comfort, even of expensive comfort, but it is the sort of comfort prepared for people who take comfort as a matter of course.

There are four people in the play. The first to be seen is CHARLES, who is in his early forties and has attained to civilization in manner and dress. He could not possibly be portrayed by an actor who wore a striped gray waistcoat with evening clothes, or who possessed a double chin. CHARLES' hair is pleasantly gray and his face is the face of an aristocrat. This does not mean that he looks like the popular idea of a French nobleman going to the guillotine. He is a gentleman who would never think of referring to himself as one. He is a man who secures service such as other people tip for in vain, because he has always been accustomed to such service, and treats servants with enough of courtesy to secure it in return.

MARION is a woman of an age which is fairly uncertain but is none the less charming. She is really beautiful, and there is genuine humor in the curve of her mouth. A professional actress would never be able to understand MARION and could never portray her properly. She does not smile when she is vaguely uncertain of the meaning of a remark. She has conquered the feminine instinct to make life a series of dramatic situations. She possesses the peculiarly masculine attribute of sportsmanship. And she is really beautiful.

BOBBY, who appears later, is precisely what MARION calls him. He is a very young man, manfully striving to conceal his youth, and in time he will be a pleasant person to know. If he makes an ass of himself occasionally, it is only to be expected. BOBBY is still young, and since he has the virtue of youth he must be allowed its compensating crudities.

*Acting rights reserved.

BOBBY could not be played by an ambitious actor. He has no "fat" in his part, but he will be worth knowing some day.

CECILY is young, but she simply must not be played as an ingénue. CECILY is a charming girl who is really delightful to look upon. It should be remembered that CHARLES likes her, and CHARLES is a person of discrimination. She dresses in good taste, in the fashion that most becomes her, and she does not affect vivacity as a substitute for girlishness. She is herself.

Shortly after the curtain rises, CHARLES walks slowly into view, looks at his watch, considers its dial for an instant, and sinks comfortably down upon the settee. He gives the impression of having settled down for what he suspects will be a long and tiresome wait. Just as he is fumbling for his cigarette-case, MARION appears from the opposite direction, walking as leisurely as CHARLES had done. She does not look at CHARLES, but is about to pass him when he glances up. Surprise and pleasure show themselves on his face, and he rises quickly

CHARLES

It can't be—is it Marion?

(She stops, and pleasure as great as his own shows in her expression.)

MARION

Why, Charles!

(They shake hands with the peculiar inexpressiveness of people who are sincerely glad to see each other, yet feel strangely embarrassed by the unexpectedness of their meeting.)

CHARLES

I really doubted that it was actually you, Marion, but I knew there could not be two women with that little smile perpetually at the corners of their mouths.

MARION

(Smiling indulgently.) The same Charles! What have you been doing and what has happened to you since—Paris?

CHARLES

The most tragic thing that has happened to me is that nothing has happened to me, and I have been extremely busy at my usual occupation, which, as you know, is nothing. And you—?

(Shrugging her shoulders.) Oh, I—

CHARLES

(Gently.) You have been beautiful.

MARION

Irrelevantly.) You're rather a dear,

Charles. But what are you waiting here for? I see you wearing your patient-angel look, which means you think you are due for a long wait.

CHARLES

(Smiling.) You know me very well. Why should I be waiting?

MARION

(Watching his smile.) A charming woman, of course. But why so early?

CHARLES

(In semi-comic resignation.) She is almost invariably late, but at times she has moments of most disconcerting punctuality, so I suffer. And you, of course—

MARION

A dear boy.

CHARLES

(Raising his eyebrows a trifle, still smiling.) We do understand each other, Marion. After what we were to each other, do you think anyone else would talk as frankly as we do?

MARION

It does seem that to have shared every thought in past times leads to concealment of every thought of present days, doesn't it?

CHARLES

Let's sit down.

(They do so, he waiting instinctively

until she has seated herself comfortably. He glances slyly at her from the corners of his eyes)

CHARLES

Do you expect to wait long, Marion?

MARION

(With the worldly wisdom of a woman.) Bobby is quite pathetically trying to be indifferent, and his idea of indifference is so youthful! I have seen him drive past my hotel five separate times before he decided he was tardy enough to impress me.

CHARLES

(Humorously retrospective.) I did the same thing myself, Marion. We men are all alike.

MARION

You are deliciously so, Charles. The third time you ever saw me, you had agreed to meet me in the lounge of my hotel and you were twenty minutes late. I was sitting patiently by one of the writing-tables and saw you in a mirror. You looked at your watch at least a dozen times in those twenty minutes—and then you explained in a superior manner that you had met a man in the lobby who detained you. You had been hiding behind a group of palms by the door.

CHARLES

(Slightly vexed.)—I never knew you suspected that, Marion.

MARION

(Confidently.) If you had, you'd have been angry with me. That, also, is very much like a man.

CHARLES

(Triumphantly.) But I knew something I never told you, too. I sent you a little note with some flowers. I'd known you two weeks. And the next day we had tea together and your purse fell open on the table. I saw my note in it. You'd been carrying it with you. You never dreamed I saw the note, but it heartened me wonderfully. *(She*

smiles wisely) Confound it! Marion, did you know that, too?

MARION

(Half-apologetically.) You were so much the boy then, Charles. You were a dear boy, but you were so young, and so shy. . . . I did like you immensely, Charles.

CHARLES

(Amused, yet annoyed with himself.) You must have played with me, Marion.

MARION

(Smiling.) Never. But there are little artifices one must employ.

(Lightly.) Such as my pretended indifference.

MARION

It added zest to the game. One never knew whether or not the little trick would have the effect one wished. And success was so important!

CHARLES

(Quickly.) Was it important, Marion?

MARION

Hush, Charles! Never wake ghosts.

CHARLES

Not pleasant ghosts?

(With a little hesitation.) True, there are pleasant ghosts. Since it was so long ago. . . . It was important, Charles. Now I have bared my secret. *(She smiles at him.)*

CHARLES

(Thoughtfully.) And neither of us dared be frank. It was vastly important to me, too.

MARION

It would be curious to be frank. There are always artifices and counter-artifices; elaborate deceptions to reach a complete understanding.

CHARLES

It must be that men are too timid to be frank, and woman too wise. And men are supposed to be such bold pursuers!

MARION

(*With a smiling sigh.*) You have no idea, Charles, how hard it is to persuade a desirable man that he is a bold pursuer. I think a woman would care much more for a man if she dared expose her primal ferocity.

CHARLES

Instead of which she has to infuse that ferocity in him?

MARION

Precisely. I do like Bobby, but it would be so much pleasanter simply to—kiss him upon occasion when I wished to, instead of having to implant the idea in his mind that he wishes to kiss me.

CHARLES

It would be a novelty to be courted in that fashion.

MARION

(*Laughing.*) Don't tempt me, Charles, or I may live up to my words. Do you remember how I used to trace, very gravely, your eyebrows with my fingertips?

CHARLES

You are the only woman I ever knew who had that little trick. It always made me want to kiss you. You were so serious about it.

MARION

(*With twinkling eyes.*) That was primal ferocity.

CHARLES

By gad! Marion, you must have made me do exactly as you pleased!

MARION

(*Shaking her head.*) No-o-o. Charles. I only tried to make your wishes accord with mine.

CHARLES

(*Whimsically.*) And I must admit that your ideas were pleasant ones.

MARION

(*Reproachfully.*) Charles, you aren't annoyed?

CHARLES

Of course not. It was beautiful to love you.

MARION

(*Quickly.*) It was love.

CHARLES

(*With a reminiscent smile.*) Marion, you were the first woman I ever really cared about. And I have no regrets. Have you?

MARION

A woman never regrets having loved.

CHARLES

(*Thoughtfully.*) A man nearly always does. He feels such a cad when he stops. (*He looks at his watch, but without great interest.*)

MARION

Is she very pretty, Charles?

CHARLES

(*In a flat tone.*) She is quite beautiful.

MARION

I am not too curious, am I?

CHARLES

Of course not. It's odd, but I don't think I could resent curiosity from you. There's a feeling I can't explain. . . .

MARION

We do understand each other, Charles. Somehow, I don't think you care for her as much as you would like.

CHARLES

When a man is my age, his emotions lose their first keenness. She is charming, though.

MARION

And at my age. . . . It is queer to be talking of ages. Bobby is so very young. He is a dear boy, but—he is so young.

CHARLES

It is strange how the virtue of youth in time becomes a vice.

MARION

(*With a faraway smile.*) We were young together.

CHARLES

Gad! Weren't we young! Do you remember what we quarreled about, Marion?

MARION

No-o-o, not exactly.

CHARLES

But wasn't it tragic? Some little disagreement that now we would think hardly deserving a second thought. . . .

MARION

I think we would get along better now.

CHARLES

Yes. We've both learned many things. A man should love and lose at least once for every year he's to live with his wife.

MARION

(*Quickly.*) You're not married, Charles?

CHARLES

(*Ruefully.*) No. I told you I cared more for you. Afterwards, I looked to find myself as deeply stirred as you stirred me, and failing, I looked farther. But there's no love as sweet as the first one.

MARION

(*Smiling as she looks into the past.*)

MARION

No . . . First love is sweetest and keenest, but also it's cruelest.

CHARLES

It is cruel. It does not understand.

MARION

And until you look back, years after, you never know. (*Lightly.*) We're growing sentimental, Charles.

CHARLES

(*Smiling thoughtfully.*) No matter, it's real. We have learned so much.

MARION

If one could only learn these things beforehand! All our half-forgotten tragedies, which at the time seemed to tumble the world about our ears, would never be.

CHARLES

Perhaps it would be pleasant to miss our tragedies. I don't know. There's something they seem to prepare us for, but we have missed it.

MARION

(*Hesitating.*) Perhaps—perhaps they are to prepare us for our last love, greatly different from the first, but maybe even sweeter.

CHARLES

(*Moodily.*) Maybe.

MARION

We have learned to understand and to forgive. I wonder . . .

CHARLES

(*Slowly.*) That is the difference between men and women. Men know dead love cannot be revived, but women are forever attempting the miracle.

MARION

(*Lightly, though wincing a little.*) I am rebuffed.

CHARLES

(*Quickly.*) No, no, Marion. Please. . . . There is something different about you. First love never quite dies. There is always tenderness left behind. And you—

(*BOBBY enters from the left. He is struggling to affect an air of ease and assurance. MARION looks at him and smiles.*)

MARION

(*Reproachfully.*) Bobby, late as usual! And leaving me to languish until your arrival.

BOBBY

(*Stammering a little, but secretly proud that she has noticed his carefully planned tardiness.*) I'm awfully sorry.

Marion, but I met a chap and he delayed me. I'm not very late, am I?

MARION

Hours and hours. Bobby, this is a very old friend of mine.

(CHARLES rises and shakes hands. BOBBY is a trifle confused and openly envies the older man his poise.)

BOBBY

(Very much the man-about-town.) Pleasure, I'm sure. Awfully much obliged to you for amusing Marion. Perhaps she won't be so much annoyed with me, since you were here.

CHARLES

(Smiling.) I am sure she will forgive you.

MARION

Bobby, I have no flowers. Run and get me a really nice corsage bouquet, won't you? Running the errand is penance for being late.

BOBBY

(Gallantly.) Then since I may run an errand for you, I'm not sorry I'm late.

(He hurries off in the direction from which he came. MARION turns to CHARLES, a trifle pale.)

MARION

Charles, you were saying . . .

CHARLES

(Irrelevantly.) I like Bobby.

MARION

He is a dear boy, Charles. But—

CHARLES

Marion, do you remember how wonderful it was when you first told me you loved me?

MARION

I had been longing to tell you for days, Charles.

CHARLES

I keep thinking of Bobby. He cares tremendously for you, Marion.

MARION

Perhaps. But he is so young . . .

CHARLES

(Whimsically, but with a touch of tenderness.) It is a beautiful thing to have loved you, Marion. Even now some of the old romance clings. It would be perfect for us to begin again, having learned what we have learned.

MARION

(Softly.) It would be perfect, Charles.

CHARLES

(Touching her hand gently.) But there is Bobby. He is very young, when love is at its keenest and sweetest. It is a beautiful thing to be young and to love you, Marion. Dare I take that beautiful thing from him?

(BOBBY reenters with the corsage bouquet.)

BOBBY

This one was the best he had, Marion, but it is a poor best.

MARION

(Turning her attention to him with ready charm.) It is very nice, Bobby.

CHARLES

(With a suggestion of hesitation.) I shall hope to see you again, Marion. (CECILY enters slowly from the right.)

BOBBY

(Softly.) Great Godfrey! (CHARLES turns and sees CECILY. He goes toward her with a smile.) . . .

CHARLES

Late as usual, Cecily.

CECILY

(Giving him her hand.) I'm sorry—but only a little.

(She smiles roguishly at him, then her glance travels past him to BOBBY. Her eyes widen.)

CHARLES

I have been entertained. This is an old, old friend of mine. (MARION

smiles and shakes hands.) And this is Bobby.

BOBBY

(In a hushed tone.) You are the girl that was in the Kents' box at the opera, tonight a week ago. Aren't you?

CECILY

(A shade too quickly.) Yes—that is, I imagine it must have been about a week ago.

BOBBY

(Inanely.) I remember.

MARION

You two know each other?

BOBBY

(Half-apologetically.) N-not until now. I just happened to recognize her.

(He turns and smiles frankly at CECILY. She looks up at CHARLES, then returns BOBBY's smile, though with a suggestion of mystery in her own.)

MARION

Your memory is splendid, Bobby.

CHARLES

(To MARION.) My memory was just as good, once upon a time.

MARION

(To CHARLES. The other two are conversing readily, about nothing whatever.) It was, Charles.

BOBBY

(Turning, with a twinge of conscience.) Er—I forgot. Excuse me, Marion. *(CHARLES moves forward to take possession of CECILY. BOBBY hesitates and flushes.)* Er—*(reluctantly)* I suppose . . .

CHARLES

(With a perfect blending of tentativeness and the assurance of an old friend.) You two are going to dinner, aren't you?

BOBBY

(Gratefully.) Why, yes.

CHARLES

(With a disarming smile.) So are we. May I suggest—

BOBBY

(In a rush.) Let's have it together.

CHARLES

Just what I was about to say. Marion and I have hardly started our reminiscences.

MARION

And you two haven't begun.

BOBBY

(Flushing again.) You talk to me as if I were a child, Marion.

CECILY

Is it so dreadful?

CHARLES

Marion often indulges in the feminine trick of being most disconcerting when she wishes to be most kind.

MARION

Charles will give away all my secrets. *(BOBBY is again deep in conversation with CECILY. MARION turns to him, then looks at CHARLES with an appealing moué. CHARLES raises his eyebrows. MARION's lips curve in a whimsical fashion. She speaks in a low voice that is quite without rancor and is really apologizing for BOBBY.)*

MARION

He is very young.

CHARLES

(In a tone that matches her own, smiling.) It is a beautiful thing to be young. But we—

(MARION looks at him for an instant and then smiles as she must have smiled years before. He returns the smile, looking at her as he, also, must have looked at her years before. He makes an impulsive movement and touches her hand gently.)

MARION

(With an indescribable, whimsically tender smile.) Shall we go to dinner, Charles?

(She takes CHARLES' arm and the four of them move slowly away, BOBBY and CECILY following abstractedly, absorbed in each other.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

PRACTICE MAKES . . .

By Elinor Maxwell

HE is handsome. He is forty. He has lived. And he says he will marry me because I am the most unsophisticated creature he has met. He's right, of course, oh, of course, he's right! Still, I am scarred for death for fear some day I'll kiss him just a little bit too—er—well . . .



REVISITED

By John V. A. Weaver

I GO back to the old house
When the years have fled.
Blindfolded, I could walk
With a sure tread
Queer little passage-ways,
Quaint beloved halls,
Guided by the old feel
Of well-known walls.

I dodge from the huge chest
That stood beside the stair;
I grope all about the hearth
For the great chair;
And at the sacred small room
None else could know
I claw at the secret door
Locked long ago. . . .

And yet, to me, who loved you in that day,
(As still), "You do not understand," you say!



I .
treme'

LOVE is the explosion; marriage the débris.

THE ZANY

By Lillian Foster Barrett

THEY were at dinner. The richly panelled walls gave out a gloom that seemed to settle heavily on all conversation to the ultimate extinction of it. The ceiling, with its weight of carving, impended threateningly. The polished floor responded with echoes, hollow and sepulchral, to the cautious tread of the footmen.

Millicent Traymore sighed wearily; her husband responded in kind. The butler cleared his throat; one of the footmen swallowed audibly.

"The lawn fête was a great success," said Millicent in laconic tone.

"Was it?" Delaney roused himself from his torpor to meet the remark with sufficient intelligence.

Conversation lapsed again. After all, how could one keep it up to tempo in that depressing atmosphere of heavy formality?

"Mrs. Austin Sears was there," Millicent resumed.

"Was she?" Delaney felt he was doing his share.

Hence, startled surprise when Millicent roused herself and with a flash of her dark eyes cried out:

"Is it? Was it? Was he? Is he?"

Her mimicry was perfect. Delaney would have burst out laughing had it not been for the presence of the austere footmen grouped about. As it was, he drew himself up with dignity and said nothing.

Millicent had flushed violently, regretting her words the minute she had uttered them. She glanced furtively about at the attendant servants to see if her outburst had been noticed; there was nothing to indicate that it had.

Another silence fraught with depression and gloom!

Millicent leaned forward to light a cigarette in a candle. There was the sound as of a faint sizzle.

"Damn!" she exclaimed as she put her hand hurriedly to her hair to ascertain the extent of the conflagration.

The heavy panels caught the word and sent it back with reverberations. Delaney covered his mouth with his hand, pretending to stroke his moustache.

"Coffee here or in the card-room, madame?" inquired the butler with superior air.

Millicent shoved her chair back with a defiant scraping sound.

"In the card-room, Horton," she said and swept proudly out of the room.

Comfortably ensconced on a divan in the card-room, Millicent showed herself as distinctly mortified, exasperated, disconsolate.

"I don't know how it is," she wailed, "but we *can't* get anywhere."

Delaney was lounging in a big chair beside her. He stirred his coffee thoughtfully.

"I wonder if we're not silly to try," he said.

Millicent sat up quickly at that.

"Now there we are! *You* don't try. No wonder we can't make any headway—"

"But, my dear!" protested Delaney.

"Yes, I know everything you're going to say," Millicent cut in irritably. "You've taken the finest house in Bar Harbour and you're spending more money than anyone else in the colony and—and—"

"Well?" asked Delaney. "What else can I do?"

Millicent gave him a despairing look. "Can't you see, Delaney, it isn't what one *does*, it's the way one does it? Plenty of people with far less than we have to offer have managed to break in. Here we are—heaps of money, fairly good families back of us, education and—and we have to content ourselves with hanging on the fringe of things."

Delaney pondered. Millicent must, of course, be humored.

"What is it you think we—er—lack?" he brought out at last.

"*Well?*" echoed Millicent, and then sank back among her pillows as if overcome by the weight of her husband's obtuseness.

"Oh!" he exclaimed brightly. "It's I who am at fault! I see. Well—let's have it. What's the matter with me?"

Millicent wrinkled her pretty brows into the semblance of a frown.

"You—you lack nuance," she brought out at last with conviction.

Delaney nodded thoughtfully. "So, that's it. Sort of too much all one color—eh?"

"Yes," answered Millicent. "Of course, not literally. You're quite all right to look at."

This last with a charming smile of appreciation.

"Mentally, then?" he queried after a pause fraught with the weight of deep appreciation.

"No, not that, either, I should say," Millicent rejoined.

Then, as if plunging at a hurdle she had been trying to make up her mind to take for some time, she hurriedly went on:

"It's your moral monotony that stands in our way."

Delaney was startled out of his well-regulated self.

Then, putting back his head, he proceeded to enjoy a good laugh.

"You mean if I were a rotter I'd get by," he said when his mirth had subsided.

Millicent gave him distinctly to understand by her hurt look that she con-

sidered his hilarity very much out of place.

"Of course if you treat the whole matter flippantly—" she began.

"I'm not—" Delaney hastened to assure her. "But what am I to understand you wish me to do to attain this very essential nuance? Wine and women—"

"Don't be vulgar, Delaney," Millicent put in. "You can be so *very* at times."

But Delaney wasn't listening. His thoughts were running in quite a new channel.

"I say," he burst out at last, "have you it?"

"What?" asked Millicent.

"This moral nuance you're advocating."

"Of course," said Millicent with conviction.

Delaney stared.

"You can't mean you—you *do* things."

"Certainly not," answered Millicent with a pretty superiority. "I merely let people *think* I do."

"The devil!" exclaimed Delaney.

Millicent smiled condescendingly, then, reaching over, took her husband's hand.

He really was very nice and even now, after six years of married life, she still knew herself to be very much in love.

"Don't be alarmed, dear," she said with tender patronage. "It's simply a social trick, one you could learn easily. And, after all, there's no harm in it. All you have to do is to pretend you *would* do things if your whim dictated; imply, too, that you *have* done things in the past and *will* do things in the future. But—don't you see?—you're quite protected in the present."

Delaney showed himself as plainly worried, and very much bewildered.

"Milly, darling," he protested as he seated himself on the edge of the divan. "I don't like it. It's risky."

Millicent snuggled close.

"Dear old Del," she murmured, "you *are* so stupid and New England."

Delaney suffered himself to be kissed.

"Has it never occurred to you, Milly, there is a danger of slipping? That the influence of this set you so want to break into is an insidious one, that it somehow gets a person in spite of—of—of—oh—lots of things. That's why I made such a row about coming here. Our own little set in Montclair was quite good enough for me."

"But what could one do with millions in Montclair?" sighed Millicent.

Delaney was firm. "Everything one can do in Bar Harbour or Newport or Paris. I've regretted many times that father's made so much money. We haven't had a really happy moment since."

Millicent's eyes filled with tears.

"Now have we, honestly, dear?" pursued Delaney tenderly.

But Millicent would not be reasoned with.

"I am ambitious above everything," she persisted obstinately. "I don't care for the snubs or the horrid belittlement or anything, as long as we get there eventually."

Delaney sighed heavily.

"I care for *that* more than anything in the world," wound up Millicent defiantly.

"And you're willing to sacrifice *me*," began Delaney with a smile, "offer up my morals on the altar of social ambition."

They both laughed at that.

Millicent put her arms about Delaney's neck; they both realized the question was settled.

"Mrs. Austin Sears was almost cordial this afternoon," Millicent resumed.

Delaney said nothing.

"Couldn't you bring yourself, Delaney, to—to—" Millicent faltered.

"Certainly not," put in Delaney quickly, "she's not my type."

"But we can't *all* be dark," answered Millicent.

"True!" said Delaney. "But Ethel Sears! No, it can't be done."

"I'd coach you," pleaded Millicent.

"Anybody else but *that* woman." Delaney was unusually firm for him.

"Why under the heavens select *her* when—"

"But don't you see *she's* the one who has shown herself very lenient of late? She even seeks me out occasionally. And she is, undoubtedly, a power. Conciliate her with a mild flirtation and—Oh, *can't* you bring yourself to do it, Delaney?"

Delaney again pondered.

"But if she has been lenient of late, why not let things take their natural course, without resorting to all this strategy?"

Millicent rose impatiently at that.

"Because I'm tired of going on this way. Because I'm bored and nervous and—and—"

Her voice broke.

Delaney had risen, too, and was all ready to present his shoulder for the curly head to rest on, as Millicent burst into a flood of tears.

"Let's go back to Montclair and cut all this," he murmured between endearments, as Millicent sobbed out her irritation with pretty abandon.

But she shook her curly head decisively.

"Never," she cried, "as long as there's one way left untried."

Delaney gave a sigh that proved he gauged accurately the measure of his marital responsibilities.

"Very well, darling. If Ethel Sears is the only way, God's will be done."

II

It proved to be of the nature of an adventure, and one that Millicent thrilled to with the keenest delight. She lay awake nights mapping out the details of Delaney's campaign and even tabulated certain remarks to be introduced aptly into his *tête-à-têtes* with the lady. A veritable juggler she was, the patient Del her zany, and she never tired of thinking up new tricks.

The affair was helped along, moreover, by the arrival on the scene of Curtis Dexter, Millicent's young cousin, just out of college. Millicent's cue was to devote herself to Curt, thus enabling

Del to range at large. She flirted desperately with Curt at the Pool, the Casino. They drove and rode together.

Delaney looked on with a resigned melancholy Millicent had schooled him to assume. Melancholy was becoming to his handsome face. 'Twas but natural, therefore, that the ladies, the susceptible ones, should go out of their way to flash smiles of consolation.

"We must distract him from the antics of that butterfly wife of his," Mrs. Carling Wood vouchsafed. Her intention was good, even if her figure was mixed.

"Nice eyes, good build!" pronounced Christine Ralston. "We must incite him to tennis."

Delaney suffered himself to be lured into many activities in the weeks that followed. He was a good tennis player and was soon in great demand on the courts. He played polo; he danced.

"Splendid!" cried Millicent as he reported each night the points scored. "But how about Mrs. Austin Sears? You *must* get on with your lovemaking. Curt is boring me intolerably and I can't hold out much longer."

Delaney sighed wearily.

"Milly, dear—" he began to protest.

She interrupted him.

"Just how far, now, have you gotten? Did you see her today?"

"Yes," Delaney said. "But she's not athletic, you know. I have to rely on stray moments about the courts, or a word or two at the Pool."

Millicent wrinkled her pretty brows.

"The point is to let her know you're interested. How about sending her flowers?"

Delaney started.

"Good heavens, Milly—"

"American beauties," pursued Milly obdurately. "She loves them. The day she had that public fete at her place I saw the most gorgeous bunch in the library—"

But Delaney was genuinely angry now.

"Look here, Milly," he cried, "this is all rot. I'll be blamed if I'll—"

Fifteen minutes later, with Milly crying in his arms, he was saying:

"Wouldn't plain roses do? There's something so—so compromising about American beauties. Perhaps, later—"

Milly, however, persisted.

"American beauties!" she said, and American beauties it was, the largest, most costly, most compromising bunch Bar Harbour had to offer.

"I met Mrs. Sears!" Millicent announced the next night triumphantly to her husband. "She gave me such a pitying look. Isn't it a lark?"

"Isn't it?" said Delaney drily.

"Have you seen her?" pressed Millicent.

"I'm going there to tea tomorrow," Delaney announced.

At which Millicent threw her arms about his neck and kissed him ecstatically.

III

MRS. AUSTIN SEARS picked him up the next afternoon in a remote byway.

"Shall we drive around a little first?" she said, "or go directly home?"

"Oh, directly home, of course," he said with quick energy.

Ethel Sears smiled at him lazily.

She was blonde and languid, of a subtle charm that disconcerted extremely. She admitted herself unscrupulous and so drew the sting of gossip, yet she guarded her affairs with the utmost secrecy.

They drove the four miles to her country place almost in silence. Yet the silence was not one of awkwardness and constraint; rather it betokened an easy intimacy and understanding.

"You're looking a bit down these days, Del," she said at last.

Del frowned.

"Business worries—" he answered.

"I wonder," she mused softly.

Then, after a pause fraught with speculation, "Or is that fly-away wife of yours?"

Del started to protest, but Ethel put her hand on his.

He took it and mechanically proce

ed to button and unbutton the dainty glove.

"Of course, you know I'm not condemning Millicent," she said with a light laugh. "I'm only questioning her methods. She's flaunting her flirtation outrageously."

Del sighed wearily and admitted the truth of her statement.

"As for me," Ethel went on, "I get my greatest joy from—well—not the affair itself, but the delicious contriving of it."

Del laughed.

"I see. It has to be illicit."

"Of course. Moreover, I enjoy a man whose wife would make a most particular row."

Del showed himself amused, though somewhat bewildered.

"But you yourself know that Millicent—" he began.

Ethel nodded sagely.

"It's because she's so sure of you that she dares; and she's sure of you because she's desperately in love with you—"

"That's not logic," said Del.

"It's *my* logic," flashed Ethel. "Meanwhile, here we are!"

Tea was ready for them in the drawing-room.

"I am not at home to anyone," said Ethel to the footman. "That will do."

She turned to some roses on a table.

"Your gorgeous roses—" she said. "They are a continual reminder—"

Their eyes met in a languid look of comfortable well-being, with underneath a suggestion of something else. Quite naturally they came together and he put his arms about her. He kissed her several times; she let him, standing there with closed eyes.

Then, with a deep sigh, she drew away and seated herself at the tea table.

"I could almost find it in my heart to be sorry for Millicent," she said at last, softly.

"Poor little Milly!" he said. "I feel guilty myself when I think of her."

Then with sudden inspiration:

"I say, why can't you be nice to her? She's ambitious, socially, you know.

And, of course, what you say goes in the Colony—"

Ethel Sears stared.

"You mean I might *push* her?"

"Yes." Del, once started, forged ahead. "You see, it would be a sop to *my* conscience and"—he wound up with a smile—"it would increase *your* sense of the illicit."

Ethel Sears reflected a minute, a dawning smile breaking over her face.

"Del!" she cried at last. "How delicious!"

Then, putting out her hand for his, she drew him down onto the divan beside her. Again they kissed as those to whom a caress has become a habit.

"Is it a go?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered eagerly. And the compact was sealed with another kiss.

IV

BAR HARBOUR said Mrs. Sears did it to show her authority. She, who at the beginning of the season had given them the cue to ignore the little Mrs. Traymore, was now going out of her languid way to push the newcomer.

It was very awkward for everyone concerned, but there was nothing to do but make the most of a bad situation. The transitory stage from complete ostracism to warm reception was a difficult one to effect gracefully.

However, Millicent's very eager desire to "get in" rendered subtlety of treatment unnecessary. She was like a child upon whose ravished sight there bursts the first glory of a Christmas tree. Mrs. Austin Sears had given a big dinner; the Traymores were included. After that, it was easy. Millicent gave herself up to the whirl of events that followed with a ready zest. As she saw her name in the New York papers grouped with those of Bar Harbour's most exclusive clientèle her happiness knew no bounds. Once in the New York *Sunday Times* she had been pictured entering Mrs. Austin Sears' motor. Mrs. Sears' hand was upon her shoulder in an attitude of graceful intimacy.

Millicent presented the picture to Del in charming triumph.

"Did you see? Isn't it jolly? What will the folks in Montclair say? And it's all been so very simple."

Del said nothing.

"All for a few American beauties—" she went on.

"How late are you planning to stay here?" Del interrupted with seeming irrelevance.

"As late as *she* does," was Milly's ready answer.

Del sighed.

"Is it as bad as that?" Milly laughed. "What has happened lately? I've been so busy I've neglected to follow."

"Well, let's see—" Del settled down with a businesslike air. "A dozen kisses, I should say. I put my arm about her now and then when I think of it. We talk on the subject of attraction and sex, analyze our feelings, forget to turn on the lights when we should—"

He paused.

"That's about all," he finished a little gruffly.

Millicent nodded sagely.

"You've gotten onto the game," she said. "Our future is secure!"

"Then, with an amused little smile, "you can't imagine how I *gloat* over Mrs. Sears."

Del had a sudden thought.

"Suppose she should find it out, Milly?"

Milly considered.

"That would be the end of us socially," she pronounced with conviction.

"A damned good thing if it was," put in Delaney with a sudden flare of irritation.

"Del!" Milly's tone showed genuine pain. "How *can* you?"

Then with the thought he might play her false to gain his point, she had turned to him in a last desperate appeal. Her lips trembled and her eyes suffused with tears.

"Del you *wouldn't*, you *couldn't* go back on me now. Promise, oh, promise, you'll never tell her!"

She looked so childish and wayward

Delaney drew her to him and kissed away the tears.

"I promise, sweetheart! If she ever finds out, it will be through you—"

In the weeks that followed Millicent and Ethel became more and more intimate. They took to running in on each other, just dropping in at any time, a fact that alarmed Del unconscionably. There was the time he was forced to hide ignominiously in an alcove of Ethel's boudoir and listen to his wife's babble for a full hour.

"An intrigue *de luxe*," breathed Ethel softly afterwards.

"Wasn't it a scream?" laughed Milly when he reached home. "Of course I *knew* you were there all the time. The portière kept moving—"

With the waning of the season Del felt all intrigued. One thought alone stood out clear cut against the shifting background of his doubts and indecisions; that was, as he put it to himself, that he was "dead sick of the whole social stunt." In proportion as he longed for his own unpretentious little set in Montclair, he fumed at Bar Harbour standards. Then had come the idea of trickery.

He had promised Millicent that Ethel Sears would never know the truth through him. He recalled vaguely that somebody (some Italian, wasn't it?) had said something rather clever about the end and the means. Well—here was a case in point. To get Milly and himself away out of all this social miasma was an end that would surely justify any means. Yes, he'd screw his courage to the sticking point and tell Ethel. But—oh, confusing thought!—Ethel had a few little things she might tell Milly, and Milly would be at the disadvantage. No, that could never be! He would have to begin at the other end. Tell Milly first and then—

Delaney grew more and more bewildered. There was bound to be a nasty and disagreeable scene any way you put it. So Delaney delayed. Averse always to the intricacies of thought process, he could not bring himself to the point of formulating any definite

scheme of action. A sluggard he proved even before the fresh and healthful vision of Montclair.

Then, one bright September day, events precipitated themselves to a climax. The scene involved, however, was far different from anything Delaney could possibly have anticipated.

He and Milly were at breakfast, sorting their mail. It was the first of the month with its inevitable deluge of bills. Milly was slitting open the envelopes carelessly and then, with a cursory glance, tossing the contents over to Del. The florist's bill came to notice. With a smile of amusement, Milly allowed herself a delicious lingering moment to peruse it.

"Oh, you've let it run all summer. Two hundred and seventy dollars—American beauties—" She chuckled. "Not bad when you think what it's brought us."

Del put out his hand with a startled movement, even as Milly's face clouded.

"But there's a mistake!" she cried. "American beauties twice a week in June. We weren't here in June. That is, I wasn't here—"

She stopped, puzzled and bewildered.

Then, as if doing some rapid calculation in a businesslike way Del had never thought her capable of, she rose.

"So *that's* it!" she said coldly. "While you were looking for a house you were not too busy to be carrying on an affair."

Del had risen, too, red and stammering.

"Let me explain!" he faltered. "Milly, I—I—"

So suddenly and unexpectedly had the crisis come upon him that Delaney's presence of mind quite deserted him. The more so as there seemed a complete reversal of rôle: Had Milly followed her usual bent for tears and sobs and reproaches, Del would have known exactly what to do. He would have handled the situation with all masterful coolness and efficiency. But before such close-lipped restraint, such deadly sarcasm, he was powerless.

"Look here now, Mill—" he could

only stammer. "You don't know who—who—"

Milly gave him a sweeping look of contempt that reduced him to speechlessness.

"I know perfectly," she said. "It's Ethel Sears!" and with that she swept in haughty dignity from the room.

Delaney, left to himself, fumed and swore. His spirits asserted themselves, however, with the thought that now things would have to work out his way. There would be a violent scene between Milly and Ethel—the result, a rapid closing of the Traymore season. After that—the renewal of their old life at Montclair. Rather neat, after all!

However, as he saw Millicent, still white and determined, enter her motor an hour later, he could not help muttering to himself "Oh, Lord, oh, Lord!" The broil of feminine intrigue worked on his imagination.

An hour passed. He wondered if they would do vulgar, physical things to each other, pull hair and scratch. Ethel, no! But Milly?

Two hours passed. Each ring of the telephone left his nerves all of a jangle. What was happening?

Three hours passed. Poor little Milly! What a brute he'd been to deceive her! But the years stretched ahead, when, free from the stigma of social ambition, he could make it up to her. If he had her in his arms that minute, he would kiss away all doubt, all suspicion from her dear eyes!

Four hours! He could stand it no longer. Some disaster must have happened.

Five minutes later he was steaming up the Sears driveway.

"Is Mrs. Traymore here?" he asked, but the question was unnecessary.

Millicent's electric was in the driveway and he heard a familiar sob coming from the upper regions.

"Yes, sir!" said the footman.

"I'd like to speak to her, or to Mrs. Sears!" Delaney went on with would-be carelessness and sauntered into the drawing-room.

A few minutes later the footman returned.

"Mrs. Traymore and Mrs. Sears were not at home to anyone!"

Del stared.

"But, good God!" he cried in consternation. "Perfectly preposterous! Perfectly—!"

The footman turned a deaf ear to his entreaties and a minute later Delaney found himself ignominiously turned out of the Sears portals.

There followed a hideous night of

sleepless anxiety. A note from Millicent arrived early in the morning.

"Will you kindly get my maid to pack a few necessary things and send them over to 'The Pines'? Mrs. Sears has been good enough to ask me to spend a few weeks with her. I need time. I cannot yet bring myself to forgive you—nor can she—"

"Well, I'll—be—damned!" said Del. The two women had made common cause against him. His social career had just begun.



REVERSION

By David Morton

Along my blood old, sullen musics beat,
 And savage chants, and hoarse, forgotten lays,
 Light tunes that have outlingered dancing feet,
 And hymns surviving hair they meant to praise.
 Their hot insistence will have never done
 For new articulation and warm breath,—
 Lost through old, leafy countries in the sun,
 Hushed, since those feet had danced their way to death.

And you who sit there, primly pouring tea,
 With every nice regard,—how should you know
 That in my brain the tom-tom's reveille
 Calls us to savage dances, and we go,
 Your anklets flashing under tropic skies,
 Your flying hair a madness on my eyes.



PIVOTAL moments in a woman's life: (1) the time she is first kissed by a man and (2) the time she first kisses a man.



WOMAN is attractive at twenty, attentive at thirty, and adhesive at forty.

THE FIRST PROPHET

By Harry Kemp

UNGHK was the first prophet. It was very long ago that he lived. His tribe was so low in the scale of life that they had but barely learned to creep into caves for shelter; even now, as a remote racial remembrance, we still have a saying applicable to that phase of human development. . . .

"He doesn't know enough to come in out of the rain," we remark of one particularly obtuse. . . .

But indeed it took a severer effort of mental concentration than we know for early humanity to learn even that.

Unghk's tribe had at least learned to come in out of the wet. They crowded into a newly-discovered cave for shelter. But they had not yet dared the use of fire. It was taboo and unholy to make fire oneself. But to crouch before it for warmth when it happened accidentally by a stroke of lightning was held to be permissible.

Unghk was a prophet. His brain teemed with visions.

The first time he felt the inexplicable, mysterious spirit descend upon him he said,

"There will come a time when our tribe will be so many that the face of the earth will be covered by our descendants."

And the crowd marvelled, and every time he spoke henceforth they gathered eagerly around him. And this made Unghk believed more and more in himself. . . .

"There will come a time," he said again, "when men will take caves like this one in which we live, and put them over the other till there are very many all in a heap. And they will climb up and live in them."

And the crowd murmured its applause of the impossible thing. And one of the hunters gave him a newly cured wolf-skin for what he had said. . . .

"There will come a time," he still said, "when this water we see running in a little stream at our feet will be made to go upward as through a reed, and it will feed with water all the caves that stand on top of each other."

And many presents were given to Unghk, for he amused the people with prophesying what they thought was ever beyond the range of coming to pass.

But now Unghk, as was inevitable to one set upon so high a pinnacle—and now Unghk began to feel the weight of his mission, and to look about for abuses to correct, and improvements to suggest, through his spirit of prophesy. . . .

"There will come a time," said he, "when Fire will become the slave of Man, and cease being his God. . . . and men will use Fire and no longer bow down in ignorant worship before Him."

There arose a murmur at this.

"He is talking what is not right," said his fellow cavemen, one to the other.

Unheeding the drift setting in against him, he proceeded further.

"There will come a time when men will no longer slay the Old and Sick of the tribe, burying them alive."

"The man is going mad," said one to the other, "Is he not trying to overturn a just law that we have known from time immemorial?"

"There will also come a time," chanted the rapt seer, blind to the rising storm, "there will come a time,

went on the prophet, emboldened, "when our maidens will no more have their two first front teeth knocked out on their arriving at adolescence."

There was a long hush.

Then the head man of the tribe rose and exclaimed,

"This is indeed too much!"

"Aye," exclaimed an old Medicine-man, "may there never come a time when our maidens grow so immodest

as to go about in the light of day, brazenly, without the absence of their two first front teeth, as decency and morality require."

So the hollow log of council was beaten. A solemn convocation was called. And the prophet, who had hitherto had great honor, was now put to death because he had prophesied to the detriment of Religion, Law, and Morality!



BURIED TREASURE

By Proctor Fitzgerald

HIS favorite hobby was buried treasure. He believed that the earth was honeycombed with loot, that it was not necessary to dig anywhere in particular. He finally persuaded a friend to help him become rich through digging. Selecting the first place at hand, they plied pick and shovel. At a six-foot depth they struck an oblong box. This was to be expected; it was not unusual. As the field of their operations they had chosen a cemetery.



SONG

By Michael Crevequer

THE wind going over the city
Is blowing my wishes to you,
And my heart would be sending a love-gift
Of sunlight and dew.

But the wind that I love from the mountains
Bears rain and a fluttering leaf,
And always I send to your dreaming
The gift of my grief.



THE most undesirable neighborhood for a woman to be in is in the neighborhood of two hundred and fifty pounds.

THE STRANGE CASE OF ZEDEKIAH L. WILKINSON

By John Blarscom

The Professor leaned back in his big cushioned chair, lighted his enormous pipe, and began to talk. He spoke as follows:

I

THE Austere type of character may be developed through poverty, but in older civilizations it commonly arises from the reaction against Conviviality. Too much of the joy of life disgusts. Out of riot, drunkenness and debauchery, saints appear. The monk stalks away from the shameless city to the cloister or the desert. The Puritan turns from the frivolity of the world to his plain living and high thinking. Their motto is "Never again!" Fasting, silence, voluntary poverty, vows of chastity and obedience, vigils, the hair-shirt, scourging, meditation, prayer. Thin, white-faced, detached, aloof, they stand gazing at the ether. If they look back at all it is to warn, to reproach, to pity. The last is dangerous. Therefore they are hard.

The Austere are essentially religious. Among the poor, religion is a substitute for success. Those who have nothing regard the True Riches. That makes life tolerable. Those who react from Conviviality consider life a race for a Greek prize. They are athletes. Hence they are abstemious.

As long as these are enthusiastic they are secure. Virtue depends on faith. But let doubt arise, and the poor steal, the racer falls. If the prize is doubtful, why run? If there are no True Riches, you will do anything to escape

poverty, which then becomes the symbol of all evil. Thus, when the Puritans of New England made their fortunes they lost, as Lowell says, their religion.

It is a commonplace of history that all great civilizations sink through the weight of their wealth. "From shirt sleeves to shirt sleeves in three generations" is the record of many families. The grandfather, let us say, was a farmer, forceful and austere. The father inherits his strength and his austerity, but becoming wealthy, he tends to relax. The son of such a parent is almost certain to be a waster. Interest, therefore, centers on the *father*. Heredity, habit, policy, fear, all may sustain him as one of the Austere. If he adds enthusiasm for virtue he is safe. He remains in that class to the end. If habit is fixed, and he has grown old before he becomes rich, it is still possible, even without enthusiasm. His son, however, will certainly not follow in his steps.

But if the father is not old, if perhaps he has memories, if enthusiasm relaxes, if fear slumbers, then watch that man! He becomes interesting. He is trembling in the balance. He is in the way either to pass out of the Austere class into the higher class of the Rationally Conscientious, or to fall back into the ranks of the Convivial. And that, too, of the most terrible type of the Convivial, the Hypocritical. For the time comes for him when the hounds of desire, the whole pack of Hades, will arise and howl for satisfaction. His heart will beat like a trip-

hammer. His head will swim. He will want what he wants when he wants it. And the very craft and strength that made him rich will enable him to drink deep of the cups of forbidden pleasure, the wine of Conviviality, with celerity and secrecy.

II

FIGURE to yourself Zedekiah L. Wilkinson. Let his case illustrate for us the thesis. Let us dissect him here under the green lampshade. Let us analyze his psychic processes. An interesting specimen.

The name, Zedekiah L. Wilkinson, is itself significant. Evidently the man is of Scotch-Irish extraction. Behind him are generations of rugged, brawny ancestors, living amid heather on barren hills, running through swamps and forests, with bodies painted blue, their red hair flying in the wind, their blue eyes blazing with the light of battle, brandishing their long, untempered swords, regarding oats as food, nourished on a beverage containing ten per cent. of alcohol. So much for "Wilkinson." The given name "Zedekiah," of course, indicates the Puritan and Protestant heritage, the religious element superimposed upon the Austerity derived from poverty. The "L."—I do not know for what the initial stands—we may assume to be an evidence of the degeneration produced by race-mixture, a slight lowering of the traditional standard. The whole, however, sufficiently of the Austere type.

His grandfather slipped away from Washington's army during the cold winter at Valley Forge in order to look after the pigs, as well as the wife and children, back in Connecticut. Yet I find that he was in at the death at Yorktown. The father of Zedekiah was a plain farmer. He was also a Presbyterian of the Calvinistic school.

So much for ancestry.

Zedekiah himself made money. Having left the farm as a boy he found work in a dry-goods store in the nearby city. From that employment he

took up the real estate business and did well. Finally he became president of the Merchants' Trust Company, director in several other corporations, an owner of valuable bonds and stocks, an esteemed citizen known to be wealthy. Brought up a Presbyterian, he remained faithful to the austere tenets of that faith. He attended church services, belonging to the various societies, and was regular at the weekly prayer meetings. In fact, he became what is known as an "elder" in that denomination. It is a position close to that of the pastor and implies responsibility as a leader in religion.

Twenty years ago, at the time of the upheaval in Presbyterianism caused by the Higher Criticism and other credal difficulties, Zedekiah would, no doubt, have been upset in his religious convictions in common with many others. But he had only recently married, his fortune had not yet been made, he was not of the Critically Intellectual class. Moreover, it happened that there were a series of able and clever ministers as the pastors of the particular Presbyterian church to which Zedekiah and his family belonged. They perceived the weight of the critical movements, and being skilful in apologetics, diverted the interest and attention of the flock towards the new enterprises of humanitarian work and Social Service.

It was of value to Zedekiah to keep in touch with the conservative and respectable elements of society, who are invariably the wealthy. It helped in business. It created confidence. Zedekiah, in the course of time, became even enthusiastic. They made him, as his riches increased, successively President of the Charity Organization Society, President of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, President of the Children's Aid. These offices he held, at the same time being active in the Missionary Society of his church and various other religious and secular organizations, to which he contributed the money that a less austere man would have spent on convivial pleasures.

Zedekiah's wife, Cordelia, shared his

interest in good works and encouraged him in his support of them. Their son, Charlie, however, born with a silver spoon in his mouth, like Galio, cared for none of these things. The boy was dull. His taste, so far as it was developed, was entirely Convivial. He lacked even the application to enter college and the industry for sports. His inclinations were for the vaudeville stage, the *thé dansant*, the café. His senses reacted to the smell of stale cigarette smoke, the sight of lace on lingerie, the taste of green chartreuse. He was a chump, a waster, a bounder. His complexion was the color of underdone piecrust, punctured by pimples. He had weak eyes and a drooping mouth. It was the best thing he had ever done when he ran away and married the daughter of a milliner. The girl steadied him a bit. Thus Zedekiah had before him a concrete instance of the evil effects of a derogation from the ideals of Austerity, though being the boy's own father, he saw less of them than another.

This, then, was the situation. Zedekiah L. Wilkinson, by inheritance of the Austere class, bound by its traditions and trained in its discipline, with an enthusiasm even for its religion, sustained by his wife and by his social environment, but rich and surrounded by the opportunities for convivial enjoyment, with a son devoid of Austerity, is in the position of the *father* in whose character, in our thesis, interest centers.

Remove now from this specimen the element of enthusiasm. Note the result.

III

THE enthusiasm of Zedekiah L. Wilkinson for his religion received its first shrewd blow the day he came to understand the tendency of the Uplift. Not being of the Critically Intellectual class, Zedekiah had never been able to penetrate the fallacies of this movement independently. It struck him first through the channels of business. His

confidence in the ideals of service as the function of government crumpled at the spectacle of the mess the Administration made by the policy of "watchful waiting" in Mexico. Zedekiah had interests in Mexican petroleum. By the time he had seen these interests blown into thin air by piffle, he concluded that a mistake had been made in not sustaining Huerta, and that force and not service is the foundation of good government.

Again, his discovery of the theories advanced by the advocates of the Social Service movement for the elimination of poverty opened his eyes to the fact that their programme consisted of nothing else in principle than the taking away of his own hard-earned money and handing it out by various legislative devices to a mass of men too lazy and incompetent to earn a living for themselves. Also upon investigation he ascertained that more than one-half of the money given to the Charity Organization, of which he was the President, never reached the poor at all, but went to support various secretaries, and that the secretaries insisted that the poor did not need money at all, but would be better helped by "expert advice." Upon looking into the matter he concluded that the secretaries were not only mistaken in their view of the needs of the poor, but that their "advice" was worth about the value of an old maid's cup of tea. Finally he suspected, after considerable experiment, that the efforts of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, instead of suppressing vice, merely scattered it and increased it.

He was amazed. He concluded that reform was not to be accomplished by exterior pressure. He doubted the very foundation of the Uplift. Several instances of self-interest on the part of paid secretaries and the catching of a vice agent in an affair of turpitude shattered the remaining respect he had for the entire movement. He found the bases of his enthusiasm for Austerity broken. He was shocked to realize that a large part of the energy

of a lifetime had been spent in a mistaken direction.

The question now before us is, What did Zedekiah L. Wilkinson do? On the one hand he was fifty-nine years of age when he made his discovery. He had not only the heritage of Austerity, but he had the acquired habits of it as well. Moreover his wife, who remained steadfast and could not change, his associates, the policy of his business operations in many ways, hesitation, and fear of the effect of a change in his mode of conduct, the dread of criticism, the horror of being thought changeable and inconsistent, all tended to make him stifle his new convictions and to keep on in the old paths.

On the other hand, Zedekiah L. Wilkinson, of a semi-savage race that had stolen both cattle and women over the border for generations, still had blood that sang. His lower lip was red. His eyes were bright. The long white beard he wore, that gave him such a patriarchal appearance, was as thick as that of the Moses of Michael Angelo in San Pietro in Vincoli at Rome. Volcanic fire slumbered under the snow on the mountain top. He was, as I have mentioned, rich. There were memories of occasions, of opportunities, of temptations, sternly passed by, refused, because they had been considered inconsistent with his accepted ideas of virtue. His wife, no longer young, was hard-featured and unattractive. Had Zedekiah L. Wilkinson been a Mohammedan he would long since have taken to himself a younger and a prettier wife, but being a Presbyterian elder, he had never considered the plan possible. Had he been a man of the world, i. e., Convivial, instead of being one of the Austere type, he would probably have practised that form of secret polygamy, so common both in Europe and America that the Sociologists tell us it is more customary even than monogamy.

IV

It is impossible, with the insufficient

data at our disposal, to be certain when the thought of the desirability of making up for lost time occurred to Zedekiah. That the thought did occur to him is probable. It is in the first step, however, that we are now interested.

When Zedekiah L. Wilkinson became convinced that the Uplift was but a subtle way in which men who had been failures were endeavoring to systematize their lack of manhood into a legal method which should ultimately separate him from his money, he did not at once resign from the various societies to which he belonged. That would not have been good policy. He stopped the subscriptions, it is true, to those organizations that he felt were merely supporting paid secretaries. He continued to give only where he was convinced that the money reached the poor. But he delayed his resignations, waiting for the moment when someone else could be secured to take his place. He did not wish to become conspicuous.

Nor could Zedekiah withdraw from all the activities of the church to which he belonged. The habits of a lifetime could not be denied. He clung to the Sunday worship. Barren and colorless though it was, there was an objective reality about it that in some way defied criticism, something greater than the limitations imposed upon it by the minister. Nevertheless, in his reasoning moments, Zedekiah could not persuade himself that there was any just ground for his participation. He was no longer enthusiastic. If he went to prayer meeting it was with a decreased interest. He could no longer "lead" with the old zeal.

Being in a condition now to revert to the Convivial class, to plunge down into the abyss of sensuality, to make up for the years of abstemious self-denial by a course of riotous conduct, of libidinous libertinism, it might be supposed that it was only a matter of days before Zedekiah L. Wilkinson would find himself in the proximate occasion where he should be compelled

to decide whether he would be able to take the first step, or whether heredity, habit, policy, and fear would be so strong that they would hold him back. There can be no doubt in such instances that the imagination works overtime supplying possible situations in which the opportunity occurs, the decision is accepted, and the course is adopted. But in Zedekiah's case the power of imagination, impoverished through many dull years, was slow; curiosity in that direction had been chastened. He required the spur of a direct occasion.

The occasion came, either fortuitously, as we say, or brought about by subconscious and, according to Bergson, instinctive direction.

Now, if our specimen had been younger, if he had been of the emotional type, if he had had the blood and nerves of quick response, if he had been curious and adventurous, sensitive to stimulus, imaginative, it would have been easy to forecast his conduct. He would have followed the line of least resistance. As president of the Society for the Suppression of Vice he had a copy of the report of the Survey of Moral Conditions in the city, made by a paid secretary, exposing all the means and methods afforded for the gratification of sensual desires, even the most abnormal and peculiar. The book, to be sure, had been suppressed by the post-office authorities, but Zedekiah kept a copy of it in his office. He knew the ropes. The book—quite a sizable volume—gave specific directions, locations, prices, methods of approach, characteristics of the human agents, panderers and ministers. With his wealth it would have been a simple matter for him to have secured photographs of specimens from which to choose, or to have required samples sent to his office for inspection on pretexts that would never have excited suspicion. But Zedekiah L. Wilkinson, inured to frugality, disciplined to self-restraint, temperamentally slow, suspicious and phlegmatic, no longer young, restricted by the blue lacings

of Austerity, would adventure nothing. Moreover, fear of exposure, of blackmail, haunted him. Therefore, Zedekiah L. Wilkinson rejected this obvious line of approach.

I cannot, of course, be perfectly secure of my data in regard to the whole history of Zedekiah's life. It is possible that there had been some lapses in earlier years from the strict standards of Austerity. It is also possible that the middle initial "L" was indicative of a congenital characteristic that had its bearing upon certain traits and tendencies. But the unknown quantity in the equation probably accounted for the following peculiarity in his conduct. It would not be explicable at least upon the strict basis of the standards of Austerity. Zedekiah L. Wilkinson never ate his luncheon at the noon hour, as other business men of his type did, at the City Club. He chose instead to go to the Alcazar. Now the Alcazar was not only a very expensive place at which to lunch, but it was a café which had, at any other than the noon hour, a decidedly shady reputation. On the upper floors there were private rooms, suites, in fact, which were hired by small parties for dinners. The place, in short, was little better than a gilded house of assignation.

The Survey of Moral Conditions which Zedekiah possessed, however, did not include the Alcazar in its list. The discretion of the management had secured silence, either through bribing the paid secretary or by reason of the almost impossibility of obtaining the evidence. There were no suspicious indications. Every propriety was observed. The employees, even if they knew, were discreet. But the reputation persisted. It was well founded.

Yet there was no impropriety whatever in taking luncheon in the main dining-room at full noon. The most respectable people went there. The food was famous. The place was crowded. If anyone had ventured to suggest a question to Zedekiah he would have answered that the place suited him on account of its proximity to his bank.

This was true. But it was noticeable that whenever Mrs. Wilkinson came down-town at the noon hour and it was necessary for her husband to take her out to lunch he always took her to the Woman's Exchange, or the Dutch Tea Room. I account for this by referring again to the "L" in his name. There may be a more valid explanation. Zedekiah himself indicated that he supposed she would prefer a simpler place in which to eat. But at all other times Zedekiah L. Wilkinson ate his luncheon at the Alcazar. A small table close to the window, screened from the street by a curtain of Venetian lace and lighted on dark days by a red-shaded electric lamp, was reserved for him. He tipped Mason, the head waiter, heavily for the privilege. The best of service was always at his disposal. It was but a slight derogation from the Austere standards. I account for it, as I said, by the "L" in his name. For so rich a man the expense was a trifle.

But consider now another angle of the case. The young woman with whom Zedekiah L. Wilkinson's son, Charlie, had eloped, a girl of sixteen, very pretty, had a mother, a certain Mrs. Delong, a milliner by occupation. It is, I believe, an employment that tends to develop a taste for style and a shrewdness in dealing with human nature. This Mrs. Delong was quite as attractive as her daughter, and, in point of age, in the middle thirties, when certain types of women are at their best. Her business was prosperous. She had a fashionable trade. But it was natural that Mrs. Wilkinson, whose only son had married her daughter—an alliance somewhat offensive to the Consciousness of Kind—should feel a strong antipathy for the mother. Without even knowing Mrs. Delong, Mrs. Wilkinson entertained for her so strong a dislike that she utterly refused to receive her under her roof. She maintained this attitude in spite of the fact that Charlie and his bride lived at the Wilkinson home, and naturally against the desire of her daughter-in-law and her son. Zedekiah himself

was indifferent to the matter. He did not know Mrs. Delong.

V

THESE are sordid details, but they are necessary for a complete study of the case of Zedekiah L. Wilkinson.

As the mother of the wife of Charlie Wilkinson it was naturally offensive to Mrs. Delong to feel that she was *persona non grata* in the Wilkinson home. She determined if possible to make Mrs. Wilkinson receive her. She realized that it would be impossible to win over the mother, but being shrewd and experienced in the ways of the world she decided that if she could manage to secure the interest of Zedekiah she would be able to carry her point. She was not scrupulous as to means. Temperamentally emotional, with nerves of quick response, sanguine, adventurous, reacting promptly to the stimulus of curiosity, this resourceful woman was spurred to action by learning that there would be a reception given at the Wilkinson home in honor of her daughter, and that she herself was not to be invited.

This combination of circumstances had materialized shortly after Zedekiah L. Wilkinson had lost faith in the Uplift, doubted the validity of Austerity, and questioned with himself whether he had not made a mistake in rejecting the opportunities that had come to him.

The injection of Mrs. Delong, clever, audacious, attractive, into the problem precipitated the solution. She adopted the obvious method of going to the Alcazar for her luncheons. She bribed Mason to seat her at the table of Mr. Wilkinson, whom she knew by sight. Zedekiah, at first stimulated to resentment by the intrusion of a stranger at his reserved table, became mollified after he had inspected her. She was dashingy attired, but withal tastefully. I believe the term to be applied to her appearance in colloquial usage would be "stunning." Her voice was charming, her manner deferential.

Similia similibus. It is an interest-

ing corollary to our analysis to inquire why it should happen that the mother of the girl that had been so attractive to the son of Zedekiah should herself have been so fascinating to Zedekiah L. Wilkinson, the father. He had no idea, of course, who she was, yet he was amazed to catch himself thinking about her for the rest of the day. He hoped that she would appear on the morrow.

She did appear again. That was her plan. Zedekiah became more and more interested in her. They conversed. At first subjects connected with business, then more personal and intimate matters. With the instinctive skill which is a quality of the sex, the woman led Zedekiah on to a consideration of a variety of Convivial theses—the theater, the dance, little dinners *aux deux*. Away from her she filled his imagination. At the table he convinced himself that, old as he was, the woman was attracted by him. He longed to touch her. Finally he managed to enclose her hand on an occasion when they simultaneously reached for the salt. The fire of desire swept through him. Before he knew it he had invited her to a little dinner the next night in one of the suites upstairs of the Alcazar. It had taken Mrs. Delong an entire week to bring matters to this point. With her it was a plot. With Zedekiah L. Wilkinson it was the first step. And it was a great step away from the standards of Austerity.

There were thirty-two hours between the luncheon at which the invitation was given and the time for the dinner itself. Note the effect upon Zedekiah during that interval. On the one hand, being enamored, he felt the peculiar emotions that accompany such a state. These, I may inform you, are somewhat similar to the sensations produced upon a person by the physiological experiment of injecting into the anatomy hypodermically a small quantity of morphine. It is somewhat like floating in feathers. The veils of material substances seem to wax thin. There is a whirl to the world. But, on the other hand, Zedekiah found himself in a fe-

ver of trepidation. He had taken a step. He had committed himself to a course of conduct so opposed to all that he had been habituated to that he felt frightened. He could not forecast the consequences. All the reproaches, the warnings against the Strange Woman, contained in the Scriptures, came to his mind. The prohibitions, the commands, the restrictions of his Calvinistic heritage haunted him. He was breaking away.

During the afternoon he could scarcely attend to business. He became morose, impatient, irritable. He snapped at his clerks and growled at his stenographer. And on going home his mood did not improve. His wife, Cordelia, seemed hard and ugly. His boy, Charlie, appeared more stupid than ever. Even the pretty daughter-in-law pouted and was on the verge of tears, angry because her mother was not invited to the coming reception, no doubt. At the table Zedekiah resented the suggestion his wife made that there should be some decoration done in the house before the proposed function. He preferred the old home comforts of rocking chairs, flowered wall-paper, and brussels carpets to the new-fangled styles of the professional decorators.

But it was prayer meeting night and he had to attend and bear his part as an elder. And with the consciousness of having yielded to a temptation and of being on the verge of a great fall into sin, this was no slight ordeal. Before the minister had finished the invocation, the forces of habitual thought had seized Zedekiah. He resolved not to keep his appointment with the Strange Woman. During the reading of Scripture he determined that he would entirely abandon his custom of eating luncheon at the Alcazar. He would purge his thoughts. He would make up for his sin of desire by giving money to the poor, while keeping aloof from the Uplift. Thus it was that the devotional aspects of his religion played upon him. When the time came for Zedekiah himself to "lead," he spoke very sincerely and earnestly about self-

deception, about the lures of the world, the flesh and the devil. He warned the careless, he exhorted the indifferent, he threatened sinners.

Yet after he had spoken and before the meeting was over, Zedekiah L. Wilkinson saw floating before his vision the charming features of the unknown woman. Her wonderful black eyes, her delicate complexion, the style of her gown, the perfume of her gloves, the contour of her throat, all passed before him. On the way home he decided that there really could be no sin in merely dining with a lady *in camera*. The matter should go no farther. He had never contemplated its going farther. He was sure he had not. But before he had disrobed for the night the reaction came, and he decided that his scruples were mere weakness; that he would dine with the Strange Woman, come what may, and that the affair might go as far as it would.

VI

I SHALL not enter upon a description of the details of the little dinner at the Alcazar the next evening. Your imagination, or your experience, will supply the setting. It was the most expensive suite in the house. Zedekiah's money assured that. There were cocktails in delicate glasses and champagne cooling in a silver bucket. There was a waiter of discretion. The food was expensive but good. Soft shaded lights glowed. Rich curtains obscured the windows. The lady herself was in a gay and concessive mood. Dressed in a black velvet dinner gown she was even more attractive than ever. Also Zedekiah drank the cocktails and the wine somewhat to his confusion.

Now was the critical moment for Zedekiah to take the plunge. After the withdrawal of the waiter and after the lady had finished her cigarette, she even sat upon Zedekiah L. Wilkinson's knee and stroked his long white beard. It was the psychological moment for our subject. A moment of singular interest to the student.

You have read that remarkable poem, "A Grammarian's Funeral," and you have marked in it the calcinating effect upon the austere scholar of the pursuit of learning beyond the bounds of reason.

So, with the throttling hands of death at strife,

Ground he at grammar;
Still through the rattle, parts of speech
were rife;

While he could stammer
He settled *Hot's* business—let it be!—
Properly based *Own*—
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.

You will recall also the famous saying of the great Darwin, who towards the end of his life, after many years devoted to the purely scientific studies through which he became famous, lamented that he had lost his taste for poetry and the other forms of literature which in earlier days had been his delight. This also proved to be the case with Zedekiah L. Wilkinson. With the best will in the world to taste forbidden fruit he was unable to do so. He sat mute and dazed. His head seemed to go round in a stupid amber muddle, confused with the memories of Austerity, perplexed with Puritan doubts. He recalled the sin of David and shuddered. Then the words of a poem he had heard at a Sunday School entertainment came to his mind:

Lovely Thais sits beside thee;
Take the goods the gods provide thee.

Mockery! The bond of heredity, the enmeshing leash of habit, the ligament of fear, the dubiety of policy restrained him. He thrust the woman from him and arose to go. He was frightened nearly to death.

If it should, perchance, be a matter of interest to any of you, I may tell you in connection with this special case that Mrs. Delong on this occasion revealed her identity to Mr. Wilkinson. She persisted also in carrying her point, by threat of exposing Zedekiah, about getting an invitation to the Wilkinson home for the reception as well as for

other times. How Zedekiah managed it I do not certainly know. Possibly he acceded to his wife's desire to have the house decorated, making his consent conditional upon her receiving Mrs. Delong. Undoubtedly he was fearful of exposure in case he did not secure the coveted invitation for the woman. Also it is likely that he indicated to his wife that it was a religious duty to receive the mother of one's daughter-in-law. We know at least that Mrs. Delong went to the reception and that she was often at the Wilkinson home thereafter.

It may be questioned, therefore, whether Zedekiah L. Wilkinson made any farther attempt to follow out his instincts, or not; whether he became a Hypocritical Convivialist, or not; whether he reverted to the Austere type and so remained; whether he may have risen through this experience to the height of the Rationally Conscientious class; whether, in short, Mrs. Delong continued to exercise an influence over him. I will leave the consideration of these points to the members of the Class in Psychology and the Seminar on Sociology.

VII

Two matters in conclusion.

It is recorded in the famous case of Judge Bridlegoose that he was accosted to decide the matters of law brought before him by the casting of dice. There are many, no doubt, whose decisions on scientific questions are

reached by the same mental process. They arrive at a conclusion hit or miss. There are no doubt some of you who, for instance, will consider that the anecdotal incident, with which I have illustrated the thesis upon which your attention has been focused, is improbable, even in details. Permit me, therefore, to emphasize the important principle that in science, as in art, there should never be a question of probability, but only a question of truth. In both science and art improbability is the criterion of greatness. Even in the world of phenomena this is true. There is nothing so improbable as the sunrise, or war, or love. In science what probability was there of wireless telegraphy, or flying machines—until they were produced? And in art the limpid simplicity and directness of classical Greek, the magnificence of Gothic cathedrals, and the splendor of a Beethoven symphony, all illustrate the principle. A thing becomes probable only after it has been done. It is the privilege of science and the triumph of art to materialize the improbable. Along that line lies progress and success. Keep this in mind.

And finally, for the sake of those quaint spirits—there are still a few—who inquire what is the "moral" of that which is written, I may say that the moral here is not the victory of the expedient of a vulgar woman, but the manifestation of the essential prurency of Puritanism and the vacuity of all the Uplifts.

Good evening.



FEE: Money given to the clergyman for tying the knot and to the lawyer for untying it.



WHEN a woman asks you how old you think she is, tell her she looks splendid.

ON THE MISREPRESENTED TEMPTATIONS OF A POOR WORKING GIRL

By June Gibson

SHE was rather pretty, with wide eyes and an appealing mouth.

She spoke with a lisp. . . .

In fact, she was the innocent little country girl who had gone to the wicked city to earn her living.

She stood before the Throne on Judgment Day.

"Why are you here?" asked the Angel in charge.

"I am a Poor Working Girl. I worked for six a week. I lived on my salary. Not once did I yield to temptation. I deserve a place in Heaven."

"And what were your temptations?" demanded the stern-eyed Angel.

"A married man once asked me to

dine with him; a fur-coated man brushed up against me in the Park; a man beckoned to me from a limousine. I yielded to none."

Spoke the Angel:

"The married man was almost in his dotage and filled you with disgust; the fur-coated man did not even see you—he was drunk; you scorned the man in the limousine because you knew he was a chauffeur. Those were not temptations; they were impossibilities. Get out of Heaven!"

"But the six a week," whimpered the Poor Working Girl.

"Six a week," sneered the Angel. "I supported my husband and two children on less. 'Raus mit 'im!"



MY LADY

By John McClure

SHE walked among the evening clouds.

Her face was in the dawn.
Herself was in the very flowers
The moonlight shone upon.

I had not known how lovely
The glowing world could be
Until I worshipped beauty
And beauty made me see.



THE BED-POST

By Gertrude Brooke Hamilton

I

THE lapping tongue of society predicted oblivion and ostracism ahead of Nella Orrison —there was nothing, the rippling tongue hinted, that might impede her heady whirl over the cascades dividing the conservative, the swift, and the impossible circles of Manhattan. Nella had married into the conservative circle by allowing Pelton Orrison to ring her finger; she had drifted into the divorcée circle by taking upon her shoulders an unsavory escapade of her dear little friend, Cindy Garnett; and, not content with the borrowed robe of a delicately audacious sinner, she was now eddying toward the impossible circle by appearing in public with Jim Walloon, the man of Cindy's shifted indiscretion.

Every circle cognizant of anybody rated poor old flashlight Jim Walloon below par! Walloon had pots of money, and he was known from one end of Broadway to the other. He was accredited with having saved flappers innumerable from untimely gas-routes; some said that he kept a basket of money swinging in his rooms wherein friend or foe might plunge needy hands; he was a target for the speed policemen; a joy to the race-tracks; an everlasting figure of comedy in the law courts.

When Nella Orrison linked her name with Walloon's it seemed, indeed, as if no straw, nor dyke, might stem the tide carrying her toward social damnation!

But there *was* a straw to hold her back from Jim Walloon.

When Walloon asked her to marry

him, she half laughed and shook her head.

"Somehow, I can't," she told him.

Walloon laughed, too.

"Why?" he demanded.

"An obtacle hangs between," she demurred.

He reddened, and blurted, "You still care for that skeleton-in-armor—Orrison."

Her laughter was wholly for him. "If I'm in love at all just now, I'm enamoured of your funniness. For some reason or other, I'm mirthful when I contemplate your fascinations. And laughter has, surely, the first rating in these dour days!"

In the same instant she shook her head again, vehemently.

"That little nothing hangs between us," she reiterated.

Walloon's big bulk slumped in his chair and a ring on one of his fingers lent a forlorn flash to his attitude.

"By joy!" he ejaculated. "I'm right! You're still fond of Orrison."

She was reflective—frankly thinking aloud: "I wonder if I am. Pelt was good enough to be thoroughly fond of; he was aloof enough to preserve as an idol; he was fastidious enough to really respect."

Shadows shifted over her expressive face and settled in her brilliant eyes. In an attitude suggestive of skidding thoughts, she swung a foot not unlike the slim, spirited hoof of a blooded mount.

Walloon watched her.

By and by, she turned her head toward him with a brimming smile.

"I'm not in love with him!" she declared, positively.

Breaking into gay laughter, she leaned forward and laid her fingers over the hand with the underbred ring.

Her impossible suitor stared down at the milky fingers.

"By joy, I believe you!" he cried.

He beamed on her.

But, sighing, she withdrew her hand.

"There's that trifling snag," she murmured. "It will, I fear, keep me clinging absurdly to the name of Orrison."

He shoved back his chair, rising.

"Pshaw!" he said.

He nurtured a natural distaste for the name of Orrison, which the courts had allowed her to retain.

Looking down at her with the tide of red rising in his good-looking, rubicund face, he burst out:

"What is this junk-idea that prevents you from marrying me?"

Her retort was accompanied by an unexpected blush.

"I shan't tell you," she laughed.

"You must tell me, Nella."

His hands cupped her elbows and he drew her to her feet. He easily pulled her into his arms, and, with a nicety that was one of his surprising qualities, let her go and merely held her hand.

"I suppose I shall tell you all about it," she admitted, reluctantly. "You have about you, Jim, a disarming decency which enables me to explain the bit of nonsense in the closet of my heart."

With a movement at once confidential and impetuous, she re-seated herself and motioned him to do the same.

"Sit down, and I'll tell you what the obstacle is."

He hauled his chair to her side.

Nella frowned; on the brink of candid revelations.

"It's idiotic as any impediment ever fashioned," she warned.

Clasping her hands about her knees, she began, without preamble:

"There hangs on a bed-post in the residence of Pelton Orrison a lace negligée of mine—at least, it should hang there, if one is to believe any man's love-promise."

She swung her foot again, looking at nothing in particular.

"Pelt hung the lace gewgaw on the post the second day of our honeymoon—we honeymooned rather oddly, not going out of town; but shutting ourselves away from our world and sheltering our raptures in the eastern wing of Pelt's town house. Have you seen the Orrison town house? If you have, you know what the eastern wing looks like; how it juts off from the rest of the building, how high its windows are, and how a spiral of outside steps winds up to a curious door. This door leads into the room where Pelt once decorated a bed-post with my negligée—it was to stay there, he said, as a symbol of mutual constancy. Heigho, the cobweb symbol! When I left his house and protection, it still hung on the post of the bed in the isolated eastern wing. I stole up there to kiss it good-bye and tell it to stay there."

She continued, almost blithely:

"Perhaps you won't believe this of me, him—you know I haven't a reputation for sentimentalism—but every now and then I take the trouble to ring up the house of Orrison and inquire of a maid whether or not a negligée hangs on the bed-post in the eastern wing. Each time the maid has replied in the affirmative. And the thread of lace between my hotel and the house I once presided over is strengthened to a thread of something rather fibrous. Nonsensical, isn't it? Utterly foolish!"

She sat back in her chair, unlocking her hands and looking at him with heightening color in her spirited face.

Jim Walloon also leaned back in his chair. "Foolish? It's tommyrot!" He was obviously relieved by the slight texture of the obstacle.

The color came and went in her smooth cheeks.

"Yet," she meditated, half to herself, "while the lacy thing hangs on that bed-post as a symbol of fidelity—though he divorced me for a very sad reason—I cannot quite bring myself to marry another man."

Her direct mention of the divorce made Walloon wheel in his chair.

"You speak as if he had reason for his suit! Now if little Mrs. Garnet had—"

"Jim," she interrupted pleasantly, "you made a ninny of Cindy Garnett. Someone should have been spanked for that misadventure."

"You got the spanking for saving a ninny's reputation," he ruefully grimaced.

He brought his hands down on the arms of his chair. "By joy, I remember my first sight of you!—when you plunged into my rooms on the hunt for Mrs. Garnett. And your face when confronted by a skunk Orrison had hired to watch you! Lord, you were splendid! It was your high-handed silence, your look of ladyship—your inability to come down to any level of explanation and incriminate your little friend—that spanked *me*."

His resonant voice tripped with emotion.

He regarded her with tons of admiration.

"Knowing what you are, I can't see how I spank up the courage to court you. D'you know, Nella,"—his broadly handsome face held a shade of abashment—"you've swept my slate clean of any woman but you."

He got to his feet, embarrassed.

Though her upward glance was soft, her hands lifted with a gesture of skepticism.

"As well assure Pelt that the knowledge of my negligée on his bed-post has formed an aureole for my brow!" she scoffed. "Your reputation is against you, Jim."

He laughed. "That comes of being too noisy."

"I can feel for you." She extended a sympathetic hand. "So many of my follies have been noised abroad."

"Pshaw," he rejoined, taking her hand, "your faults could be used as ten new commandments!"

"They would not be placarded in any cathedral," she sighed, rising.

Walloon was loath to take leave of

her. He stood looking at her with his hat and stick in his hand.

"Honest to God, you won't marry me, Nella?"

"Not while the faithful negligée of a supposedly unfaithful wife hangs in my mind, Jim."

"Isn't there some way to jolt it out of your mind?"

"There may be; I do not know."

"If there's a way, I'll find it," stoutly.

"I hope so, Jim,—for I'm inclined to like a life of laughter."

She gave him her eyes for a second.

"Trot along now," she told him.

"I've an engagement with my dress-maker this noon."

She watched his big figure go from the drawing-room of the suite she was occupying in a hotel on the Avenue.

Interlacing her hands behind her head in a posture of ease, Nella experienced the inward amusement that always followed the departure of her lovable, impossible admirer. With quirking mouth—and softened eyes—she reviewed his proposal of marriage and his protestations of affection. He was so different from Pelton Orrison! He had nothing but his blundering attractions and some nice streaks in his attitude toward women.

Yet she could readily understand how a white moth like Cindy Garnett might have been momentarily drawn to Walloon. Little Cindy—whose mother had married her to the wealthiest of the Garnetts—had, perhaps, been a victim to one of those transient infatuations which sometimes seize upon idle young matrons and not infrequently bring them to wreckage. Nella knew that only one man had ever really stirred the mothlike emotions of Cindy—that man was Pelton Orrison, who, as a young bachelor, had sued for Cindy's hand and been rejected by the ambitious mother; Nella had heard the bitter-sweet tale from Pelt's own lips, and it had made her always compassionate of the little creature who had obeyed an avaricious mother, and afterwards toyed with impossible adventures.

Nella's reflections lingered on Cindy—whom she had not seen since the mix-up with Walloon. She recalled how prettily affrighted the blonde mite had appeared clinging to portieres that shielded her from the "skunk" who thought he had earned his hire in finding Nella Orrison in Walloon's rooms. Cindy must have wept a bucketful of tears that evening! Since then, had she put aside youthful peccadilloes and contented herself in the palatial jail up the Avenue, where her mother enjoyably presided over the retinue of Garnett servants?

An impulse to chat with Cindy Garnett and see how life was treating her made Nella rise, and dress leisurely for the street. It would be zesty reconnoitering to gossip for a half hour with the swift little friend who had unwittingly tumbled her into the divorce courts; it would be pleasurable as a journey back to familiar haunts.

She fastened her sables and picked up her muff with a feeling of actual anticipation.

II

THE weather was resplendent that day and Nella enjoyed her walk up the long thoroughfare. Many preened women and well-dressed men were on promenade; the throngs had the freshly tubbed look of a forenoon on the Avenue. Nella—with the exclusive taste of the Orrisons still clinging to her garments, the rapid grace of the Garnett crowd evident in her gait, and the impossibly broad joy of living unconsciously filched from Walloon shining from her glances—was a noticeable figure in the panorama of the far-famed street.

She took the sweep around the Park and approached the Sixties.

The pile of marble wherein Cindy's edified mother followed a gorgeous routine glistened dully in the high noon; Nella had a twinge of pity for the young atom of girlhood imprisoned by the multitudinous barred windows and wrought-iron doors!

She ascended the steps of the edifice with the feeling of going up to a sunless tower.

Cindy was at home to her erstwhile friend. She saw Nella in her boudoir, where she was in negligée taking her morning chocolate.

Her upward glance of greeting was one of fluttered surprise.

"Of all people—Nella Orrison!" she exclaimed.

Nella gave Cindy a kiss.

"How are you these days, my dear? You're looking well."

"Am I?" murmured Cindy—wistfully retaining the end of Nella's sable stole. "I'm feeling far from strong. However do you manage to keep such bloom?"

"My blooming spirits, I suppose," shrugged Nella, seating herself on a flowery lounge and throwing aside her furs.

Cindy rang for an extra chocolate cup.

"Wherever have you been keeping yourself in the last months, Nell? It always makes me fidgety to have a friend sink from the surface—one never knows at what point of the ocean they may reappear."

"Don't worry," philosophically. "If I strike the rocks I'll have tact enough to romp forever at the bottom of the sea."

"Oh, I didn't mean that!" protested Cindy. "I meant, you might be eying me from afar!"

She took the fragile, tall cup that her maid brought in and tilted the chocolate pitcher, watching the smooth beverage whip into the cup.

"You know, you possess rather far-seeing eyes, Nell," she added, pensively.

Nella tasted her chocolate.

"Few credit me with foresight, Cindy!"

"As if people at large ever credit us with anything," sighed young Mrs. Garnett. "What do they know of our impulses or our real characters? Why ever do we place any valuation at all on public opinion?"

Her misty blue eyes swam with un-

expected tears. She fingered her chocolate spoon in fitful abstraction.

Nella's brows came together. "Public opinion is ballast, my dear. Look at me for a terrific example. I didn't care a sandbag what was said of me."

She routed the coming frown with easy laughter.

"I know," shivered Cindy.

Her delicately pointed teeth clamped and released her lip.

"Though my impossible nature may merit some credit, after all," laughed Nella; "it once saved your pretty skin, eh?"

She added, with a shade of impulsive warmth,

"I trust, little one, that you haven't felt any further need of a fool fond enough of you to pry into your desperate minutes and rescue you from their consequences."

Her tone implied a query, a quixotic solicitude for this moth who had flown beyond the reach of Pelton Orrison.

Cindy regarded her in dismay. "Whatever do you mean by 'desperate minutes?'—

"Oh, with a catch of her breath, 'you're recalling the goosie I made of myself by masquerading as a stranded flapper and seeking assistance from Jim Walloon—I wanted so to find some sort of diversion in those days—I—did not mean to be really naughty. I was up to any wild trick that might distract me from Jack Garnett and Mamma. I didn't dream you'd follow me, Nell; and that a detective would follow you! I'd read of such things happening, husbands keeping a watch on their wives, but I didn't know that you were— If I'd had your courage, I'd have come out from behind the curtain and told the beast why you were there. But I'm a timid little thing. Why, Mamma would murder me in cold blood if I lost the Garnett money!"

She began to tremble.

"Nell," piteously, "I'm sorry if you've suffered because of me."

"My dear," replied Nella, putting aside the chocolate cup and assuming her favorite attitude—hands locked

about her shapely knees, "forget all about it, after you've answered me one question; did you imagine yourself in love with that big blunderer of Broadway—Jim Walloon? How could you, Cindy? He's such a farce!"

"I didn't," averred the white moth. "I'd met him only once, at a party given by those outlandish Madders. He looked as if he might prove interesting. In love with him? No."

A cloudy look crept into the blue of her eyes and her slight breast was shaken by a sigh.

"I'm in love with Jack Garnett and Mamma," lied young Mrs. Garnett.

Nella was quick to say, "Poor little Cindy! What a shame they didn't let you marry Pelt!"

Cindy's retort lacked breath. "Pelt?—Pelton Orrison? Whatever do you mean?"

"Why, Pelt told me ages ago of wanting you before he met me," explained Nella; "and I suppose you wanted Pelt before your mother met Jack Garnett, eh? Heigho, what a muddle all of it is! Such mismatings! Such mistakes! Such misunderstandings!"

Cindy was silent.

"I half wish," continued Nella, letting her humor to talk carry her on, "that so decent a man as Pelton hadn't misunderstood me. Often, Cindy, it rushes over me—horridly. If he'd been more like the average man, less honorable, nearer Walloon's type, the rush wouldn't hurt as it does. There are times, indeed, when I'm tempted to go to him and tell him the truth. And where would that leave his old idealization of you? What good would it do? Could we patch things up? I think not."

She leaned back on the lounge soberly eying a stream of sunlight along the floor of the boudoir.

She was conscious of Cindy's prolonged silence.

Turning her head, she saw that Cindy was crying, as only a small and blonde woman can cry—exquisitely and without sound.

"Why,—my dear!" expostulated Nella, jumping up.

She went to Cindy and put her arms about her.

With a movement childishly dejected, Cindy crumpled in the generous embrace.

"I wish I were dead," she wept. "Oh, I do wish so!"

Nella took out her handkerchief and patted the dampened cheeks. She sat Cindy up in the cushions of her chair as if she were not unlike a melting wax doll.

"Let's stop talking of the past, baby," she suggested. "All our surcharged agonies of two years! Your Mamma will be scolding me for giving you pink eyelids. Come, we'll chat less deeply."

She touched the fluting of Cindy's abbreviated sleeve. "What a charming negligée you're wearing—I haven't seen the pattern before. It's cut all in one piece isn't it? And these cloth-of-gold butterflies appliqued over it—they suit you to perfection."

Though Cindy stopped crying she shrank back into her cushions.

"Mamma always has butterflies on my lounging-ropes," she faltered at random, trying to regain her poise.

"I had a fancy once for lace couch-ropes," nodded Nella, making talk.

"Mamma ordered a dozen of these one-piece things." Cindy was afluff of moist chiffon and cloth-of-gold in the shadows of her chair. "All of them have gold butterflies."

She changed the topic by saying, apathetically,

"Is it true, Nell, that you're going about with Mr. Walloon?—Jack heard so at one of his clubs and brought the news home to Mamma. It made Mamma purse her mouth—you know the way she does. Is it true?"

"True as your butterflies," replied Nella, with heightened color.

She reached out a long arm for her sables.

"It seems so strange," commented Cindy, in a faint way. "I wonder what—Pelton thinks of it."

"I suppose it confirms the hireling's

evidence," smiled Nella, without much humor. "Pelton's restricted imagination could not concede the possibility of my not having met the co-respondent before the fatal night! On the rare occasions when my sense of justice ruffled up and I made half an attempt to explain away my seeming infidelity, he would simply hold up his hand in his cold manner, and say, 'Please Nella!'"

Cindy leaned forward and caught the end of the sable scarf.

"Make me a promise, Nell," breathlessly. "Promise me that you'll never, never tell Pelton Orrison why you were in Walloon's rooms. I'd die of shame!"

Cuddling the sable stole against her breast, she looked up at Nella with humid eyes.

"Don't blame me for anything I've done," she pleaded. "I do have my desperate minutes, and their consequences—!"

She added, timidly,

*"Why should little things be blamed?
Little things for flaws are famed;
Love, the winged and the wild,
Love was once a little child."*

Impulsively, Nella stooped and kissed the whispering mouth.

"I shall never tell good old Pelt," she promised.

Cindy released the stole with a grateful gesture.

"Good-bye, my dear," said Nella, affectionately. "Continue to love Jack Garnett and Mamma. Be the good little wife God made you to be. I do not know if we shall meet again—Mamma's pursing mouth, you understand."

"I'm sorry," smiled Cindy. Her head drooped. "Good-bye."

"Good-bye, Cindy." Going toward the door of the boudoir.

"Good-bye, Nell."

III

THE sun was not shining so clearly when Nella came out on the Avenue again. The throngs had the slightly

seared look that follows the progression of a Manhattan day. Not being in the mood for her dressmaker, the late wife of Pelton Orrison gave the rest of the afternoon to a walk through the wilderness of Central Park.

Her thoughts, for no tangible cause, reverted to the bed-post in the eastern wing of the Orrison residence—to the unforgotten lace negligée there. The lace tidbit seemed the pivot around which her mind had revolved all day. Had she gone far from it in her scene with Cindy, with its intimate trend and futile tears, and in her rejection of Walloon had not the lacy obstacle played its part? Her mood of self-communing warned her that before the close of the day she might telephone an Orrison housemaid and go through the usual bootless inquiry, that yielded her an equally bootless satisfaction!

In and out the weave of reflections concerning that shut-off eastern wing where she had honeymooned ran involuntary memories of Pelton Orrison; and, recalling a character she could not cease to admire, she regretted for the hundredth time the pride that had held her back from any clear defense of his accusations. With emotions hovering around Pelton, and around that quiet eastern wing, Nella half longed to live again within the shelter of his house. Of late she had been in the midst of so much clamor! The world was such a noisy place!

She was thinking this when, at length, she turned homeward. Sundown had brought with it a haze that might mean rain that night. She compared the vapors of the town with the mists in her own being, and she conceived a desire to clear-headedly view herself.

Was she still fond enough of Orrison to reject Walloon? That was the question befogging her. As the dark fell, there rushed over her a whim to argue out her question in no other place than the eastern wing of Pelt's residence—in the room where she hoped her lace negligée still hung.

A nonsensical whimsy! A freak of the heart!

In the early night, her footsteps turned across town, toward the exclusive section where she had lived with Pelton Orrison. She planned—if her headlong impulse had any plan—to enter his house by the side-spiral of steps that led directly to the eastern wing. She would bury her face in her wedding finery and thus take counsel with herself and learn just where she was going!

She walked rapidly, as one does when led on by memories.

Pelton Orrison's house was so like him!—she found herself frowning as she came to the corner-bulk of brown stone that brought a stately row to a finish. She could see the usual illumination in the front entrance of the residence, the lamp that the footman lit every evening at twilight. The spiral of steps on the side-street was dark.

Nella began the ascent to the eastern room. She noticed the lowering sky as she climbed, there would be no stars this evening, the town would soon be drowned in a purple haze.

She found the curious door of the eastern sleeping-chamber unlocked, and, with a foolishly pounding heart, turned the knob.

The room appeared just as she remembered it.

Through the creeping dusk, she placed each familiar object: there was the mirror with the double reflection, the rosewood furniture, the solid blue rug, the blue curtain-stuff, the frieze of plain blue. She stood by the door absorbing each dim outline.

Memory, poignant because of its youthfulness, welled up in her, swelled to an emotion nearly beautiful and flooded her consciousness with trivial recollections—she recalled Pelton's face in its tenderer moments and dwelt on each ecstasy she had fancied eternal. After awhile, she brought herself to look across the room toward the spot where he had hung the lace negligée.

The post was still decorated with a filmy garment!

Her hands clasped. She experienced a sense of unconfined pleasure.

Her negligée was still there!

In the forgetful town, the clamorous, strident town, there hung this fragile symbol of her fidelity.

She moved forward, with outflung hands.

The room was nearly dark.

Along the familiar length of the blue rug she went slowly, found the electric button on the wall and pressed it.

Each object of the place sprang into prominence under the roseate flow of light. Turning, she saw in the sudden illumination that the negligée hanging on the post was not of lace!

It was not hers!

The negligée was a one-piece garment appliqued with cloth-of-gold butterflies!

She stood as if frozen.

Cindy's butterflies—here!

She shrank back. Her hands had all but touched the garment. She had been on the verge of shrouding her face in it. She had come across town because of it, thinking of it as a symbol of fidelity. And it was not hers! It was appliqued with frail glistening butterflies.

Cindy's butterflies—*here!*

She was not inclined to make any outcry, or to feel any rending sense of revulsion. She was, rather, inclined toward a sinking sense of incredulity and the stinging shame that is sometimes aroused by a folly we have nothing to do with.

Guiltily, as if she had blundered upon the desperate moment of two souls, she plunged the room into darkness.

For a minute or two she clasped and unclasped her hands. But blood surged into her cheeks—she blushed for her girlish rhapsodies of a minute before and for the emotions that had led her to hang a thread of fidelity between herself and life! Through this spurt of burning self-derision, the revelation she had stumbled upon wrung her heart. Recalling Cindy's tearful wish for death, she pieced a swarm of butterfly words together and fashioned

from them a whole garment of folly

It grew completely dark except for the glimmer from the high windows!

Nella crossed the room toward the door—and heard footsteps coming from the spiral flight.

Running back into the room, she sought the deep shadows behind the double mirror. The footsteps, though familiar, did not belong to Pelton Carson.

Looking around the mirror, she smothered an exclamation in recognizing the bulky figure of Jim Walloon limned against the door of Orrison's eastern wing.

Her surprise kept her in the shadows.

Walloon entered the isolated chamber with a tread unaccustomed and uncomfortable. He did not know the room as Nella knew it. She could have shrieked when he jostled a chair and knocked into a wall-angle. She hung fascinated upon his movements.

She watched him feel his way along the rug, toward the bed-post!

With bated breath, she saw him find and pocket the butterfly negligée.

A paroxysm of something like laughter rose in her throat. She perceived what Walloon was doing. His way removing the "obstacle" between them was uncomplex—merely walking the steps she had told him of and pocketing the first silken garment at hand. She could have wept for her simple sophisticated lover as she sensed the flare of joyous victory in securing what he thought was a symbol of feminine faithfulness.

Walloon was almost at the door again when Nella stepped from the shadows of the mirror and called to him.

He retraced his steps—disregarding any obstacle in his way.

"Nella!" he said, fiercely. "Y here?"

"The same errand brought us here, Jim; the negligée on the bed-post."

She gave him her hand, to verify the truth.

Though he could not see her face distinctly, and though he had been

fooled by many fair hands, the touch of her fingers made him stammer,

"By joy, you care for me!"

He caught her by the elbows. "You wouldn't have come to get it if you hadn't cared!"

He stopped to look squarely into her eyes. "Isn't that so, Nella?"

"It may be, Jim." Her voice was hardly audible.

"You didn't want anything to hang between us—you wanted to clear the way as much as I did. You came, and I came; and, by joy, I got it first! It's mine now. And you're mine. Aren't you?"

Holding her by the elbow as if she were already his bride, he guided her along the rug to the door, and the circular flight of outside stairs.

On the sill he paused long enough to kiss her.

She allowed him a second of unalloyed triumph.

Then they descended the steps, seeing less of the sky as they neared the street.

Nella was at the bottom of the flight when she saw Pelton's car speed by and round the corner to the main entrance of the residence. The machine stopped smoothly. She watched her former husband go into his house and saw the entrance-light fall on his face

as he passed under it. Her own face was suddenly drained of color.

Wordless, she started along the by-street with her tacitly accepted suitor. It was beginning to rain, a saturating drizzle that promised to clear the atmosphere. The thoroughfares were dim mirrors for the lights of the town. "Jim," she said, as they crossed Broadway, "take me to dinner this evening—choose a rather noisy place."

She walked in step with him, looking ahead. They turned into the Avenue, shining with the rain, and traversed it together. In the few blocks of shimmering concrete, Nella passed several persons of the Orrison circle and one or two of the Cindy Garnett set—the young divorcée cut these acquaintances before they had a chance to bow coldly! She was acutely cognizant of the long, licking tongue of society as she walked up the Avenue with Jim Walloon.

In the drawing-room of her suite, she said to him.

"Give me the negligée, Jim; and strike a match over the fireplace."

Nella watched the gold butterflies shrivel in the destroying flames—she hoped, with all her heart, she might quickly forget that Cindy's Mamma always had butterflies on the moth's lounging-ropes!



CAPRICE

By Babette Deutsch

COME without a word now,
Nothing said.
Come without a vow
In your head.

Eyes that shout with laughter,
Sweet mouth dumb.
Still, or wild and wicked . . .
Come!

PERHAPS, LIKE MALONA . . .

By Lawrence Vail

CONRAD smiled at the day which he had planned. A cup of the blackest coffee, three of the darkest Spanish cigarettes; and then his pipe, his chair, and Stendhal. At noon boots, the least fair prospect of the morning. Across the city, across the river, along gay ragged streets to Sidonie's, there to be flattered by little snails—grey as the Seine, a *civet de lièvre*, and a chopine of Anjou wine. Red-haired, red-cheeked, red-eyed Sidonie—he could think of no woman more ugly and more wise—would tell him how she despised men and loved her lovers. After lunch he might compose a letter to himself—address it to a Marion or a Susan over seas.

He might pause a minute, pause an hour, closeted with the mystery of himself. But presently he would grow weary, a current of curiosity, impatience would enter through the door—the city's window. And Conrad would leave his table, leave Sidonie, leave himself, fling his brain and body into the turmoil of the streets, rub souls and shoulders with the mob, give all of him to chance.

He was smoking the second of the three Spanish cigarettes when a youth entered with a telegram.

Conrad was angry. The boy, the telegram, the telegraph office, the scribes and petty officials at their desks, the sender of the dispatch, in truth the entire fabric of society struck him as a conspiracy to spoil the choice pattern of his day. A flame was laughing in the grate.

"Give me the little blue paper," it seemed to murmur, "and I shall give you peace."

"You will give me curiosity," muttered Conrad.

"Yes, but I shall never satisfy it."

Conrad turned his back on the fire.

"Alas," he cried, "my eyes and fingers are like the eyes and fingers of other men. I am a man like any other man."

He was told in less than a dozen words that Malona was dying in a village of Touraine. She wished him to come to her immediately.

"Death is cruel," moaned Conrad, "why can't she, my darling, live forever?"

"Death is tactless," he thought as he drew on his boots "why can't she live until tomorrow?"

He felt irritated as he waited on the platform amid the stress and smoke and soot.

"Why," he thought, "are people so important when they travel? Why is that old woman so anxious about her valise? Doubtless it contains underwear: the porter has no interest in her underwear, I have no interest in her underwear. And that man in brown? Who cares whether he shall miss his train at Tours? How can it matter where he sleeps tonight? Does it matter whether he be alive or dead?"

A whistle blew. There was a din of coughs and petticoats, a cascade of messages, promises and farewells. A stout woman wept because she would not see her husband for ten days; a thin woman wept because she would see her husband before sunset.

"I do not weep," thought Conrad, "and I have cause to weep. Malona, my dear love, is dying. And with her

a part of me is dying—a part of me that shall never live again.”

The train was moving; Conrad was in the moving train.

“Even the train,” he muttered, “strives to contradict me. Each beat of time brings this train closer to Malona, each beat of time takes me further from her. Can she be dead already? Then why am I so calm? Is it that the part of me which belongs to Malona, which is Malona, is dead, too?”

Conrad turned to the window.

A low grey sky hung like a doom over the listless plain. The interval between land and sky was thick with rain.

“The sky is weeping,” murmured Conrad, “and the stars behind the sky, and the great spaces behind the stars. The wide green fields are weeping, and the brown earth beneath the grass, and the fierce womb of life beneath the earth. I alone am incapable of tears. And I alone have cause to weep.”

Opposite him, a thin woman with a black veil was reading a ragged paper volume. She clutched the book eagerly with her nervous fingers, with greater eagerness her eyes seemed to clutch each phrase, each word, as though to draw from them, through force of will, a pain that was buried in them. Conrad watched the tired panting of her breast. Each breath seemed to cut her, rasp her, like the blade of a blunt knife.

“I must write a book,” thought Conrad, “a long and melancholy book, which I shall read when I desire to feel sad. But perhaps I would only laugh, feel ridiculous, petty and absurd.”

He glanced dully at the ever passing land. Tall thin trees, shrouded in mists and tears, were running from him as though they were afraid.

“There is a book that I might write,” mused Conrad, “the saddest and the gayest of all books, the book of youth. In it I could tell my love and laughter, the hours in which I have lived and loved my life, the pleasures that have made me glad. I could tell the pain and glory I have found on the bosom of my mistress, when we had one life, one

blood, and not too many thoughts. And when I read it I would suffer, for I would know how much of me was dead.”

The train was moving, but Conrad was no longer in the moving train. He watched it roll out of the station, disappear with pomp of din and smoke around a bend of land. It seemed to be carrying with it the burden of his thoughts.

“The Hotel du Grand Monarque,” said a solemn man in black in the little village square, “is on the other side of town. You cross the river, walk up the hill till you reach the church, and then turn to the left. When you come to the shop of Monsieur Picot, watchmaker, you turn to the left again.”

Conrad thanked the man in black.

“Always to the left,” repeated the man, “to the left, and to the left again.”

Conrad reassured him. He would turn to the left, always to the left, till the end of streets and time. The villager bowed gravely: there was, however, a suspicion in his candid eye.

“You do not belong to the village,” he seemed to say, “I should not be surprised if there were no village you belonged to. You are of that race of vagabonds that have neither hearth nor father; you will never have a child. I tell you to turn to the left, every self-respecting man would tell you to turn to the left, yet you might through sheer conceit and lawlessness turn to the right. There is no telling what a man like you could do.”

A glad peace came into Conrad as he walked up the village street. A milkmaid, gay of cheek and tough of limb, clattered by in her wooden shoes, her pails swinging to the strong clear gait of her blood. A man in blue vaunted the quality of his fish that glistened in a square wooden cart. Two girls giggled, one boy whistled, a baby in a perambulator smiled at its toes. A lean old man, weak-kneed and bright of eye, leaned against a door, stroking the sunlight with his beard. A dog barked at a cat, the cat arched its back and hissed, the dog retreated, slowly, self-con-

sciously, trying to appear absentminded. The grey spire of a church rose into the sky like a prayer.

"How can one live in Paris?" Conrad said to himself. "I shall marry, have many children, and settle in the provinces. No, the provinces are too sweet and lovely for domestic quarrels. I shall leave my wife and family in Paris."

Malona had been dead for three hours when Conrad found her. The room was silent save for a fly buzzing near the ceiling and a curtain flapping at the open window. Her feet seemed at a long distance from her hands.

"She seems to have grown," thought Conrad.

He could think of nothing else.

An impatience seized him. He seemed to be waiting, waiting for something that would not come. He was waiting, waiting, for pain, and pain refused to come. It was as though all feeling were frozen within him and he suffered, in a dull painless way, at the frozen matter in him. And then suddenly he saw her hand.

He saw her fingers, her five fingers, very still, and white and pitiful. And as he looked something surged within him, a hardness broke, something hurt behind his eyes. He lifted her hands. He pressed her fingers. He let go of her hand; it fell limply upon the white sheets.

From all his being pain flooded on him. He remembered a pressure of her fingers one day in April when they had climbed a hill in Tuscany. He remembered snatches of her words, a look in her eyes, a tremor of her throat. She had swayed against him, they had both trembled; how they had loved each other! They had been young then, it had been the happy season. Next winter he had lost her, or had thought to lose her. She had taunted him, she had abandoned him. No, she had not left him, it was he who had driven her

away. If he had loved her as he loved her now, nothing could have taken Malona from him. If he had not loved her, then she could not have died. It was he—Conrad—who had killed her.

The train was due to leave at four thirty-two; at four o'clock Conrad was on his way to the station. Even now, when he loved her, he could not lose a train for her.

He turned to the right, and to the right again, passed the shop of Monsieur Picot, watchmaker, passed the church. A cat slid between his legs, causing him to break step and stumble. Two girls giggled, a boy whistled, a baby yelled. A milkmaid swung up the hill, heavy and ridiculous in her wooden shoes. How he loathed the village and the provinces! The air stifled him, the houses on either side of the narrow street gave him a sense of suffocation. Only in Paris could one live: there were people, there was noise, there was freedom. One was startled, contradicted, interrupted; there was no time to feel.

He found himself in his rooms at midnight, searching among his papers for a picture of Malona. He found a few formal invitations to dinner and a handkerchief with an M in the corner which might have belonged to Martha. There were pictures of other women: one of Martha, a grave brunette, another of a yellow-haired Sonia. They were nothing to him now. They lived somewhere in the city, surrounded by children, servants, and furniture.

Perhaps, like Malona, they would send for him when they were about to die. Would he love them at their last hours, after their last hours, as he now loved Malona? Would he suffer for them the anguish of having a part of him come to life, suffer, and then die? Conrad laughed irritably at himself. How did he know that he would not be the first to die?

LE PONT

By Charles Dornier

Le clair de lune tendre découpe en dentelures bleues les massifs des vergers, enfarine les pignons et miroite doucement, ça et là, au lisé de zinc d'un toit. La rivière coupe le village d'une coulée d'argent où se reflète l'image inverse des longs chalands amarrés.

A l'extrémité, là-bas, le pont, avec son tablier lumineux et ses arches d'ombre, semble une chaîne à grosses mailles tendue d'une rive à l'autre. Les auberges vomissent sur la rue des lueurs rouges et des cris. Sur la place, que l'église abrite de sa vieille penchée, tournent des lumières, des sons et des couples.

C'est un soir de frairie. Des chevaux de bois emportent, sous un ciel d'astres en clinquant, des enfants joyeux, des filles altières et des hommes à l'ivresse burlesque.

Autour des loteries foraines, la foule s'attarde, admirant les hautes roues numérotées et les boules de métal en lesquelles elle se reflète, minuscule et difforme.

Mais le plus grand nombre entoure d'une haie mouvante le bal de toile, adossé au café. Sur les planches mal jointes, dansent lourdement les gars et les filles du pays, auxquels se mêle une équipe de grands marinières, qui, sur les longs bateaux amarrés là-bas, emmènent par trains flottants, vers Paris, les bois du Nivernais et les houilles de la Loire. Les paysans ont, sur leur plus belle chemise, mis leur plus beau gilet; mais eux, les crânes bateliers, en costume de travail, se parent seulement de leur force souple et hardie, et remportent tous les succès.

Le mystère et la poésie de leur ex-

istence voyageuse attirent les filles, auxquelles ils parlent de merveilles lointaines, et dans leurs yeux profonds elles croient voir, sous les girandoles tournantes du bal, scintiller des cordons infinis de lumières, colliers de flamme des villes, astres inconnus d'autres cieux.

L'un d'eux surtout, brun, imberbe, mais couronné de longs cheveux bouclés, est le héros du jour. Au café, tout à l'heure, il chantait d'une voix chaude les romances des pays de soleil, et maintenant sa danse agile et gracieuse emporte en un vertige délicieux les puissantes filles des champs, dont cette étreinte noie la volonté et les regards.

Entre toutes, il choisit, entraîne et enveloppe la Jeannette, la plus avenante et la plus coquette des jeunes villageoises. Elle oublie, sur la poitrine de l'étranger, son promis, Pierre le bûcheron, qui, derrière le groupe sombre des vieilles femmes rumine sournoisement sa rancune jalouse.

Le couple bientôt se glisse hors du bal, et, par le jardin de l'auberge, gagne furtivement la ruelle. Dans la nuit tiède, des senteurs lourdes montent des plantes, et les ombres des branches se mêlent sur le chemin. Jeannette, au chuchotement enjôleur du marinier qui l'enlace, se laisse emmener vers le murmure de l'eau caressant la rive. Une péniche vide offre à leur émoi sensuel son refuge berceur. La cambuse profonde, avec sa litière de paille fraîche, leur est une douce couche nuptiale, et Jeannette, en sa pâmoison, voit, par le hublot du haut, tourner les étoiles comme un essaim d'abeilles autour du lys épanoui de la lune.

Mais soudain, dans le demi-sommeil languide qui suit la trop aiguë volupté, l'homme se soulève et tend tous ses sens éveillés dans la nuit. Le ruban de l'eau se déchire plus fort au flanc du bateau, et, vers l'avant, on perçoit un frôlement suspect. Il se lève et pousse un sourd juron, car il a vu les arbres de la rive, tout à l'heure parallèles, filer presque perpendiculaires au bateau. Suivi de sa compagne affolée, il se précipite sur le pont. Sur la rive déjà lointaine un homme gesticule et ricane. "Assassin!" crie la femme qui a reconnu Pierre, son promis. C'est lui qui a enlevé les gaffes, les crochets, les cordes et les chaînes, et poussé la péniche au courant, et

qui crie: "Je vais vous payer des draps de noce auxquels vous ne songiez pas!"

En effet, le bateau peu à peu s'est placé en travers du fleuve, et, d'un mouvement fatal, court se briser, de toute sa longue masse, contre la ligne proche du pont. Le groupe des amants, tragiquement noué, voit, grandissantes, les arches s'ouvrir comme les portes de la mort. Le courant, plus violent, happe l'énorme cercueil flottant. Un grand fracas de bois craquant claquant l'eau, et, dans la nuit, seul se profile le pont au tablier sombre et aux arches claires, pareil à une énorme mâchoire qui crache des débris épars dans l'écume.



ANECDOTE

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

ALL in a flash it came to her:
 He held the cards—the winning hand!
 And she had played without demur,
 Nor cared to understand.

Those were *his* orchids at her breast.
 That was *his* jewelled brooch she wore . . .
 Well, she would owe him for the rest—
 And Conscience keep the score!

But when the violins became
 Silent, and the last light went out,
 Strangely enough their little game
 Was even then in doubt.

And there are some who say that he
 Cheated without a qualm that night,
 And wiser ones who hint that she
 Had rather hoped he might.



THE NATIONAL HUMOUR

By George Jean Nathan

WERE I asked by a foreigner to point out the most searchingly exact and typical—if true enough not always the best—specimens of the American national humour, I should direct the inquisitor to the legend post-cards on sale for a penny apiece in corner cigar stores throughout the country. Nowhere else, I conclude after considerable deliberation, is the unique and characteristic humour of the United States so clearly presented, so clearly illustrated, so clearly summarized. Search the libraries of America from end to end and one will be at pains to find a shrewder and better anthology than is revealed upon these mailing-cards. I quote a few more or less familiar examples, selected at random:

1. "What! You never kissed any girl before? Then you beat it! You are not gonna practise on me."
2. "After talking with some people, without mentioning any names, I wonder at the high price of ivory."
3. "Don't criticize the butter—yer may be old yerself some day."
4. "I'm somewhat of a liar myself—but go on with your story; I'm listening."
5. "I'm so unlucky that if it was raining soup I'd be right there with a fork."
6. "Some men will do more for a cheap cigar than they will for a dollar."
7. "Don't spit. Remember the Johnstown Flood!"
8. "A tea-kettle sings when it's full of water. But who the hell wants to be a tea-kettle?"
9. "Life is one damn thing after another. Love is two damn things after each other."
10. "I've met both your gentlemen friends, and I don't know which one I like the worst."
11. "Kiss me quick, kid; I'm going to eat onions."
12. "If you have nothing to do, don't do it here."

13. "Come in without knocking. Go out the same way."
14. "If you spit on the floor at home, spit on the floor here. We want you to feel at home."
15. "Take things easy. You can always go to jail."
16. "Don't swear while here. Not that we care a damn, but it sounds like hell to strangers."
17. "If every man was as true to his country as he is to his wife, God save the U. S. A."
18. "You can't fool nature. That's why so many prohibitionists have red noses."
19. "The peacock is a beautiful bird, but it takes the stork to deliver the goods."
20. "Don't say mean things to your mother-in-law. . . . Kick her in the slats."
21. "What! *You* here again? Another half-hour gone to hell!"
22. "Half the world is nutty—the rest are squirrels."
23. "I ain't got nothing to live for; nobody loves me but the dog, and he's got fleas."
24. "A baby doesn't know much, but father can't wear mother's nightgown and fool it when it's hungry."
25. "Calves may come and cows may go, but the bull goes on forever."
26. "I love my patent leather, but oh you undressed kid!"
27. "I may be no chicken, but I'm game."
28. "Any fool can go to bed, but getting up takes a man!"
29. "Our eyes have met, our lips not yet, but oh you kid, I'll get you yet."
30. "An Irishman dies every time they're short an angel in Heaven."

Not a tony, an elegant, humour perhaps—but nevertheless a humour sharply typical of the present day American people: as typical in its way as is the humour of *Le Rire*, Maillol and Rip of the French, the humour of Seymour Hicks, *Tit-Bits* and the New Cross Empire of the British, or the humour of Busch, the side-street Tingel-Tangel and Georg Okonkowski of the German.

The national humour of America, like that of any other nation save Spain and possibly France, is in the main its lowest and most vulgar humour. Thus, the satirical humour of George Ade—the finest American humour of our time—is no more accurately the weather-cock of the American national chuckle than the high satirical humour of Anatole France is the divining-rod of the French, or the striking satirical humour of Ludwig Thoma that of the German, or the smart satirical humour of Max Beerbohm that of the British.

The national humour is obviously enough the humour not of the few, but of the mass—the plurality humour. And thus the humour most typical of the American people is the humour of the beer saloon, the scenic railway pleasure park, the county fair, the day coach smoking car, the street-corner, the chowder club picnic, the political rally, the baseball bleachers. The humour of any nation is the humour of its leading bartender. The humour of England is assuredly typified vastly less by the reply of a W. S. Gilbert to the question of what he thought of Dickens—"He was, if you understand me, a gentish person"—than by some such punning allusion of Arthur Wimperis as General Haig and Haig or Admiral Jellicoe. The humour of Germany is not of the stuff of Bismarck's reply when they asked him how he would settle the Irish problem—"I would have the Irish and the Dutch exchange countries: the Dutch would make a garden of Ireland, and in a year or so the Irish would begin neglecting the dikes"—but of the stuff of some such music-hall "Jupplala" lyric whence was derived the American "My wife's gone to the country, hooray, hooray!" And the national humour of France, though probably of a suaver quality than that of the other nations here considered, since France, after all, is metropolitan Paris and metropolitan Paris France, is measurably less the gorgeous humour of "The Revolt of the Angels" than that of the well-known comic boulevard picture with the appended inscription,

"Is this Monsieur Calhot that I have the pleasure of addressing?"

In England and on the Continent, the characteristic humour of a nation is the humour of its music-halls. The humour of the Alhambra, the Victoria Palace and the Camberwell Empire is as certain a thermometer of British humour as that of the Folies-Bergère, the Olympia, the Bobino and the Gaité-Montparnasse is a thermometer of the French, and that of the Wintergarten, the Fledermaus cabaret platform and the Nollendorffplatz Theater of the German. But the representative humour of the American people is, I believe, the humour of the cheap vaudevilles and the burlesque show. It is this humour that the post-cards which I have described reflect: for in the cheap vaudevilles and the burlesque shows one finds, indeed, this humour's provenience.

The humour of the burlesque show is a humour original with the burlesque show: it is an even more original humour than that of the cheap vaudevilles which is often a mere slight polishing up of the burlesque humour or a mere roughening and toughening up of the already thrice distilled Broadway musical comedy humour. And this burlesque humour therefore doubtless places a more accurate finger upon the national pulse. The loudest and most popular laughter in the American theaters of today is provoked by humour that has been graduated from burlesque. The leading comedians of a dozen or more shows of uniformly high prosperity throughout the country have come to the more august stage from burlesque, and have brought their wheezes with them. The exceptionally popular humour of Irvin Cobb is substantially the humour of the burlesque show, somewhat refined for the purposes of general distribution in a periodical that rolls a canny eye at the papa and his housewife. The most popular *mot* negotiated by President Wilson on his speech route of 1918, the joke about making the world safe for the democratic party, originated with the comedian in Charlie Baker's "Gay Morning

Glories" show. Helen Green's admirable actors' boarding-house and telephone girls' humour—some of the very best native humour an American has set upon paper—was in essence the purest burlesque show humour.

The satiric humour of George Ade though, as observed, probably the best American humour since the time of Twain, is generically less an American than a British humour. On the surface it is as American as a catcher's mit; its general form and style are as thoroughly American as Stein-Bloch clothes; but in its amazingly sharp satire it is British. Ade's training and upbringing, contrary to the general notion, were—I understand from a source that seems thoroughly reliable—less along banks of the Wabash lines than along banks of the Thames lines. (His father, so I hear, was of English stock and stubbornly read no other newspaper than the London *Telegraph*, for which he regularly subscribed.) The fine English satiric note in the son's writings may thus be explained. Whatever the facts, the one fact remains that the humour of George Ade is intrinsically no more a symptom of the national humour than the vastly less fine but partly satiric writing of Charles Hoyt was, in his day, intrinsically a symptom of the national humour. The present-day American mass humour is not the sly humour of Ade, but the somewhat less recherché humour of Billy Watson ("baggy comedian's clothes, toothpick in his mouth, red nose, cuffs tied with ribbons, hatchet in his hip pocket," so Arthur Ruhl describes him in that droll and excellent essay)—of Billy Watson and his venerable and deathless "Krausmeyer's Alley." Just as the twenty-year-ago sly American humour of Hoyt was less the national humour of its day than the somewhat less recherché humour of this selfsame Watson and this selfsame "Krausmeyer's Alley." (A nation's humour is in general as unchanging as a nation's flag—a few more stars, or a few more asterisks, perhaps, but Watson's current immensely popular addendum to "Krausmeyer's Alley,"

"A Gay Old Boy," is nothing other than Harry Montague's famous "My Uncle" of a quarter of a century ago, the lucrative and nationally applauded standby of Waldron's old Trocadero Burlesquers.)

The American national humour is not the derisory humour of the Twains and the Ades, but the burlesque humour of the Petroleum V. Nasby's and the Irvin Cobbs. The humour of Ring Lardner comes nearer the national pulse than the humour of Montague Glass, say, yet both these humours are intrinsically of too fine and subtle a left-handed quality, too sharp and incisive a power of characterization—especially the humour of the latter—to bring them into a plurality of popularity. The national humour is the low, broad, easy, vulgar humour that appeals alike to the Elk and the member of the Union Club, the motorman and the owner of a Rolls-Royce, the congressman and the chiropodist, the Y. M. C. A. superintendent and the brothel keeper, the artist and the shoe clerk: the humour that tickles alike the ribs of ignoramus and intellectual, of rich and poor, of rowdy and genteel, of black, white and tan. And where other than in burlesque do we find this humour in America?

Whether spoken humour or physical humour, this burlesque humour—regularly graduated to the more legitimate popular stage, to the popular magazines, to the popular songs and books and moving pictures, and so given a thorough national circulation—is more often than any other form of American humour successful in amusing the generality of the American people. Thus, for one American who will laugh at some such delicate mockery of Clyde Fitch's as "Men are always hard on another man whom women like," ten thousand will laugh at some such burlesque show fancy as Krausmeyer's injunction to Grogan to take his feet off the table "and give the Limburger a chance." And for every American, rich or poor, black or white, Christian or Quartermaster, who will be found to

laugh at some such literary drollery as Christopher Morley's account of the lecturer on Tennyson who by error got into a home for female inebriates, there will be found thirty thousand who will laugh at some such burlesque drollery as Al Reeves' account of his adventures in urging the Salvation Army saver of fallen women to save him two blondes and a brunette for Saturday night.

The true fundamental national humour of America—as of any other nation—rests, of course, in its dirty story. The loose and ribald anecdote of the Irishman and the minister's daughter, of what was seen through the opera-glass from the veranda of the Hebrew golf club, of the widow and the college boy, of the girl who went to the masked ball as a certain playing card, and the like, constitute the N toward which the national popular humour compass needle constantly and unswervingly directs itself. And it is because the burlesque show humour more closely and brazenly than any other public form of American humour approaches to this shall we say deplorable index, that it vouchsafes the most accurate public picture of the American national humour. This burlesque humour, further, is of typical American accent and expression, as the burlesque show itself is a typical American product: one will not find the like of it anywhere in the world. And this is why the alien investigator, would he know the best available criterion of the American scherzo, would rightly and most appropriately be directed to a study of that form of American public entertainment whose humour most intimately and unabashedly dances the bump-polka with what is the actual national humour.

The humour of the burlesque show—the genuine, full-blown and unaffected burlesque show of Fourteenth Street, not the hybrid thing manicured by the so-called burlesque wheel for the uptown Columbia Theater of Broadway—this humour is as representatively and intrinsically American, in all the fine bloom of its vulgarity, as the humour of the comic valentine, the pie cinema

or the bush league bleachers. Its essence is the essence of the nationally most popular comic cartoons as, for example, the "Boobs," "Simps," "Foolish Questions," "No Brains" and "Mike and Ike" of Goldberg, the Hallroom Boys of McGill, the Mutt and Jeff of Bud Fisher, the "Bringing Up Father" of George McManus, the "Abie the Agent" of Hershfield—and the Yellow Kid of Outcault, and the Katzenjammer Kids, and the various celebrated comic strips of the yesterdays. For one American who laughs at the pungent, satiric drawings of Webster or Hill or McCutcheon, there are ten thousand who laugh at the low burlesque stage sketches of Tad, of Opper, and of T. E. Powers.

Puck was successful only so long as it stuck to the barber-shop level: the day it attempted a more elevated form of wit the office boy began figuring how much the editor's spittoon would go for at the auction sale. *Life* sticks sagaciously to mother-in-law and Little Willie jokes and so keeps alive. *Judge* sticks to yokel limericks about the man who lived in Siam and pictures of dogs with cans tied to their tails and thus keeps its head above water. The United States has not one humorous periodical of one-half the quality of the British *Punch*, or one-tenth the quality of the French *Vie Parisienne*, the Russian *Loukomorye* and *Novi Satirikon* and *Boudilnik*, or the German *Simplicissimus*. The American comic paper reflects the highest popular level of the American taste in humour as exactly as such a periodical as the *Saturday Evening Post*, with its two million circulation and five million readers, reflects the highest popular level of the American taste in philosophy and æsthetics.

As, theatrically, "Krausmeyer's Alley" may be accepted as a typical example of the American humour, so may "La Cocotte Bleue," the Cluny Theater riot, be accepted as an emblem of the French humour, and "A Little Bit of Fluff," the dismal American failure, as an emblem of the British, and an eternally popular Laufs and Kraatz collaboration

as an emblem of the German. The American humour, more than the British, or French, or even German, is a slapstick and seltzer siphon humour. It is the humour of "Dere Mable," of "Speaking of Operations," of K. C. B., of comedians speaking into telephones and receiving faces full of flour, of William F. Kirk, and of Barney Gerard kicking Rose Sydell in the seat of her tights. It is the humour of the Silk Hat Harry cartoons, of such songs as "How're We Gonna Keep The Boys On The Farm After They Been To Gay Paree?", of postcards bearing the inscription "Say, bo, get me! You're bug-house," of Louis Robie and the bass drum and ratchet and suggestively torn strip of muslin. It is, in brief, less the humour of the ironic Harry Leon Wilson, or of the observant Kin Hubbard, or of the J. L. Morgan of the shrewd club lampoons, or of the F. P. Adams of parody classic verse, or of the quaintly philosophical E. W. Howe, or of the museful Clare Briggs, than the humour of the Yonkers *Statesman*, "Bugs" Baer, Dinkelspiel, the Charlie Chaplin inserts, Joe Oppenheimer's "Broadway Belles," Roy L. McCardell, Irvin Cobb, Bert Leslie, and the story about the cigar drummer and the blonde.

II

OF the numerous delusions that enwrap the theater, not the least amusing is the hypothesis that the summer season is suited vastly better to music shows than to drama because the former, in warm uncomfortable weather, place considerably less strain upon the attention of the spectator than the latter. The truth, of course, despite its regrettable air of flippancy, is quite the opposite. A music show like "The Follies," say, with its seventy or eighty comely girls, with its every fifteen-minute change of multicoloured costume and brilliant scenery, and with its quickly shifting panorama of dance, tune and spectacle, invites the attention with a tenfold more close alertness than a drama like St. John Ervine's "John Ferguson," for instance, with its seven

or eight characters, its very slow action, its leisurely development of thesis.

The managerial assumption that the music show provides the better form of hot weather entertainment because it calls for a lesser sense-organic agility on the part of the spectator than does the dramatic show vouchsafes us a not inaccurate measure of the peculiarly bogus managerial metaphysic. Placing the cart before the horse with his accustomed perspicacity, the manager argues from the success of the music show in hot weather—and from the reciprocal failure of drama in the same weather—that the music show is successful because it appeals to the spectator's indolent hot weather mood, when the fact is that the music show appeals to the spectator in hot weather—as the drama does not—purely and simply because in hot weather the average man is of twice as active a disposition and of twice as alert a nature as in cold weather, and because the music show thus satisfies his doubly acute senses.

In the summer months the average man who in the winter months hugs the radiator and the easy chair is fond of exerting himself. The activity he abjures in the cold season he adopts with a furious suddenness and enthusiasm in the warm season. Though he may be anything but athletic, the warm weather sees him golfing, walking, swimming, bathing in the surf, playing tennis, gardening, climbing hills and mountains, hurrying to and from railroad stations, fishing, commuting twice a day, working like a dog cooking his own meals and washing dishes in some sort of "camp," going on long bucolic hikes, spending weeks stalking the mythical bear in the Maine woods, rowing his arms lame at Lake Mahopac, falling out of canoes into the Hudson River or pitching hay for diversion in Westchester county. The very mention of such exotic didoes would make him grunt a sour grunt during the winter; but, come summer with its wilting heat, and he becomes abruptly and surprisingly as active as a cootie.

It is this grotesque and wayward hot weather zeal that brings him to the desire for a more lively form of theatrical entertainment than slow-paced drama. When the warm weather comes, his peculiarly restless nature wants action, change, something to rivet the attention, to provoke the emotions and the senses, to hold the eye. And the music show serves this end. He strains his too long inert body by day and, suddenly avid of life, he wishes to balance the strain by a hard pull at his other faculties by night. And if he is not of the sort that relishes the physical strain of sport, he naturally relishes doubly, and wants doubly, the equivalent and compensatory emotional strain provided by the theater. Drama would rest him and cause him to relax, and he doesn't want rest or relaxation. He wants to have a smashing colour, a dazzling parade, a ceaseless movement, lithographed upon the combined bichromated gelatin and albumen of his nervous and vigilant brain. He wants, not an inert, passive and too easily assimilated depiction of the tragic psychoneurological phenomena underlying filial and maternal love as set forth in some such drama as Hervieu's "Passing of the Torch," but the active, absorbing and every-moment intriguing and rivetting kaleidoscope of bewildering motion.

The problem is a simple one in practical psychology, familiar to every Harvard sophomore. It is fully explained by Wundt, Külpe and James in their respective writings on the nature and forms of attention, and by Ribot ("Psychologie de l'Attention"), A. J. Hamlin in the *American Journal of Psychology*, Flournoy ("L'Année Psychologique"), and the very sagacious Exner. . . . This, therefore, the reason why "The Follies" is inevitably twenty times as prosperous a hot weather show as would be the best drama Pinero ever wrote.

III

For the dramatist, the marionette surpasses the living actor in the same way that, for the composer, the violin

surpasses the living singer. For all the wood out of which the marionette, like the violin, is fashioned, that wood contains in each instance the potential voice of the thousand and one inspirations of the creative artist. Unlike flesh and blood and the whims and idiosyncrasies and contumacies that go more or less inevitably with flesh and blood, it serves the creative artist with all the obedience and docility of his pen, with all the expository force of the lead that is in cold type. The critic of the marionette is the critic who believes that the human voice of Schumann-Heink is capable of bringing as great a glory to the "Heidenröslein" of Schubert as the wooden voice of Antonio Stradivari, or that the visible nose, Adam's apple and Chianti-bottle figure of Mr. Robert B. Mantell constitute a grander and more beautiful funnel for the majestic verse of Shakespeare than the shrewdly negotiated combination of a trained and mellifluous larynx in the wings and a visible wooden figure finely carved by the painstaking hand of an artist of Bologna.

The "Scheherazade" of the Russian ballet, the richest flower of pantomime and in its silence as vibrantly dramatic as the most strepitantly voiced drama, is in essence drama expounded by marionettes. The "Voice in the Wilderness," the off-stage voice of God, in the dramatic presentation of the Biblical "Book of Job," contributes at once the most effective and dramatic note of the play. Is, then, the theory of the marionette drama—intrinsically a combination of these twain—so absurd as some contend? . . . What living, speaking actor could be half so effective, half so revelatory, half so eloquent as Pinero's little marionette that gayly dances down the curtain to the second act of "A Wife Without a Smile"? What living, speaking actress could conjure up for the imagination the vision of a Jenny Mere as that vision might be conjured up by a delicate waxen doll responding to the golden, always-sixteen off-stage voice of a shrivelled Bernhardt of sixty?

If there are certain plays that, in good truth, can not perhaps be so electrically played by marionettes as by living actors—plays of sex emotionalism, for instance—there are no less certain plays that can not be so electrically played by living actors as by marionettes. The so-called drama of ideas, for example, is essentially and properly a marionette drama: the living actor not only contributes nothing to it; he actually by his presence detracts from it. Lucien Guitry as Pasteur in the play of that name is less Pasteur than the familiar Lucien Guitry playing Chantecler in a Prince Albert. It thus becomes necessary for the proper effect of the play that the spectator, in Coleridge's phrase, strain to support the illusion not by judging Guitry to be Pasteur, but by remitting the judgment that Guitry is not Pasteur. This "temporary half-faith supported by the spectator's voluntary contribution," this mental ruse and imaginative tug—this a marionette in the rôle of Pasteur would not call for since (1) the role of Pasteur as written by the younger Guitry is primarily a mere spigot for the projection of scientific ideas and contentions, since (2) a living interpreter of the role, however able, by virtue of his familiar and largely inalienable aspect and comportment serves as a somewhat grotesque sieve, and since (3), therefore, the marionette, being obviously a marionette, would rid the spectator of the devastating sieve consciousness and, interposing no alien physiological element and call for temporary half-faith, would

bring the spectator without ado into direct contact with the aforesaid scientific ideas and contentions. The difference, somewhat less gaseously expressed, is the difference between watching August Fraemcke excite the F minor concerto of Chopin on a Steinway and listening to the ghost of Paderewski perform the same composition on a Welte-Mignon.

Well, well, I probably exaggerate. Nor do I pretend that I am myself yet convinced. But, perusing the anti-marionette logic of the mummer worshippers, my doubts and hesitations are somewhat moderated. If there is much to be said on the one side, there is much also to be said on the other.

IV

OF the summer shows I have waited upon, Mr. Ziegfeld's "Follies" is, as usual, the most beautifully devised: a truly artistic organization of girl, movement, tune and colour. Search the music show stage of Europe from the Strand to the Ring and you will find nothing so richly and effectively arranged. For the rest, George White's "Scandals of 1919" is a vaudeville actor's idea of satire; "A Lonely Romeo" is Lew Fields and a corps of very able leg-lifters handicapped in the first instance by a babbling libretto and in the second by the faces God gave them; and "La La Lucille" is possessed of an agile front line and a comical book by Frederick Jackson drolly delivered by John Hazzard. I'll report on the others anon.



NOVELS, CHIEFLY BAD

By H. L. Mencken



THE stream of popular fiction, dammed up for two happy years by the war, now comes roaring down the heights of Parnassus like an Alpine brook in the Spring thaws. I can remember no Summer which saw more new novels, imported and domestic—or worse ones. The publishers have emptied their warehouses, cellars and morgues of manuscripts, some of them gone stale in storage, nearly all of them intrinsically bad, and now the stacks in the department-stores reach half way to the ceiling. I doubt that any decent fiction has been written in the United States since April 6, 1917, save perhaps a few short stories. The alarums and hysterias of the time simply flabbergasted the native Balzacs and Hall Caines, and a good many of them frankly gave it up, and so turned to press-agenting for one or other of the infinite horde of war-time movements, drives, spy hunts, charities, uplifters, statesmen, munitions contractors, social pushers and Wall Street patriots. Those that remained faithful to their lofty art, essaying war fiction to fit the journalism of the time, achieved only a mass of balderdash so idiotic that the contemplation of it affects one like a sniff of senile Camembert. In no other country, I believe, was the average of war writing so low. The war dramas, without a single exception, were garbage. The war poetry, save for a few pieces by Carl Sandburg, was puerile guff. The war novels were of the general rank of the boob-bumpers of Rex Beach. The war polemics, when they were actually native, were superficial

and ignorant. And the war journalism, in the overwhelming main, was maudlin, extravagant and dishonest. A distressing spectacle, in all conscience. Nothing even remotely approaching Barbusse's "Le Feu" or Latzko's "Men in War" was produced, despite the fact that, in sheer bulk, the American output probably equalled that of all other countries taken together. Nor was there any poetry comparable to the sonnets of Rupert Brooke, or to the "Meiner Mutter Haus" of Hanns Heinz Ewers, or to the raucous stanzas of Siegfried Sassoon, or even to the overestimated rondeau of John McCrae. The itch to write was there and the audience was there, eager and agape, but what it got, as literature, was almost *nil*.

Now that the thing is over, the disparity between domestic goods and foreign goods grows even more marked. I go through a stack of American war novels, all printed since the armistice and many of them written since then, and all I can find is flatulent and blowsy melodrama—the old, old rumbledumble about spying Huns, stolen papers, wounded lieutenants and beautiful heroines. Some of them substitute Bolsheviks for spies; otherwise they are all alike, and all sickeningly bad. Then I turn to a much smaller stack of new English novels, and at once I unearth "Blind Alley," by W. L. George (*Little Brown*), a well-designed, thoughtful and penetrating piece of work, with intelligible ideas in it and real people—in brief, a story that not only affords entertainment of a civilized quality, but also offers its mite to an understanding of the massive and often appalling psychology of the conflict. This George,

I daresay, was as hideously beset by the excitements and distractions of the time as any of the novelists of America. He lived nearer the heart of the war; he felt its actual pressure; his very life was frequently at stake. And yet, for all that devastating ding-donging, he managed to keep his head, to see things clearly, to remain the contemplative artist. His book, by that fact alone, rises immeasurably above the general level of war blather. It is sane, careful, reflective, illuminating. By no means a work of the first class, and certainly not to be mentioned in the same breath with his "The Making of an Englishman," it is yet an agreeable proof of the fact that, in England at least, the fine arts may survive the war.

In plan it is quite simple. What George tries to set forth is not the conventional heroics of the struggle, but the reactions of a small group of English folks of the upper middle class to its titanic battering of the emotions. The center of the group is Sir Hugh Oakley, J.P., a country gentleman of fifty-odd, and the other members of it are his wife, aged forty-five or so; his two daughters, Monica and Sylvia, and his son, Stephen. Of story, in the conventional sense, there is next to nothing. The main action is concerned solely with the conflict within the soul of Sir Hugh—his aristocratic revolt against the rising vulgarization of the national spirit, the growth of bombast and imbecility, the gradual abandonment of all reason and restraint, the reduction of the whole thing to a gospel-tent level. Against all this he sets himself, at first patiently and then with increasing truculence: he is hot for victory, but he is afraid of a victory that will cost the nation its self-respect. The inevitable penalty falls upon him. First he is accused of being a faint heart, then he is accused of conniving at pacifism, and then he is accused flatly of favoring the enemy. In the last days, made desperate and despairing, he seizes a gun, gets himself into the French Foreign Legion, and has a grotesque and ill-starred moment in the field. Peace

at last! But scarcely for Sir Hugh. He sees fresh clouds roll up, a revival of all the things he fought against, a new hysteria. A light shines from America, but before he can hail it it goes out. He passes from the scene in great travail and wonderment.

So much for the main outline. In detail the story presents many small and excellent studies of the effects of the war upon individuals. Lady Oakley, set afire by the newspapers, becomes a sort of female Kipling, demanding impossible sacrifices, hurling objurgations at the foe, unearthing plots on all sides. Young Stephen, turned out of the army with one leg gone, sinks into a sort of pathological hopelessness, a permanent state of shell shock, and is concerned only with the reviling of ideals and sacrifices. As for the two girls, what they suffer is the gradual breakdown of their normal instincts, their peace-time inhibitions. Monica carries on a surreptitious affair with the manager of an explosives factory, and is saved at the brink only by his renascent prudence. Sylvia, first marrying a soldier out of hand, is made a widow in a few months, takes to general amorous practise among the military, gets herself involved in a nasty scandal, and finally manages to reach the altar a second time. The general effect is that of lawlessness, rebellion, demoralization. Each does things that would have been inconceivable in the old days—openly, callously, defiantly. The ancient standards are overturned. A new world is in the making, and while it is making there is chaos. . . .

That chaos reflects itself in the book. George himself is a bit befuddled. He doesn't quite know what to make of it. But though the story thus fails as interpretation, it is excellent as representation. One gets out of it a sense of profound honesty; it is free from all the customary short cuts and easy assumptions. Imperfect as it is and unpleasant as it is, it is the best novel of the war that England has so far produced.

II

THE native war novels, as I say, are all balderdash. I spare you their names: you will find them in any department-store. But the early Summer brings at least three home-made books that are of excellent merit. One of them is Theodore Dreiser's "Twelve Men" (*Boni-Liveright*), another is "Civilization," by Ellen N. La Motte (*Doran*), and the third is "Winesburg, Ohio," by Sherwood Anderson (*Huebsch*). Of these the most original and remarkable is the Anderson book, a collection of short stories of a new order, including at least half a dozen of a very striking quality. This Anderson is a man of whom a great deal will be heard hereafter. Along with Willa Sibert Cather, James Branch Cabell and a few others, he belongs to a small group that has somehow emancipated itself from the prevailing imitativeness and banality of the national letters and is moving steadily toward work that will do honor to the country. His first novel, "Windy McPherson's Son," printed in 1916, had plenty of faults, but there were so many compensating merits that it stood out clearly above the general run of the fiction of its year. Then came "Marching Men," another defective but extremely interesting novel, and then a book of dithyrambs, "Mid-American Chants." But these things, for all their brilliant moments, did not adequately represent Anderson. The national vice of ethical purpose corrupted them; they were burdened with *Tendenz*. Now, in "Winesburg, Ohio," he throws off that handicap. What remains is pure representation—and it is representation so vivid, so full of insight, so shinningly life-like and glowing, that the book is lifted into a category all its own. Nothing quite like it has ever been done in America. It is a book that, at one stroke, turns depression into enthusiasm.

In form, it is a collection of short stories, with common characters welding them into a continued picture of life in a small inland town. But what short stories! Compare them to the popular

trade goods of the Gouverneur Morris and Julian Streets, or even to the more pretentious work of the Alice Browns and Katharine Fullerton Geroulds. It is the difference between music by a Chaminade and music by a Brahms. Into his brief pages Anderson not only gets brilliant images of men and women who walk in all the colors of reality; he also gets a profound sense of the obscure, inner drama of their lives. Consider, for example, the four-part story called "Godliness." It is fiction for half a page, but after that it seems indubitable fact—fact that is searching and ferret-like—fact infinitely stealthy and persuasive—the sort of fact that suddenly changes a stolid, inscrutable Captain MacWhirr into a moving symbol of man in his struggle with the fates. And then turn to "Respectability," and to "The Strength of God," and to "Adventure," and to "The Teacher." Here one gets all the joy that goes with the discovery of something quite new under the sun—a new order of short story, half tale and half psychological anatomizing, and vastly better than all the kinds that have gone before. Here is the goal that "The Spoon River Anthology" aimed at, and missed by half a mile. Allow everything to the imperfection of the form and everything to the author's occasional failure to rise to it: what remains is a truly extraordinary book, by a man of such palpably unusual talent that it seems almost an impertinence to welcome him.

The Dreiser volume is not labeled fiction, but fact; it purports to be a series of twelve character studies of real men and some of them are easily recognizable—for example, Muldoon the trainer, the author's brother Paul, Harris Merton Lyon, and W. Louis Sontag. But Dreiser gets the iridescence of his imaginings into all of these pictures; they are free fantasies upon set themes and full of the familiar Dreiserian asides, episodes and epistemological speculations. The book, in a way, stands for a return to C major. The vapid ponderosity of "The 'Genius'" is gone.

there is no torturing of theory, no befogment by half-baked ideas, above all, no hint of moral purpose, pro or con. Instead there is the clear, straightforward representation of "Sister Carrie" and "The Titan"—in brief, a revival of the Dreiser who, after a dozen years of battering, still remains, in all essentials, the best literary artist we can show to-day. The thing, as I say, is uncorrupted by purpose. It projects human existence as the most brilliant of spectacles, thrilling, amazing, often downright appalling, but never hortatory, never a moral tale. The workmanship, as always, is sometimes distressingly crude. There are phrases that torture the ear. There are words abominably misused. But what emerges, at the end, is nevertheless a work that is sound, original and engrossing. It is solidly organized. It has a rough sort of grace. It conveys its ideas massively and surely. It is a book that will interest you immensely.

Naturally enough, the schoolmarms, male and female, who carry on the anti-Dreiser crusade have had at it with their ferrules. The usual accusation of these pedagogues is that Dreiser is a naughty fellow, and his characters all mammals. This time, in the absence of the slightest excuse for that charge, they bring forward various other complaints. The reviewer of the New York *Times* devotes two-thirds of a column to denouncing the book and the author as worthless, and then, with rare humor, gives over the very next column to praising the "skill in the use of incident" and "mastery of the mechanics of novel writing" of Robert W. Chambers! It is almost unimaginable, but it is nevertheless so. Here is the chief scene of the Chambers masterpiece, in the exact words of this *Times* Brandes:

The heroine . . . bursts upon the astonished gaze of several of the important characters of the story when she dashes into the ballroom of the German Embassy standing upon a bridled ostrich, which she compels to dance and go through its paces at her command. She is dressed, Mr. Chambers assures us, in nothing but the skin of her

virtuous youth, modified slightly by a yashmak and a zone of blue jewels about her hips and waist.

This is the sort of thing, according to the *Times*, that is better than the work of Theodore Dreiser! This is the Potash and Perlmutter preference in literature! . . .

The La Motte book, "Civilization," is a collection of ten short stories, all dealing with the Far East. Several are commonplace, but in others, notably "The Yellow Streak," "On the Heights," "Prisoners" and "Civilization," there is a quality that lifts the book far above the general. They show a Conradian irony; they are carefully made; they somehow stick in the mind. This Miss La Motte, in fact, is a writer of a great deal more than common promise. Her little volumes of sketches, "The Backwash of War," suppressed by Dr. Burleson, remains the nearest approach to a first-rate war book that the United States has yet produced. Whether or not its circulation is still forbidden I do not know; probably it is. If so, I advise you to take a look at it immediately the regulation of your reading is abandoned. It is a very unpleasant book, but there are pages in it that make war a great deal more vivid than all the Sergeants Balderdash and Press-Agents Pishposh have ever managed to make it. Miss La Motte is also the author of "Peking Dust" (*Century*), a collection of letters from China.

III

THE new Joseph Conrad novel, "The Arrow of Gold" (*Doubleday*), is bound to disappoint the growing corps of Conradistas. It has its moments of splendor, its pages that only Conrad could have written, but there are fundamental defects in it, and they leave a sense of something lacking at the end. Probably the chief of these defects is an unfulfilled expectation. One gathers the notion, at the start, that one is to be introduced to stirring scenes in the last Carlist rebellion in Spain—scenes ob-

viously designed to display Conrad at his melodramatic best—but the rebellion keeps on receding and receding as chapter follows chapter, and at the end it is nothing save a dim glow on the horizon: all the action goes on in Marseilles, which is like seeing the engines go by but missing the fire. Moreover, there is a lack in the story itself, even as it stands. One never quite makes out why it is that young Monsieur George never marries the dashing and fascinating Doña Rita, heiress to the late Crœsus, M. Henry Allègre. They meet, they love, they kiss, they proceed even further—and then they part. Why? I confess that I still wonder. If it is in the book, then I missed it—which is a subtle criticism of the book. But though it thus falls short and is to be set much below the long series of Conrad masterpieces, it is yet full of capital detail. Rita herself is superbly done, and so are some of the other personages—her half-fabulous peasant-sister, Mlle. Therese; her homicidal lover, Señor Ortega; the ancient journalist who comes down from Paris to advise her; Dominic, the brave sailor-man; Captain Blunt, the romantic Americano. Nay, Conrad could not write downright badly if he tried. But he has, like all of us, his ups and his downs, his good days and his bad days. If I stacked his books in the order of their merit, I should put "The Arrow of Gold" between "Chance" and "The Inheritors"—and a good six feet from "Youth," "Typhoon" and "Lord Jim."

IV

AFTER such short stories as Mr. Anderson's the conventional stuff in Mary Roberts Rinehart's "Love Stories" (*Doran*) seems thin and flabby, and magazine tales of the sort presented by Newton A. Fuessle in "Flesh and Phantasy" (*Cornhill*) are utterly unreadable. The longer pieces of the day, in the main, are quite as bad. E. M. Delafield's "The Pelicans" (*Knopf*) I find heavy going; Miss Delafield remains one of my blind spots. J. D. Beresford's "The Jervaise Comedy" (*Mac-*

millan) is mildly amusing—but only mildly. "The Tale of Mr. Tubbs," by J. E. Buckrose (*Doran*) is rough farce. "The Vinegar Saint," by Hughes Mearns (*Penn*), is a sugar-teat in the manner of Henry Sydnor Harrison. "Across the Stream," by E. F. Benson (*Doran*), is burdened by gabble about spirits. "The Fighting Shepherdess," by Caroline Lockhart (*Small-Maynard*), is spoiled by moving-picture melodrama. "The Wicked Marquise," by E. Phillips Oppenheim (*Little-Brown*); "Big Flat," by Henry Oyen (*Doran*); "Flower o' the Lily," by the Baroness Orczy (*Doran*); "Wooden Spoil," by Victor Rousseau (*Doran*); "The Mystery of the Summer-House," by Horace Hutchinson (*Doran*); "The Thunder Bird," by B. M. Bower (*Little-Brown*); "Claire," by Leslie Burton Blades (*Doran*); "The Further Adventures of Jimmie Dale," by Frank L. Packard (*Doran*); "The King's Widow," by Mrs. Baillie Reynolds (*Doran*); and "Spears of Destiny," by Arthur D. Howden Smith (*Doran*), are trade-goods, and not worth going into. "The Paliser Case," by Edgar Saltus (*Boni-Liveright*) is a boob-bumper by a man who, in his day, wrote "Imperial Purple," perhaps the finest example of brilliant gaudiness in words ever concocted in America. Finally, to have done with this sort of thing, there is "The Yellow Lord," by Will Levington Comfort (*Doran*), a melodrama of undeniable merit, and happily free from the author's late gabble about Mystic Motherhood, Avatars, Third Lustrous Dimensions and other such horrors.

Two Irish novels emerge from the muck-heap. One is "The Valley of the Squinting Windows," by Brinsley MacNamara (*Brentano*), and the other is "Glenmornan," by Patrick MacGill (*Doran*). Both deal with the everyday life of small Irish villages, and in a manner not unrelated to that employed by Mr. Anderson in "Winesburg, Ohio." The MacNamara book is the more coherent and dramatic, but the book of MacGill is by far the better written. It is, in fact, an extraordi-

narily graceful and agreeable piece of writing, partly in the melodious Irish dialect made familiar by Synge and Lady Gregory. I don't know how true it is to the life of the Irish peasants, but at all events the people of the story are made quite real to the reader. There is, in the usual sense, no story. Doalty Gallagher, the young son of a peasant farmer, goes to London, makes a small success as a newspaper reporter, and then, suddenly overcome by the nostalgia of the Gael, returns to his sod-house home in the Glen of Mornan and there makes shift to be a yokel again. The experiment, alas, is not altogether successful. The country folk can't fathom Doalty's motive for returning, and so conclude, first, that he must be rich, and when this turns out to be untrue, that he must be a bit queer. The belles of the neighborhood keep him at a distance; the boys feel that he is no longer one of them. In the end the war covers his retreat; one is sure, parting from him, that he will never go back to the glen again. Half a dozen lively and very deftly contrived character sketches enliven the chronicle. That of old Oiney Leahy, with his sinister past, his heroic boastings and his Rabelaisian humor, is a little masterpiece, and that of Doalty's mother, Maura The Rosses, falls but little below it. Altogether, "Glenmornan" is a book of the utmost charm—a refreshing island in the Dead Sea of machine-made dullness. MacGill is the man who wrote "The Rat-Pit," but I think that "Glenmornan" is a very much better piece of work than "The Rat-Pit." . . .

The other importations of the season are anything but stimulating. "Blood and Sand," by Vicente Blasco Ibáñez (*Dutton*) is a tale dealing with bull-fights and bull-fighters, and is marked by the author's customary hortatory purpose. The American vogue of Blasco, I suppose, is already declining; such bogus geniuses from foreign parts come one a year, and are forgotten almost as rapidly as they are embraced. The usual procedure is for the season's hero to be brought over by his publisher

and exhibited before a gaping populace. This scheme, however, does not always work. The visit of Arnold Bennett, far from helping his sales, probably did much to diminish them; at all events the Bennette furore sickened and died while he was here, and the women's clubs have since almost forgotten him. Perhaps that is why we have not been favored with a view of Blasco. . . . Another dull product of the literary customs-house is "Two Banks of the Seine," by Fernand Vandérem (*Dutton*). This is the third volume in the Library of French Fiction which began with Eugène Le Roy's "Jacquou the Rebel." It is not to be mentioned in the same breath with that book. But in such a series, of course, there must be indifferent things as well as good ones.

Viola Meynell's "Second Marriage" (*Doran*) does not interest me, and neither does Stephen McKenna's "Midas and Son" (*Doran*). Nor do I find myself moved to anything resembling enthusiasm by a re-reading of Leonard Merrick's "Conrad in Quest of His Youth" (*Dutton*), despite the highly encomiastic preface by Sir James M. Barrie. This volume is the first of a "new, uniform and definitive edition" of Merrick, with introductions by such eminent authors as Barrie, Sir Arthur Wing Pinero, W. J. Locke, Maurice Hewlett, G. K. Chesterton, H. G. Wells and W. D. Howells. Sir James explains the plot frankly and engagingly. All these gentlemen, it appears, happen to like the books of Merrick immensely and so it dismays them to observe he is a good deal less popular than many another. Therefore they put their heads together in a benign conspiracy and propose to drum up new readers for him, and to spread the news that he is good—in brief, to make him. The intent is laudable, and many a far worse novelist has been put over, as we Americans say, in a far less candid manner. But I still have doubts that the enterprise will be a success. Merrick is amusing, he is often extremely ingenious, and it is very seldom that he falls into down-

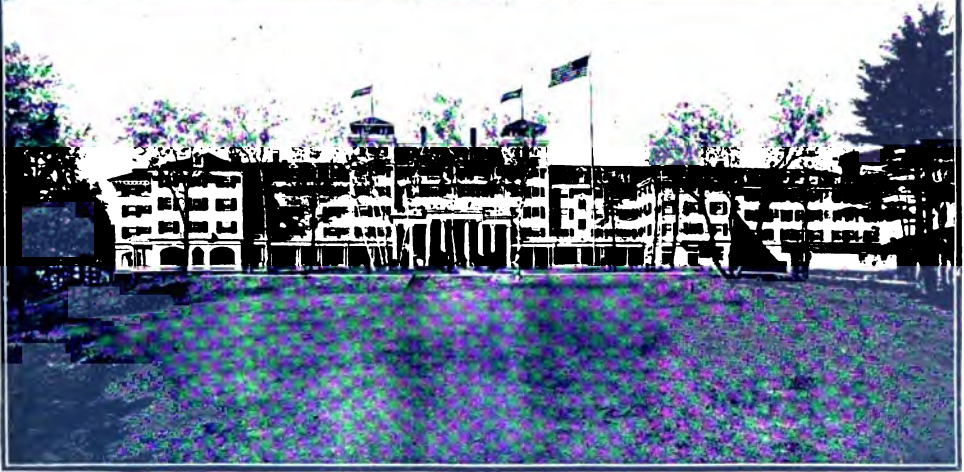
right sentimentality, but his talent, at best, is a fragile one, and I am inclined to think that too much puffing may not only fail to make him, but even quite undo him. The ancient Howells once said of "The Actor-Manager" (*Dutton*) that he could "recall no English novel in which the study of temperament and character is carried further or deeper, allowing for what the people are." And now comes Barrie with the statement that he would rather have written "Conrad in Quest of His Youth" than any novel by a living Englishman save "a score or so of Hardy's." It would be difficult to imagine more extravagant overpraise of two diverting but by no means profound or memorable books. Barrie, a canny Scot, may be slyly joking. If he seems to forget Joseph Conrad, it may be solely because he maliciously remembers that Conrad, like a full half of the other first-rate English authors of the day, is not actually an Englishman. But the encomium of Howells is simply nonsense. If he genuinely believes in the pre-eminence that he gives to "The Actor-Manager," then he has begun to forget all the books he read before the age of seventy-five.

V

WHAT remains is chiefly bad. "The Fields of the Fatherless," by Jean Roy (*Doran*), if it is fiction, has a rather unusual reality; if it is fact, it is not so remarkable. The sad story of a servant girl, obscure, unravished and unhappy. "Aristokia," by A. Washington Pezet (*Century*), is a tortured burlesque—the 888th variation of the topsy-turvy idea. "Temptations," a book of short stories by David Pinski (*Brentano*), only proves that Pinski is very much better as a dramatist than as a story writer. "Jimmie Higgins," by Upton Sinclair (*Boni-Liveright*), is a war novel smothered in Socialism. "Futurist Stories," by Margery Verner Reed (*Kennerley*), is piffle. "Nixola of Wall Street," by Felix Grendon (*Century*), is a sentimental piece, suffi-

ciently described by its title. "Letters From a Prairie Garden," by Edna Worthley Underwood (*Jones*), is intellectual sentimentality. "Travelling Companions," by Henry James (*Boni-Liveright*), is a collection of the author's very early short stories, dredged from old magazines—and most of them not worth the dredging. "Murder," by David S. Greenberg (*Hour*), is a tale which starts off with a grim and extremely vivid picture of the life of the very poor, and then grows so stupid that I can't tell you what happens afterward. This Mr. Greenberg, rigorously edited, might conceivably do something worth reading. . . .

Which brings me to "Martin Schuler," by Romer Wilson (*Holt*)—and surcease from novels, I hope, for three or four months. This "Martin Schuler" (the umlaut is omitted from the cover and slip-cover, but restored in the text) is a story of a musical genius, and a good deal less banal and unconvincing than such stories usually are. Why the man of genius is hard to get into a novel I have exposed in the present place full oft in the past; he is hard to get upon paper in any way; even Shakespeare failed at the business. But Miss Wilson, though I think she fails too, at least fails less ignominiously than most. Martin, in fact, is brilliantly real at the start, and begins to wither and creak only after he has sold his God-given gift for a mess of pottage, and has a villa in the Schwarzwald, and a French chauffeur, and a title from the Kaiser, and the Nobel prize, and a mistress who is a countess. Here there is much that is hard to believe. Imagine the Nobel prize going to the composer of a new "Merry Widow"! Or the Kaiser making a *Reichsgraf* of such a fellow! But despite these obstacles to credulity, Martin is often anything but a stuffed dummy. In his amours, at all events, he lives, and there is even a good deal of reality left in him at the close, when he dies at the moment of the success of his first serious opera—the abandoned dream of his youth come true at last.



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